

THE DUPLICITIES OF HISTORY

The CENTRAL PROBLEM OF FREEMASONRY

‘Freemasonry’, as a single identifiable entity, doesn’t exist and probably has never existed. The Grand Lodge [GL] of English Freemasonry (EF), an organisation which probably began meeting in the period 1717-23 and claims to have ‘mothered’ all other variants, is a distinct entity which asserted and gained ascendancy by the classical carrot and stick technique. It offered benefits to memberships of otherwise independent lodges in return for oaths of loyalty and thus of a secondary position. Claims that it was made up of men of higher status who were therefore deserving of obedience from men of lower standing were no more than a re-fashioned statement of ‘the Divine Right of Kings’. The mythical history of this GL is full of delicious ironies. At the same time, the real-time history needs the mythology to help explain *the Order’s* global expansion.

That initial GL had no authority to determine either ‘Masonic’ or political practice of any other ‘Masonic’ entity yet that is the nature of its achievement. Its claims of uniqueness and authority were parts of a marketing strategy it needed because it was neither unique nor in charge. Why its self-defined ‘Grand Lodge Officers’ chose to act in this way is only the first of many questions the answers to which determine how its subsequent 300 years + of endeavour are to be interpreted. Over three centuries, something called ‘Masonic history’ has been cobbled together by partisans from not very-objective accounts of entities self-identifying as ‘Masonic’ for political reasons and, it seems, for no other reason.

How does ‘Freemasonry’ come to be in EA’s origin story at all? There are two reasons. The first is that 18th-19th century extensions of the British Empire and ‘English Freemasonry’ [EF] occurred together in a manner that must be construed as a co-dependent relationship which has genuinely been part of the EA experience. The second is that the EA historians who have tried to insert what they thought was ‘freemasonry’ into the EA story have made the problem of false history worse. Like the conspiracy theorists who have wrapped the topic in negative views, they have used the mythical account rather than do serious research. So strong, apparently, was the mythology that they believed it could be taken as read. Their claimed pursuit of an ‘origin story’ more accurate than the national narrative has added layers of confusion.

Other than the obviously bogus claims of ‘Freemasonry’ seeking world domination, then, in the material labelled ‘Freemasonry/masonry/pseudo-masonic’ found in EA museums and archives there are two distinct ‘threads’ – one relates to the creation of EA’s modernist image, the other assists in the writing of an account closer to the truth. Neither is accurate but both begin with an invasion and a very long military occupation.

EA Scholarship on Freemasonry

A prominent and comparatively recent EA Masonicⁱ scholar assumed that ‘*the early history of the craft in Australia*’ coincided with ‘*the early history of Australian settlement*’.ⁱⁱ Interestingly, he allowed that ‘*the men involved*’ were ‘*individualistic, chauvinistic, bigoted, truculent and were on some occasions malevolent gossips*’. But, he says, this is to be tolerated today as the ‘*natural capriciousness*’ of 19th century Englishmen who, incidentally, were not responsible for ‘*the savage brutality*’ of the convict system but merely for its maintenance and oversight.

These are generalisations of little more use than the myth.

Pioneering authors on EA. James Matra and WC Wentworth writing much earlier don't mention 'Freemasonry' of any kind. If they had they would probably have connected stories popular at the time of US loyalists and Irish criminals to Masonic plots, and we'd now be celebrating an origin story in which oath-bound and shackled brethren, and 'sisteren', came ashore at Botany Bay intending to set up *'Masonic Headquarters- Southern Region'*.

They have disagreed about the results, but later serious EA scholars have insisted that something like this did happen: *'In 1797, following a meeting at the Freemasons Arms hotel involving some fellow-officers and selected free settlers, the extraordinarily influential junior officer John Macarthur formed an exclusive freemason's society... This secretive group had an all-pervading, if not sinister influence in colonial affairs from that time on.'*ⁱⁱⁱ Binney made no further mention of these plotters who, you'll notice, were not desperadoes but 'exclusives... officers and free settlers.'

'For the Term of His Natural Life' by Marcus Clarke (1874), a story of a fictional convict Rufus Dawe, linked 'secret signs (and) their secret language' to 'a hideous Freemasonry of crime and suffering'.^{iv} A later collection of stories, *'The Ring'*, published in the 1890's by *'Price Warung'* (another pseudonym) detailed an underground convict network supposedly in existence in the 1840's. It contended that convict 'lodge' meetings included oaths of secrecy, secret signs and passwords, and that its organisation involved a hierarchy of concentric 'circles', the whole headed by 'The One'.^v

Another local scholar, Colin Roderick bizarrely argued in 1950 that 'the Ring' was the origin of larrikin pushes [gangs] *'that infested Sydney from the (1860's) until 1918'*, *'the packs of jackals that scavenged the camps of Australian soldiers'* in WW1 France, and Sydney and Melbourne's razor-gangs of the 1930's and 1940's.^{vi} Perhaps the connection here is that the larrikin gangs were *'(like) contemporary lodges'* with members having to be nominated, balloted, initiated and put on probation.

The excitable Robert Hughes labelled convict conspiracies on Norfolk Island, *'The Ring'*, and described it as *'a carceral mafia whose control of the lives of prisoners was both inescapable and minutely enforced.'* The same story surfaced again in 2003 attached to the suspected murder of 1840's police magistrate on NI, Samuel Barrow.^{vii}

A fictional account of 'Botany Bay' by Russell Schneider in 2019 imagined Evan Nepean, Under Secretary of State, recruiting well-known figures into 'his' Masonic lodge before the First Fleet sailed. Nepean insisted the inductees swear to stand by the just-announced Commandant Captain Arthur Phillip in any trouble he might run into, whatever other allegiances they might have. The point for Schneider, and the basis for the secret meeting, was a belief that 'Freemasons' could be trusted to always do 'the right thing', especially when British honour was at stake.^{viii}

A slightly more insightful, but still conspiratorial attempt to understand was made in 2007: *'This thesis examines the coexistence of traumatic themes and Masonic content in the work of contemporary visual artists. ...Recent research by scholars examining cult practices has indicated the existence of Masonic ritual abuse of children....'*^{ix} Research by this scholar, Brunet, led to a realization on her part of two relevant things - the importance of 'Freemasonry' within Australian culture, and an awareness of its failure to attract academic scholarship. She suggested' that 'Freemasonry', and all that is associated with it, constituted a significant 'blind spot' in academic research. *'One of the consistent responses I have had when announcing the subject of Freemasonry as my research has been a particular laugh, as if the whole topic is some sort of joke, a curious anachronism that bears little relevance to our contemporary experience.'* (Brunet, 2007 pp.8-9)

Alan Atkinson's three volume *Europeans in Australia* has been rewarded and acclaimed. In Volume One (1997) he tried to make sense of the fraternal story, in particular, that of 'the

'Freemasons', which he made central to his account. Unfortunately, he assumed that 'Freemasons' always told the truth, including that there was only one entity of the name. He accepted at face value what they said about themselves: '*No institution more thoroughly enshrined the virtues of liberty, equality and fraternity as understood in the late eighteenth century*', and so on. (Atkinson, 1997, p243) His excellent rendition of the modernist myth began with the notion that Enlightenment ideals '*had been shaped by a polished and highly literate culture*' and had been carried abroad '*by powerful and cultivated minds such as that of (Governor) Phillip's... (whose) successors ...continued the Enlightenment project, by dispensing laws from a position of high humanitarianism.*' He implied early governors of New South Wales were probably all initiated 'brothers' since the Masonic ethos, once it had appeared, was suddenly everywhere: '*A fraternal spirit showed in soldiers' collective land grants... especially where officers and men participated on equal terms. Masonic ideas might also explain the Corps' little war on Christianity, or at least on the evangelism of the colonial chaplain.*'

Ditto for merchants: '*Freemasonry stood for a new ideal of frankness and mutuality among men... so that joint-enterprise and investment abroad might issue from brothers' meeting places.*' The 'new ideal' led directly, he said, to settlers gaining their own property. And since: '*Property established interests, and interests led to active rights*', and since growing rich was to grow more honest: '*Nor was honesty only a private virtue. It included that businesslike candour, that manly ability to speak (a virtue women might hope to emulate) which was the essence of commonwealth!*'

The Irish could not be part of his '*polished and highly literate culture*', so had to be otherwise explained. Thankfully for his thesis they had reached the same conclusion. All Irish people were, apparently, semi-literate at best, and '*unable to cope with the imaginary scheme of things, manifest in pen and paper, maps and terrestrial globes*'. '*The Defenders*' [an Irish oath-bound, secretive anti-government militia] among them '*were bound to each other by a wilderness of catechisms and codewords, memorised formulas invested with a kind of talismanic authority as is usual among people who regard writing as a semi-sacred skill*'. He immediately segued without explanation to 'Freemasonry': '*Perhaps the antipodean compass [carried by Irish escapees] was of this sort. Among Freemasons (as in the mediaeval Church) the north point had a powerful significance.*' (Atkinson, 1997, p.249) After further remarks about the Defenders' '*web of imagery*' mixing '*Catholic and revolutionary symbols*', he made the same segue to the same Order: '*Brotherhood revived old millenarian ideas among the Irish. Ancient ideas of baptism and redemption were mingled with hopes of sudden liberty*'. After all, '*Freemasonry was more popular in late-eighteenth century Ireland than in any other country on earth.*' (p.250)

In her 2007 study, US scholar Harland-Jacob wrote about NSW: '*As in British North America, a brotherhood [Freemasonry] that was initially identified with prominent men gradually broadened its appeal once rising men began to see membership as facilitating their upward mobility.*' This is not a group plotting revolution or child-abuse but it's also not promoting '*scientific improvement*' or '*the exercise of mutual benevolence*' as she had previously claimed for 'the Order'. She is not describing 'Freemasonry' as '*an association of men, bound together in their struggles to attain all that is noble*' as 'Freemasons' have described themselves. What she is drawing attention to is social climbing with the 'Masonic' label as a stepladder.

To replace the ultra-materialist image of EA with an origin story involving 'Freemasons' was always going to be hard for Australian readers to accept. What follows here, apart from my opinions which I try to flag, is verifiable. It is a complicated and very different story to what has been taught and is far from fully researched. It sets out evidence which shows that

‘Freemasonry’ did indeed arrive with the First Fleet but not in the ways suggested. And it shows that ‘The Order’ was not the only conspiratorial group involved in the invasion and all that followed.

FREEMANONRY’S ALLEGED TRANSITION from Workmen’s Club to a ‘glittering assemblage’

From a smoke-filled ale-house in one of central London’s most notorious red-light districts in 1716 to the glamour and excitement of a gala dinner in July 1886 where reporters jostled to catch a glimpse of *‘the glittering assemblage’*, is quite a leap. This is the rags to riches story claimed by EFs for their Order. Members of four lodges, mainly working men, supposedly met over bread, cheese and ale to assess options for their struggling combinations. With London awash with clubs and societies, competition for members was fierce, but, neither the clatter of tankards on rough wooden tables, nor the whistling, singing and jostling patrons all around deterred them from their purpose. These men were special, unique - or so it has been claimed.

Perhaps there were heated exchanges over ‘the Constitution’, perhaps there were surly losers and grinning winners - we have no records, no first-hand accounts. We only have assertions written years later that this gathering of stonemasons, carpenters and like-minded drinking buddies agreed to begin meeting quarterly and to organise a year-ending feast at which they would elect their first-ever ‘Grand Master’. Yet more remarkable is the allegation that their idea was quickly taken up by intellectuals and gentry as a vehicle for religious tolerance and new, ‘enlightened’ philosophies. This allegedly led to a transformation of the original into a global phenomenon which matched the drive of the British Empire in vigour and ruthlessness. Acting on a request from the aristocratic GL executive which had quickly supplanted the original artisanal ‘committee’, pioneer chronicler, James Anderson, published in 1723 an account which established ‘its’ ambiguous parameters. He provided no clear definition or viable mission statement, equated ‘the Order’ with ‘the science’ of geometry, only to trace its lineage from Adam and Eve through figures of power to the then-current English ruling family.

EF presented itself early on as a method of character building through study and contemplation – the Temple of the Body and all that. In 1859 the mythology was notably updated by WA Laurie, a Scot: *‘(Freemasonry) has existed from the remotest antiquity... (It) has extended to every corner of the globe, and embraced men of every rank, of every religion, and of every form of government.. (It was) formed for the purpose of scientific improvement and the exercise of mutual benevolence.’*^x

Each of these is a remarkable claim, together they are astonishing. Notably, Laurie spurned all works previous to his, insisting that his contribution would *‘divest the history of Free Masonry of that jargon and mystery in which it has hitherto been enveloped, and substitute a historical and therefore reliable account...’* His claims were dismissed soon after by J Murray Lyon in 1873 who quoted him and then wrote: *‘The time was when statements of this kind would have been accepted without challenge... but it is nowadays pretty generally believed that by such applications of the rose-tint of fiction the real features of the ancient fraternity are concealed.’*^{xi} In 1884, unhappy with all that had gone before, English brethren set up their first lodge of research, *Quatuor Coronati* [understood to refer to the ‘Four Crowned Martyrs’ legend, hereafter QC].

That forum continued the historical and definitional vagueness for what it asserted was the original and the best ‘Freemasonry’: *‘When Masonry came into prominence and took a position in London, it was only natural that there should soon have risen some imitators. Of Clubs there were plenty, one or more at almost every tavern, but a Society uniting all their advantages, with the addition of secrecy and mystery, was certain to excite both interest and attention.’*^{xii}

It is notable, here, that while 'Masonry' supposedly united the advantages of all other 'Clubs' its unique contribution was 'secrecy and mystery.'

The astounding claims continued even when circumstances required 'the Order' to evolve in a secular direction. In 1909 the Order was: '*(Defined) ...as a union of all unions, an association of men, bound together in their struggles to attain all that is noble, who desire only what is true and beautiful, who love and practise virtue for its own sake, - this is Freemasonry, the most comprehensive of all human confederacies.*'^{xiii} In 1948, NSW's Grand Master McDowell asserted: '*(Guided) by our Masonic principles, with continuing faith in (God), united in the spirit of brotherhood, we can face the future with every confidence, firmly believing that truth and justice will always prevail, and that Freemasonry is truth and justice in all things.*'^{xiv}

Repeated dismissals by insiders of earlier insider claims reveal the Order's constant anxiety about how 'Freemasonry' was being perceived, and a hope that the next 'new' claim would finally produce 'the truth'. An impressive version, backed with much evidence, was provided in 1988 by Scottish academic David Stevenson.^{xv} He declared the formation of London's GL '*almost an irrelevance*' (p.4) in the 'Masonic' story.

He allowed that the events of 1717-23 marked the end of Scottish dominance of the Order and the beginning of three centuries of English control, the most important new element of which became for many the Order's defining characteristic – a hierarchical organisation in which subordinate lodges agree authority resides in an over-sighting Grand Lodge. Stevenson's detailed account, ending at 1710, does not explain why a Scottish fraternity would fall into line with London in the 1720's rather than argue for pre-eminence, why EF would adopt the name 'Freemasonry' only to use it in a totally new way, or why it would propagate the origin story that it began in a London tavern in 1716. He praised two English scholars, Knoop and Jones, for their erudition in the 1930's and '40's in economic aspects of 'freemasonry' but thought the rest of the literature '*is best avoided.*' (p.3) He railed at the continuance of extremist interpretations, from '*the unreasoning prejudice of professional historians*' at one end to believers '*in the most implausible fables*' at the other (p.2).

As EF spread globally, he said, it developed in diverse ways – '*a protean institution that (changed) shape according to circumstances and membership.*' (p.6) What then of its supposedly unique characteristics? Were they duplicated exactly or if not, were these 'copies' no longer 'Freemasonry'? Mirala supported Stevenson's origin story but argued strongly that Peter Clark, an English scholar had 'given the death-blow' to attempts to treat 'the Order' in isolation and its claimed features as unique. For him, Clark demonstrated that '*much of what has been regarded as uniquely masonic was, in fact, widely shared by a multitude of clubs and societies.*' (Mirala, 2007, p.23) For these authors secrecy and religion have all but disappeared.

Religion and morality

US scholar Margaret Jacob forcefully asserted in 1991 that 'Freemasonry' didn't just happen at the same time as the Enlightenment but was the vehicle for and literal embodiment of its ideals. Scottish scholar James Curl agreed, asserting that 'Freemasonry' was central to the Enlightenment.

Australian Manning Clark did not have 'the Order' in mind when he attempted to describe the conflict between Christianity, Enlightenment-era thinking and Modernism which he believed had continued in EA. He later accepted that he had failed to achieve his aim. When another scholar, McQueen, noted Clark's ethical approach to 'the invasion' and the very obvious religion-based battles in EA's parliament and school-yards of later years, McQueen commented: '*The regret is that so few of Clark's followers [ie professional historians] have*

continued down his line of country.' Since Clark, he said, religion has been reduced to biographical sketches and bureaucratic systems: '*Theology is rarely explicated.*'^{xvi}

Theology was not directly involved in EA's origins. Interpreting religions as systems used by personalities to achieve material goals is more likely. The regret is that neither Clark nor his followers saw the mythology or realised that manipulation of historical truth was itself evidence, indeed the evidentiary solution to his dilemma.

The continuing problem has been the confusion religion has caused by its advocates claiming it was and is a-historical and that it was therefore not to be treated as historical evidence of itself.

Religious beliefs, and attendant claims – a faith's content – may call upon a-historical entities for verification, but its supporters and their preaching are not and cannot be anything other than flesh and blood humans. They are and have always been time-bound products of very specific contexts. As such they must be judged in terms of that context.

Antients and Moderns

'The Order' was not the only 18th century fraternity involved in political affairs and not the only 'Masonic Order' insisting its philosophy and ritual were the oldest, the purest or the most important. '*The period from 1740 to 1813 saw a host of Masonic rites, orders and degrees emerge.*'^{xvii} The dizzying array of 'Masonic' organisations was not the result of an undirected enthusiasm for something new, suddenly fashionable. There was an internal struggle for control of 'the Order' which created spin-offs but the proliferation was caused by the larger struggle for control of Europe and the wealth it was generating. France around 1800 had 36 distinct 'Masonic groups', including 26 which admitted women, and nearly 1400 different degree rituals. Today, it still has at least 14 competing 'Grand Lodges'.

In London, in the 1750's, just a little downstream from LGL, a number of unhappy Irish artisans and supporters set up their own 'Grand Lodge' in opposition. The newcomers named their Order '*The Most Antient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons*', in short, '*the Antients*'. They decried their predecessors as '*the Moderns*' and alleged they had deviated from an original ritual.

With the industrious Lawrence Dermott as Secretary for over twenty years, and involved for over forty, 'the Antients' overtook 'the Moderns' in popularity, influence and reach. For five decades there were no official contacts between the two GL's and mutual hostilities ran deep. An amalgamated 'United Grand Lodge' came about in 1813, conveniently marking an apparent end of 'Masonic' contributions to the revolutionary decades.

The Antients' manifesto, *Ahiman Rezon*, (1756) was sub-titled '*Showing the Excellence of Secrecy and the First Cause or Motive of the Institution of Free-Masons.*' Within six years of formation its Grand Lodge had sixty-four lodges on its register and was spreading north into the new industrialising areas. Twentieth century authors, Berman and Bullock emphasised the transformational nature of '*the Antient's*' rise both on 'Freemasonry' and on broader society, Berman of Britain, Bullock of the United States.

Both have helped shift scholarly views of 'the Order' from ritual and symbolism to socio-economics: '*The schism in English freemasonry was a consequence of the deterioration in England's economic and political relationship with Ireland and of the social condescension with which Ireland and the Irish were viewed.*' (Berman 2013, p.187) With regard to the remarkable triumph of '*the Antients*' over '*the Moderns*' in the US, Bullock has claimed: '*This reordering (within Masonry) reflected larger changes in American society...The groups that embraced Ancient [sic] Masonry most strongly...were the chief beneficiaries of Revolutionary changes.*' (Bullock, 1996, p.86)

Just as in London, the mythic story of independent 'America' and of its 'Freemasonry' grew out of tavern culture. Boston's 'Masons', meeting in the 1760's in the *'Green Dragon'* tavern as a *'Lodge of St Andrew'*, were refused registration by the local, 'Moderns' lodge. It deemed them 'irregular', so the members sought and obtained an 'Antients' charter. In 1769, they changed the tavern name to the *'Freemasons Arms'*^{xviii} and established it as the meeting place for Massachusetts' Grand Lodge of the Antients: *'The basement (of the) tavern was used by several secret groups and became known by historians as the "Headquarters of the Revolution". The 'Sons of Liberty', the 'Boston Committee of Correspondence' and the 'Boston Caucus' each met there.'*^{xix}

The Boston Tea Party was planned there and long-time lodge member Paul Revere went from there to Lexington on his famous ride. Not long after, in the 1790's a Sydney tavern named *'the Freemasons Arms'* was established and became notorious because of its unusual patrons. But rather than become a widely celebrated centre of rebel conspiracy and therefore a focus of media coverage and scholarly research, this tavern has remained in the shadows.

Tavern Culture

A 2017 collection *'in honour of the establishment of the Grand Lodge of England'* insisted that from its appearance in 1717-21 'Freemasonry' owed nothing to a tavern culture but was decorous and abstemious without fail and that *'the evidence speaks to men seriously engaging with their Craft and viewing themselves as stewards of a divinely-sourced and truly ancient institution.'*^{xx} Not only have 'Freemasons' apparently retained their 'divinely-sourced' nature but they have remained interchangeable – they think alike, always act in accordance with all the Rules and they are never drunk and disorderly.

George III was pious and abstemious but his sons were not, as Georgian culture, elite or plebeian, was not. Gout, syphilis and lifestyles beyond the means to pay were common. Of the then Prince of Wales, later GM of 'Modern' Freemasonry and then George IV, a contemporary, Horace Walpole, wrote: *'The prince drank hard, swore publically in the (palace) drawing room and talked there irreligiously and indecently in the openest manner. He passed the nights in the lowest debaucheries, at the same time bragging of intrigues with women of quality, whom he named publically.'*^{xxi}

Societal changes were bringing taverns into the world of national decision-making and changing the ways in which public politics could influence government policies. A convergence of profit, party politics and self-indulgence best explains the 18th century surge in tavern culture. Crucially these intersected with fraternal societies like 'the Masons' and forced them to adapt. A craze for sweetened tea, coffee and chocolate, and for smoking, put premiums on sugar and tobacco growing.

Commercial, 'deal-making' networks drawing men of diverse backgrounds, nationalities and resources to projects, which could be anywhere on the globe, involved huge risks to their lives as well as their bank drafts. British planters had long taken advantage of slave markets to source labour but were having to reconsider how they and their foreign 'partners' could meet publicly but safely.

Some UK observers, such as Roy Porter, have concluded 'masonic lodges' could not have avoided being 'political clubs' since they were already gatherings of men hungry for 'arrangements'. He has noted organisational work being done by *'tavern clubs, societies and masonic lodges'* as though they were much the same: *'The Great Lodge of Swaffham in Norfolk, for example, was simply a club consisting of all the political leaders of the local independent Whigs...'* John Money has argued that in mid-century Masonic lodges, actively seeking financial and political influence, played a role in transferring mercantile and therefore political power from the aristocratic class to the new formation, the middle class.^{xxii} Money named this 'the Masonic moment', after which the English Order increasingly insisted on loyalty to the

1688 'Glorious Revolution' and the Establishment.^{xxiii} Despite its title the '*Great Lodge of Swaffham*' rarely had more than a handful of consistent members. One of its founding members was Anthony Rellhan who later became Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Ireland.^{xxiv} Newspaper notices show founder Captain Richard Gardiner (1723-1781) was a keen member of '*the Blue and Orange Society*', aka '*The Loyal and Friendly Society of the Blew and Orange*'. As well as celebrating the Revolution (1688) and the accession of the Hanoverians (1st August), the Society also kept the anniversaries of the Battle of the Boyne (11 July) and the Battle of Culloden (16 April).^{xxv} Blue and orange cockades and ribbons appeared at elections throughout the period as loyalist code, summarised in the motto '*Honour, Friendship and Freedom!*'.^{xxvi}

An increasing willingness of government to pay private operators to undertake specific tasks added to the mix. It was an invitation for 'agents' to proliferate – clerks, lobbyists, solicitors, providores, managers – all claiming expertise in strategy, form-filling, budgeting and deal-making. Greed as the proven vital spark mixed with insider information as the proven fuel. Getting a tavern keeper or an industrious editor on side was as potentially profitable or politically beneficial to a fraternal society as having a celebrity or a 'Royal' as a regular visitor – better still if they could be initiated as a 'brother'.

Calling one's lodge 'No 1' or 'Grand Lodge', could mean, if successfully publicised, that originators of a new Order or 'lodge' could spin off subsidiary lodges and charge for charters and 'paraphernalia'. How deliberately covert and how formally fraternal any grouping or network was, depended on its creators.

Of the networks contributing to and benefitting from the imperial charge, those of greatest material value were those with members who were both well-placed to affect policy decisions and to take advantage of opportunities thrown up by events. The riskiest and potentially the most profitable speculations transported the least forgiving cargoes - slaves, convicted felons, soldiers and whales. As 21st century consumers support sweatshop practices by shopping in the High Street, so explicitly and implicitly the 18th century tavern-goers played a part in keeping exploitative industries and imperialism buoyant and enjoyed themselves while they did it.

After the 1730's when Bristol and then Liverpool surpassed it as the pre-eminent trading port, London's entrepreneurs continued to indulge in slaving - '*the triangular trade*' - most importantly, as its financing centre – loaning money, insuring vessels and arranging cargoes. Enormous profits made slavery the drugs trade of its time with the difference that it was legal and state sanctioned (at least until 1807 in Britain).

After entering the sugar business later than some, British naval supremacy and control over key islands gave London an edge over all competitors. By far the most financially profitable West Indian colonies in 1800 belonged to operators from the United Kingdom. While many companies did not succeed, a handful of individuals made fortunes. British advantage was reinforced when France lost its most important colony, St Domingue (western Hispaniola, now Haiti), to a slave revolt in the 1790's. Afterwards, the British islands produced the most sugar, and Britons quickly became the largest consumers.

British ships between 1662 and 1807 transported an estimated 3,415,500 Africans into plantation slavery, the largest forced migration in human history. At one stage the trade was the monopoly of the Royal African Company, operating out of London. The wealth of Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham was built on the processing of slave-picked cotton and the manufacture of cloth. By the late 18th century, one out of every four ships that left Liverpool harbour was a slave trader.

Ship owners in the slave trade were strong personalities who over this period re-ordered, to their benefit, relevant systems in 'the City' - capital markets, shipping insurance regulations, lines of credit and jurisdictional law. They were Board members of Lloyds, Trinity House or the Bank of England, or they were connected by marriage to men who were.^{xxvii}

Tavern-based clubs and societies became arenas of bargaining, negotiation and compromise where competition forced all involved to think about their 'brand' differentiation. Self-promotion was crucial for any 'Club' wishing to attract the well-heeled and the influential. EF was only one among many clubs and associations which had either adopted the essential fraternal features – ritual, secret signs, conviviality - or had maintained them from earlier times. 18th century initiation rituals carried out in taverns were competitive elements in the recognition and influence market.

The '*Ancient Society of Leeches*', a 'club' which initiated the infamous John Wilkes in 1769, also admitted him to its '*Grand Council*'. The '*Order and Association of Anti-Gallicans*' went one further, electing him its Grand President in 1770, and assisting his installation as Sheriff of London in 1771-2, and Lord Mayor in 1774-5: '*Mr. Alderman Wilkes dined on Thursday last at the Greyhound in Greenwich, being the annual feast of the grand association of (Anti-Gallicans) of the county of Kent. The cannon were fired at his arrival, and he was waited upon by the Stewards in their dress of the order...Mr. Alderman Wilkes returned to London at six in the evening, when the cannon were again fired; and he was attended through the town by an incredible number of people, who saluted him with the loudest acclamations.*'

xxviii

In the case of '*the Beefsteaks*': '(A) new member was brought in blindfold, along with the club's Bishop (wearing his miter and carrying the book of Rules) and escorted by the Halberdiers in special costumes, the Recorder gave the charge to the member, dwelling on his sombre duties, and the entry was duly sworn.' (Clark, p.223)

A new London magazine, *The Attic Miscellany*, listed in its first issue in 1789 a number of '*Convivial Clubs*' and an undertaking to regularly visit and report on them. It's first feature article, however, featured a society not on its list. Illustrated with a detailed engraving, this was a society of '*Odd Fellows*', more accurately a lodge of '*the Grand Imperial Order of Odd*



Fellows'.

Clubroom 'Grand Imperial Order of Odd Fellows' London 1789

The anonymous article dismissed Chief Minister Pitt with a suggestion that he was probably heartless, but praised the '*great leader of the Opposition, the popular representative of Westminster*', Charles James Fox.

The probable successor to the *Grand Imperial Order of Odd Fellows*, the *Grand United Order of Odd Fellows*, [GUOOF] was just beginning its global expansion when it appears to

have been singled out by the Pitt government. Not the only editors jailed and far from being the only persons arrested during the '90's crackdown, two regional editors who wrote positively in 1794-5 about GUOOF were criminalised.

In February 1790 *'The Attic Miscellany'*^{xxix} featured, in its usual sardonic style, a 'Samsonic Society' and its ritual - refusal of a candidate by two black balls after a secret ballot, elections for 'Noble Grands', 'Wardens' and 'Past Grand' officers, an oath *'to conceal, not reveal'* and medallions and sashes to signify rank. The guardian of the 'lodge door' wore a lion skin over his street clothes and carried the jawbone of an ass as his defence against interlopers.^{xxx}

The *'Alfredans'* featured in the *Attic Miscellany* of April 1797 in an essay written 'by a member': *'The Royal Modern Incorporated Alfredans seem...to be a municipal institution: they are governed by a Lord Mayor, Twelve Aldermen, Two Sheriffs, a Recorder, and have several subordinate corporation officers'*. These titles appear forerunners of the later *'Order of Buffaloes'*: *'The official robes and habits [of the Alfredans] are not only very distinguished, but respectable, and their insignia well fancied and elegant.'* Among *'the Alfredans'* in 1789 was Sir Watkin Lewes. Somewhat better connected and therefore more successful than Wilkes, Lewes had also been an ambitious sheriff and alderman of London in the 1760's: *'...(The) new brother... is led to the Lord Mayor's chair...(where) his lordship makes a short cautionary harangue, gives the peculiar signs of the Society and communicates the pass-word'*.^{xxxii}

Importantly, Lewes was a long-term member of an influential loyalist society which unlike the 'Freemasons' had been born inside the charmed circle of Court and Westminster patronage and had been nurtured rather than forced to negotiate for favours. The *'Honorable Society of Ancient Britons'* was, from the reign of George I, ostensibly an educational charity sponsoring poor children of Welsh descent. In the early 1770's the then Mr Watkin Lewes appears to have become a Pitt-supporter. He was made Sheriff of the City in 1772, knighted in 1773 and Lord Mayor in 1780. He was initiated into the *'Modern Freemasons'* in 1781 then shifted to *'the Antients'*, becoming Master of a new lodge in 1789.

By 1788 'Masonic' networking was happening as far 'east' as China and officially as near to EA as the East Indies. A debate in 2020 between the formidable scholar Berman and the equally formidable duo of Sommers and Prescott culminated pair when the latter put down what is for me an inescapable conclusion: *'The history of freemasonry has over many centuries been manipulated and embellished to suit the interests of different groups.'*^{xxxii} Unprepared scholars venturing into 'the revolutionary decades' will still in 2025 encounter London's United Grand Lodge [UGL] claim that its 'History and Achievements' in summary are:

'OUR HISTORY & ACHIEVEMENTS'

Barely a decade after the foundation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, Freemasonry had become the largest and arguably the most influential of Britain's many clubs and societies... A key factor was the widespread promulgation of the 1723 Constitutions of the Freemasons, which pioneered the cutting-edge principles of the Enlightenment:

- *Religious tolerance, something wholly radical in a world characterised by religious conflict;*
- *Meritocracy, at a time when birth and wealth determined success;*
- *High standards of interpersonal civility;*
- *Scientific and artistic education;*
- *Societal and personal self-improvement.*

The Reality of Freemasonry

For GL decision-makers the lack of clarity has been a useful but accidental result of a need to satisfy factional agendas. The London fraternity of *Freemasonry*, aka 'the Order', was neither alone nor unique. The idea often labelled 'freemasonry' was a multi-faceted phenomenon. Already in the 18th century: '*There were (and still are) many varieties existing side by side, practised simultaneously by different lodges.*'

For some members, Grand Lodge was an energy centre of an exclusive but free-wheeling club scene, for some it was an arm of the government, for others it was a money-making exercise. Overlapping agendas, fluid alliances and uneven administrations threatened viability, even as its potential for political usefulness became clearer and was more fully harnessed. Unpredictable noble leadership damaged collective capacity to balance military, commercial and industrial demands until a manufactured mystique of Empire provided cohesion.

Tensions between political and religious agendas have remained. Official 'mission statements have made serious discussion of 'the past' impossible. For three centuries, Grand Lodge have claimed to be unified while being endlessly conflicted internally and externally. They have exhorted regularity and conformity while appearing in a multitude of guises and combinations; they have claimed to be passionate about learning while discouraging research and while insisting 'it' already knew everything humans needed to reach fulfilment. While preaching tolerance and openness they have been discriminatory and unwilling to publicly discuss its decisions. They have insisted they observed political and religious neutrality while being clearly in lock-step with the dominant elements of their respective society even as that 'evolved'.

The initial claims made by London's Grand Lodge [LGL] were sufficient to fuel outside curiosity and speculation which was no doubt the intention of at least some members. To survive, a club needed to attract paying customers and to attract them required that a club offer benefits beyond the offers of other groups.

London had bounced back quickly after the great fire and been likened to a vortex, sucking in people and goods from all over the known world. The prevailing mood was that everything was for sale. John Bunyan noted '*houses, lands, trades, places, honours, preferments, titles, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures, and delights of all sorts were just so many tradeable items.*'^{xxxiii} Bribery was ingrained in English politics long before him^{xxxiv} but Robert Walpole, Prime Minister 1721-1742, '*bribed everyone*', including '*the King, the Queen, (and) Dissenters*', while '*(secret) service money during his administration (was devoted) to the direct purchase of members of Parliament*'. '*(The corrupt) system...was, if not his (Walpole's) creation, his life work of perfection and augmentation.*'^{xxxv}

The political life of 1720's England has been described as having '*the sick quality of a "banana republic", wherein 'predators (fought) for the spoils of power'*', and where so-called rational, bureaucratic rules and forms did not exist.^{xxxvi} Constant intervention in other countries' affairs, dynastic/family squabbles - all pursued under the rubric of advancing British interests - advanced the interests of those making the decision and their backers. The Duke of Chandos, 'England's richest man' was among Walpole's strongest supporters^{xxxvii} and was, of course, an investor in the slave trade.

English society was topped by the King and his Court - hierarchical, male, corrupt and bent on self-aggrandisement. These weren't merely venal and self-indulgent politicians. These were the men who fashioned 'Freemasonry' to suit their own ends. By evolving from and agreeing to be loyal to this status quo, EF condoned its behaviour. English scholar Berman has recently written: '*Freemasonry's leaders not only endowed (the Order) with social credibility,*

they gave it a political purpose.' (p.254) Berman has identified '*how the lodge and masonic connectivity were used to facilitate espionage and diplomacy.'*'^{xxxviii}

The next piece of the puzzle is that while Desagulier, a founding member of LGL and Chaplain to the Duke of Chandos, was a place-hunter, he was also a Huguenot. London's Grand Lodge, like the prevailing regime, was protestant but only secure after major struggles. Neil Kamil's work^{xxxix} has detailed how London's Huguenot community had made itself financially viable while remaining refugees in a country which didn't necessarily want them. Their goldsmiths and furniture-makers brought French aesthetics to London's wealthiest citizens but they were a threat to local artisans. Prior to Walpole they had often had to defend themselves against charges of breaching guild regulations, of being diseased, of being counterfeiters, alchemists and worse. On a number of occasions, their shops and houses were set upon and destroyed.

Someone, perhaps Desagulier, sought government protection, and the administration saw advantages in maintaining the new commerce, and its secret networks. Negotiations achieved '*the EF solution'* - a combination of ritualised conviviality, religious and political allegiance, and the all-important secrecy.

In a single entity, the agendas of the administration and the Huguenot diaspora were brought together and provided with a cover story. The Huguenot traders gained protection, an enhanced entre into gentry society and resources to augment their efforts to safeguard family connections. The administration gained agents and 'safe houses' throughout Europe, a further vehicle for its clandestine activities, and insider access to luxury goods. At a stroke, EF had legitimacy, a missionary purpose, which in the circumstances its advocates could argue was totally moral and progressive, and the benefits of being in partnership with two powerful, outward looking allies.

The Order's greatest value to government and its bestselling point was its personnel and their networks' willingness to gather information while 'duchessing' local influencers. Robert Walpole's dominance of the 1720's and 1730's was a result of his earthy pragmatism and capacity to charm people,^{xli} but to retain office he needed to be better informed than his enemies, local and foreign. In EF's first flush, Grand Lodges appeared in Edinburgh and Dublin, and then at those royal courts of mainland European dynasties, about which English power-brokers needed to be best informed – Germany, Poland, Austria, France, Sweden and Russia.

It is unlikely that London's Grand Lodge paid all the costs involved in these extensions abroad, or even the major part. Close association of a Protestant/Hanoverian EF with government-funded espionage programs is the only possible explanation for EF's rapid expansion and the range of responses it provoked from 1736. The savagery of the punishments of active or suspected 'Masons' is a marker of the seriousness with which the English threat was viewed. (Berman, 2012, p.182)

Henry Sadler, un-paid historian and first official EF Librarian, from 1879, concluded from surviving documents that for their first four decades '*the Modern Freemasons' were not well-equipped to administer their rapidly burgeoning 'empire'*' and that 'head office' was run in a ramshackle manner.^{xlii} This reminds us that LGL had no need for a fixed location if decisions affecting its relationship with government were being taken wherever London's political faction leaders and government officers met.

'Britain' had a prodigious intelligence-gathering system in place before the revolutionary decades magnified its importance but it was no coincidence that during the years when the 'secret service' budget emerged officially and informers' notes began to accumulate as Cabinet files, the first 'Masonic charters' were granted to military regiments in order that they might operate as armed, travelling lodges.

Violence at the Sharp End of the Imperial Spear

As most academic history did for a long time, the mythical EA narrative omitted violence and the worst of human blemishes – war. This negative was even made a positive: ‘*Regular armies gave the first check to barbarism of the Middle Ages and it was under their protection alone that Arts, Science, Commerce and Industry grew up and extended in Europe.*’^{xlii} The British Army’s occupation of New Zealand was sometimes called an invasion but in EA there was only ever an ‘*exercise in policing*’ - guarding convicts at penal institutions, combating bushrangers, putting down convict rebellions and lastly perhaps ‘*to suppress Aboriginal resistance to the extension of European settlement.*’

Eighteenth century enthusiasts for a ‘new world’ argued that with ‘American’ independence from the stultifying hand of ‘Old Europe’ and the French Revolution decimating tradition and custom, a secular, rational and democratic world appeared to be in the offing. The ‘*Divine Right of Kings to Absolute Power*’ was to be replaced with ‘*liberty, equality and fraternity*’.^{xliii} The earliest ‘modernists’ argued that nations making up ‘the West’ were engaged in nurturing freedom and the rule of law with an eye to the benefit of all their citizens. The idea was presented as an optimistic belief in human capacity to learn, to improve morally and, through introspection and self-discipline, to solve universal problems. Peaceful resolution of conflict was to be a given.

The reality was quite different. The then decision-makers, whatever their ethnicity, religious or political stripe, were not about to give up what they regarded as theirs.

EA’s earliest administrators and ‘their’ troopers used the bloodiest of tactics when it suited them, as their colleagues were doing elsewhere, including ‘at home’.^{xliv} Academic contributors to the conservative Australian Dictionary of Biography [ADB] made this clear as early as the 1960’s: ‘*An irate Governor Phillip ordered Lieutenant Tench to gather his company of marines and lead an expedition against the Bidjigal in retaliation for Pemulwuy's attack on McIntyre. He ordered that two Bidjigal were to be captured and ten killed; these ten were then to be beheaded and the heads returned to the settlement...*’ (‘Captain Arthur Phillip’, ADB, 1966, on-line 2006)

Later ADB has: ‘*...To check at once 'these dangerous predators', military force was used against Pemulwuy and his people. Captain Paterson directed that soldiers be sent from Parramatta, with instructions to destroy 'as many as they could meet' of the Bediagal. In March 1797 Pemulwuy led a raid on the government farm at Toongabbie. Settlers formed a punitive party and tracked him to the outskirts of Parramatta. He was wounded, receiving seven pieces of buckshot in his head and body...*’ (‘William Paterson’, ADB)

‘*...On 1 May 1801 Governor King issued a government and general order that Aborigines near Parramatta, Georges River and Prospect could be shot on sight, and in November a proclamation outlawed Pemulwuy and offered a reward for his death or capture...*’ (‘Governor Philip Gidley King’, ADB)

‘*...In April 1816, in keeping with imperial imperatives, Macquarie issued orders for the regiment to undertake 'punitive expeditions' against 'the natives' in the Nepean, Hawkesbury and Grose River valleys. The regiment was to take as many prisoners as they could; if anyone refused to surrender, the soldiers were to "fire upon and compel them to surrender, breaking and destroying the spears, clubs and waddies of all those you take prisoners". Furthermore, if the soldiers did kill anyone, Macquarie ordered their bodies to be "hanged up on trees in conspicuous situations, to strike the survivors with greater terror."*’ (‘Governor Lachlan Macquarie’, ADB)

‘*...On 29 November 1826 he ordered the capture of their leaders... Exactly a year later he... ordered out the military... On 15 April 1828... he forbade all natives to enter the settled districts, and followed this... by a declaration of martial law ... (These) ... 'plans of military operation' ... mark Arthur's adoption of a policy of removal, or extermination... 'The aboriginal*

natives of this colony are and ever have been a most treacherous race', he wrote on 15 April 1830...'. (ADB A Shaw, 'Governor George Arthur')

These accounts, systematically denied or omitted from EA curricula, were not intended as a counter-narrative to the 'golden Australia' image. The idea that violence might have moral, even religious implications, was not the priority. Generations of pragmatic, problem-solving decision-makers were developing approaches to information to enable troublesome aspects of global domination to escape attention.

Precisely because violence was the reality, it had to be concealed or its formulation controlled. Those violated need to be down-played, rendered invisible or deleted altogether, information for those who needed it had to be secured, and 'public' information' needed to be delivered by trusted outlets. These needs are crucial to the success of colonial violence.

Secrecy and its Needs – Deniability and Invisibility

EA began at a time when secrecy was a way of life. When, in the last decades of the 18th century, imperial ambitions clashed head-on, and convict transportation spread to the South Pacific, espionage and counter-espionage increased exponentially. In the teeth of theories about civility and openness, realpolitik ensured that nation states 'modernised' long-standing programs of propaganda, informers and fake press releases. 'Traditional' use of brutality, corruption and diplomatic 'leverage' were normalised and appropriate cover-ups prepared.

Distinction of 'public' information from what was to remain 'off-limits' was fought over in ways as brutal as for other resources. After the military had cleared a space, bureaucrats, reporters and intellectuals might be credentialled to visit, observe and report. Waves of what Chomsky called in the 20th century 'the new mandarins' defined what was 'progressive' and what was irrelevant to the 'modernist' narrative. Central to their efforts was the packaging and distribution of information.

Language was a more subtle means than explosives of rendering indigenous peoples invisible to justify the ambitions of invading settlers: '*In line with this colonial rationale...a vast body of literature (has been) dedicated to proving that (just as in South Africa, Australia, Algeria and parts of East Africa) before the advent of the European Zionist colonization, Palestine was barren, empty and backward.*'^{xlvi}

Brian Fletcher's interest in EA's first governor, Arthur Phillip's use of deception was obvious in his ADB article but ambiguous. Sealed orders were made to seem normal, Phillip's lying to his employers about Botany Bay – exaggerating progress, downplaying difficulties – was treated off-handedly. Phillip's attitude towards 'the truth' had important consequences but his work as a military spy in France and the colony's place in global politics were rendered invisible by Fletcher.

Secrecy takes on a different 'colour' depending on the direction from which it is viewed. Fraternalism's nature is bifurcated – good/bad, insider/outsider, loyal/opposition. The Lawson-Paterson 'mate-ship' stories don't seem to have any secrecy about them, they stress openness, as in men being able to share. But the secrecy was there in the close bonding which excluded 'non-mates', another thing about fraternalism. It was the reason why all governments continued to fear fraternals after 1789. Their need to oppose government meant 'our' self-help and mutual aid societies came up against government agencies but capitulated in the face of legislated demands.

An English academic, J M Roberts in 1969 urged scholars to study 'Freemasonry' because: '*English freemasonry... shaped directly or indirectly almost every secret society... (giving them) secrets, signs and passwords, symbolic rituals, an inflated rhetoric of moral purpose, a hierarchy of initiates of various degrees.*'^{xlvi} Stevenson endorsed the idea in 1988: 'It is

nonetheless true that masonry has provided the classic structure for secret organisations in the modern world.'^{xlvii}

Evidence doesn't support the idea that any of the versions of 'Freemasonry' was uniquely secretive despite many brethren's regard for it. Secrecy is not a quality like weight or height. It is relational and dependent on context for its nature and function. It is adopted when it's needed. In mediaeval times, the fraternals were secretive to protect information crucial to their operation. In the revolutionary period, they adopted secrecy for the additional reason that they were considered a threat to the status quo or, in the case of EF, because it was acting clandestinely for the government.

Conspiracies require other codes and signs known only to 'insiders'. Where 'insider' information intended for 'knowing' friends required a particular response the lack of the correct 'counter-sign' could end all exchange. Where coded messages from strangers contained an invitation to respond, stumbling answers could convert trust into dangerous suspicion very easily.

Language differences require behavioural 'customs'. Tahitian greetings unknown to 18th century Europeans, who may have been gods come to punish, included throwing a plantain onto the water to attempt appeasement. Europeans who didn't know the secrets of that ritual, often found themselves in hot water.^{xlviii}

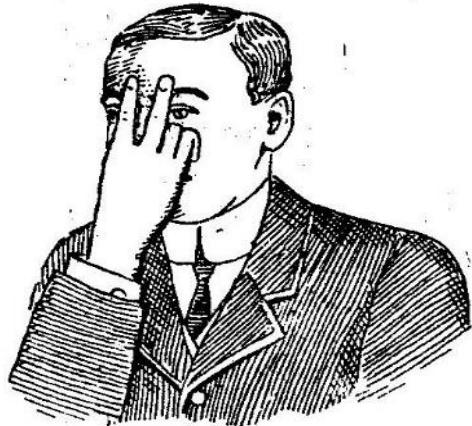
Physical skirmishes between 'gangs' inside the penal settlement haven't been taught in schools, as the fighting with the indigenes hasn't been taught. The image creators have denied clashes perhaps because they appeared dis-organised and were therefore unimportant. Perhaps it was believed, or hoped, that the convicts, and the indigenes, would soon calm down and learn that conforming to British rule of law was better for them. Any that didn't learn what was good for them deserved punishment, deserved being regarded as 'outsiders' and disregarded by 'benevolent' government policies – the issuing of land permits, education, health care, etc.

In 1788, the men in red jackets and gilded epaulettes acted out a disciplined and highly scripted performance which prioritised their 'tribe' and symbolically marked out 'their' territory. Ritualised violence, secrecy and coded messages had been so deeply embedded in European culture they were used, unthinkingly, to introduce the indigenous residents around Botany Bay to their new world. For the residents this was a meeting of a secret society.

Their uniforms paralleled the regalia of higher officers in some fraternal lodges - 'Grand Master', 'Master' and so on. Subtle differences of colour and decoration established each individual's place in routines learnt by heart. The less-qualified 'brothers' in simpler, matching 'regalia', had their own movements and responses, also learnt by heart. The rags worn by those in chains identified them as 'outsiders' seeking admittance but in need of examination and education before being considered worthy to even be asked to swear an oath of allegiance. Failed applicants were literally 'drummed out', to exile, the flogging tree or to the gallows.

Other rituals, equally proscriptive, were enacted when required. It was not accidental that a full regimental parade up the hill to Government House preceded the arrest of Governor Bligh in 1808, nor that outcomes of serious wrangles over power and influence were decided by regulations, bribery and personal interpretation notwithstanding. Doing what was prescribed in the rules was in fact all these 'brothers in arms' had to go on, officially.

An Odd Fellow secret sign c1900



Their public 'presentations' were in a code which initiated 'brothers' deciphered sub-consciously. An implicit threat in the 1788 display was later set down in posters nailed to trees showing conflict with the locals being judged biblically, 'an Eye for an Eye', whereby sin was to be purged with further rituals. The 'residents' didn't know the code or its hidden secrets and they were not invited to examine them.

They were invited to learn table manners, to raise corn, and to understand exclusive property rights but they were not told about the necessity of the rituals to Georgian bureaucrats and shareholders. They were not told how this invasion of their space stood in relation to the recent loss by Britain of its American colonies, nor its connection to the conflagration in France just across the Channel. For that matter, neither 'the lobster backs' nor their prisoners had the slightest idea they were participating in a momentous event during a momentous period which would, in hindsight, be regarded globally as the beginning of the modern world.

Coded rituals happened in New South Wales because they were normal 'at home' where, beside enforceable rules and unspoken 'truths', they sometimes manifested dynamic opportunism. In April 1788, a Dublin paper related how the 4th Duke of Atholl, Grand Master of 'the Antients', *'has upon many occasions shewn more than ordinary respect to the Trades. Last week his Grace complimented each of our Deacon's wives with a silk gown.'* The response was interesting: *'In return for which their husbands presented the Duke with aprons such as are worn by their respective Trades.'*

Presumably these aprons carried symbols which distinguished one trade from another. *'Upon Wednesday he caused eight men put on eight of the aprons and clothed himself with the ninth. He then lead a very grand procession from one end of the town to the other, being accompanied by a select number of each trade, with colours flying and a band of music going before.'*⁴⁹

The editor of 'British Freemasonry' Robert Peter asserted in 2016 that LGL had invented street parades and benefit performances: *'(In) the 1720's (LGL) developed two inter-related public expressions of their pre-eminent cultural and social position in London: processions and the sponsoring of benefit performances in prestigious theatres.'*⁵⁰ For him it was the public display which conveyed 'power and authority' while in the Roberts and Stevens examples (above) it was the private 'secret display' which outsiders sought to copy.

Peter went on to assert that whether press announcements were for 'the Hums, the Gormogons, the Real Masons, the Free Sawyers, the Modern Masons, the Order of Bucks, or countless other societies, a common template (was) adopted that (drew) on the phraseology, hierarchical structure, philanthropic activism and promotion of festive pastimes redolent of Grand Lodge Freemasonry.'

It's hard to imagine Grand Lodge officers, most of whom were gentry, making the 'props' for a parade from scratch or planning the route but, clearly, someone in LGL or associated with it, had realised that overt propaganda, especially processions in regalia, would be useful. Peter's claimed chain of transmission appears to be the wrong way around. Post-1717 societies matched the parade format of their mediaeval counterparts - viz, a procession to church to hear a sermon, in regalia and in ranked order, with 'wands', music and decorations, a return parade to the 'business' meeting, topped off with a substantial feast, exhortations to the members and alms-giving to the poor.

Ceremonial or decorated aprons raise the same issues. The earliest 'Masonic' apron has been portrayed as a long, protective garment in leather without embellishment. When decoration first appeared on ceremonial aprons, fraternal or not, is unclear but earliest known references are to trades prior to 1717. The ceremonial aprons used by the Govan Weavers' Society may be one of the earliest surviving examples.

Ceremonial Apron Govan (Scotland) Weavers Society c 1770



The need among fraternal members for covert acknowledgement by one's 'brothers' - secret signs and passwords – did not diminish as military coded display became popular, but their form at delivery had to be altered. Symbols on a knight's shield as code to assist or to conceal identification were dropped. Taken up with fervour by status-conscious officers, the 'Higher Masonic Degrees' may have proliferated in the 18th century as one way of recapturing a sense of exclusiveness.

The Regimental Lodges

From its beginning, the Order was popular with Army leaders, basically the gentry on parade. The 3,000 or so names in the Registers of the LGL, between 1723 and 1735 include over 100 ranking officers, including two who were later Field Marshals, twenty-three colonels, eight majors, and fifty-six captains. The figure excludes more than sixty aristocrats and baronets who commanded their own regiments and others of more junior rank or whose rank was not recorded.

Lodges required a Charter to operate. The first regimental 'travelling warrants' were not issued by London's GL [LGL] but by the Irish Grand Lodge [IGL] - to the '*First Battalion, Royal Scots*' in 1732 and to the '*Second Regiment*' in 1737. Between 1732 and 1742, IGL issued twelve further warrants to regiments, most of which were raised in England.

Late twentieth century 'Masonic' scholars, a number in EA, have determined that Irish influence on what we generally think of as an English invention had existed from the first: '*Ireland is often forgotten or underrated as a source of Freemasonry throughout the world but it was an Irish invention which was largely responsible for the spread of Masonry outside of Europe. In 1730 the GLI invented the document called a Warrant or Charter, and two years later had the brilliant idea of issuing a movable warrant – that is to say, a warrant for the lodge to meet wherever the members happened to be.*'^{li}

The IGL was intensely Protestant and loyal. London's Grand Lodge was not as secure, indeed it was internally ablaze with dissent during its first decades. Only after the failed '45' did the winning loyalists proclaim they had cleansed the English GL of '*Jacobins and Irish-papists*', something which allowed reliable Catholics to be Grand Masters even in Ireland.^{lii} But the theoretically brilliant strategy of the travelling regimental lodge, bridging military, religious, State and 'Masonic' agendas, could only have worked after close consultation between the Army High Command, Cabinet, the Court, and the senior executives of all three 'British' Grand Lodges. In practice it would only work if 'sound' officers received the warrant and the lodge was worked solely within the officer's mess. 'Ordinary' soldiers, probably enlisting to escape limited futures, were not going to be welcomed as 'brother Masons' by their superiors which is why there were other political 'clubs' within regiments - discussed further below.

Few of the brethren involved would have failed to see this scheme as a breach of 'the Order's' alleged core values. Any formal commitment by any 'Mason' to fight was against the Order's principle of neutrality implied in the commitment to discuss neither religion nor politics in lodge and to admit men as equals whatever their outside allegiances.

Official combatants were, and are, political partisans, recruited to fight in the King's name for any cause nominated by the Monarch or his representatives. The same requirement contradicts the pledge to '*support the established regime*', wherever a 'brother' might be.

Scholars of British regiments show only the unit's overseas service and invariably emphasise royal or elite connections. For example, Harland-Jacob noted that '*The Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry*' regiment, was established in 1752 and registered as the 46th Regiment of Foot, and carried the '*Lodge of Social and Military Virtues No 227*' when it fought in Canada, the US and the West Indies and when, in the 19th century it occupied a central place in the affairs of early Sydney (of which more below).^{lxxiii} The web of decision-making necessary for the use of 'Masonic' and other loyalist regiments against both civil disorder and in overseas wars illustrates the pervasive nature of their integration with government at all levels.

Her research left Harland-Jacon (2007) in thrall to the mythology of both English Freemasonry (EF) and modernism and a double-edged sword. The Order's claimed foremost position in imperial endeavors entitles it to whatever glory is going but also attaches to it any opprobrium which may be unearthed.

Her approach involves viewing the Empire's soldiery from the wrong end. All 'British' military units must be considered first as defenders of the regime at home. Where the local population was rebellious, trusted regiments had as their first priority, the re-establishment of order and the status quo. By the end of the century, if not before, this meant defending an idea of Britain which included 'Freemasonry'.

To obtain labour for plantations or colonial outposts, traders pursuing profitable enterprises or naval and army officers seeking advancement and plunder had to have social standing. They needed to be able to show they could attract suitable shipping, insurance and capital to get underway. An aspirant officer without the 'right' family connections needed luck, along with charm and boldness, to be accepted into the emerging chain of contacts from Whitehall and the Palace to shipyards, recruiting offices, banking and investment circles.

An aspirant found the going easier if he had the support of scientific bodies and was a member of the right 'clubs'. Further, he was not able to ply his trade at all if, for any reason, he could not supply the necessary 'ranks'. A regiment's commanding officer had discretion to make most if not all decisions regarding 'his' troop but this did not take the question of a Masonic lodge out of GL hands or those of Cabinet.

Attempts to explain the spread of the militarised 'Masonic Order' have often noted alleviation of boredom as motivation: '*The practice of Freemasonry was found to be a pleasant relaxation from the tedious monotony of military life.*' This has been glossed into a relaxed lodge sociability encouraging the creation of friendships and providing space for equality and congeniality at all levels of a regiment.^{lxxiv} The conditions in which the rank-and-file in 'Masonic' regiments fought, no better or worse than in any other regiment, undermine any claim of an inclusive fraternity. Social class divisions made vertical fraternisation impossible: '*Life for a British soldier was often harsh and unforgiving. Discipline was strict...with harsh punishments commonly meted out for even minor offences. This was in part a reaction to the constant (soldiers') gambling, whoring, drinking and brawling.*'^{lxxv}

The loyalty of any front-line soldier was highly suspect, and naturally so. Building an 18th century regiment involved cobbling together native-born volunteers, men 'pressed' into service and foreigners 'hired' from the armies of mainland governments. Local, ill-educated boys and young men made up the bulk of the rank and file and they suffered the worst of the mayhem and slaughter. If they survived, frontline troops were awarded small percentages of prize money but if status, 'the press' and the thought of plunder and rapine weren't sufficient to get them there in the first place, there were direct bribes. A 'bounty' of 5 pounds for the recruiter and a Crown for each 'volunteer' was offered. There were other inducements: '*On Wednesday, orders were sent from Woolwich (Headquarters) to make an offer to such convicts who are young*

men, and had been at sea either in His Majesty's or the merchant service, to serve on board the men of war, instead of being transported...ⁱ

In short, official doubts about the rank-and-file were considerable, and were of course, reciprocated. Military lodges couldn't have worked as 'Kipling-style' fraternities until 'the ranks' were allowed at least something like equal status in the 19th century.

Living conditions on-board Royal Navy [RN] ships were at least as dire as those experienced by soldiers in the field, meaning that the Board of the Admiralty often had to 'press' harder and more widely to get crews. In the 1770's: '(Fresh) press warrants were made out and sent all over the kingdom with orders to impress every hand they can meet with, and not to suffer a man to escape on any pretence whatever.' (*Press Notices October 1787*) Discharged men were said to be starving despite claims that ample booze and opportunities for plunder would be available. Officers took these inducements for granted as part of their entitlement.

CODA: Part two of this article is available in *No More Conspiracy Theories*. It details the involvement of the Masonic-led regiments which carried out extraordinary brutality in suppressing the Irish independence movement from the 1780's after which they went onto a rotational program as parts of they moved from one imperial hot-spot to another. After serving in New South Wales, for example, they went on, usually to India. While in NSW and its off-shoot settlements, they were instrumental in both driving the natives off their land and helping to establish civilian lodges. A third vital role was their support of dissident merchant and land-owning groups in opposition to Governors and their administrations.

Two other fraternities heavily involved in colonial politics as a direct result of central roles they played in Ireland cannot be excluded from the EA Masonic story. These, the United Irish Brotherhood and the Loyal Orange Institution maintained hostilities well into the 20th century mostly at election rallies and in the various parliaments.

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