

THE PRODUCTION OF THE ENGLISH BOOKS OF CONSTITUTIONS IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Andrew Prescott
University of Sheffield

The key event in the development of freemasonry into the one of the largest and most influential social organisations in the world was the establishment of a Grand Lodge in London in 1717, and the fundamental starting point for investigations into the early history of the Grand Lodge remains the *Book of Constitutions of the Free-Masons* published in London in February 1723. The text of the *Book of Constitutions* was compiled by the Scottish presbyterian clergyman James Anderson and we generally refer to the volume as Anderson's *Constitutions*. Scholarly discussion of the *Constitutions* has chiefly focussed on Anderson's own writings and character and on his relationship to such leading players in the politics of the Grand Lodge as the two noble grand masters, the Duke of Montagu and the Duke of Wharton, and the scientist, populariser of Newton and Deputy Grand Master at the time of the publication of the *Constitutions*, John Theophilus Desaguliers. However, to anyone perusing the *Book of Constitutions* shortly after its publication, Anderson's involvement would not have been immediately apparent. Anderson is not described as the author in the title page or in the dedication, and only very attentive readers would have noticed that in the list of lodges against Anderson's name as Master of a lodge were the words, 'the author'. When the *Constitutions* of the London lodge were reprinted in a slightly revised form for use in Ireland seven years afterwards, John Pennell, the Grand Secretary of the Irish Grand Lodge, had to explain to readers in his dedication that the book had been compiled by Anderson. There were a number of others associated with the production of the 1723 *Book of Constitutions* to whom masonic scholars have given little attention. The investigation of these neglected figures sheds much greater light on the intellectual and cultural context of the early days of Grand Lodge freemasonry than the constant revisiting of Anderson's own brief recollections some fifteen years later of the circumstances of the compilation of the book.

The names which anyone purchasing the *Book of Constitutions* in 1723 would have noticed first would have been those of the publishers John Senex and John Hooke on the title page. They would also have noticed that the engraver of the

frontispiece had given his name and address beneath the picture: 'Engraved by John Pine in Aldersgate Street London'. The other name given prominence was that of Desaguliers, whose name appeared beneath the dedication to the Duke of Montagu. Indeed, the unwary reader might have assumed that Desaguliers had compiled the volume. The appearance of these names would have conveyed a powerful message to the reader, associating freemasonry intimately with the new scientific learning stemming from the discoveries of men such as Newton and Halley. The form of the imprint 'Printed by William Hunter, for John Senex, at the Globe, and John Hooke at the Flower-de-luce over against St. Dunstan's Church' make it clear that the book was published by Senex and Hooke themselves and that they had financed the publication. If Grand Lodge or a particular individual had paid for the printing, this would have been declared in the imprint, as in the case of the 1730 Irish Constitutions, which were published by the Dublin bookseller Joseph Watts for John Pennell, the Grand Secretary of the Irish Grand Lodge, a fact recorded in the imprint. A very large number of copies of the 1723 Constitutions survive, far more than for many other publications of the same period, suggesting that Senex and Hooke kept the book in print for a number of years and that reprints were made.

Senex was one of the leading map makers of his generation and the most prominent publisher of the new science. Within a few years of completing his apprenticeship under a master of the London Stationers' Company, he had published a translation of Edmond Halley's celebrated treatise establishing the periodicity of comets. With his Welsh partner, Charles Price, he established a business selling maps, charts, globes and mathematical instruments. Price and Senex claimed that their maps exceeded all others 'in correctness and all other particulars'. After his partnership with Price broke up, Senex produced a series of innovative publications which allied his interests in maps with the new scientific discoveries. In 1713, he published a wall chart of the solar systems showing the planets and comets. In 1715, he produced a map showing Halley's prediction of the path of a solar eclipse across Britain, even selling smoked glasses to allow members of the public to view the eclipse. Senex was assisted in these ventures by William Whiston, formerly Newton's assistant and his successor as Professor of Mathematics at the University of Cambridge. Whiston's anti-trinitarian views led to his expulsion from Cambridge, and he established himself in London as an experimental philosopher, seeking to popularise the new cosmology

and investigating such practical applications as the more accurate measurement of longitude. He also became preoccupied with producing a new religious synthesis. Among these projects was, intriguingly, an attempt to produce a more exact model of Solomon's Temple.

From 1714, John Senex worked closely with William Taylor, who had made a fortune by publishing the first edition of *Robinson Crusoe*. Taylor helped finance Senex's project for the publication of an elaborate 'English Atlas'. Taylor also shared Senex's interest in scientific publication. In 1715, Senex published a pamphlet by Desaguliers, and he became Desaguliers's publisher, publishing for example Desaguliers's translation of s'Gravesende's *Mathematical Elements* in 1720. Moreover, Desaguliers gave Senex further contacts in the scientific community. By 1723, Senex was, in the words of his biographer Lawrence Worms, 'publishing all the key figures – not just Newton, Keill, Hauksbee, Desaguliers, Whiston and Halley, but also reprints of the first seventeenth-century generation of true believers in the 'experimental' approach, Hooke and Boyle. Senex had become the publishing champion of the whole of the new science'. The major scientific books of the period were published by Senex, frequently with prefaces signed by Desaguliers. Senex also encouraged and supported new authors and engravers also interested in new forms of thought, such as his former apprentice and protégé, the encyclopaedist Ephraim Chambers. For the book buying public of 1723, the appearance of the names of Senex on the title page and Desaguliers at the end of the dedication in the *Book of Constitutions* inextricably linked it with the new scientific thought.

For Senex, his interest in scientific measurement, maps and engraving came together in his chief passion, globes. He was the greatest globe-maker of his day, naming his shop 'The Globe'. This appears to have been another shared interest with Desaguliers. After Senex's death, Desaguliers' former assistant Benjamin Martin acquired Senex's globe plates after his death and continued to produce them on his own account. The single paper read by Senex to the Royal Society after his election was on improvements for the construction of globes. Globes were of course to become important symbols in British freemasonry, and it is tempting to suggest that this reflects Senex's influence. He certainly would not have been able to resist lecturing his fellow masons as to how globes married together geometry, science and art.

Senex's partner in publishing the *Book of Constitutions*, John Hooke, is a less distinct figure. Hooke had previously used William Hunter as a printer, in a serialisation of a translation of the *Dialogues with the Dead* by the German writer Fassman which even the translator admitted he found excessively laborious. Hooke's seems to have taken a greater interest in continental philosophy than Senex. He published Basil Kennett's translation of Pascal's *Thoughts on Religion*. However, Hooke also shared with Senex an interest in surveying and measurement. He published in 1725 Samuel Wyld's practical guide to field measurement, *The Practical Surveyor*. Hooke's partner in publishing Wyld's book was Jonathan Sisson, one of the most brilliant scientific instrument makers of his time, who produced the gauge used to standardise French and English units of measurement and made major improvements to theodolite design. Both Hooke and Sisson served as wardens of the masonic lodge which met at the Fountain in the Strand. The Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London possesses a past masters' jewel made by Sisson which is thought to be oldest such jewel preserved. It is embellished with an enamelled representation of Euclid's 47th Proposition. For men like Senex, Hooke and Sisson, the symbolism and significance of this proposition would have required little further elucidation.

At the end of the 1723 *Book of Constitutions*, there is a list of other books published jointly by Senex and Hooke. These introduce a further and very important theme. They comprise works on architecture including two sumptuously engraved folios, the first a translation by the architect John James, a member of a masonic lodge at Greenwich, of Andrea Pozzo's *Rules and Examples of Perspective Proper for Painters and Architects* and the second a translation of Claude Perrault's *Treatise of the Five Orders of Columns in Architecture*. Both these volumes were key texts for the understanding of Palladian architecture. Their beautiful illustrations were engraved by the veteran book engraver John Sturt, who was also probably responsible for the 'curious copper plate' which was made for tickets for the Grand Feast in 1722. The provision of these Palladian handbooks as 'further reading' at the end of the *Book of Constitutions* is a reminder that the legendary history provided by Anderson was as much as anything a history of architecture and aesthetics, essentially telling the story of the loss of the secrets of classical architecture, their rediscovery in the seventeenth century and revival in the eighteenth century. It is easy to forget that when Anderson

talks about a ‘well built arch of the Augustan stile’ he was not indulging in symbolism or masonic allegory – he meant exactly what he said. The *Book of Constitutions* was Palladian propaganda, and the concerns of Senex and the others as much aesthetic as scientific.

This theme is brilliantly reinforced by the celebrated frontispiece of the *Book of Constitutions*, engraved by John Pine. The architectural framing of the scene with its representation of the different orders of architecture and its sophisticated handling of perspective encapsulates the aesthetic themes which permeate Anderson’s text. Pine was another Senex / William Taylor connection. John Pine had shot to fame shortly after completing his apprenticeship in the London Goldsmiths’ Company when with John Clark he designed and engraved the frontispiece to the first edition of *Robinson Crusoe*, the book which enabled Taylor to finance Senex in his scientific publication programme. Although Pine was a prolific illustrator of books and periodicals, his work had hitherto been crude and clumsy, particularly in its handling of perspective, and it seems unlikely that Pine would have been capable by 1723 of producing the sophisticated design of the frontispiece of the *Book of Constitutions*. It seems likely that he was engraving the work of another artist. One possibility is his neighbour in Aldersgate, John Sturt, but the person most likely to have been responsible for the design of the frontispiece was James Thornhill, the King’s Sergeant painter, whose most famous works were the frescoes in the Dome of St Paul’s Cathedral and his decorations at the Naval Hospital in Greenwich. Recent critics have argued that, in their handling of light and perspective in St Paul’s and Greenwich, Wren and Thornhill were developing an aesthetic reaction to Newton’s cosmology, stressing feelings of light and space. Thornhill was a keen freemason, serving as master of a lodge in Greenwich and as Senior Grand Warden in the Grand Lodge. He afterwards provided the design for an illustration of Hiram Abiff with Solomon included by Pine in the engraved lists of lodges from 1725. Although Pine was probably not responsible for the design of the frontispiece of the *Book of Constitutions*, he nevertheless engaged strongly with the scientific and philosophical debates of the age. For example, he not only engraved illustrations for Henry Pemberton’s 1728 *View of Newton’s Philosophy*, but also subscribed to the book, as did Thornhill.

The 1723 edition of the *Book of Constitutions* was far from being the sole work of Anderson. It was a collaboration between men who were engaged in scientific publication, engraving, and the manufacture of maps, scientific instruments and globes, who all shared a great enthusiasm for the new scientific and philosophical thought. However, in 1735 Anderson petitioned Grand Lodge stating that the first edition of the *Book of Constitutions* ‘compiled by himself’ was sold out and that a second edition was needed. He had some thoughts on additions and improvements which he wished to set before Grand lodge. Anderson also complained that William Smith, who had recently published the *Free Mason’s Pocket Companion* ‘had without his privity or consent pirated a considerable part of the Constitutions of Masonry aforesaid to the prejudice of the said Bro Anderson it being his sole property’. Grand Lodge ordered Masters to prevent members of lodges buying Smith’s books, and set up a committee to produce a new edition of the second *Book of Constitutions*. There is no record of what Senex and Hooke thought of Anderson’s claim. Hooke ceased activity as a publisher after about 1730, and may have been dead. Senex was still publishing, but seems to have been taking life more gently in his final years, and was apparently happy to relinquish any rights in the *Book of Constitutions*. Anderson however was however in serious financial trouble. The cost of researching and publishing his enormous collection of historical genealogies, which first appeared in 1732, had been enormous. In 1734, he had lost his position as minister to the presbyterian chapel in Swallow Street and had moved with some of his former congregation to a chapel near Leicester Square. It must have been galling to Anderson to see others make money from publishing books on freemasonry, when he had been one of the first in the field.

In the 1738 edition of the *Book of Constitutions*, Anderson comes firmly centre stage as author and these are now clearly Anderson’s *Constitutions*. His name appears on the title page, he signs the dedication to the Prince of Wales, and there is a preface ‘From the Author to the Reader’ signed by Anderson from ‘my study in Exeter Court, Strand’. This doubtless also helps explain Anderson’s stress on his own role in the events of 1721-3 in his history of the Grand Lodge. Anderson aimed to turn the *Book of Constitutions* into a general handbook of freemasonry, including for example his own riposte to Samuel Pritchard. Anderson’s wish that his book should reach a wider market is evident from the choice of publishers for the volume, Caesar

Ward and Richard Chandler. Ward had established a bookselling business in Fleet Street in 1732 and was soon afterwards joined by his brother-in-law Richard Chandler as a partner. By 1734, the pair had opened a second shop in Scarborough on the Yorkshire coast. Ward became a freeman of York in 1736 and opened a third shop with Chandler in York. In 1739, the partners became publishers of the York newspaper, the *York Courant*. Ward was afterwards associated with the York antiquary and freemason Francis Drake in the writing of the 24-volume *Parliamentary or Constitutional History of England*, and perhaps his interest in freemasonry stemmed from his friendship with Drake. Chandler was a member of a lodge in London in 1730. Between 1742-4, Ward and Chandler published the *History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, but the publication proved too expensive, and, depressed by the prospect of bankruptcy, Chandler killed himself in 1744. Ward was eventually declared bankrupt in June 1745.

In 1738, however, all this was in the future, and Ward and Chandler must have been attractive to Anderson as publishers of the volume, since their shops in Yorkshire offered the prospect of reaching a wider market. The more general character of Ward and Chandler's publishing is apparent from the list of their other publications at the back of the volume which contrasts with Senex and Hooke's Palladian manuals. They included a song book, an anthology of English plays, and a guide to German spas. The printer of the 1738 constitutions was Thomas Aris, at that time a printer in London who was a member of a lodge in Ludgate Hill, but in 1741 he moved to Birmingham where he began publishing the *Birmingham Gazette*. John Pine was by 1738 the long-serving engraver to Grand Lodge, responsible for the production of the annual engraved lists of lodges. He actively collaborated with Anderson in the production of the 1738 *Constitutions*, providing the plate of the 1723 frontispiece which was used again and also providing the plate of the drawing by Thornhill of Hiram Abiff used in the engraved lists. In return, Anderson inserted an advertisement for Pine's engraved lists and a print published by Pine of Grand Lodge's sword of state.

All this makes it sound as if the 1738 Constitutions was very much a commercial venture and that the scientific instrument makers and mapmakers who had been involved in the production of the 1723 volume had now disappeared from sight. However, Anderson includes at the end of the 1738 constitutions a list of those

who had assisted and encouraged him in the production of the volume. They include Jonathan Sisson, the scientific instrument maker who had collaborated with John Hooke. There is also Nathaniel Adams, an optician with premises at Charing Cross, who had served as Grand Steward. An inventory of the contents of Adams's shop at his death in 1741 included not only nearly 500 pairs of spectacles, but also telescopes, microscopes, prisms, barometers, lanterns and air pumps. Other freemasons thanked by Anderson included the experimental lecturer Erasmus King and Daniel Delander, the famous watch and clock maker, who was a staunch supporter of the Hanoverian government and had been pursued by an anti-government mob in 1716. Anderson's list also includes the artist Louis-Philippe Boitard, the son of a French engraver who worked in Amsterdam and London. Louis-Philippe was at that time at the beginning of his career. After a short period working in France, Boitard became known for his acerbic and sharply-observed pictures of English life, which mock the conspicuous consumption of the English nobility and middle classes and show sympathy with ordinary working people. Boitard was perhaps responsible for the engraved tailpieces at the end of each section of the 1738 *Constitutions*. In 1744, Boitard also provided illustrations for the freemason John Coustos's account of his sufferings at the hands of the inquisition in Portugal.

Despite the apparently commercial veneer of the 1738 *Constitutions*, Anderson was assisted in his work by a group of scientists, scientific instrument makers and artists whose outlook and interests were very similar to those involved with the 1723 publication. The 1738 *Constitutions* failed significantly to ease Anderson's money worries and, as David Stevenson has pointed out, it is ominous that his last published sermon before his death in 1739 was to debtors in the Fleet Prison. After Ward's bankruptcy in 1745, his stock was sold, and the remaining copies of Anderson's *Constitutions* were acquired by J. Robinson, and reissued in 1746 with a new title page. It appears probable that Robinson was not a freemason. In 1754, Robinson threatened to reprint the book, and another publisher Jonathan Scott, who was a mason, urged the Grand Lodge to prepare a new edition of the book under its auspices. He proposed that the publication should be financed by subscriptions from lodges and brethren and suggested that any profits should be paid to the charity fund.

Despite Scott's apparent altruism, he was a ruthless businessman. Scott had already published a *Pocket Companion* to freemasonry. He was the proprietor of a newspaper called *The Monitor* or *British Freeholder*, which was published between 1755 and 1767 and whose ferocious attacks on the government led to legal action in 1762. Scott's accounts for the publishing of the Book of Constitutions suggest some financial sleight of hand, to say the least. Scott's pet hack writer was John Entick, who described himself as a clergyman and Master of Arts, although there is no evidence that he ever formally received such orders. Entick had already written Scott's *Pocket Companion to Freemasonry* and was paid £200 a year by Scott to write *The Monitor*, so that his papers were seized when the government acted against the paper in 1762. Entick was appointed, presumably at Scott's behest, to the committee charged with revising the *Book of Constitutions*. The title page of the new edition of the *Book of Constitutions* published in 1756 described it as compiled by Anderson but 'carefully revised, continued and enlarged, with many corrections' by John Entick.

Entick afterwards published *History of London* which was based on an earlier work by William Maitland. It was therefore appropriate that the frontispiece to the 1756 Book of Constitutions was engraved by Benjamin Cole, who had taken over from John Pine as engraver to the Grand Lodge in 1743. Cole was a London mapmaker and engraver who had provided the ward maps for the first edition of Maitland's *History*. Cole's wide range of interests as an engraver echo those of John Senex. He was an accomplished mapmaker. He engraved music, including a collection by John Frederick Lampe containing a setting of the Apprentice's Song. His interest in freemasonry was long-standing. In 1728 or 9, he had published an engraved copy of the Old Charges with speeches by Francis Drake and Edward Oakley. Like Senex, Cole was a propagandist in favour of the Palladian and Vitruvian virtues. With Oakley, he collaborated on the production of *The Magazine of Architecture, Perspective, and Sculpture* which gave an introduction to Palladian architecture. Cole was the first of a remarkable dynasty who served as engravers to Grand Lodge. His son, William, the engraver to the Bank of England, took over production of the engraved lists in 1767. William's son, John, established a 'Masonic Printing Office' in London.

The design for Cole's frontispiece was provided by Boitard, who had been acknowledged in Anderson's 1738 *Constitutions*. Thus, despite the Grub Street air of

Entick and Scott, there were also in the 1756 *Book of Constitutions* important continuities with the circle responsible for the 1723 and 1738 editions. Entick's edition of the *Book of Constitutions* was reissued in 1767, the year after Entick's *History of London* was published, by another publisher, W. Johnston. In 1784, Entick's *Book of Constitutions* was superseded by another edition compiled by another man chiefly remembered for his work on the history of London, John Noorthouck. Noorthouck was the son of a bookseller. He left school at fourteen, having learned only 'plain reading, writing, and common arithmetic', to worked as his father's shop assistant, eventually following his father into membership of the Stationers Company. He earned his living for many years as an indexer, corrector of the press and hack writer. Noorthouck was devoted to the Stationers Company and his *History of London* is particularly useful for its emphasis on the history of the London livery companies. Even as late as 1784, we can still see interesting lines of personal connection with the earliest days of Grand Lodge freemasonry. For example, the engraver who produced the maps for Noorthouck's *History of London* was Thomas Bowen, who had learnt map making from his father Emanuel Bowen, who engraved the earliest surviving engraved list of lodges in 1724 and was a member of a lodge in Carmarthen which included Cole's collaborator, Edward Oakley. Artists of the first rank continued in 1784 to be involved with the production of the *Book of Constitutions*, with the fashionable artists Cipriani and Bartolozzi contributing to the frontispiece and the Grand Secretary himself engaging in spirited correspondence about the design of the picture.

A biographical study of those involved in the production of the various editions of the *Book of Constitutions* published by the premier Grand Lodge reveals a great deal about the cultural context and concerns of early English freemasonry. It suggests that there was at the heart of English freemasonry a powerful nexus of hack historians, engravers, artists, map makers and scientific instrument makers who were fascinated by the implications of the discoveries of English scientists in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and considered that these discoveries had important implications across a range of subject fields from history to architecture. This group, focussed around figures such as Senex, Sisson and Thornhill, was of course not the only such group within English freemasonry. Ronald Paulson has pointed out how Hogarth's lodge contained almost all members of his inner circle,

and Paulson also suggests that Hogarth and his associates might not have been sympathetic to the social ideas promulgated by Anderson and Desaguliers. However, Hogarth and his friends seem to have become quickly disillusioned with freemasonry. The group we have discussed were, through their connection with the publication of the various editions of the *Book of Constitutions* at the heart of the development of 18th-century freemasonry in England.

Men such as Sisson, the clockmaker Daniel Delander and the optician Nathaniel Adams were by no means of the first social rank, and indeed in some ways they remain quite obscure figures. They were practical men and they seem to have taken little interest in the wider European Enlightenment. However, through the involvement in the *Book of Constitutions* they helped create a powerful means of spreading a new cosmology and social outlook. Margaret Jacob correctly sees freemasonry as a major means of contact between the Scientific Revolution in England and the European Enlightenment, but suggests that it was radical figures such as John Toland and Bernard Picart which provided the link. However, the masonic character of the Knights of Jubilation is doubtful. It was perhaps rather organised Grand Lodge freemasonry, disseminated through the *Book of Constitutions*, which provided the link. In this way, the instrument makers, map makers and engravers who helped produce the Book of Constitutions found a European outlet for their ideas and enthusiasms.