

FREE AND ACCEPTED

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See: <http://www.columbia.edu/cu/cup/catalog/data/088033/0880339926.htm>

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Introduction

It is well known that the origins of modern Freemasonry are still shrouded in mystery. On the face of it there is little apparent evidence of the movement before the formation of the London Grand Lodge on 24 June 1717, with the notable exception of Elias Ashmole who was 'made a Free Mason' on 16 October 1646 at Warrington in Cheshire. As little is known about the other members of this lodge, it has long been assumed that it was an early form of 'speculative' lodge, even though the term 'speculative' was not used until nearly forty years after the formation of the London Grand Lodge.

The original description used by the first masonic constitutions of 1723 was 'Free and Accepted', yet these words have been repeatedly misunderstood. Many researchers have even constructed elaborate theories of origin based on an interpretation of these terms, without first seeking an accurate definition of them. The twentieth-century historians, Douglas Knoop and Gwilym Jones, noted that the majority of Masonic writers have viewed Freemasonry 'as something entirely apart from ordinary history', a subject outside the mainstream of historical enquiry. As a consequence much has been written without the guidance of a precise and systematic methodology. If the origins of the movement and its subsequent influence are to be better understood, a scientific analysis of the terminology employed by modern freemasonry in its formative years is of central importance. Therefore this paper will explore the etymology of the terms 'Free and Accepted', exposing a fatal flaw that underpins a substantial corpus of masonic literature, and has coloured the way historiographers have traditionally perceived the movement's roots.

The term 'Freemason'

The term Freemason emerged in early fourteenth-century England, and derives from an abbreviation of freestone-mason. Essentially there were two basic types of mason: (1) the layers or setters, or rough masons; (2) the more qualified hewers or freestone masons (hence freemasons), Freestone is so-called because it is soft, fine-grained, pliable stone that is ideal for sculpting, and delicate vaulting and tracery , Consequently masons known as hewers, sculptors, carvers and imagers were all categorized as freestone-masons or freemasons. And as the term architect was not generally employed in England until the second half of the seventeenth century, the masters of building projects were usually chosen from their ranks. The oldest record of the word 'freemason' was recently discovered by Prof. Andrew Prescott in the London Coroners' Rolls of 1325/6, and for the next four centuries it occurs literally hundreds of times in a variety of English accounts associated with building. For instance on 25 August 1436 a mason from Colchester, John Wode, contracted to rebuild the western tower at Bury St. Edmunds Abbey Church. The contract stipulated that that the work should be done 'in the seyde monasterye in all maner thynges that longe to fremasounrye', and that he and 'hys man' should be allowed to board in the County Hall 'for hym self as a gentelman and for hys servaunt as a yoman'. In fact, the accounts relating to the great buildings of the English perpendicular style, such as Kings' College Chapel Cambridge, St. George's Chapel Windsor and the Henry VII Chapel, Westminster Abbey, repeatedly mention the Freemasons.

Contrary to popular myth there was only one fellowship or guild of masons in London, though it did embrace two distinct classes of mason: the hewers or freemasons, and the rough masons or layers and setters. In 1472 this fellowship of London was officially granted its coat of Arms. The arms consisted of a pair of extended silver compasses contained within an engrailed chevron and positioned between three argent triple-towered square castles, garnished with doors set on a sable background, bearing the motto: 'God is our guide'. Because of its importance the masons' fellowship provided a watch for the City Gates of twenty men-at-arms, and in 1481 the Company was granted

its Livery. The Arms were confirmed in 1520 by Thomas Benolt, Clarenceux King of Arms and entered at the Visitation of 1634.

Great changes occurred as a result of the dissolution of the monasteries, and almost overnight the religious and symbolic carvings that had been a large part of the Freemasons' art were no longer required. As a consequence, many craftsmen had to content themselves with employment on stately homes and the great monumental tomb of the landed classes. Yet the term survived and in 1585 the Freemasons and Marblers of London merged for a time into one Company. At the dawn of the seventeenth century the term Freemason could be found all across England. For instance on 12 November 1604 the Freemasons of the City of Oxford were given the right of incorporation. In 1610-13, the 'ffreemason', William Blackshaw, cut three statues over the entrance to the hall and chapel at Wadham College, Oxford, and the building accounts record,

'...the masons who worked the stone for the building are called Freemasons or Freestone Masons while the rest are merely called labourers'.

The earliest extant records of the London Masons' Company are contained in the Renter Warden Accounts, which begin in July 1619 and refer to the 'Wardens of the Company of ffreemasons within the citie of London'. Sadly the records before this time have been lost.

In 1654 the London 'Company of ffreemasons' changed its name to the London 'Company of Masons', the reasons for which are unclear. Yet in spite of the change, individual craftsmen continued to refer to themselves as 'free masons' until after the formation of the London Grand Lodge in 1717. A good example of this occurred in 1676, when, soon after finishing the Monument in Fish Street to mark the place where the Great Fire of London of 1666 had begun, Joshua Marshall was commissioned to work on a statue of King Charles I in Charing Cross and in the building accounts he is referred to as a 'Free Mason'. Another good example occurred in 1719 when a Magistrate in Kendal, Westmoreland, ruled that 'a Master Freemason' when working in hewing or walling 'freestone' receives more than a 'rough mason' and other workmen.

Three ways of a joining a Company or Guild

At the beginning of the seventeenth century the London Company of Freemasons consisted of a master, two wardens, a ruling court of assistants, a livery , and a body of freemen or yeomanry.

Servitude

The regular system of joining the guild was usually by 'servitude', which involved serving a seven-year apprenticeship. To gain his freedom a young aspiring mason would be apprenticed and bound to a freeman of the Company for seven years, after which he was entitled to produce his indenture and with the payment of fee, take up his Freedom, thus becoming a 'yeoman'. Within approximately one month of his being freed by the Company, it was then customary for him to be made free of the city. If the Company's ruling Court of Assistants later considered him eligible, he would be called upon to take up the clothing and colours of a Liveryman, and, after some years, he might then be invited to join the governing body and take his seat at the Court of Assistants, from where he might serve as Renter Warden. He would then be elected to the honorary post of Upper Warden, before proceeding to the chair as Master.

Patrimony

Yet 'servitude' was not the only way to become free of the Company or City. It appears from the City records prior to 1620 and possibly dating to medieval times, that the Company had members who were not craftsmen and unrelated to the building trade. These members might be the sons of Freemen of the Company, who claimed admittance by 'patrimony' and joined the Livery on attaining the age of twenty-one years without serving an apprenticeship.

Redemption

There was also a third way to become free, that of 'redemption', which signified the admission to the freedom of the City of London or of a City livery company by purchase. The Company could also grant admission in the form of a gift, which would absolve the joining member from payment of a fee and this was sometimes described as 'admission by redemption with fees remitted'. The earliest recorded admission by redemption in London was in 1282. Therefore what masonic historians have generally not realised is, if a non-mason wanted to become an honorary member of a company or

guild, including the London Company of Freemasons, he was perfectly entitled to do so either by Patrimony or Redemption.

An additional category of membership

The mysterious Acception

Aside from Servitude, Patrimony and Redemption, the only London Company to have an additional category of membership was the London 'Company of ffreemasons', and this was the 'Acception' or 'Accepcon', about which little is known. The first apparent reference to this mysterious Company practice occurs on 17 June 1630, but brevity of the record does not reveal much, merely: 'Paid in goeing abroad and att the Hall, the masons that were to be accepted'. Although no names are given, it appears from the way the entry is phrased, that those who were to be 'accepted' were already masons.

However a more informative record of the practice occurs early in 1638, when the Company accounts records that six men 'were taken into the Accepcon' .This time the names given do provide sufficient information to determine their respective professions, the most notable being that of Nicholas Stone, possibly the finest sculptor mason of seventeenth-century England. In 1615 he was described as 'a freemason and citizen of London', and he went on to carve numerous monumental tombs, including the famous statue of the Poet John Donne, now housed in the ambulatory of St. Paul's Cathedral. He served two Stuart kings, James VI of Scotland and I of England, and his son Charles I, and also oversaw the construction of Whitehall's Banqueting House designed by Inigo Jones (1619-22). At the time of his being 'taken into the Accepcon' he was the 'Master Mason to the King's Majesty' and had already served as Master of the Company for two consecutive years. Yet despite these accolades Stone had not been made an 'accepted' mason, which strongly suggests that is was something quite distinct from the normal internal structure of a London guild. Moreover recent examination of the 1638 account reveals that all those involved in the ' Accepcon ' were members of the London Company of Freemasons and all were active craftsmen (ffreemasons).

It is known that the Acception seemed to involve some kind of a meeting, followed by an extremely costly dinner paid for those who had been accepted. Unfortunately due to the loss of records prior to 1619 we can only speculate as to its

antiquity. The phrase 'acception of persons' occurred hundreds of times in the English language prior to 1700 when it was replaced by 'accepting' or 'acceptance', which has added to the confusion surrounding the term. To whatever the term alluded it was clearly unconnected with the regular internal hierarchy of a guild. Nor does it appear to refer to an honorary form of membership for non-masons, as all those accepted in 1638 were senior craftsmen. Furthermore, if a gentleman sought membership of the Company, he could easily do so, as has already been stated, either by patrimony or redemption.

After 1638 there are further references to this curious practice in the Masons' Company accounts, although the names of those involved are not always given. For instance, in 1649 it was recorded that two craftsmen should pay the balance owed for the coming on the Company Livery two years previously, in addition to which, they were required to pay a further 20 shillings for their 'admission upon acceptance of Masonry'. The wording here proves a little ambiguous, although it is known that 20 shillings was the amount paid by 'accepted masons' at the time. In 1663 an inventory of the Company mentions 'the names of the Accepted Masons in a faire enclosed frame with a lock and key'. In 1676 another inventory headed, ' An Inventory of the Goods and Chattels of the Company of Masons', included, 'One book of the Constitutions of the Accepted Masons', 'One book of the Ancient Constitutions and Orders', and 'A fair large table of the Accepted Masons'. Sadly all these items have been lost.

In 1677 the Acception is mentioned for the last time in the Company Accounts. However five years later there is one other crucial mention of the acception in the diary of Elias Ashmole. Ashmole mentioned his connection with Freemasonry a second time in his diary: -

'About 5H: PM. I received a summons to appear at a Lodge to be held next day, at Masons' Hall London'.

11 March 1682 -

Accordingly, Ashmole visited Masons' Hall in Basinghall Street, which had been the home of the London Masons' Company since the second half of the fifteenth century-

'...I went, & about Noone were admitted into the Fellowship of Free Masons, Sir William Wilson Knight, Capt: Rich: Borthwick, Mr: Will:

Woodman, Mr. William Grey, Mr. Samuel Taylor & Mr. William Wise. I was the senior Fellow among them (it being 35 years since I was admitted) There were present beside my selfe the Fellows after named. Mr: Tho: Wise, Master of the Masons Company this present yeare. Mr: Thomas Shorthose, Mr: Thomas Shadbolt, Wainsford Esquire Mr: Nich: Young. Mr: John Shorthose, Mr: William Ramon, Mr: John Thompson, and Mr: Will: Stanton. Wee all dined at the halfe Moone Taverne in Cheapside, at a Noble Dinner prepared at the charge of the **New-accepted Masons'** [my emphasis].

This entry is noteworthy for a number of reasons. Firstly, Ashmole quite unequivocally associates the 'Fellowship of Free Masons' with a 'Lodge' meeting at the home of the London Masons' Company. He then identifies the newly admitted members as 'the New-accepted Masons'. He also states that he was now 'the senior fellow among them (it being 35 years since I was admitted)', an apparent allusion to the year 1646 when he was initiated in the lodge at Warrington. Here Ashmole clearly indicates that the two bodies were connected, if not part of the same organisation, a link that masonic historians have simply ignored.

Fatal flaw in the traditional view of the Acception

The traditional view of the Acception by most masonic scholars is that it was an honorary category of membership and therefore an accepted mason was not a working stonemason. For instance two well known masonic historians described Ashmole's 1682 meeting thus:

'Ashmole records only one other Masonic event at which he was present: the admission of six gentlemen, none of whom were operative masons [my emphasis], to the Fellowship of Free Masons at London in 1682'¹

Yet the evidence strongly contradicts this view. To begin with the first man to be mentioned by Ashmole was Sir William Wilson, had just been knighted a few days before the lodge meeting. He is known to have trained as a mason in Sutton Coldfield and was the sculptor of the statue of Charles II at Lichfield Cathedral. Unfortunately not much is known concerning Captain Richard Borthwick, but William Woodman is known to

¹ John Hamill and R.A. Gilbert *Freemasonry, A Celebration of the Craft* (1992). p.22

have been a member of the London Company. Crucially William Woodman is also mentioned in the first Grand Lodge membership lists of 1723 and 1725 as a member of the Horn Tavern Lodge at Westminster, by far the most influential of the four founding lodges of the London Grand Lodge. The other three men William Grey, Samuel Taylour and William Wise, were all masons and members of the Masons' Company, the latter being the son of the Master that day.

Perhaps even more revealing is the membership of the acceptance 'lodge' that 'admitted' the six men that day. The Master was Thomas Wise, who was the King's Master Mason and Master of the London Company that year. The Wardens were John Shorthose and William Stanton. John Shorthose was the Upper Warden of the Company that year and is known to have also worked on a number of Wren's City churches. William Stanton was the Renter Warden of the Company at the time and is known to have come from a family much associated with masonry during the seventeenth century. Thomas Shorthose was a Past Master of the Company who joined the acception on 25 January 1650, Thomas Shadboult was a Past Master of the Company, and Nicholas Young was its Past Upper Warden. William Hammond was a Past Renter Warden and clerk, while W /Rainsford and John Thompson were both freemen of the Company.

Although a craft-controlled practice, clearly gentlemen such as Elias Ashmole, Colonel Henry Mainwaring and Captain Richard Borthwick were eligible to join the Acception. Yet once again in his book *The Craft* John Hamill argued that,

'Accepted masonry simply seems to have appeared in England as a new organisation without any prior connections with the operative craft' 2

Nor is he alone, as many writers have made the mistake of equating the term Acception with non-craftsmen. In 1874 Albert G. Mackay asserted that an accepted mason was one,

'distinguished from a purely operative or stone-mason, who has not been admitted to the freedom of the Company' 3

Kenneth Mackenzie believed:

'the term accepted has been found in the admission of non-operative Masons by the original Society of Craftsmen' 4

² J. M. Hamill, *The Craft* (Wellingborough, 1986), p. 19.

³ Albert G. Mackey, *Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* (Philadelphia, 1874), p. 11

Edward Conder Junior, who served as Master of the London Masons' Company in the late nineteenth century, and was also a leading masonic researcher wrote that the acception was,

'a well known term for a speculative or non-operative mason...'⁵

Bernard Jones wrote:

'We find the most definite of indications that the Company had an 'accepted' as well as operative membership...'⁶

Coils Masonic Encyclopedia states:

'At a very early date, certainly as early as the third decade of the seventeenth century, a distinction in name was drawn between ordinary working Freemasons and those who came into the Fraternity as honorary or gentlemen members. The word used to apply to the latter was accepted and it was the counterpart of free'.⁷

Alec Mellor wrote:

'Many amateurs well versed in architectural matters, whose admission was by no means out of place. These members were called gentlemen masons or accepted masons in England, and honorary members or gentlemen masons in Scotland'.⁸

The Freemasons' Pocket Reference Book records:

'The term originally applied to persons who were not operative masons yet who were 'accepted' into their society by the operatives'.⁹

The American academic R. William Weisberger more recently wrote:

'accepted or non-operative Masons were admitted to lodges in London. Prior to 1715, accepted or speculative Masons constituted a small minority

⁴ Kenneth MacKenzie, *Royal Masonic Cyclopaedia* (ed.). R. A. Gilbert and J. Hamill (1987 edn) p 15

⁵ Edward Conder, *The Masons Company of the City of London, and the Lodge of Accepted Masons connected with it*, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 9 (1896), p. 32.

⁶ Bernard E. Jones, *Freemasons' Guide and Compendium* (rev. edn., 1994), p. 90

⁷ Henry Wilson Coil, *Coil's Masonic Encyclopedia* (New York, 1961), p. 4

⁸ Alec Melior, *Our Separated Brethren* (London, 1964), p. 50.

⁹ Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight, *The Freemasons' Pocket Reference Book* (London, 1983), p. 19

within the ranks of operative lodges and were not very active in lodge affairs'.¹⁰

And in a recent phenomenological study the Russian academic, Alexander Piatigorsky, argued that,

'the term "accepted" refers to the act of accepting some individuals who did not work as stonemasons into a Masonic lodge'.¹¹

Indeed the list of offenders is too numerous to list here, but suffice it to say, they got it wrong, as the evidence shows that the accepted masons, or those who were admitted to the acceptance, were, in the main, craftsmen. More specifically they were stonemasons who worked with freestone, who were recorded as 'ffreemasons' in the original accounts.

Yet the author of a recent popularist work, whilst not mentioning the acceptance by name, makes the wild and unsubstantiated claim that,

'between about 1500 to 1700, the Freemasons changed. They ceased to be an illegal trade union of working masons...and became an organisation of intellectual gentlemen who favoured religious toleration and friendship between men of different religions'.¹²

Firstly, there is no evidence to suggest that they were 'an illegal' trade union of working masons. Secondly, there is no evidence that they became an organisation of intellectual gentlemen who favoured religious toleration before 1723, and even then, the tolerance espoused by the London Grand Lodge was to facilitate friendship between different Christian denominations, not 'different religions'. The first non-Christian brethren did not enter the Craft until the 1730s, and even then only small in small numbers. Different religions were tolerated later, but this was the result of a slow evolutionary process in the eighteenth century and not before.

One of the few historians who realised that the term 'accepted mason' embraced both practising stonemasons and honorary members was David Stevenson in his pioneering work *The Origins of Freemasonry, Scotland's Century, 1590-1710*. Stevenson

¹⁰ 10 R. William Weisberger, *Speculative Freemasonry and the Enlightenment, a study of the craft in London, Paris, Prague and Vienna* (New York, 1993), p. 23

¹¹ Alexander Piatigorsky, *Who's Afraid of Freemasons? The Phenomenon of Freemasonry* (London, 1997), p.40

¹² 12 Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons* (London, 1999), p. 17.

noted that men 'who were already members' of the Company, seemed to have been 'initiated into some group within the company'.

'the accepted masons formed an exclusive cell within the London Company. Perhaps the acceptance should be seen as an occasion or a ceremony rather than as an institution, with there being not a 'London Acceptation' but a number of accepted masons within the London Company'.¹³

Harry Carr also correctly noted that,

'It was a Society for 'making Masons' originally an adjunct of the London Masons' Company. It made 'accepted Masons' out of men who were already; masons by trade and members of the Company; but it also made 'accepted Masons' of men who had no connection with the trade or the Company'.¹⁴

This view appears to concur precisely with one of the earliest masonic exposures. In 1730 Samuel Pritchard published his best-selling expose *Masonry Dissected*, in which he clearly equated operative masons with accepted masons, adding that only 'some operative Masons' became members, who, according 'to the polite way of Expression', were known as 'Accepted Masons'.

In fact Ashmole, in his other writings, shows quite clearly that he understood the term 'Freemason' referred to craftsmen, and not to a separate so-called 'speculative' society. In 1652 he published his magnum opus *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* which contained a number of manuscript works previously unpublished, such as Thomas Norton's *The Ordinall of Alchemy* written in 1477. Significantly Norton attempts to dissuade unskilled persons from tampering with Alchemy and in doing so, cites a number of craft professions, including 'Free Masons', who he says, 'as well as Lords', 'love this noble crafte' and 'profound philosophy'. Twenty years later, in 1672, Ashmole also

¹³ 13 David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry, Scotland's Century, 1590-1710* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge. 1988}. p. 218. The masonic scholar R. J. Meekren also points out that Accepted Masons were practising craftsmen. *AQC* 64 (1951), pp 140-4.

¹⁴ Henry Carr 'Freemasonry before Grand Lodge', in *Grand Lodge 1717-1967* (Oxford 1967). P.26

published his *Institutions Laws and Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter*. Once again he clearly shows that he understood the term denoted a particular type of craftsman, by describing the craftsmen working on the vaulting of St. George's Chapel as 'Free Masons'.

So were there lodges in England?

Once again leading masonic historians have claimed that there no lodges in England at this time, but this is not born out by the facts. At Westminster in 1532 it is recorded that a stock-lock and 'shutting plate' were, 'set upon a dore belonging to one of the lodgies wherein certein of the masons worke.' In 1581 a new timber bridge is recorded as on the channel at Westminster, against the end of 'the masons' lodge'. Five years later some tiling was done on 'the Masons Lodge next to Chafing Crosse'. And in 1601 rooms adjoining the masons lodge in Westminster were rendered with lime and hair.

Several masonic manuscripts or Old Charges also refer to lodges, The third oldest. 'The Grand Lodge M..S'. No.1', dated 25 December 1583 specifically enjoins masons to:

'kepe all the counsells ofyor ffellowes truely be yt in Lodge or in Chamber'.

This regulation appears again in the old charges of the early seventeenth-century. Rather curiously among the manuscripts in the British Library there is an old charge written on the same night of Ashmole's initiation (16 October 1646) by one Edward Sankey (Sloane MS. 3848) thought to be a relative of the Richard Sankey in the Warrington lodge. Once again among a list of regulations there is a reference to a lodge, viz:

'Alsoe every Mason shall keepe true Councell of lodge and Chamber; and all other Counsell that ought to bee kept by ye way of Masonrie'.

When all the evidence is carefully assembled it does appear that Ashmole's 1646 lodge was a craft-controlled entity, albeit with a lot of members who were not craftsmen.

Ashmole's former alchemical student, who had been appointed as the first Professor of Chemistry at Oxford University and keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, Dr. Robert Plot. In 1686 Plot recorded that it was a popular custom of the moorlands of Staffordshire to admit 'men into the Society of Free-Masons', though he claimed the custom was 'spread more or less allover the Nation'. He said he found 'persons of the most

eminent quality, that did not disdain to be of this fellowship'; each 'Lodg' had to consist of at least, 5 or 6 of the Ancients of the Order, whom the candidats present with gloves, and so likewise their wives'; before the candidates or 'new accepted masons' were shown the '**secret signes**' (my emphasis).

One gentleman who is known to have become a freemason at this time was the antiquary Randle Holme III, who, in about 1665, joined a lodge in Chester. Twenty-three years later he described 'the terms of Art used by Free Masons stone-cutters', honouring the fellowship because of its antiquity, adding that he was a 'member of that Society called Free-Masons'. Referring to the importance of pillars and columns he says,

'I shall in two [my emphasis] examples set forth all their words of art used about them; by which any Gentleman may be able to discourse a Free-Mason or other workman in his own terms'.

Holme then proceeds to describe the five orders architecture and stated that anyone desirous of 'further instruction in the Theorick part of Free Masonry' should peruse the architectural works of' Sebastien Serley printed in 1611, Peter de le Muet and Andrew Palladio'. In Holmes' manuscript collection in the British Library, there is a small piece of paper which records the oath used by the Freemasons at this time before such words could be divulged.

'There is sevrall words & signes of a free Mason to be revailed to yu wch as yu will asnw: before God at the Great & terrible day of Iudgmt yu keep Secret & not revaile the same to any in the heares of any pson w but to the Mrs & fellows of the Said Society of free Masons so helpe me God, xc'.

Countdown to a Grand Lodge

The oldest known lodge that later became part of the Grand Lodge in London was the old St. Paul's Lodge that met in St. Paul's Churchyard from as early as 1691. This was one of the four lodges that later met and decided to form a Grand Lodge in the summer of 1717. In the words of the author of the Constitutions, James Anderson, 'some old brothers' belonging to 'the few Lodges at London' met at the Apple Tree Tavern in Covent Garden and decided to constitute 'themselves a Grand Lodge'. He then adds that they 'forthwith revived [my emphasis] the Quarterly Communication of the Officers of Lodges' and

'resolved to hold an Annual Assembly and Feast'. This was a tradition familiar to all the London Livery Companies as subscriptions were paid four times a year in a procedure known as Quarterage, traditionally paid on the four saintly feast days that roughly marked the years' equinoxes: St. John Evangelist's Day (27 December); St. Michael the Archangel (29 September); and Lady Day (25 March).

'Accordingly, on the St. John Baptist's Day, in the 3rd year of King George I. AD.1717, the Assembly and Feast of the Free and Accepted Masons was held at the foresaid Goose and Gridiron Alehouse. Before Dinner, the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge) in the chair, proposed a list of proper candidates; and the Brethren by a Majority of Hands elected'.

Rather tellingly one of the two Grand Wardens of the new Grand Lodge was a City carpenter. The following year both Wardens were craftsmen: a City carpenter and a stone-cutter, who also both belonged to the Old St. Paul's Lodge, and the latter was also a member of the London Masons' Company.

At the traditional midsummer feast held at Stationers' Hall on 24 June 1721, the outgoing Grand Master George Payne presented the first noble Grand Master, the Duke of Montagu, with 'an old M.S. of the Constitutions which he got in the West of England, 500 years old'. Then at the following quarterly meeting held at the King's Arms in St. Paul's Churchyard on 29 September, the Duke of Montagu announced to the members of sixteen lodges that he found 'fault with all the Copies of the old Gothic Constitutions' and 'order'd Brother James Anderson, A.M, to digest the same in a new and better Method'. And when the Constitutions finally appeared in print early in 1723, they read:

'The CONSTITUTION, History, Laws, Charges, Orders, Regulations, and Usages, of the Right Worshipful FRATERNITY of **Accepted Free MASONS; collected From their general RECORDS** [my emphasis], and their faithful TRADITIONS of many Ages'.