

THE GROWTH OF FREEMASONRY



Operative Freemasonry, stemming from the ancient guilds, started to become attractive to learned men, like Sir Christopher Wren who sought to join a Freemasons' lodge because they realised its moral worth, and so were born the 'speculative' lodges which did not specify that a man had to be an operative mason to join.



Sir Christopher Wren

The first speculative Freemason recorded was admitted into a Lodge in Warrington in 1646. These speculative lodges started to grow in number throughout England, Scotland and Ireland. In London there were many new lodges, but they were all unorganised with no rules and regulations. However, in 1717, four lodges met at an ale-house in St. Paul's Churchyard to form a Grand Lodge, and a few years later a set of rules called the 'Constitutions' were printed.

From then on, Freemasonry spread at an astonishing rate, not only in the British Isles, but all over the world as Freemasons in British military lodges established new lodges all over the continents. Trading companies, especially in India, established lodges. In every corner of the globe, and following Captains Cook and Flinders discovery voyages around the Pacific, lodges were started in Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and the Sandwich Isles over the next century.

In the American colonies, Freemasonry started when a lodge was made in Boston in 1733. Eighteen Freemasons pledged to be true to each other, to God and to their king.

Forty-three years later, in 1776 they would no longer pledge loyalty to a king as they declared their independence from Great Britain.

Twenty-one Freemasons signed the Declaration of Independence including Benjamin Franklin. They were led by George Washington who was to become the first of 14 Presidents of the United States of America who were Freemasons.

Today the U.S. has over 2 million Freemasons in 33,000 lodges.



There are nearly 4 million Freemasons worldwide

UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND

The United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) administers Freemasonry worldwide, but rules over nearly a quarter of a million Freemasons in England, Wales and the Channel Islands. Scotland has its own constitution.

In 2017, at the 300th anniversary of the formation of Grand Lodge, 3,000 Freemasons from across the globe attended a special function at the Royal Albert Hall, London, attended by the Grand Master, M.W.Bro. H.R.H. The Duke of Kent.



This art-deco building in London is the headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England. It was purposely-built and opened in 1933 financed by subscriptions from Freemasons after the Great War to commemorate those that died. It is appropriately named "The Peace Building".