

As early as 1661 the influential London based Royal Society requested a former Society President and a freemason of 20 years standing to write the history of Freemasonry. Also Dr. Francis Drake, a Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of All England at York in 1767 and a member of the Royal Society and who it is also thought to have also submitted a written history of Freemasonry, Both documents seems to have been mislaid during the time when the Duke of Sussex was President of the Royal Society (1830-38).

We know that freemasonry was active in Lancashire in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, as Elias Ashmole recorded in his diary the fact that he was initiated into a Lodge in Warrington in 1646. We also have a number of "Old Masonic Charges" which were written in the 1600's such as the Colne and the Beswicke MS's, all of which demonstrates that Lancashire has a rich Masonic heritage.

At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century the first Grand Lodge was formed by middle to upper-class freemasons from four London and Westminster lodges, following the departure of the many operative masons from the Capital on the completion of the many building projects following the Great Fire of London.

In the first few years of the Grand Lodge the Grand Masters were elected on an annual basis. The third Grand Master, the Revd. Dr. Desaguliers and the 5<sup>th</sup> Grand Master the Duke of Montagu were both active Fellows of the Royal Society, as were many of the Grand Masters that followed.

Desaguliers attracted several members of the royal family into freemasonry, including the Prince of Wales and also the Duke of Lorraine, who become the Emperor of Austria just to name a few.

This influx of dignitaries resulted in many of the independent freemasons' lodges around the country with middle class members tended to affiliate to the London Grand Lodge.

Ten years after Grand Lodge was founded, an unaffiliated Salford Freemasons Lodge, consisting of merchants and dignitaries drawn from around the region; applied to the London and Westminster Grand Lodge, for recognition for its members. It is now thought that at least one of their members was also a member of the Royal Society.

## The Five PGMs of Lancashire 1734 to 1826 By: Eddie Forkgen

At the same Grand Lodge meeting, the Grand Master ordered a survey to be conducted to establish the precedence of affiliated and unaffiliated Freemasons lodges around the country.

The Salford Lodge met at the 'Kings Head Coaching Inn' near to the Salford 'Cloth House', which at that time was the main trading exchange in East Lancashire.

Edward Entwistle, was a dealer in fine textile fabrics and had a shop on the high street in Bolton, he became the first Lancashire PGM and it is thought that he was a member of the King's Head Salford Lodge, which was next to the Salford Cloth House, which was the main Cloth Exchange in the area.

Edward Entwistle who was authorised by the Grand Master Anthony Brown Lord Montague, to constitute a lodge in Bolton in 1732, later named the 'Anchor and Hope Lodge'.

*Lord Montague, who was from strong Roman Catholic families, and as a Roman Catholic Lord Montague was not permitted to take his seat in the House of Lords.*

Eight months later, the next Grand Master the Earl of Strathmore also authorised Entwistle to constitute a lodge in Bury. Both Lodges paid the two guinea fee to be constituted.

The next Grand Master was the Earl of Crawford, a Fellow of the Royal Society. Crawford appointed Bro. Entwistle to the position as the first Lancashire PGM and as a local Freemason Entwistle was more likely to attract other private lodges into the new Grand Lodge.

Somewhat surprisingly the Premier Grand Lodge has had in Lancashire, a continuous succession of Provincial Grand Masters from 1734 to 1826, even though when the first Provincial Grand Master was appointed there were just four registered Lancashire lodges with the Grand Lodge, they were based in Salford, Bolton, Leigh and Bury.

The first five Provincial Grand Masters for Lancashire were:

- Edward Entwistle a textile merchant from Bolton
- William Ratchdale a Liverpool doctor
- John Smith a Manchester Gentleman

- The fourth and most active Provincial Grand Master was John Allen, from Bury who became the London attorney for Grand Lodge
- The last Lancashire PGM was Francis Duckinfield Astley, High Sheriff of Cheshire and a major land-owner

**Edward Entwistle (Enrwise) was the first Lancashire PGM A position he held for 9 years from 1734**

Edward came from Bolton-le-moors, and was a Textile Merchant, with a shop in Bolton town centre.

As PGM, Entwistle went on to constitute by “Deputation” the St. George and Dragon Lodge, in Liverpool and a lodge in Salford, now know as the Lodge of Fortitude.

The early Kings Head Lodge in Salford, the Leigh and also the Liverpool lodges which were under Entwistle’s control have all since been erased.

The Salford ‘Kings Head’ Lodge lasted less than 30 years, as trade moved from Salford and over the Irwell to the new Manchester Cotton Exchange where new lodges were being established.

Entwistle served under eight Grand Masters, four of whom were Fellows of the Royal Society and a further seven of the DGMs and GWs were also FRS.

*The Grand Master, the Earl of Crawford, who had appointed Entwistle as PGM, was responsible for causing a major rift between the new London Grand Lodge and the Old York Grand Lodge as he granted a warrant to an existing York City Lodge who had fallen out of favour with the Old York Grand Lodge. This resulted in animosity between the two Grand Lodges. (take out)*

**The Second Lancashire PGM was Dr. William Ratchdale**

Not a lot is known about the good doctor. His father Edward was an active Alderman of the City of Liverpool who went on to become the Lord Mayor.

William Ratchdale was appointed PGM by Lord Dudley in 1743.

During Rarchdale's 17 year reign he only constituted four lodges. The Imperial George Lodge in Middleton, the Prescott Lodge of Loyalty, and his last two lodges, the Sea Captain's Lodge in Liverpool and Unanimity Lodge in Manchester.

The latter two lodges are of interest for significant different reasons. The Sea Captain's Lodge along with another Liverpool Lodge and the Wigan Lodge of Sincerity were all erased by Grand Lodge for their part in the 'Liverpool Rebellion' following the 'Union' and the formation of the United Grand Lodge.

The second lodge of note is the Manchester Lodge of Unanimity whose warrant is described as the first true English Masonic Warrant. It was constituted by Ratchdale in his home town of Liverpool, even though the Lodge was to meet at St. Ann's Coffee House, Manchester. Unanimity Lodge went on to become the unofficial Provincial Lodge for the Province of Lancashire.

I haven't been able to find out which lodge Bro. Ratchdate was initiated into, as early Masonic records up to about 1760 are very poor. However, the most likely candidates are the Liverpool St. George & Dragon Lodge, but it is equally possible that Ratchdale was attracted into freemasonry whilst at medical school, as many scholar and academics of the day were members of the craft.

William Ratchdale and all doctors in the early 1700's would not have had the medicines available to him as we have today. The biggest health threat to the populace was poor sanitation, the lack of clean drinking water combined with overcrowded poor accommodation in the cities, such as Liverpool, Salford and Manchester.

Hospitals which we now take for granted only came into existence in Lancashire in the mid-1700's with the Liverpool Infirmary opening in 1745, followed by the Manchester Hospital in 1752.

William Ratchdale served six Grand Masters during his time as the Provincial Grand Master. His last, Lord Aberdour was a FRS

It was on Ratchdale's watch that the rival Ancient Grand Lodge was founded in 1751. A small group of masons from six lodges, five of which were independent lodges with no more than eighty members in total, most of whom were from Ireland and Scotland, but residing in England, established the 'Antient' Grand Lodge.

Most of these masons were working class mechanics or shopkeepers, whereas the members of the older Premier Grand Lodge tended to be of a higher social status.

Non affiliated independent English lodges had for a long time had concerns regarding the restrictions and changes being imposed by the Grand Lodge in London with its upper-class membership and patronage of the aristocracy and the Royal family.

Ratchdale was quite ill during the later years of his reign. In the interval from when Ratchdale warranted his last Lodge and when Smith the next PGM, warranted his first lodge in 1762, the first six Ancient Lodges were founded in Lancashire.

**John Smith was appointed the third PGM for Lancashire in 1760 and by the standards of the day he was quite active in his role.**

It is widely thought that Smith was associated with the Cotton Trade in Manchester, and London.

John Smith was the Senior Warden of Unanimity Lodge, when it was founded in 1754 but it is not known in which lodge he was made a mason.

Smith had been in post for two years before he issued his first warrant to the Masons of Colne, now known as the Royal Lancashire Lodge No. 116. Six months later he warranted a lodge in Burnley, now known as the Lodge of Silent Temple.

Smith moved to London, as when he constituted the Lodge of Lights at Warrington in 1765, he styled himself on the Lodge Warrant as, "of Hammersmith in the Parish of Fulham and County of Middlesex".

His next warrant was for a Lodge that met at the Swan & Saracen's Head, in Manchester, now the Lodge of Integrity. This lodge went on to be the principle Lodge in Lancashire, once the Lodge of Unanimity, lapsed and moved to Cheshire.

John Smith had been appointed PGM by the Grand Master, Lord Aberdour and served under three other Grand Masters, including Lord Blaney the Grand Master, who is credited with bringing the Royal Arch into existence within the Premier Grand Lodge.

It was only after Smiths reign as PGM, that Grand Lodge started to keep lists of lodge members. Grand Lodge records before this date tended to be very poor.

During Bro. Smiths time as PGM, two 'Ancient' Lodges were founded in Liverpool.

**John Allen became the 4<sup>th</sup> and most active Lancashire PGM, he served five Grand Masters during his 37 year tenure.**

Allen managed to constitute 25 Lodges in Lancashire, whereas the Ancients constitute 26 lodges, in the same period.

John Allen was from Bury, and is known to have had links with the Bury Lodge of Relief. He was initiated, passed and raised in Unanimity Lodge in Manchester in 1757 and was appointed PGM for Lancashire 12 years later. Allen used Unanimity Lodge as his personal Provincial Lodge.

Allen was an Attorney of Clements Inn, in London and spent up to half his time in the County Palatine of Lancashire. He was entrusted with the legal business of Grand Lodge for over 10 years.

Allen was a very active freemason in the Capital; and a member of five prestigious London lodges: He became the first Lancashire mason to be recorded as having attended Grand Lodge, and went on to attend every Quarterly Communication at Grand Lodge for an unbroken 34 years.

Three of Allen's Lancashire Lodges contributed to the Great Queen Street building fund, Fortitude Lodge in Manchester and the Lodge of Loyalty in Prescot and the Royal Lancashire Lodge in Colne.

Allen as a practicing attorney completed the Conveyance of the Great Queens Street site on behalf of Grand Lodge and managed the tontine that raised funds for the new building.

Allen held several positions in Grand Lodge including Deputy Grand Master, and went on to serve six Grand Masters including, George, Duke of Manchester, H.R.H. Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, and H.R.H. George, Prince of Wales

At Allen's last attendance of a Quarterly Communications in 1805, he had to report that remittance from lodges totalling £31 9s 6d, which had been sent by coach with the Lancashire Deputy PGM had been stolen. After investigations Grand Lodge agreed to credit lodges with the amounts stolen.

Allen was a signatory to the Royal Arch Charter of Compact of 1766, when Grand Chapter was founded.

Bro. Allen is credited with the drafting of the Charter, although his Clerk, Mr. Parkington was paid two guineas for engrossing it.

Allen became the First Grand Principle on two occasions and held many other positions in Grand Chapter over a 25 year period. He became the 1<sup>st</sup> Grand Superintendant in and over the Provinces of Lancashire and Cheshire in 1778 a position that he retained until his death.

Allen's influences in the Royal Arch was very significant, as four of the first six warrants issued to Chapters were for Lancashire Chapters, three of which are still very active:

- Nativity in Burnley
- Cana in Colne
- Unanimity in Bury

When Allen took up the position as PGM for Lancashire there were only 13 lodges in the Province, he went on to rule over 48 Lodges and brought 17 Chapter into existence in Lancashire and further 3 Chapters in the neighbouring Province of Cheshire.

Allen was an extremely hard working Mason across the Province. I can give no higher an accolade to him, but to say that I consider that he has done more for Freemasonry and Royal Arch Masonry in particular than any other mason, past or present.

### **The 5<sup>th</sup> and last Lancashire PGM was Francis Duckinfield Astley**

Francis is remembered to a large extent for the events that followed the Union of the two Grand Lodges in 1814. However, in the seven years before the Union he constituted 5 lodges, whilst only two Lodges were constituted by the Lancashire Ancients.

It was eight months after the formal Union before Francis was re-installed as the PGM for a 'united' Lancashire. Francis re-installed Daniel Lynch as the Deputy PGM and in keeping with tradition, Francis appointed all his Provincial Officers from one lodge in the province, which was, the Lodge of Integrity. This act alienated many of the former Ancient Lodges. The Manchester 'Social Lodge', wrote to UGL saying that they considered that the appointment of the PGM and the Provincial Officers should be by election.

Rather than addressing the Lodges concerns, Lynch the Deputy PGM and several other Provincial Officers visited the Social Lodge and demanded to be given the Lodge's Minute Books and other documents for inspection. This led to a stand-off as their request was declined.

Daniel Lynch had the lodge suspended and set in motion steps to have the lodge expelled. However, the lodge gave the Grand Lodge a written guarantee of conformity and they were re-instated.

The Social Lodge then started to keep two sets of minute books, as they continued to work several of the 'ancient' now unauthorised degrees in their lodge right up to 1843; this included the Arch Degree, the Mark, Knight Templars and Red Cross, as they were quite common in both 'ancient' and 'traditioner' lodges in East Lancashire.

The Social Lodge was not on their own in working other degrees in their lodge and lodges and members found not to conform to the rules of the new GL, were dealt with harshly and swiftly by the Provincial Team.

Running parallel with the seeds of unrest in Manchester was unrest in Lodges in both Liverpool and Wigan, as former Ancient Lodges were forbidden to conduct the Royal Arch Degree and other Orders of Chivalry, according to the Constitutions as agreed in Article II of the Union, in their Lodges. They were also refused permission to set up their own independent Royal Arch Chapters, being informed that there was already a sufficient number of Royal Arch Chapters.

This led to the 'Liverpool Rebellion' with 3 Lancashire lodges and 65 members from 9 other Lodges all being expelled; this included one member from the Royal Lancashire Lodge. What followed was the formation to what is now referred to as 'The Wigan Grand Lodge'.

Due to the unrest, the Grand Master suspended Francis Astley and his Deputy in 1822 and William Meyrick the Grand Registrar and the President of the Board of General Purposes was put in sole charge of affairs of the Lancashire Province.

Following Francis Astley's suspension as PGM, it is reported that he took no further part in the activities of the Province, although he remained the PGM and leader of the Royal Arch and KTs.

William Meyrick re-appointed Bro. Lynch as the Deputy PGM as he did not attend any Provincial meetings or visit the Lancashire Province.

### **So who was Francis Dukinfield Astley?**

He was born in 1781, his father having died when he was only six. He was well educated and went to Christ Church College, Oxford.

At the age of twenty-one, Francis succeeded to his father's estate in Dukinfield and took to his new role as Squire with enthusiasm.

As a classical scholar and a competent poet, he had very little training for his new duties, but he took to them well and carried on the industrialisation of the Dukinfield estate that his father had started.

Francis's benevolent nature caused him to lose money, as he often waved the rent from his tenants when they were in financial difficulties.

His industrial exploits finally came to fruition when large quantities good quality coal was discovered on his estate. Francis became very wealthy, which allowed him to make significant improvement on his estate.

Francis Astley had a keen interest in trees and planted over 40,000 trees on his estate for which he received a silver medal from the 'Society for the Improvement of Agriculture'.

He became the High Sheriff of Cheshire in 1806. The following year he was appointed to the position as Provincial Grand Master for Lancashire by the H.R.H. George, Prince of Wales, he was just 26 years old, and this was only 4 years after his initiation into freemasonry.

Francis was regarded as a prestigious figure-head for Lancashire masons. He was initiated into Freemasonry in the Lodge of Minerva in 1803 and installed as WM in the following year.

Francis became a joining member of Unanimity Lodge, the unofficial Provincial Lodge of Lancashire and after the lodge had lapsed due to debts, (It lapsed in 1805, possibly due to the Manchester bank crash of 1792). Francis paid off all the Lodge debts and relocated the Lodge to his home town in Cheshire in 1807. He then became the Lodges' first Master in its new Province of Cheshire.

Francis with another member of 'Unanimity Lodge', raised a regiment called the 'Dukinfield Rifle Corps, in which he was the Captain Commander.

He enjoyed and loved his Masonry, but in my view, he was elevated too quickly, and in many ways, he proved to be inadequate to manage and resolve the many problems which occurred after the Union of the two Grand Lodges.

Unlike the early Lancashire PGM which has very little written about them, there are several Masonic writers who have put pen to paper after his death. Many of whom have portrayed him in a bad light, which I consider to be a little harsh.

Francis Dukinfield Ashley married Susan Fyshe-Palmer in 1812. The couple had a son John Dukinfield Ashley, who at the age of sixteen weeks fell from a window and died.

Thirteen years later his wife Susan gave birth to their second son, Francis Dukinfield Palmer Ashley.

Three months after Ashley's wife had given birth to their second child, the suspended PGM, mysteriously and unexpectedly died at his brother-in-law - Thomas Gisborne's house. Gisborne who was a politician had been married to Ashley's wife's sister, who had died two years earlier.

There was a lot of controversy surrounding Ashley's death, with fly posters and meetings stating that he had been murdered. These concerns were only re-ignited when Thomas Gisborne married Ashley's widow the year after his death.

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During Francis's life he was known to fund many good causes and he was very well regarded by his tenants and employee and inhabitants of Dukinfield, all of whom mourned his suddenly mysterious death in 1825.

Following Francis Dukinfield Astley's death, the Grand Master took the opportunity to split his troublesome Province of Lancashire in to two regions, and that is how it has remained.

Hence the phrase: Divide and conquer!