

25th Anniversary Conference of The Grand Lodge of Estonia

Friday, 3rd May 2024

Venue:

Maarjamäe Palace

Tallinn, Estonia

Moderator:

Grand Secretary of Grand Lodge of Estonia – Meelis Roosimägi

CONFERENCE TRANSCRIPTS:

Introduction:

Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Estonia - Kalle Küttis

Dear ladies, gentlemen, brethren, friends of freemasonry.

Welcome to this momentous occasion as we gather to celebrate the 25th anniversary of establishment of our esteemed Grand Lodge of Estonia.

Two years ago we celebrated 250 years of freemasonry on territory of Estonia. But as our nation has gone through different times and tweaks of history, so has freemasonry in Estonia.

A famous Estonian poet Juhan Liiv has once said: “Those who do not remember the past, live without the future.” Therefore, today we must reflect on our rich history and honour our traditions. We must pay tribute to the ancient landmarks and old charges that have guided us on our Masonic journey until this day. As we look back on the past 25 years, we are also reminded of the foundations laid by our predecessors. We must remember the brethren working the Craft years before sowing the seeds of freemasonry in Estonia.

They ... our forefathers with principles of brotherly love, relief, and truth. Just as ancient landmarks serve as guiding beacons, our Grand Lodge stands as a testament to the enduring values that have sustained this through the years. Today as we reflect a quarter of a century of Estonian Grand Lodge, I'm very thankful to our esteemed friends here today. Thank you brethren from Scotland, England, and Sweden, that you have agreed to share your perspective on freemasonry and of the world that has led us this far.

Thank you for joining us in this celebration of our past, present, and future. Together let us honour the legacy of the Grand Lodge of Estonia and look forward to the journey ahead with renewed vigor and commitment. Thank you all for coming.

PRESENTER 1 – Past Grand Master William Ramsay McGhee (Scotland):

A Perspective of Scottish Freemasonry

Duration of presentation: 25 minutes. Duration of Q&A: 20 minutes.

Grand Master, ladies and gentlemen. It's a tremendous privilege indeed to be here in Estonia. Although this time last night I had severe doubts as to whether I would reach Estonia or not, but absolutely delighted to be here today to address the Grand Lodge of Estonia. And in so doing will hopefully further cement the strong bond that already exists between the Grand Lodge of Estonia and the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

I've been asked today to give you a short perspective on the Scottish masonry. Something which I suppose is impossible to cover in a short address. So what I will try to do this morning is pinpoint some notable events and try to give you an understanding of how freemasonry is structured today. Explain what we are doing today and how in some ways it differs from other constitutions.

First and foremost, I would like to make the point that modern freemasonry, as we all recognise it today, irrespective of which constitution we belong to, has its origins in Scotland. That is, even though England and Ireland had Grand Lodges before we, the Scots had. We formed ours in 1736, some 19 years after England and 11 years after Ireland. But ladies and gentlemen, the reason was perfectly simple. The Scots did not see any benefit whatsoever in having a grand lodge. In fact, many of the lodges that existed before 1736 were very much opposed to the idea of having a grand lodge, as they feared that it could remove the autonomy that they enjoyed. Prior to the erection of the grand lodge, there remains much evidence, some of which is in the custody of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, that freemasonry existed in Scotland prior to 1598.

The first short statutes were produced. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the Schaw statutes, let me explain that. In 1583, William Schaw was appointed by King James VI who later became King James I of England. He was appointed by King James as Master of the Work and Warden General with the commission of reorganising the masonic craft. In 1598, he issued the first of the now famous Schaw statutes, which set out the duties of all members to the lodge and to the public. These statutes were formally adopted in 1598 at a conference of Scottish lodges that existed at that time. The statute was agreed by all the master masons present and the arrangements were made to send a copy to every lodge in Scotland. This statute here signifies an advance in the organisation of the craft with geographical shires constituting a sort of intermediate level of organisation. These territorial lodges run parallel to another set of civic organisations called incorporations, often linking masons with other workers in the building trades such as wrights.

A *wright* is an occupational surname originating in England. The term wright comes from circa 700 ad, an old English word meaning worker or shaper of wood. Later it became any occupational worker. For example, a shipwright is someone who builds ships. A wheel wright makes wheels. A cartwright makes and repairs waggons or carts. And a playwright is someone like William Shakespeare, a writer of plays. The word carpenter was introduced into England in the years after the Norman Conquest in 1066 and slowly replaced the traditional name and meaning of wright in most of England. However, the term wright is still used in Scotland in the original meaning of skilled wood worker.

The incorporation of Wrights of the Trades House of Glasgow and the incorporation of Wrights and Masons of Edinburgh retain the word in its original meaning. In the role of promoting the woodworking trade. In some places in Scotland such as Dundee Sterling, the lodges and incorporations became indistinguishable. In other places, the incorporation linked the trade to the borough. Now, a borough was an autonomous municipal corporation in Scotland. Usually a large town or a city. And it became a mechanism whereby the merchants exercised some control over the wages of the building trades. In places like Edinburgh where the proliferation of wooden buildings meant a predominance of wrights or carpenters. The territorial lodge offered a forum of craft self-governance distinct from the incorporation. Also, the masons and wrights used different ceremonial motifs at their respective events. The role of deacon provided a link between these incorporations and the lodges. It also imposed penalties for unsatisfactory work and inadequate safety during work. So we had health and safety laws way way back.

More importantly, for freemasons today, Schaw drew up a second statute in 1599. Now, the importance of this document lies in the fact that it makes the first veiled reference of the existence of esoteric knowledge within the craft of stonemasonry. It also reveals that the Mother Lodge of Scotland with number zero, was in existence and active at that time in 1599. The impact of these statutes was dramatic. Schaw's instructions to all lodges but not to incorporations, purely to the lodges, state that they must begin to keep written records, meet at specific times, test annually the members in the art of memory and enter apprentices in the lodge records. This meant that lodges became fixed permanent institutions, and we still do these things. Today we hold in Edinburgh the oldest surviving masonic minute of a Scottish lodge – Lodge HSN Heaven – which dates back to 1599, some 425 years ago. Mary's Chapel number 1 still retain their records in their lodge room in Hill Street in Edinburgh.

Again going back to 1599. The same lodge can also boast with the first record of the initiation of a non-operative mason in a lodge in 1634. And to this day, the master of that lodge at his installation takes his obligation on a Bible dated 1585. The foregoing is only a fraction of the evidence that still exists, which shows that Scotland is indeed the birthplace of freemasonry. As we note today, Scottish freemasonry exists in over 40 countries throughout the world. The lodges in Belgium, Chile, Fiji, Jordan, Malta, Mauritius, Peru, Togo, and St. Kitts all report directly to Grand Lodge of Scotland. They do not belong to a district or superintendent.

Our structure is relatively simple. The Grand Lodge of Scotland is a governing body and is based at 96 George Street in Edinburgh. Sitting directly below the grand lodge, we have 32 provincial grand lodges throughout Scotland and 26 district grand lodges scattered across the globe. Each province has a provincial grand master and each district a district grand master. In addition, we have four Grand Superintendencies - in Bermuda, Panama, Sri Lanka and Malawi. And as I mentioned earlier, those further 14 lodges who report directly to the Grand Lodge of Scotland. A superintendency is basically where there are insufficient lodges to form a district, but they have sufficient to save them reporting back individually. The two newest superintendencies that we have in Sri Lanka and Panama both have a very vivid vision of growing in numbers to enable them to become districts.

Scottish freemasonry has developed a distinct and unique character even by comparison with the other British Grand Lodges. The Grand Master of our constitution bears the unique title Grand Master Mason. The first Grand Master Mason was William St Clair of Roslin. And I was greatly privileged to be the 111th Grand Master between 2018 and 2023.

Each lodge in our constitution is a sovereign body in its own right with a considerable degree of control of their own affairs. I mentioned earlier that many of the lodges in existence prior to 1736 were very much opposed to the idea of having a grand lodge as they feared it could remove the autonomy they enjoy. To preserve their traditions, those early lodges were permitted to retain their own procedures, regalia, and distinctive rituals. Having accepted that principle of independence of the old lodges, it was impossible therefore to deny to the lodges founded after 1736 - that same degree of independence. Of course the rituals must contain the principle points of each degree, but the scope for elaboration is considerable with numerous interesting additions. Since Scottish lodges have the right to choose the colours of the lodge and regalia the meetings can be very colourful indeed while standing in the Grand Lodge of Scotland. It's an absolutely wonderful site to see the diverse range of colours in their regalia.

I would now like to tell you about the main charity project we've been involved in. It was started by my predecessor brother Charles Ian Robert Wolrige Gordon of Esslemont. We are supporting Prostate Cancer Scotland, and by the end of my term as Grand Master Mason, we had donated a total of 1,125,000 GBP to the project. Prostate cancer is the most common cancer affecting men in Scotland. Nearly one in two men in Scotland will be affected by prostate disease at some stage of their lives, and one in 10 are likely to develop prostate cancer. And I'm sure that the statistics in other countries represented here today will not differ greatly from that. The most recent figures for Scotland show that 4,265 men were diagnosed and 1066 men died from prostate cancer in 2021. However, survival rates amongst men with prostate cancer have encouragingly doubled over the past two decades with 84% of men with prostate cancer now surviving it. This in my opinion has been a crucial project which will benefit men not just in Scotland, but literally throughout the world because of the research that we, the Grand Lodge of Scotland have funded in Scotland as a result of our involvement with Prostate Scotland.

We are now involved in two legacy projects:

1. The Prospack Initiative, which provides a special pack to all men. And it's not just to masons, but to all men being treated for cancer in Scotland. Now, depending on what form of prostate disease they're being treated for, they receive a pack best suited to their needs. Packs are a free support and aimed at all men who are starting treatment for prostate cancer. The Prospacks have been developed by Prostate Scotland with funding from the Grand Lodge. Raigmore Hospital up north in Inverness was one of the first Scottish hospitals to be on board with the project. The packs are available to men through oncology and urology units and hospitals where the treatment is taking place. Four different packs have been developed to support men undergoing those treatments and radiotherapy, brachytherapy surgery and chemotherapy. Prostate Scotland consulted with patients and clinicians in the development of the pack contents to provide men with a range of useful items. Now, these include, and you might find some of these strange, but they have been developed by experts in the field that contain moisturising lotion, sensitive soap, male continence pads, mouthwash ginger tea, thermal socks, a water bottle, antibacterial gel, and eye masks.
2. We are recruiting and training volunteer brethren from all our provinces and districts as Prostate Champions. These are brethren who are on hand to give basic advice and direction to brethren in respect of signs and symptoms, but not only that, while they're there to give talks to lodges to raise awareness among brethren, these champions also go out into the community and talk to a diverse range of organisations to raise awareness not only of prostate disease, but importantly to raise awareness of what freemasonry does in the community. And it's interesting to note that very often some of the ladies organisations such as the Women's Guilds who are most attentive because they exert an awful lot of pressure onto the men folk to actually do something about it.

At national level, we have supported and continue to offer support to a range of charities. But also where natural disasters have occurred. Working alongside the Buddhist monks from the Zoo Chi Foundation, the Grand Lodge of Scotland helped to build a new shelter, which comprises a community centre, health centre and a police station to replace many of the buildings that were demolished during the Typhoon Haiyan. We have supported our brethren in Zimbabwe and Malawi on projects to alleviate the suffering and hardship caused by severe flooding because of Cyclone Kenneth. And as a result of Hurricane Dorian, we provided much needed relief to our brethren in The Bahamas. In addition, each lodge regularly supports local, national and international charities according to their own means and ability. It is estimated that at least another half million pounds is raised annually by lodges for worthy causes that they support locally.

Brethren, ladies, so far I have spoken about the past and the present. What about the future? The most important change to take place during my term as Grand Master has been the restructuring of the Grand Lodge. Some of which has been somewhat radical. After almost 300 years, we have done away with Grand Committee and replaced it with a much smaller, more dynamic Governance & Strategy Board. In order to restructure, we have had to totally revise our constitution and laws. This has been a massive undertaking for our Grand Secretary. However, his efforts have been endorsed by our Administration Committee and by Grand Lodge itself. In June last year, the Grand Lodge voted overwhelmingly for the changes and we are now working hard to move those changes forward. The other major change to the committee structure is that the new committees will be populated by brethren who have the requisite skills to enable those committees to make measurable progress. Whereas in the past, the committees were populated by members of Grand Committee who did not necessarily have the knowledge, experience, or skills for that particular committee.

In 2019, I commissioned an international survey to be conducted amongst members of the Scottish Craft. We had over 7500 responses, which have helped enormously in pointing the way ahead for us. The newly formed Governance & Strategy Board are using much of that data in their deliberations. And the three strategic objectives taking us forward are 1) to place membership at the heart of Scottish freemasonry 2) to grow Scottish freemasonry internationally and 3) to create inspiring communication and engagement as a major part of attending those objectives. We are embarking on a new IT structure, which will hopefully deliver a new external website or app to provide information and recruitment opportunities for prospective new members. A secure internal website for use by existing members that will provide an enhanced membership experience. A new digital Grand Lodge Masonic passport for every member of the Scottish Craft that will provide member benefits and privileges according to role and connect each member directly with Grand Lodge as part of a membership ecosystem. An expandable modular IT platform, able to adapt to the future strategies of Grand

Lodge and the needs of members administration functionality to coordinate Grand Lodge back office functions and management of the external and member websites.

Most Worshipful Grand Master, distinguished brethren, ladies. I hope that this short presentation has given you a flavour of what the Grand Lodge of Scotland is all about. Where we have come from, where we are now, and where we hope to be in the future. We can justly say that we are the historical home of freemasonry as we recognise it today. And I extend the warmest of welcomes to each and every one of you to visit us in Edinburgh whenever the opportunity may arise. My sincere thanks to you, Grand Master, for the warmth of your welcome, for your outstanding hospitality, and to you ladies and brethren for the attention you have given to this presentation. Thank you.

Q&A

Moderator:

Thank you, Ramsey for such a swift presentation. We're in schedule. Are there questions you would like to ask from Ramsey? Well, I got several ideas from here because I have to be awake and moderating. You have 980 lodges, quite a way to go. We have 25, but in these additional 400 years, you have longer history. We can manage it, I think.

Presenter:

You never know.

Moderator:

We never know. And another thing – the charity side, this prostate campaign, the cost of it was 1.12 million pounds. Well, I made some thinking and it is only some 1,300 pounds per lodge. Taking into consideration how many charity things you have, 1,300 is quite acceptable I think for our lodges too. We have a Pelican Foundation. So make your calculations please brethren.

And do you have any questions now?

Question 1:

Thank you. I have a question about this slide where aprons were shown. And from left the first one seemed to be based on tartan. Is it officially registered to the Grand Lodge or?

Presenter:

Yes. Yeah, within the constitution and laws, there are rules and regulations about the size of aprons, etc. But you can see there those are all lodge aprons. And I've just taken four at random. And you can see we've got tartan ones, we've got that chequered one there, that's the Robert Burns tartan. We've got blue ones, green ones, purple ones, yellow ones. Some of the African countries have got really colourful aprons altogether. But this all goes back to the fact that each lodge in Scotland has autonomy and we use whichever ritual we want. Those are four of the normal rituals that are in use. I think we've got a total of about eight different rituals in use at the moment. And as long as we use those, there's no great problem. Although the Jewish lodge in Glasgow have rewritten their ritual to suit their own needs that it's not far removed from what's in there. But the aprons are very distinctive. And in Scotland we not only wear the apron, we wear a sash as well. And the sash is usually the same colour as the apron. So it does make for a very colourful existence compared to the bland one colour aprons of many of the constitutions. We're very proud of it.

Question 2:

Thank you. I have one more question about the charity work. There are resources for the charity. Are they all voluntary or you have some mandatory contribution or semi mandatory contribution from every member?

Presenter:

There's nothing mandatory at all about any of the charities. We do encourage. Now the one that we have really encouraged is the Prostate Cancer one. And to be perfectly honest with you, the lodges have responded absolutely wonderfully both at home and abroad because they realise and appreciate that with the money that we've gathered that is going to feed research programmes and through those research programmes, men literally throughout the world will

benefit in relation to it. One of the big changes so far is the robotic surgeries that can be carried out. Now as part of that research that we have funded, it makes life that bit easier for men. It is not as intrusive as it formally was. So we have encouraged the lodges.

In my second to last year, we were sort of heading towards a million pound, but we weren't just quite there. So I started a new campaign, the Make it a Million campaign. And to be perfectly honest with you, the provinces, the districts, the lodges all came together when they make it a million appeal, we made it a million, but we didn't just make it a million. We made it 1,125,000. I was indebted to the lodges for the amount of effort and work they put into it. And we did all sorts of things. You have no idea the range of things that took place. Me and Joseph John Morrow, my successor at that point, Joe was the Chairman of our Welfare & Benevolence Committee, and he said, some of the guys are signing up to do a zip slide. He said, I think it's only right that you and I should lead from the front. Yeah, fine, let's do this zip slide. And it was to be a zip slide across the River Clyde. But on the day that we were supposed to do it, the Queen died. And of course Joe Morrow is not only the Grand Master Mason, he's also the Lord Lyon King of Arms and he was heavily involved in the Queen's funeral arrangements, etc. Our Grand Almoner rehashed this zip slide and it went to a place called Killiecrankie. And well, Joe and I did this one Sunday and not only had we to do one zip slide, we had to do 9. But to start off with, we had to climb a rope ladder about 30 feet up a tree. And when we got to this platform up in the top that's where it all started from. Well, the two of us just laughed our way around that we were black and blue by the time we got to the other end barging into trees. But the effort was well worth it. That exercise alone raised something like 50,000 pound. So everybody came together for the Prostate Scotland appeal.

But the lodges, the provinces, the districts can all do their own thing. For example, right now, the Provincial Master in the province of Lanarkshire, he has had experience of a young grandchild die from terminal cancer. And he has in that province a whole range of activities to support what we call CHAs, the Children's Hospice Association in Scotland. So that province are concentrating their efforts on CHAs, whereas other districts and provinces are concentrating in what they feel best in that area.

I should maybe explain that in the setup – Provinces are at home in Scotland, Districts are out of Scotland, so that we can differentiate between the two.

Question 3:

If you can say something about the conferences that you have launched about Scottish Rite. About Scottish Freemasonry International conferences. Is there one coming up and how people can learn about it?

Presenter:

Okay, this started as a District Grand Lodge of East Africa where the people who kicked this off, it was the first International Scottish Freemasonry Conference and it was held in Mombasa in East Africa. And it was an outstanding success. It was reasonably low level, but the topics were chosen because there were topics that folk could relate to. And it was so successful that we decided, or the brethren in the districts decided that this was going to continue. And we've had them. Now we've had fourth, and the fifth International Scottish Freemasonry Conference is going to take place next year in Zambia. And it will be in a hotel right at the falls. So we would be delighted to see all of you coming to Zambia for our fifth international Scottish Masonic Conference. The topics, I don't know what they're going to be this time around, but they have been very, very varied over the piece. And generally they come from the brethren themselves, issues that matter to them, and they get widely discussed and debated. There are breakout sessions during the conference and then of course it wouldn't be Scottish freemasonry if there wasn't the social side to it as well. And it has been known that whiskey has been taken.

Question 4:

I have two questions. First one is about the laws of the overseas lodges. There are something like one third of all lodges there. And what was the dynamics when they were founded during the last 400 years, all these overseas lodges?

Presenter:

Right, good question. Basically 34% of our lodges are overseas. And to be perfectly honest with you, a lot of it goes back to colonial times when Scotsman, and I mean when you go abroad, the English, the Irish to an extent, but English

and Scots, wherever they went in the world, they had this tendency to start lodges up. And over the years that has developed. It's quite interesting when you look at the past masters' boards in some countries like Malaysia or Africa, India, you can actually see from the past boards when that country received independence. So there's quite a historical link to the whole thing. And over the years those have developed, and I've got to say that our brethren over in the districts are extremely proud of being Scottish freemasons. And some of them are more Scottish than the Scots. They really enjoy their Scottish freemasonry.

And the one massive thing for me about the whole thing, if you live in Scotland, then the only lodges you can go to in Scotland are Scottish lodges. If you live in England, the only lodges you can go to are English lodges. I'm a member or an honorary member of the Caledonian Lodge in London. But while it tries to bring Scots together, it's an English lodge. It's not a Scottish lodge, it's an English lodge. If you go to Ireland, you can only go to Irish lodges. The big difference in the districts is – under the one roof, you can have a Scottish constitution meeting tonight, tomorrow, another land's constitution meeting, the next night English, the next night Irish. And what we find is that a lot of our brethren actually join each of the constitutions and they work together in great harmony. We've got tremendous harmony between England and Scotland and the districts with one exception.

But generally, in fact, in East Africa, the lodge that we have in Tanzania was really struggling. And it was the English District Grand who really got his brethren in that part of Tanzania to band together to help out the Scottish Lodge. And it's back on its feet again. So the different constitutions help each other in their own ways. The only downside to the fact that you've got these constitutions all meeting under the same roof, and I used to say to the District Grand Master, you've got to retain the scottishness because what you find is that there are Englishisms, Irishisms and dear knows where else all mingling in. And a lot of the Scottish traditions go out the window. But equally, one of the English District Grand Master said to me, I know where you're coming from. He said, we get really annoyed that all our English lodges are using the Scottish workings. So there's the downside to it, but basically everybody works in harmony and it really goes back to the colonial days when the English, the Irish and the Scots were working in those countries.

Question 5:

And the second question about the charity project you did on cancer. Could you tell me what was the timeline when you started it and when you reached the goal? 1 million pounds, how much time it took?

Presenter:

Well, my predecessor started the project and there was no definitive timeline at that point. However, it bounced along and at the end of the day, we probably ran it over, I don't know, seven or eight years one way or another. But the big push was in my second to last year when we made the Make it a Million appeal. At that point, I think we had raised somewhere in the region about 700,000. And the Make it a Million appeal was to really go that last mile and make it a million. Like Estonia we are a small country, so we don't have all that many members. So to make a million with something of a milestone for us down south in England where they've got far more members, far bigger, they do a tremendous job down there. And I mean they can raise a million without even thinking about it. Whereas it's had work for us. And the English have supported tremendous charities like the helicopters, the air ambulance helicopters, that's the United Grand Lodge of England blazoned all over the helicopters. Fantastic because it's important that we let the public see what we are doing. Interestingly, one hospital refused to take the Prospacks because it said in the pack that they were donated by the freemasons. I find that incredibly sad but I think they've been spoken to.

PRESENTER 2 – Past Grand Secretary James W. Daniel (England)

The Context and Conditions of the UGLE's Recognition of the Grand Lodge of Estonia

Duration of presentation: 40 minutes. Duration of Q&A: 16 minutes.

(Starting in Estonian)

“Daamid, härrased ja vennad. Ma oskan saksa keelt, prantsuse ja hispaania, itaalia, aga mitte eesti keelt. Palun andke andeks minu teadmatus. Head päeva teile”

(followed by applause)

Sorry, my Estonian is not all that good. Now I can get back to English.

(reflecting on the previous presenter)

So that was Ramsey McGee and one little item I should mention that his presentation proved my point – that freemasonry was originally established by masonic regalia manufacturers. They are the only people ever to have profited from freemasonry.

Now I have been given an important task today and late after midnight last night I decided to put my papers into some sort of order. This morning I was hijacked at breakfast and I didn't put them in the right order. So now I will throw those out and start with this selection.

I knew I was going to be welcomed and that the Estonian element was early in my mind because on the radio on the morning three days ago, your Estonian composer Esther Mägi, some of her music was being played on Radio 3 in England and I thought that's a good day. I also ought to mention that I have given several papers before but never to an audience like this, let alone one where there is someone who used to look after Scottish masonry, but as one of the speakers, one of the examiners of my doctorate.

You see before you a case of mistaken identity. When I was with some of your senior members of the Grand Lodge at Estonia last year at the meeting of another Order in Edinburgh, they mistook me for the representative of the United Grand Lodge of England who attended the consecration of the Estonian Grand Lodge on the 18th of May 1999. And they subsequently invited me to speak today. But I wasn't present in 1999. It was not me at that time. I'd only just taken over as the Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England, which in those days only had about 1,800 lodges in London alone. And so it was the President of our Board of General Purposes, brother Gavin Purser, who came here 25 years ago and you'll see him sitting next to your first Grand Master. I'm sorry, it's not very clear. I still have the press cutting in one of my files and that was the best I could do with my camera. Luckily for me, even when I had diplomatically pointed out the mistaken identity, they still invited me to address you at this occasion to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Estonia and I'm pleased and honoured to be here today.

So the tasks the hosts have set me are:

1. To provide insights from the perspective of the United Grand Lodge of England on the times when many Grand Lodges including the Grand Lodge of Estonia were established.
2. To help the conference explore how the values and principles of the Old Charges and Constitutions have maintained their significance over time and
3. To establish a connection between the Old Charges and Constitutions and the development of the Grand Lodge of Estonia.

I hope you don't mind seeing all these words up on the text, but I may be speaking rather quickly and I think this may help some of you follow what I'm saying. I can of course obviously do the whole thing from heart, but I've forgotten it so this is what I'm going to be talking about today.

You may well ask as I asked myself why me? Anyway, after all, I was initiated in the Apollo University Lodge Oxford as long ago as 1961 and I'm now just an 82-year-old former Grand Secretary and one of the past Senior Grand Wardens of the Grand Lodge. However, on my Masonic journey, I also joined what is now called the Royal Somerset and Inverness Lodge No. IV - one of the four old lodges which founded the Premier Grand Lodge in 1717 and of which the author of the 1723 Constitutions, Dr. James Anderson was a member. I was also the 17th Grand Secretary since 1717 and I was in that office in 1999 when the Grand Lodge of Estonia was founded and when it was recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England in the year 2000. Before that appointment, I'd been the Grand Secretary General of the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for England and Wales, a Past Master of ... Research Lodge and a fellow of the Royal Society Historical. I'm still a member of the External Relations Committee of our Board of General Purposes. I've written many papers about the relations with its lodges overseas and with other grand lodges and I have a doctorate based on my research into English freemasonry in the British Empire in the latter half of the 19th

century. I even have a facsimile edition of Anderson's 1723 constitutions, but I'm not an expert on its social and international importance. For that you'll have to refer to my colleagues, Dr. Rick Berman and Andrea Vo.

However, I can speak about the continuing relevance of the Old Charges and Constitutions today from an English perspective. Even when the Scottish Freemason James Anderson published the so-called Old Charges in 1723, several of them were not appropriate to non-operative or speculative freemasons as practised south of the border in England. For Anderson's version was his digestion of Old Charges that had been applied to operative stonemasons in previous centuries. Anderson claimed that his constitutions comprised the historic laws, charges, orders, regulations and usages of the right worshipful fraternity of ancient free and accepted masons, collected from their general records and their faithful traditions of many ages. It also stipulated in those constitutions that the master and wardens were to read all 48 pages of it at the admission of a new brother. It's unlikely that they as published were ever thereafter inflicted in full on any English candidate after his initiation. Moreover, some of the charges were irrelevant. For example, one requires that no master should take an apprentice unless he has sufficient employment for him. Second, it includes the injunction that all masons employed shall weekly receive their wages without murmuring or mutiny and not desert the master until the work is finished. But I was one of those employees and I have meekly received my wages until 25 years ago.

However, in spite of all the criticism to which Anderson and his book have been subjected, the remarkable influence of his Constitutions on the course of world history must be freely acknowledged. As must the part it played in transmitting the principles and tenets of freemasonic history throughout the world. True to the ideals of the enlightenment, those principles and tenets included religious tolerance, meritocracy, high standards of interpersonal civility, scientific and artistic education and societal and personal self-improvement. Indeed, the importance of Anderson's 1723 work was most significantly recognised during the two centennial celebrations in many jurisdictions. Anderson himself amended his version of the charges in later editions and further changes have been made to them over the next centuries. Today under the English constitution that is the laws of the United Grand Lodge of England - a Summary of the Antient Charges and Regulations is printed in the opening pages of our Book of Constitutions.

At the opening of the lodge to instal a new Master, the Master is asked, do you admit to and promise to support these charges and regulations as masters have done in all ages. So I'm going to read these to you simply because it's part of our ritual.

1. *You agree to be a good Man and true, and strictly to obey the moral law.*
2. *You are to be a peaceable Subject, and cheerfully to conform to the laws of the country in which you reside.*
3. *You promise not to be concerned in plots or Conspiracies against Government, but patiently to submit to the decisions of the Supreme Legislature.*
4. *You agree to pay a proper respect to the Civil Magistrate, to work diligently, live creditably, and act honourably by all Men.*
5. *You agree to hold in veneration the original Rulers and Patrons of the Order of Free-Masonry, and their regular Successors, supreme and subordinate, according to their Stations; and to submit to the Awards and Resolutions of your Brethren in general Lodge convened, in every case consistent with the Constitutions of the Order.*
6. *You agree to avoid private piques and quarrels and to guard against intemperance and excess.*
7. *You agree to be cautious in your carriage and behaviour, courteous to your Brethren, and faithful to your Lodge.*
8. *You promise to respect genuine and true Brethren, and to discountenance Imposters and all Dissenters from the original Plan of Free-Masonry.*
9. *You agree to promote the general good of Society, to cultivate the Social Virtues, and to propagate the knowledge of the Mystic Art as far as your influence and ability can extend.*
10. *You promise to pay homage to the Grand Master for the time being, and to his Officers when duly installed, and strictly to conform to every Edict of the Grand Lodge.*
11. *You admit that it is not in the power of any Man or Body of Men to make any Alteration or Innovation in the Body of Masonry without the consent first obtained of the Grand Lodge.*
12. *You promise a regular attendance on the Communications and Committees of the Grand Lodge, upon receiving proper notice thereof, and to pay attention to all the duties of Free-Masonry upon proper and convenient occasions.*
13. *You admit that no new Lodge can be formed without permission of the Grand Master or his Deputy, and that no countenance ought to be given to any irregular Lodge, or to any person initiated therein; and that no public*

processions of Masons clothed with the Badges of the Order can take place without the special Licence of the Grand Master or his Deputy.

14. You admit that no person can regularly be made a Free-Mason or admitted a Member of any Lodge without previous notice and due inquiry into his character; and that no Brother can be advanced to a higher Degree except in strict conformity with the Laws of the Grand Lodge.

15. You promise that no Visitor shall be received into your Lodge without due examination, and producing proper Vouchers of his having been initiated in a regular Lodge.

So that's what every new Master of lodge has to agree to.

Further echoes of Anderson's major work are also still to be found in the "Charge After Initiation". So this is what is read to every new brother. These are extracts from the ritual:

*'the important duties you owe to God, to your neighbour and to yourself',
'to be exemplary in the discharge of your civil duties',
'the practice of every domestic as well as public virtue', 'to maintain...Benevolence and Charity,
...Secrecy, Fidelity and Obedience', and
'to dedicate yourself to such pursuits as may at once enable you to be respectable in life, useful to mankind, and an ornament to the society of which you have this day become a member.'*

So that is what we tell each newly made brother on the night of his initiation. So you'll see that it mentions God, religion, civil magistrate, masters, wardens, management craft and so on. Now less frequently heard or read today are the "Charges of a Freemason" which can be found without explanation or introduction in a much later section of our Book of Constitutions and which bears a close resemblance to Anderson's early versions and they too cover God and religion, the civil magistrate, wardens, management of the craft and behaviour. So there is the proof if proof is needed that the Old Charges and Constitutions, likely edited over the centuries are still relevant to English freemasonry today.

So I'll now move on. Happily for us here today, the Grand Lodge of Estonia almost immediately was recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England after its creation in 1999 for three reasons which I will come on to.

We now have the foundation of regular freemasonry and what we consider to be the absolute basis of our tenants and principles. Over the following few years the Grand Lodge of England and firmly later on Ireland and Scotland formed lodges overseas and life became rather more complicated. They originally recognised each other in an informal way and allowed their members to visit. And a few European grand lodges such as Denmark and Sweden quickly followed the example. And these in their terms were recognised for into visitation so that we could share each other's enjoyment of regular freemasonry. In the 19th century, however, masonic inter-jurisdictional relations became more complicated.

In 1855, the British brethren who formed the first grand lodge to be created in what remained of British North America – Canada – were initially called rebels and their creation was deemed to have been irregular. It took the Grand Lodge of England three years to remove its ban on masonic intercourse with the first grand lodge to have been created in the British Empire since the American War of Independence. But speculative freemasonry in its several forms was already spreading ever more widely around the world. Unfortunately, some Grand Lodges became politically engaged and or stopped demanding of their initiatives, a belief in the supreme being. And so at the end of the first World War, the Grand Master of the UGLE expressed a desire that the Board of General Purposes would draw up a statement of the basic principles of which this grand lodge could be invited to recognise any grand lodge applying for its recognition. The board's draft of those basic principles of freemasonry for which the Grand Lodge of England has stood through its history was accepted by the Grand Lodge in September, 1924. And these have been printed in The Book of Constitutions and applied ever since.

So these are the basic principles for Grand Lodge recognition:

- 1. Regularity of origin. That is each Lodge should have been established lawfully by a duly recognised Grand Lodge or by three or more regularly constituted lodges.*
- 2. Belief in the Grand Architect of the Universe and his revealed will shall be an essential qualification for membership.*

3. *That all initiates shall take their Obligation on or in full view of the open Volume of the Sacred Law, by which is meant the revelation from above, which is binding on the conscience of that particular individual who is being initiated.*
4. *That the membership of the Grand Lodge and individual Lodges shall be composed exclusively of those who are made Masons as men and that each Grand Lodge shall have no Masonic association of any kind with bodies which make women Masons. And usages of the Craft shall be strictly observed.*
5. *That the Grand Lodge shall have sovereign jurisdiction with the Lodges under its control. That it shall be a responsible, independent, self governing organisation with sole and undisputed authority over the Craft or Symbolic Degrees (Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason) within its jurisdiction and shall not in any way be subjected to or divide such authority with a Supreme Council or other Power claiming any control or supervision over those degrees.*
6. *That the Three Great Lights of Freemasonry (namely the Volume of the Sacred Law, the Square and the Compasses) shall always be exhibited when the Grand Lodge or its subordinate Lodges are at work.*

Chief of those being the Volume of the Sacred Law. And if you're like me that you did a lot of your freemasonry in Sri Lanka, there would be five different Volumes of the Sacred Law available.

7. *That the discussion of religion and politics within the lodge shall be strictly prohibited*
8. *That the principles of the Antient Landmarks, customs, and usages of the Craft shall be strictly observed.*

Now you'll note that these basic principles do not mention Anderson's constitutions. The numbers two about the Grand Architect four and seven, no discussion of religion or politics are consistent with Anderson's and that number eight, ancient but undefined landmarks is intended to cover everything else.

Happily for us here today, Estonia met that challenge.

The number of Grand Lodges has expanded hugely over this period and continues to do so. As I will show you with a graph in a moment.

Grand Lodge of Estonia was recognised by UGLE after its creation for three reasons.

1. It was created by the regular Grand Lodge of Finland.
2. The Finnish Grand Lodge had been created by the Grand Lodge of New York in 1924.
3. That Grand Lodge had been an English provincial Grand Lodge until 1781 when it simply changed the name to become a Grand Lodge.

So much for the genealogy of the Grand Lodge of Estonia and the conditions on which it has been internationally recognised by other regular grand lodges.

So let me now review the context in which it was created from an English perspective. The historical context that led to the formation of the Grand Lodge of Estonia. I was impressed to learn that for 12 months from October, 2021 the History Museum of Estonia held an exhibition entitled 250 Years of Freemasonry in Estonia. Brethren, we don't have time today for me to take us back to 1770, so I would just sketch the Craft's international growth since the end of the first World War. Between 1918 and the outbreak of the Second World War, another 23 grand lodges were created. There were about 94, which we recognised in 1967, which was the 250th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of England when the Duke of Kent, our Grand Master then and still today said we had little responsibility for the creation of most of them, but they all followed the tenants and principles laid down originally in Anderson's Constitutions and revised over the years.

As he said the UGLE played a significant part in only a few of these, but the majority sought and eventually received its recognition in Europe. Some of that growth resulted in part from the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which was built in 1961 when I was at university and the dissolution of Soviet Russia in December, 1991. These momentous events

prompted and enabled the formation or reestablishment of Grand Lodges in territories in which it had until then been banned.

Among the 84 Grand Lodges represented in the 275th anniversary, two Grand Masters from Grand Lodges in recently independent countries in Eastern Europe were particularly welcomed by his Royal Highness, namely Brother ..., the first Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Czechoslovakia and Brother Ferenc of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary. Brother Ferenc who was called upon to represent the Grand Lodges in the old world, replied to his welcome but especially warm applause greeted the 90-year-old professor Brother ..., who had survived many years in prison during and after the Second World War. I was present as a Junior Grand Lodge officer and remember all this very well. Estonia was not represented as its Grand Lodge had yet to be created.

However, also present in 1992 was the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Finland, Brother Peltonen. His Grand Lodge had been initiating Estonians in its lodges since Estonia, together with Latvia and Lithuania finally achieved or reached independence in 1991, where upon Finland promptly established four lodges in Estonia itself. It subsequently formed these four lodges into its District of Estonia in preparation for the eventual establishment of the Grand Lodge of Estonia in 1999. Lithuania and Latvia soon followed in 2002 and 2003 respectively.

Meanwhile, a dozen more grand lodges have been established elsewhere, including Russia in 1995. The remarkable growth in the number of regular grand lodges established in the 21st century is shown in this graph. As you see, the growth is indeed truly remarkable. Several reasons account for that growth. The end of the Cold War, my grand lodge's decision to recognise, with the permission of the previously recognised sovereign grand lodges in Brazil and Mexico, multiple grand lodges in those territories. And the masonic independence of several British districts overseas such as Malta, Cyprus, Ghana and Nigeria. Most of the work of the Grand Chancellor's department in London is concerned at the moment with checking that each new applicant grand lodge, particularly from South America and Central America meets the tenants and principles laid down by Anderson and later adjustments to the qualifications required by the Grand Lodge of England for recognition. At present we recognise a very large number. I think we are up to about 230.

So we now come to a conclusion that then is a summary of the context in which the Grand Lodge of Estonia was established in 1999 from an English perspective. While the number of English lodges has fallen from 8,500 in 1992 to 7,000 today and the number of members has fallen from 340,000 to 169,000 today, the number of regular grand lodges around the world recognised as such by the UGLE is higher than it has ever been, namely 235, all of whose roots, principles and tenants can be traced back to 1717 and 1723.

So next let us then celebrate the continuing history of regular freemasonry by singing a song which Anderson published in his 1723 Constitutions. Namely the "Enter'd 'Prentices Song".

I recently reminded certain people in the Grand Lodge that this existed and when we had the Grand Festival this year, they produced a programme with the first line of that song as its framework. So suddenly this song has come back into life. Now some of your lodges may already be aware of it and some may not. As stated by Anderson, this song was written by our late brother Mr. Matthew, Deceas'd. Presumably it was written before he deceased. And is to be sung when all grave business is over. They don't mean burying, they mean serious. When all grave business is over and with the master's leave. Actually we sing it in my lodge every time we have initiatives. It wasn't written for inclusion in Anderson's book but was incorporated in it after having appeared separately in 1722.

According to one commentary, which you'll find in the ... edition of Anderson's Constitutions published by ... Lodge, Mr. Birkhead who wrote the song, was the Master of Lodge 5 when he died in print on the 28th of December, 1722. And "Enter'd 'Prentices Song" had already appeared in Read's Weekly Journal for December 1st, 1722 under the title The Freemason's Health. The metre was used by Charles Cotton in "The Angler's Ballad" a fisherman's ballad, written in or before the reign of James II. The tune was already well known and Birkhead was a stage singer and is likely enough therefore to have fitted words of his own to a familiar melody.

The setting we're going to use today is by W... and I'm so pleased that Brother Jaanus has agreed to accompany us today. I shall put the lyrics, that's the words up on screen and invite you all to join me in singing them all or at least the last two lines of each verse when they're repeated.

So this is the modernised version of the song.

Speaker 2:

I have to say this song is 200 years old. It's been very simple and hopefully I play a short prologue. I hope I trust on you. You will be lead singer.

Presenter:

Yes, I certainly trust you.

Speaker 2:

We together try to do it. But all of you [*turning to the attendees*] you are invited to two last lines from every verse.

[Piano playing]

Okay, now we're going to start with the first verse. I at least will take over the first four lines. If you already feel you can join me, please do. My voice may run out otherwise. And then we are going to, I also sing the last two lines, which will then be repeated with all of you joining in. If you don't join in, there is no lunch, so give us the note.

[Continued with singing]

Thank you all very much for listening. I noticed that some of you were already asleep. I apologise for the misplacement of some of my papers. I can only put it down to an excellent supper that I had last night with something called Honey Bear rather than Honey Beer. I was looking forward to having Honey Beer, but Honey Bear was a good substitute.

Now if there are any questions that anyone has about this long journey into Estonian regular freemasonry today or anything related, I am here at your disposal until lunch. Unless we break early? Oh moderator, will you take over.

Moderator:

That would be a little bit premature. In case you will go to lunch alone, you'll have to ask some questions before that. That's in my hands.

Presenter:

I've obviously persuaded everyone that I told the true story. It might be worth adding to what my Scottish brother has told you that the English, Scottish and Irish Grand Lodges regularly hold tripartite meetings to discuss matters which affect all of us in the United Kingdom and Ireland. And that has been going on now since at least the 18 hundreds and it is a very, very valuable institution. I'm myself half Scottish and a Scottish freemason. I became a Scottish freemason in Sri Lanka where I took my first Master's chair. And after that I did masonry in Germany. I was Secretary of a Lodge in Caracas, Venezuela. I lived many years in Germany and in North America. So if anyone has any questions about an international freemasonry or freemasonry in the world today, I'm happy to handle that. Thank you.

Q&A

Moderator:

Thank you. There is a question.

Question 1:

Thank you for presentation. Do you dare to speculate, why has the number of freemasons has dropped? I imagine that the number of lodges goes up and down. If you at some point have reached a maximum number ...

Presenter:

We don't know.

Question 2:

The number of freemasons has decreased more than double, are there any historical events or reasons why that has been initiated and created the drop?

Presenter:

Yeah, actually that is very important for all of us to address today. Freemasonry is part of normal society and should be regarded as such. And our behaviour today is quite different from our ancestors, even compared to the time when I became a freemason in 1961. There are many changes in the world today. I have a joint bank account with my wife for a start. Something called television has been invented. There's social media. Many women have had to work as well as be housekeepers, like heavens. We are lucky all of us to be supported by our partners. People have less time for adventures unless they're taking a quick holiday somewhere. They are reading fewer newspapers. Their attention span is shorter. Their education doesn't concentrate on learning as much as it used to. It certainly doesn't concentrate on memory and ability to memorise. Churches have lost membership. Clubs like Rotary and the Women's Inner Wheel - they have all suffered similar membership declines. It's something to do with the world today. I don't think we can blame freemasonry itself. Certainly not the core principles and tenets – they are as relevant today as they ever have been. But there are other ways that people can use their energy and time and we have to take that into account.

In England, we were challenged at one stage under a previous government to prove or rather disprove their belief that being a freemason and a top civil servant or an army person or judge was incompatible with that public service. We had to remind those ignorant newspapers that our leader was a Field Marshal in Her Majesty's army. That many of us held judicial appointments. Many of us were in the police. All of us were public servants in one way or another and all of us were trying to be better men. And we were trying to be not political, not religious in our meetings. Open to all men and therefore a useful ornament to today's society. And any questions which they asked us, we were able to provide. Except a list of our members. They had no right to that and we would challenge that in the courts. We do not have to produce a list of our members. Oddly enough, until 1963 and from 1799 onwards we had to send lists of our members to the Clerk of our local town. What has happened to all those records? Whatever happened to them, we have no idea. Mr. Blair's government decided they were no longer required. So it was indeed government which decided that we no longer had to provide list of our members. So we were able to remind the government of that as well. I don't think that that had a negative effect on freemasonry, although I think some of the attempts to blacken the name of freemasonry in the press and the media didn't do us any good. And at one stage we were not able or willing to argue against.

Now there are certain things it is not worth arguing against and that is a matter of faith. We don't engage with a church that says that membership of their church is incompatible with freemasonry. That's their opinion. We don't have an opinion on that. We just say that we are open to any men of faith. That's the first point. Second point is that we are accused of being a male only society. Which is of course perfectly true that the United Grand Lodge of England and indeed the ancient stonemasons craft was always reserved to men. But there have been female lady freemasons since the 18th century and there have been mixed lodges since the 19th century. All we are saying is that we are the male group in this palette of colours. There are female Freemasons with whom we enjoy good relationships at a management level and mixed masons and we hope that somewhere anyone will find freemasonry of interest. We are not interested in those lodges which get involved in politics or in religious matters.

So to answer your question very briefly, yes, our membership has fallen. We think that fall has just about bottomed out. Our new Pro Grand Master – we always have a Pro Grand Master when we have a member of the Royal Family as the Grand Master. Our Pro Grand Master has a strategy for making masonry today more available, more widely known, more accessible than it always has been. Partly to increase our membership but also to maintain our position in society. His strategy is at work and one of the things he's introduced, which hasn't been mentioned today, is the inclusion of the Royal Arch under the same management. It was always thus in that there is the heading of the Craft also heading the Royal Arch, but now they are being joined at a management level. And people are even more encouraged to join the Royal Arch as well because as it says in our Book of Constitutions that our Constitution consists of three degrees including the Royal Arch.

The future could be good. My own lodge, Apollo University Lodge in Oxford initiates 4 or even 6 members every second meeting and we meet six times a year. We are flourishing. We have lots of younger men now coming in. Thanks in part to social media, because people are using that to tell people what enjoyment they're getting from freemasonry and they're bringing more of their younger friends in. So I think that is looking good.

As masonry membership declines, it means that we perhaps are getting back to a point where we haven't had a war for a long time. Not a serious war that involved the whole countryside. Immediately after the First World War, there was a huge increase in freemasonry membership, which declined until the Second World War. And after the Second World War again, there was a big increase in the number of freemasons. I've seen the number of Lodges in London, which used to come under my direct control, reduced from 1,800 when I took over to about 1600 today. So in the Centre it is flourishing, in the Districts, that is overseas, flourishing. It's often in the Provinces now around England that we are having difficulties. For example, in the little area I come from called Cornwall, which is in the far southwest corner, we only have about 4,000 members, but we have 27 lodge buildings to maintain and you can imagine that is quite a financial burden to justify to your wife. I just mentioned that from personal experience and that plays a part.

We still do very well on the charity side. I won't go into the details there. We still raise lots of money, but again, people are having to think much more carefully. Particularly if they dine in a Lodge in London. Dining in London has now become extremely expensive. It may not be expensive by Estonian standards, but I find that paying 110 pounds for a three course meal, including two glasses of wine – difficult. It's easier now. When I became Grand Secretary, I promised my wife that I would only devote six nights a week to freemasonry. Now if I was out dining every night, you can see that would've been quite a draw on the family finances. I'd be already having a joint account at that stage.

So I hope that answers your question.

Moderator:

Thank you James. And some other questions that were not formulated - you have a little chance to ask James something. You regret if you pass it.

Question 3:

Thank you. I have a question. What if in this very tough world we are in with wars and everything and some countries are turning into authoritarian regimes. What about the recognition? I understand it so that recognition to Grand Lodge in a particular country is given one time only. And if it goes sideways are there any examples of their recognition or temporary suspension?

Presenter:

Yes, there are examples, but it's not generally speaking to do with war. There is one example of war, however. For the First World War, we slowly said that we would no longer receive German citizens as visiting members. Not surprisingly. We had a little war with Argentina just a few years ago. Freemasonry continued. We put out no ban. People just stayed back from into visiting at that time. When however, a grand lodge in its internal behaviour becomes so fragmented with competing grand master and we don't know which is the regular grand lodge and which isn't, then we can initially and do suspend relations and restore them once order has been restored and we're satisfied that our members will not be subjected to internal disputes. This happened with the The Grande Loge Nationale Française. Again, of recent history.

If however, a Grand Lodge becomes involved in politics within the Lodge we become very worried. And this happened in 1870. At that time, the Grand Orient of France decided that each member could choose whether he believed in a God and would declare that or not and would rely on his conscience. The person about whom I wrote my thesis, (Henry Herbert, the 4th) Earl of Carnarvon was our Pro Grand Master at the time. And he led Grand Lodge in the decision to say to the Grand Orient of France that we could no longer have relations with a body which no longer recognise a Grand Architect of the Universe. And that big divide has gone on ever since. And we are quite different. However, in

our research work, in our conferences like this and so on, we of course meet each other, but we do not visit each other's lodges.

So the short answer to your question is there are examples and most current one of course is I did mention that we recognised the Grand Lodge of Russia in 1995 and we also recognise the Grand Lodge of Ukraine. And oddly enough, somehow or other visitation isn't happening at the moment. We've not laid down any law. It just isn't happening. As brothers, I'm sure there are still good worthy men on both sides, but we have not yet interfered in the sense of suspending relations because they're still acting in accordance with the principles and tenants of freemasonry as far as we are aware. Does that answer your question?

Thank you very much.

LUNCHEBREAK

PRESENTER 3 – Andreas Önnarfors (Sweden)

Freemasonry as a Tool in European Diplomacy History

Duration of presentation: 45 minutes. Duration of Q&A: 7 minutes.

Moderator:

We're going to get on with our job. There's a saying in Estonian, which goes in Estonian “leiba luusse laskma”, of which a free translation is to take a snap after lunch. But I'm quite sure that Andreas will not let you take it because Professor Andreas is a professor of intellectual history. So sharpen your minds please.

Presenter:

Thank you. Thank you so much for inviting me. This will be a talk of cliffhangers. So this is kind of part one of many, many parts that could be presented because the topic is so vast and what I'm going to tell you today just is a little part of it.

One of the first conversations we had with the Grand Master Kalle was about a man called Jacob Gustaf Pontusson De la Gardie. I will not talk so much about him today, so that's also one of the cliffhangers. But he's a really interesting person in the history of diplomacy and freemasonry in Europe because he was a Swede who presided the union between the Antients and the Moderns in 1813 in England. And the De la Gardie family has connections to Estonia but also to other parts around the Baltic Sea. De la Gardie was part of what you could call the Swedish government for a long time. He was also an ambassador in Spain and he was very much involved in freemasonry. He was also a very instrumental person to bring about public schools in Sweden. Even before we established public schools in Sweden in 1842. And he established banks, insurances, has donated money to the University of Lund in southern Sweden and ... where I took my PhD. A remarkable character that is part of the early history of Swedish freemasonry. So when I was asked to present today, I said I will have to start with some kind of more general picture and then I will at another occasion hopefully be able to tell you more about the remarkable life of freemason and diplomat, Jacob Gustaf Pontusson De la Gardie.

But what I'm going to talk about today, well first I will talk a little bit about the organisation culture of freemasonry because sometimes it seems a topic that is not so exciting, but I think it is because it has some points to the future. James W. Daniel already talked about the legacy of the 1723 Constitutions and why are the Constitutions important. Not only because they have a very nice song in the end, but they are kind of preparing freemasons to go out in the world and build lodges in different continents. And that happens both on the very local level and on the international level where diplomacy and freemasonry kind of overlap.

Then I would talk about the peculiar case of Swedish Anglo relations around 1800. They kind of set the stage for De la Gardie being the person who merges the Antients and the Modern Grand Lodge and the overlap in diplomacy and

freemasonry in that specific case. To put that into context. And then I will dare to make some kind of lessons for the future reflections at the end of my presentation.

We have already heard about the connections that are going from New York to Tallinn. The Grand Lodge of New York established the Finnish Grand Lodge and the Finnish Grand Lodge established the province of Estonia. And then later on was instrumental in bringing about the recognition of the Grand Lodge of Estonia. The seal that you can see in the background is of a lodge in New York that I have been researching. This one is from a petition to a Lodge in New York that was called the Union Lodge and this was a lodge where French emigrants after the Napoleonic War and Germans worked together in New York. It's a very interesting topic and I've been writing about German immigrant lodges to New York as well. And I think the fascinating thing with the international history of freemasonry is about all these dimensions where people are moving across the globe and bringing their freemasons with 'em. They come to new local conditions, they're writing back to their grand lodges. Sometimes in harmony, sometimes it's not as you know, but in the end, freemasonry prevails and that's so fascinating and interesting. So in 2017 I published a book on Oxford University press called Freemasonry - A Very Short Introduction and I will start off to say something about what I wrote in this book when it comes to the organisation culture of Freemasonry,

In the chapter I wrote about organisational culture, I talk about masonic self jurisdiction or self-governance. These are terms that come from political theory basically. But I mean I cannot help, I'm an academic, I'm trying to project things in my understanding of freemasonry as well. I think that's a very important term to have in mind. That is what is going on since 1723 is that freemasonry voluntarily agrees upon certain rules and that these rules are kind of followed or not followed across the globe and it manifests itself through patents, certificates, constitutions, and warrants. And maybe the most important thing that has happened is the development of the idea of authority, the territorial idea of authority or jurisdiction. It's a very complex and conflicting concept, but it is there and was certainly an innovation by freemasons who came up with that.

Normally freemasons across the globe voluntarily submit to these rules, but there are also divergences on own discretion and there's a flexible adaptation to host of local context across the globe. But in the end, and as we heard from the Scottish presentation, what we should understand is the smallest organisation, a unit in freemasonry is the lodge. And that is I think one of the most important messages when you think about this self organisation of freemasonry – that we have the lodge as the most fundamental unit and that we have a tension between bottom up and top down understandings of freemasonry. So is freemasonry actually an organisation made of bottom up organisations or is it a top down understanding? A grand lodge establishes certain lodges and they make out a grand lodge. And then we have the tensions or the differences between regional and national levels as we already have been talking about.

We have provincial grand lodges and national grand lodges. But what is interesting is that the international relations are rather unregulated because of what we heard before about the rules of grand lodge recognition. But when did it all start? When did the international relations and freemasonry actually start? And it is really an interesting question because who came up with the idea to establish a grand lodge in France or in Sweden or in Italy and how would it all be regulated? That was not as particularly clear in the 1760s and I'll come back to an incident that surrounds this episode. And to continue further on these concepts of masonic regularity or irregularity and recognition, and James was talking about it before, we have the major schism on the issue of freedom of conscience before and during the 1870s.

Normally we talk about the ... of freemasonry and France and Belgium being at the heart of this conflict. But in reality it was built up since at least five decades before that. You can see that this tension between what freemasonry means in society and for society already starts in the decades after the French Revolution. And this is the culmination of something that comes in 1,877. And then we have these already discussed eight important principles of grand lodge recognition from the side of UGLE and I think the Irish and Scottish Grand Lodges are also subscribed to. But in practical terms, one could say that the main issue with the grand lodge recognition is the inter-visitation right on the individual level. So the individual member is precluded from visiting a lodge that is not recognised. And then we have the principle of territorial authority, one grand lodge in one country. We know that this is a rule that is more or less also debatable and has very many exceptions. We have national grand lodges in Germany before 1935 that were organised across Germany or we have the Prince Hall grand lodges in the US where you have a second grand lodge in different

States and so on. But then we have of course many fake organisations that claim that they are freemasons. They neither are regular nor recognised.

Why I'm starting at this end is that in the end what it boils down to is that freemasonry since 1723 became a school for government as Margaret C. Jacob has called it. So Masonic logic prepared their members and practised important government functions and more specifically democratic functions according to Margaret Jacob.

That is the Union Lodge Steel I wanted to show or thought I was showing you at the beginning, but that is the Union lodge in New York I was talking about in the beginning where German and French freemasons were together at the beginning of the 18 hundreds in New York.

What I think is the fascinating thing with freemasonry is that there's this culture of self-governance that prepares for an active citizenship. So that answers some of the questions, why are we doing this actually? Why is it important? Why does Freemasonry work in systems that are democratic or more open societies? And why are more autocratic societies not inclined to support freemasonry? That is because of that some people come together, they form a large thing, they have their freedoms, they think that they're acting in accordance to internationally agreed, voluntarily agreed norms. And that self-governance is the preparation for an active citizenship. And you can see it happening in every lodge on a local and a global level in voting, in collecting fees and correspondence and issuing passports to the members and civil society actions like the charity project we heard of before in Scotland.

It's also important to have in mind that many masonic lodges and provincial lodges and grand lodges were the first non-governmental organisations in large parts of the world. So today we are talking about non-government organisations through society, organisation as a typical part of open societies. But if you go back in history that starts in the 18th century and that is why it's fascinating. They are the first who do this, who come up with rules and organise themselves. And INGOs, if you don't know what that means is an international non-governmental organisation. As we all know, free masonry is not an international organisation, but on one level it is because it is practised everywhere also even in different forms. But that makes it so interesting, sometimes freemasonry also substitutes for the absence of foreign structures with something that I've learned in the United States. So it is not only the case that many masonic grand lodges were established before the sovereignty or a national sovereignty of a state, but it is also true that freemasonry sometimes has substituted for the absence of former governing structures.

And that happened for instance in the Great American West when the masonic lodges came there before there was any statehood, neither the local or regional or national level, which is super fascinating. So we have a successful pattern of organisation across the globe since and before 1723 and we have millions of members that have become initiated.

But with that background in mind, to set the kind of theoretical stage for that, I want to bring you into one particular episode of Masonic diplomacy that played out in between Sweden and England around 1800. And why I think it's fascinating. Documents like the one you can see here are very prominent in masonic archives across the globe. And sometimes you need to work hard to unpack what this really is about.

This is a letter that was sent by the Prince of Wales who was the then Grand Master of the Modern Grand Lodge to Duke Charles later King Charles XIII of Sweden on the 8th of May 1799. And this is Duke Charles of Sudermania. As I said, he became Charles XIII, King of Sweden and King of Norway and was a Grand Master of Swedish Order of Freemasons between 1774 and 1818. So for a very long time. And here his portrait in his magnificent dress as a Grand Master of the so-called 9th province of the Order as he believed that he was heading.

In this letter from the Prince of Wales who was the Grand Master of the Modern to the Swedish Grand Master – that is a reply to letter that Duke Charles sent to him in which he proposed a closer union between the two Grand Lodges. And then you can think of, yeah, well and of course it's nice cause Grand Lodges always want to work together. And then he says the Order in both countries is founded for the good of humanity.

It is important to preserve that simplicity which has distinguished the Order for many centuries. It is vital to prescribe those novelties which furnish material for those dangerous enthusiasts or weak conspirators working under the cover of

darkness and under the sacred evil of our Order. And we'll come back to that. It's interesting that the letter finishes up with stating that three principles: adoration of the Almighty, submission to the government of our native country, love for our neighbor, are very much so things we recognise from Anderson's Constitutions. And the letter finishes off that freemasonry enjoys Royal protection, both in Britain and Sweden.

That requires a little recap of the Swedish-Anglo relations during the 18th century until 1813. The first initiation in Sweden placed in 1735. Then we got the French constitution two years later. We got a renewed French constitution in 1751. The Grand Lodge of Sweden was established in 1760, in the 1760s there was a conflict of interest with Tullmann's lodges that were established from England. That conflict was solved. There was basically no contact between Sweden and England until 1784 and then suddenly there was a renewed interest in the 1790s.

And I just want to talk a little bit about this conflict of interest in the 1760s because it's also an overlap between diplomacy and freemasonry. There was this guy Tullmann, who worked at the British Embassy in Stockholm and he said, your lodges in Sweden are not regular because you were not established by London. I'm establishing lodges in Sweden now and we will establish a Province of Sweden because that does not exist so far. So we established two lodges in Stockholm and one in Gothenburg and one lodge of a higher degrees that later moved to Finland. And that of course was a complex situation because Sweden was in the absolute belief that their Grand Lodge was established with French patents and with true patents and was a regular Grand Lodge. But as I said before, the concept of Masonic diplomacy or international relations was kind of established in the 1760s and the principles were developed by a man called De Vignoles, whose name is written on the next point here.

And this De Vignoles was the first Provincial Grand Master of foreign provinces, a title that he proposed himself to the Modern Grand Master to regulate international affairs. All these De Vignoles' papers are very much so preserved and deserve much more research because I think that a lot of the principles of international Masonic jurisdictions are already buried in these ideas that they had in the 1760s. The problem of the recognition of the Swedish Grand Lodge was solved in the early 1770s by our Grand Master Scheffer who wrote to London and explained to them how Sweden was established. But then the Swedish interest decreased until the end of the 1790s. And why? That's because of geopolitics.

What happened in the end of the 1790s? Well, as you all know, we had a French revolution and in the aftermath of French Revolution, freemasonry and the important or well-known and notorious Illuminati of Bavaria were accused to have orchestrated the French Revolution. And in Britain legislation came up with the so-called Unlawful Society Act as a response to growing societal and political tensions. There was a legislation passed to stem radical activism in the aftermath of the French Revolution. There was an Irish rebellion. There were organisations like United Irishmen, Scotsman, Englishman, all the London Greek society. All accused of kind of conspiring against the British government. And this legislation is clearly influenced by the growth of anti-masonic conspiracy theories. There were two authors (Barruel and Robison) who had written about the French Revolution and proofs of a conspiracy against all governments in Europe.

So the British government tried to control the kind of unlawful organisations that they saw were kind of using the pretext of being fraternal organisations for instance, to in the political activism. And there's other legislation around in Europe that preceded that British legislation. I've written an entire article about that. But the interesting thing is here that the British government in this Unlawful Societies Act wants to regulate uncertainties that are related to voluntary association in the age of revolution and reaction. So that means we have revolutions going on in the continent. We have the, if you've seen the Napoleon movie, we have all the warfare that is going on, the coalition wars against Napoleon and something has to be done. So in that moment the British government says we have to control all kinds of voluntary associations, freemasonry included. And that was the issue when the legislation was passed.

And this is how the Unlawful Societies Act looked. This is a Prussian patent, which I think it was very much modelled on. So Prussia had also legislation here, even if freemasonry was accepted but put under a governmental control and that is what happened in the end with the Unlawful Societies Act as well. So freemasonry for the first time was part of the national legislation. First in Prussia, one year later in England. As a reaction upon the revolution. So this animation in Britain that we had with the 1790s that you can read, for instance in these books of Barruel or Robison, this is the title page of the proofs of the conspiracy and blames in particular continental forms of freemasonry. Higher degree of

freemasonry that is perverted and contributes to the excess of revolution. As he says in his book, British freemasonry is something that was very modern.

They published a newspaper or a journal to boost the image of themselves in society. So in 1793 printers and what we today would call journalists, people in media in London came together to establish the Freemasons magazine in order to control and influence the public opinion of Freemasonry and portray in its most positive terms as a charitable society that's doing good for mankind and is intellectual and cultural. And this is super interesting. A journal that came out and in it they attempted to counter growing anti-masonry by referring to historical cases when freemasonry had been prosecuted and they argued openly against Robison and it displayed extreme loyalty and patriotism towards the English government.

But then comes in the Swedish diplomacy. And this man, Göran Ulrik Silfverhielm, as you can see was a Swedish diplomat who was in service in Britain for a long time. First as a Secretary then he was a minister- resident, *envoyée extraordinaire* and *ministre plénipotentiaire*. So all kind of functions you could wish that a person in diplomatic service would have. He was even married to a local in London, Harriet Matthew and the Matthew family were patrons of art in London. But not only that, this man Göran Silfverhielm as we can call him, he was a part of the intimate circle of the Swedish freemasonry with Duke Charles. And then around the time of passing of this English legislation, Duke Charles contacts Silfverhielm while he's in Stockholm and he goes back to London again and gives him a certain mission. So it is not only that Silfverhielm comes then back to Stockholm and gets his accreditation again to act as a minister in Britain in this precarious time when the coalition against Napoleon was formed. But he also got a secret mission as a mason and that is one part of it. He says Silfverhielm is obliged on all occasion to avoid the alleged supremacy or superiority with which English freemasonry generally wants to exercise over the Lodges of other countries. He says here, and since the Swedish Grand Lodge has never accepted the precedence from the English, such disputes are to be avoided diligently; but if such unexpectedly occur the Swedish Grand Lodge should clearly declare that since it owns its power and authority from a completely different place from England, it can also not accept the precedence of its grand lodge. Sweden constitutes a particular Province independent from the English and has no other interest than that which promotes a close friendship which is stated by the uniformity of the aims of its practises. Some pretty sharp formulation in a kind of diplomatic instruction to Silfverhielm on how he should interact with people of the English Grand Lodge.

And we have also a strange certificate that Silfverhielm received as a Swedish masonic envoy to Britain in January 1798. Nobody has really been able to explain to me what this patent actually means, but there's something that Duke Charles tells Silfverhielm to produce this certificate if you have to. I have my theories about what this certificate is, I can share it with you if you're interested, but it's not super important for this, the chain of events what happened.

And furthermore Silfverhielm was instructed by Duke Charles to regularly report to him about what is happening in England right now. But certainly the freemason was under stress because of the political events. And what Duke Charles did, he provided Silfverhielm with this cypher instrument here. This is still preserved today in the archive of Swedish Order of Freemasons. I don't know if you've played with those when you were a kid, but you're turning them around. When I was in the Boy Scouts, we did that and you can turn it around so you can use it. It's quite advanced. So it's not so simple that it's a substitution cypher, but it is a kind of cypher machine and you need instructions on how to turn this cypher grill in order then to decode what you have written in your letter. And these letters between Silfverhielm and Duke Charles are also preserved today. As you can see this is dated in London and the content is highly interesting. When I first found the correspondence in two archives of both of the freemasons but also the Royal Library, I thought I will never be able to crack the code because how will I know how to turn this real so that it can decipher.

But then I was lucky because Duke Charles, to whom this letter was sent, had made a transcript of it. So it was not me who cracked the code, I'm a very bad code cracker, but Duke Charles made transcriptions which made it much easier to read. I've written about what they have written to each other in these correspondences, but it is an amazing thing. And at the time several other of Duke Charles' friends and of his intimate circles are at different places in Europe. De la Gardie is one of them. And Duke Charles provided this cypher grill to all of them with different patterns, but all of them had to communicate with him in this way, which is quite very fascinating. And there's also a host of correspondence that is not transcribed and still awaits to be cracked. Maybe with AI in the future. So you can see how happy I was when I found

this transcription, the handwriting of Duke Charles. So this is transcribed and translated passage from the dispatch sent by Silfverhielm to Duke Charles:

“Freemasonry, which since my last stay in England [probably during the early 1790s] in a rather unimportant way was acknowledged by the public has since that time in a high degree turned into a topic of diligent and curious public interest and even more of closer investigation by the government. Two learned, the one a Scotsman with the name of Robison, professor in Edinburgh, the other a Frenchman called Barruel, an Ex-Jesuit, have both within a year and each in his own language published writings accusing freemasonry to be the breeding ground and nursery for the present teachings of revolution, destroying all societal order and legitimate government. With a certain but insufficient acquaintance of the true secret of freemasonry, both have united a more true and extensive knowledge of ‘Illuminatism’ [sic] both of its atheistic type from Bavaria, the head of which was Weishaupt, as well as of the mystical, which as its tools has used a Cagliostro, or a Pater Gassner as well as other publicly known charlatans. How finally these two types of Illuminati – as a vehicle to transport their systems – have gained access to the secret of freemasonry and in particular for this purpose have exploited its three craft degrees has been known by these above-mentioned authors. But such a knowledge has then been applied by them without differentiation to throw a shadow on the entire Order of Freemasons and in particular its higher secrets. French freemasonry and in particular its operations under the rule of the Duke of Orleans has been cited by Barruel as evidence for the activity of the entire Order to [bring about] the present revolution in society. Although correct knowledge of the matter takes off all suspicion from the hazard posed to societies and religion by the Masonic order, if perceived as such in the right way, it is at the same time less surprising that the fear of the profane world has been awakened by these crippled but partly evidenced facts on the misuse that was caused [by certain forms of freemasonry].”

18th century style isn't it? Baroque style, no dots. One sentence. But the importance of the letters between Silfverhielm and Duke Charles is that he informs him about the precarious state of English freemasonry at the point. And it's a true proof of that they're aware of these things, they're aware of the accusations of the conspiracy theories of the authors who are publishing about these things. And in that situation, Duke Charles instructs Silfverhielm back to say, I want you to contact the Prince of Wales because I want to propose to him that we should form a closer union. That's quite amazing and he's successful with that because Silfverhielm then is admitted to a meeting in Grand Lodge on 10th April, 1799.

The deputy Grand Master, I think the title was something else back in time, was a Scotsman called the Earl of Moira, which you [RW Bro James W. Daniel] have written about quite extensively in a thesis. Very fascinating figure, absolutely super interesting person. He was instrumental in bringing in Silfverhielm into that Grand Lodge meeting and where he was well received and the Prince of Wales was instructed to write a letter back to Duke Charles, which I showed to you in the beginning:

“From the above correspondence and the happy opening of a regular communication between the Grand Lodges of England, Scotland and Sweden, there is the greatest reason to believe that the best effects will result and that, agreeably to the wish of every zealous brother, a friendly and lasting intercourse will be preserved with the Freemasons of all the Kingdoms.”

Now as I said on the surface this looks like any other kind of approachment between two grand lodges in the history of masonry, but we need to study these things in the context of the societal development at the time. And that is why it's always so important to place these things in the broader context.

So in the aftermath of the Swedish rapprochement, the letter by Duke Charles was not only well received by the Modern Grand Lodge, which is documented - this was original records from the Grand Lodge meeting - but it was used by Lord Moira in negotiating exemptions from the Unlawful Societies Act to freemasonry on the 2nd of May 1799. So Moira was called to Pitt's who led the government and they were negotiating about exemption because freemasonry was very close to being prohibited in Britain at the time. Which is kind of unimaginable because it was its country of origin.

And according to the count that Silfverhielm gave to Duke Charles, his intervention makes that Moira can bring this letter of support from Duke Charles and say, we are a respectable institution. The Swedes want to have communication with us. And then of course don't forget the geopolitical aspects in that moment. The alliance against the Napoleon is

forged between Sweden and England for instance. But the delicacy surrounding the passing of the Unlawful Societies Act must also be understood in what tense relationship would be the prime minister and George III and the Prince of Wales the successor to the throne. And this is again British domestic politics, but that's also very interesting and that there were rumours that Lord Moira potentially would become a prime minister if the Prince of Wales would become king. As I said, domestic politics in Britain. But they were intermingled with freemasonry as you can see.

But to me the interesting part here is that Silfverhielm's dispatches provide with another piece in the puzzle as to why prime minister Pitt might have targeted freemasonry. Because it belonged to the camp of his political opponents. And then of course what you can see what's happening in Britain at the time is that the domestic politics, the internal power play uses these conspiratorial paranoia as pretension for infringements of civil liberties. That is something you clearly can say is one of the elements of what we see is going on here.

And then the longer lasting influence of that rapprochement between Sweden and England was that over the next entire two decades I would say, and perhaps ever since there was a normalisation taking place. And what then happened in 1813, when De la Gardie presided over the union of the Antient and Moderns was some sort of a pinnacle of demonstration of that new union in very, very tense political times. But if you go to Swedish freemasonry, one can say that in 1770s and 80s, freemasonry was identified as a means to exercise influence in European affairs by soft politics. So Sweden was not any longer a great power, but the Swedish Duke Charles and also his brother Gustav III clearly identified freemasonry as a tool to make foreign elites interested in Sweden so to speak.

And one of the ideas was, for instance, to establish or to extend the Swedish Order of Freemasons into the territory of the Russian Empire. I think that on this patent also Tallinn is mentioned, we have to look closer here because what happened then was that Sweden wanted to extend its reach in organisational terms into the Russian Empire including the other side of the Baltic Sea. But as I said, Sweden developed a stronger interest in Britain during the 1790s. The Swedish rapprochement is part of that campaign. It unintentionally or intentionally contributed to the exemption of freemasonry from prohibition and the infringement of freedom of assembly. And if that can be substantiated more through more research, maybe more in these parts of the correspondence that we have not been able to decode yet, then that would be a proof of that. Sometimes freemasonry and diplomacy definitely overlap and it is very worthwhile to look twice at developments like these. Thank you.

So I want to finish up with some lessons for the future. We live in the age of generative AI and I asked the generative AI called Copilot to create an image: *"Faced by the turmoil of the surrounding world, Freemasons need to stick together in the future."* And that is what you get if you ask a generative AI model to produce that. It still looks very much like that. The freemasons, well the evil guys and why I want to show this to you is do we today own the image of freemasonry that is out there? Do we own the perception that a generative AI interprets a freemasonry to be? I'm not quite sure. I like the Superman image out there on the left and maybe the intellectual guy who's staring at the globe. But the others that clearly show that if you type in freemasonry, the perception is that it's something of a sin.

But still, I think the lesson from that episode that I was talking to you about – there's a risk always when we do masonic history that we are talking about dates and people, lodges and meetings and so on that we risk to see the larger picture. But if we go back to the end of the 1700s, the 1790s we see that freemasonry is in a very serious crisis. It is accused of being used for revolution and for political ends. And in that situation the Swedish Grand Lodge certainly also inspired by geopolitical developments decided we need to support what is going on there. There's this crisis going on in England, it's the birthplace of freemasonry and very unlikely, particularly if you look at the kind of construction that Silfverhielm got from Duke Charles about the supremacy of the image of freemasonry.

I think it's not an exception if you look into our times that we need to support each other and another lesson of course that freemasonry can contribute to better relations between individuals as much as between cultures and nations. And taken back to what had been said before, that kind of ethos of 1723 and the Constitutions. And then of course we need to continue to build bridges across obedience and discuss and address divisions as much as what unites us. I think that is a difficult task.

Q&A

Moderator:

Thank you so much. You generated so much thoughts. Are there any questions coming because, well my head is full of these things you just spoke about. So how good students are we to the professor? Has he raised some questions in your head?

Question 1:

Thank you Professor. My question is that, could you elaborate what was the reason, let's say, to choose or select De la Gardie as a person for the merger of two Grand Lodges in 1813?

Presenter:

It's a good question. De la Gardie donated all his writings to the University Library of Lund in Sweden. He was a very avid writer of his diary. He has written fantastic diaries. He was in Vienna when the Peace of Vienna was negotiated. He had met with everybody, he was a superstar in European diplomatic history and he wrote diaries when he was an envoy in London. Now it's absolutely clear that when he was there around 1812 - 1813, before he went to Spain, that he had some kind of very important diplomatic mission to carry out. But you can see in his diary that he's visiting numerous Lodges in London during this time in London. I think that the English leadership of both the Antients and the Moderns knew De la Gardie knew that he was a super diplomat. He had really high credentials in the diplomatic world. And then they thought that if we are having an event where you bring together the Antients and the Moderns, we need somebody who's neutral and who's not involved in either the Antients or the Moderns, but who is a high ranking freemason and has credentials from the Swedish king. And harking back to the earlier story I think that was the reason they picked him. I have not found any clear motivations for that. Maybe James can help me out with that. But I think that is absolutely the main explanation. He was a top diplomat that was around in London at the time and he was the right person to do it.

Question 2:

I have one more. When you visit UGLE's museum in London, then there is one very important artefact - Grand Sword of the Grand Lodge, a gift from Lord Norfolk. It's written in Constitution in 1738 that it was done in January 1731 and the Grand Master Lord Norfolk gifted a sword which belonged to Swedish King Gustavus Adolfus. He was killed in 1632, which means it happened during the 30 Years War between two main trains of Christianity. And now it's interesting that in Estonia, Gustavus Adolfus was connected to Estonian history in Tallinn in 1631, 1 year before he was killed, there is the first gymnasium which was established and first university 1632 in Tartu. And then university in Finland. Our Grand Lodge Sword is not from West.

Presenter:

The authenticity of that particular sword can be discussed. But the symbolic dimension of it is of course super interesting. And it could have happened that it ended up in England, although he died against Catholics in New Germany. But I mean talking about conspiracy theories – Gustav III was killed, Charles XII was killed. So who knows how this sword ended up in the Grand Lodge of England.

James W. Daniel:

Might I? Little story about the sword. When we came to celebrate our 200th anniversary with the Grand Lodge of Sweden or freemasons in Sweden, I was lucky enough to be the escort for the Duke of Kent to go to Stockholm and stay in the Royal Palace and be present at an interview between him and the King of Sweden at the time who flew in from Africa, just obviously just to give us dinner. And I took with us or we took with us the Duke of Norfolk sword, which had a special seat on this special plane only when we had in writing the guarantee from the Grand Lodge of Sweden that we would be allowed to take it out of the country again. We thought this was quite an important sword. So when the King met the Duke in the Royal Palace, there was the sword in the middle and the king who had just arrived and Duke was there, neither of them knew each other and it was quiet. Nobody said anything. So I thought I wanted say something. So I did. I said this is the sword. Gustavus III. We've always carried it in our possession. It's really very famous and we're so glad it's here today and how nice of you, Your Royal Highness, to also be present here. And that was it. And we left. And as I was leaving, the Head of the Library in Sweden came to me and said: "Thank you very much. We have several swords like that."

Presenter:

Thank you. I regularly say to my students that you can read more in my publication so I can give you a reading list because I could have added footnotes to most of the things.

Moderator:

You don't have to remind us. Everybody saw your book. So we're going to look at amazon.com or elsewhere. Thank you very much.

Presenter:

Thank you.

PRESENTER 4 – David Ryan Jenkins (Estonia)

Freemasonry's Role in the History of Estonia

Duration of presentation: 51 minutes. Duration of Q&A: 17 minutes.

Presenter:

I do hope that even though this conference was supposed to be in English, that an American will suffice. Thank you very much again to Andreas. You have made my job extremely difficult. And to the rest of you, congratulations for having made it this far. That is also quite an achievement. I can at this point reassure you that I am looking forward to getting to this evening's reception as much as you are.

So when I was told that I would be given the opportunity to speak to you today, it was a fairly open-end assignment. The topic had to be appropriate for the 25th anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Estonia, and it was warmly suggested that I tie it in somehow to the recent 300th anniversary of the first publication of Anderson's Constitutions. My first thought obviously would be, will I be able to speak about Estonian freemasonry and Anderson's constitutions for 45 minutes? My direct next thought would be that, is there anyone who would want to listen to me talking about Estonian freemasonry and Anderson's constitutions for 45 minutes? And I have to say that we will probably find the answers to both of those questions very shortly.

Initially, while that did not seem to be a terribly easy task, I started at the very beginning and picked up a copy of Anderson's Constitutions, which as you've seen earlier today, is generally remembered for the rules and regulations that it gave to freemasonry. But as I'm sure all of you have actually read the publication, you know that the first half of the book is actually a very grandiose masonic history of the world. Starting from the dawn of time afterwards, he proceeded to relate the history, not just of masonry, but of how masons and their ideals shaped the wider history of mankind. While for some reason many consider that part of the book to be of more questionable value, I started to like the idea of examining how masons and masonry have affected the development of Estonian culture and the idea of nation. At any rate, it seemed to be an appropriate challenge and perhaps even something that could warrant 45 minutes of your valuable time.

So freemasonry has always been about bringing together men with common principles and helping them make themselves better men and in the process making the world a better place. The first step in a mason's growth is understanding his own history, including his culture. The next step is to understand his role in actively developing history, whether as an individual or as a member of the brotherhood with respect to the land that we now know as the Republic of Estonia.

The province of Old Estonia on the top here and the northern part of Old Livonia is now what we consider to be modern Estonia. Freemasonry in our land basically has had two incarnations, roughly 1770 to 1820, and then again from the 1990s that is shall we say, going strong. And while we're all sitting here right now, the history of the organisation was a major topic of the last conference held for the 250th anniversary of freemasonry in Estonia, which I'm sure you all attended and all remember. Well in addition to the history of freemasonry, though, I think it's very important to actually

remember the history of the brethren themselves. On one hand, the brethren had a large impact on the history of the whole region, and on the other hand, global freemasonry has had a very significant effect both on the brethren and on the general public. Together those two forces have played an important role in laying the foundation for the formation of an independent republic in Estonia as well as rebuilding it after 1991.

I will spare you Anderson's history starting with Brother Adam and continuing on through biblical history. I'll also not broach upon the relationship between the Templars and the Lavinian Brotherhood of the Sword of the Onic order and any other murky connections that they may have had or may not have had to the founding of freemasonry. I'm concerned with foundation's solid things, so I'll keep my focus primarily on the impact of masons and masonry on Estonia and Livonia between 1770 and 1918. But I do still think it's a little bit necessary to give some background on the overall history of the region.

Most of the people that I see sitting here are already intimately acquainted with the Estonian culture, but for those who are not, Estonians form a very old and relatively independent culture and have kept their language and their culture intact within a relatively small homeland for many thousands of years. As masonic ritual is intimately tied to the history of the people of Israel, it is certainly not unfounded to notice the many parallels between the people of Israel and the people of Estonia, the strongest sense of nation, the desire to pass our land and language onto our children, and the many trials brought on by unfriendly foreign powers and neighbours. All of these have led to modern nations that value education and democracy and are willing to fiercely protect them. Indeed, even as Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Kingdom of Judah and scattered the people into years of captivity and exile.

Between 1939 and 1949, Estonia saw a huge number of denizens scattered across to other lands. The last of the Baltic, Germans and former aristocrats left at Hitler's beckon in 1939. The first Soviet deportations occurred in 1941. Huge numbers were forced to leave in 1944 and the final mass deportations to Siberia were in 1949. Those sent to Siberia were allowed to return home by 1965, some earlier. Those who fled to the west though had to wait until the 1990s, many of whom still live as a diaspora. With the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the occupation, the Estonian nation was finally allowed to reunite and start rebuilding itself. And as in ancient Israel, the masons prepared the ground and started to build. Obviously, the roles that freemason media has played since 1991 has been profound, but we will save that analysis for future historians.

To return to my primary focus and a little to the style of Anderson's history, I present a brief overview of the situation at the dawn of freemasonry in the region. By the beginning of the 18th century when freemasonry had started to spread across the world, Estonia and Livonia were formally part of the Russian empire. The Estonian people or as they referred to themselves "maarahvas", the people of the land were primarily just that – serfs attached to the land physically in modern terms. They could be considered slaves, although that sort of terminology with respect to this region is slightly ... The aristocracy here was a very interesting cultural mix, similar in many ways to that of England in as much as there was a conquest in the Middle Ages where a new aristocracy completely with a new language entered a society that existed. The old aristocracy quickly either assimilated with the new culture or was disposed of entirely, but with this assimilation, the new aristocracy was no longer purely German either.

Over the centuries there were influences from Denmark, Sweden, Poland, and Russia as borders of the Empire shifted. But it's important to note that even under the Russian empire, Estonia and Livonia retained an enormous amount of autonomy. Western cultural development in the Russian Empire was driven from the Baltic region, not the other way around. This multicultural autonomous region was a perfect space for the coming of freemasonry. And when we look at the 1770s as those who attended the last conference, remember the application for the founding of our first lodge Isis in Tallinn was in 1771. The concept of serfdom in the UK, Sweden, and because of that, Finland was foreign. As it essentially was in the northern colonies in the Americas. However, for good and measure the following were dates of the emancipation of serfs or slaves in the West. As you can see above me, France in 1789, Mecklenburg in 1807, Prussia in 1807, Estonia in 1816, Livonia in 1819. A little bit of a gap, and then Russia in 1861 and then we returned to the Southern United States in 1865.

So when we talk about freemasonry, we cannot in any way get past the concept of freedom, and that concept was in no way universally understood at the time that we were discussing in the 1770s, the bulk of ethnic Estonians were in

bondage, but there was hope and there was life. Freemasonry was a tool and a catalyst for the change that has created the modern world. It's impossible to know how much this change was caused by freemasonry and how much freemasonry just fit with the ideals of those men who were making the change. But at the end, those were inseparable. Masonry gave a format for discussion and friendship to decision makers from all different fields who otherwise perhaps did not agree on politics or economics, who otherwise would've remained at a perpetual distance. Amongst Brethren, thought was free.

Freemasonry, as we know is built on structure and symbolism. It seems appropriate therefore, to take some of my structure from freemasonry's ancient landmarks. These are figuratively speaking both immovable regulations as well as beacons leading to the light. I hope to show how some of those beacons guided what is now the Estonian people through the darkness to reach the light of independent statehood. In Estonian, that would be "Rahvusriik" - how masonic ideals helped the people of the land – "maarahvas" - to retain their identity for centuries to maintain their culture and finally regain political independence within the sphere of Western cultural space.

If we look to the ancient landmarks, one is that a mason must be free born. Given the legal base in the Russian Empire at the time, that significantly limited the potential membership of the brotherhood. Brethren were barrons and merchants, doctors and soldiers, artists and actors. Most were German speaking, but the rest of the nation was awakening here. Of course, I do have to mention that not all of the first brethren were Germans. There were a handful of Russians, Swedes and Scots who had located themselves in Tallinn. But there were ethnic Estonians as well. Society has always allowed for exceptions and we find brethren such as Carl Friedrich Karell. I don't have a picture of him, but what I do have is a piece or the cover page to one of his publications of music. He was the first known ethnic custodian composer and also was Tchaikovsky's music teacher in St. Petersburg. Next we have Otto Wilhelm Masing. We have one step up - we have a profile of him, although we don't have an actual picture. He was a well-known pastor, linguist and author, and we'll discuss him in quite a bit of detail later. And then right above me, quite an interesting character Johan or Johann Michelson who started out as a simple soldier and worked his way through the ranks to finally becoming General of the Cavalry in the Imperial Russian Army. As with those present Estonian brethren who were born under the yoke of Soviet occupation, perhaps what was most important is that we are all born free in our minds. But to get back to the bigger picture, we should see how freemasonry has helped to ensure the sustainability of the Estonian culture and prepare the way for the foundation of the Estonian Republic. And while this most certainly was not the plan or even the desire of the brethren at the time, it was most certainly part of a higher plan.

And just as a side note, while the top part of our slide here shows the sort of mixing ground between the elite and the people of the land, the bottom shows a painting of just the people of the land, as it started to become more interesting and idealised among the so-called higher culture. Especially for Estonians, a clear distinguishing mark of culture is language. At the end of the 18th century, there were still at least two Estonian languages, the Northern and the Southern and many dialects in between. Every region had its own local language, but all official business and higher culture was transacted in either German or Russian or if a much higher level, perhaps even in French. At that point though, the educated elite started to become interested in the local folk stories and songs of the people. Prior to that, most of the focus of the local language was only to translate religious texts, especially the Bible into local dialects so that the people could understand what was going on in church.

That was Johan Godfried Herder, an academic from Königsberg, student of Emmanuel Kant, friend of Goethe and brother in the Riga Lodge. He played a large role in starting to create interest in folk culture among the certainly academic elite. But I think amongst the cultural elite by starting to compile and publish folk songs, his popular publication included eight Estonian songs and their translations into German, which while quite reserved was an important step in creating a sense of value around folk cultures and languages. For this and obviously for many other writings, he has been called the Godfather of the Estonian National Discourse. Here you can see again brother Herder roughly around the time that he was very active in freemasonry. He was again based in Königsberg. Here is a very nice picture of the University of Königsberg, which was essentially the centre of learning of the time. The building, I have to say still exists. Unfortunately it has been ratified as with the rest of Königsberg, but it still stands as shall we say, a landmark to where we've been. And then the front piece is the collection of folk songs where the Estonian texts as well as Latvia were included and which was a very important first step in modern terms in creating a buzz amongst the academics for what had previously just been considered something that was very base.

So as interest in the Estonian language grew among the educated, it became more important to formalise it. It was a spoken language, not a written language. In order for Estonian to become a written language and not just a method to transmit texts translated into it from other languages, it was necessary to agree on rules as to how it should be written down. That became a base of both literature and education. And here I think it's very important to mention Friedrich David Lenz - a brother and secretary of the Zum Morgenstern Lodge in Tartu. In addition to being a pastor in the Tartu St. John's Church, he was an author, publisher and Tartu school inspector. And as of 1803, he was the first professor of the Estonian and Finnish languages at Tartu University. And as a matter of fact, probably the first professor of both Estonian and Finnish anywhere in the world. Amongst his other achievements, he also wrote the first Estonian language handbook on gardening – “Aija kalender” in 1796, which you can see up there next to his gravestone. As his courses were mostly intended for German speaking pastors who needed to be able to communicate with their congregations. He taught many other brethren, including Isis member Heinrich ..., who was one of the strongest supporters of using the Southern Estonian language as a base for written Estonian instead of the Northern Estonian. He wrote several books on Estonian grammar and was also one of the founding members of the Learned Estonian Society, which has been one of the driving forces in the research and preservation of the Estonian language culture and history since the Awakening.

On the other side of the North vs South language debate was another Isis brother O.W. Masing, I showed you his profile earlier. Masing was the son of an ethnic Estonian church curator and an aristocratic mother giving him a very interesting mixed perspective. Masing wrote an Estonian language primer for Children in 1795, which you can see here in which you will note that there is no letter C because there is no letter C in Estonian. He also published a weekly newspaper starting from 1821, along with another Estonian brother, pastor David Friedrich Ignatius, who was a member of Isis and Incidentally, Ignatius also played a very large role in teaching the fine arts and two of his sons were also brothers. In the painting that you can see here, which was done by one of his students. You can see both the pastor himself sitting in the middle and his two sons who would also later become brothers. In addition to being just a thought provoking read for those who ordered the “Nädalaleht”, it also served to introduce a number of new words into the Estonian vocabulary such as “armee”, “ajaleht”, “kapital”, “metall” and “minister”, none of which existed before.

Finally, after a great debate, the North won and the modern Estonian language was developed on the basis of the Northern Estonian dialect. But probably Masing's greatest service to Estonian language and literature is the development of a small but priceless mark. The letter which you can see down below – Õ – is something that is pervasive in the language and in that form found nowhere else. It is difficult to think of something that is now more essentially Estonian other than perhaps the sauna, although some in this room may choose to disagree with that.

As the next iteration of the work of theatre, August von Kotzebue, a brother in the lodge ... included for the first time Estonian language text on stage in several of his plays. In his day he was an acclaimed playwright across Europe. We've all now heard about the origins of the term *wright*. Thank you very much. And his work was in fact performed very widely. In addition to being President of the Magistrate of Tallinn, he founded an amateur theatre in 1784 where he performed, oddly enough, many of his own works, which became the first professional theatre in Tallinn in 1809. The Revala Theater which its initial original building is picture in the middle. That building unfortunately was destroyed in a fire and now stands underneath our puppet theatre. This other one however, became the Italian German theatre and worked until 1939 at which point the Estonian Drama Theatre took over their building, which is still used today. It should also be mentioned that Kotzebue acted alongside Goethe in Goethe's plays and Beethoven's “Turkish March” was originally written as part of the incidental music to Kotzebue's ... when it was performed at the opening to the New Deutsches Theatre in Hungary. Altogether Kotzebue wrote more than 200 plays as well as numerous poems, novels, and memoirs, many of which touched upon his experiences in Estonia.

But with language in place, national culture next needs education. I've already mentioned Friedrich David Lenz as the first university professor of Estonian and Finnish, but there was a long road to travel before he reached that position. While education had been important to the Swedish King when Estonia was under their empire and he had greatly supported literacy amongst the commoners as a means to read the Bible, there was a gap after the Great Northern War. Tartu University, which was the second university founded in the Swedish Empire after Uppsala and before Turku and now Helsinki. But it was moved to Pärnu in 1699 and finally closed in 1710 when Pärnu surrendered to the Russian

forces. The local elite did not give up on education, but they were forced to travel to Germany to get it. This did however, have the positive side effect of allowing many Baltic Germans to join German lodges.

However, there was a clear understanding that there was a need for higher education in Estonia and Livonia. And in 1802, after several years of negotiation, Tartu University was reopened. One of the main forces behind that was the university's deputy curator, J.F.E. von Ungern-Sternberg, who was also a past master of the Isis Lodge, honorary Grand Officer in the Estraya Grand Lodge and honorary member of the St. Petersburg Lodge. While studying in Vienna in the 1780s, he was a member of the same lodge as Joseph Hayden and which Mozart frequently attended. He was also a friend of Friedrich Schiller who was probably a brother in German Lodge ...

University became the centre of the Tartu education district, which also included Riga at the time. And the centre of one of the six new educational districts in the Russian Empire. Declared by Alexander I. The district was governed by curator who sat in St. Petersburg and the first curator was Friedrich Maximilian von Klinger. He was a friend of Goethe. He was the actual author of the play "Sturm und Drang", which became the calling sign of the movement of the day, and he was a member of the Zürich lodge Modestia ... But as deputy curator, J.F.E. von Ungern-Sternberg, was actually based in Tartu and he was the one who worked to develop the day-to-day operations of the university and education in general. But based on the role of the upper two gentlemen, we certainly need to mention that the university's first rector George Friedrich Parrot was also a mason, as was the first pro rector and the first dogmatics and moral theology Professor Lawrence Ferdinand Ewers, as well as a number of other people who were in and around the university community at the time. One of those is Jacob von Barak, Chief of the Knighthood and member of Isis Lodge, but I will speak about him later. His contributions were more political, but just as important in an era where education may have seemed more like a danger to the ruling class than a benefit.

Through the work of the brethren, the university was reestablished and flourished. And just as a comparison, in the 19th century, Tartu University was one of 30 German speaking universities in the world. And of these Tartu was the first one in the Russian Empire and the 11th largest overall. So in its day, it was an extremely important centre of learning. Not to say that it's not today. While there were several hundred ethnic Estonians and Livonians who matriculated to talk to the university in the first decade after restoration, it was important to start education more widely and at the younger age. Isis's brother Paul Friedrich von Benckendorff, in addition to serving as Chief of the Knighthood and civil governor of Estonia, personally supported the founding of a National School Teacher Seminary in 1837.

So as you can see, masons were extraordinarily interested in the passing of knowledge onto the people. Now as we can see, after culture has demanded education, education demands research and resources. In order to facilitate education, you need to have information. In the 18th and 19th century that meant books. As books tended to be both expensive and very unwieldy in large numbers, academics needed to have libraries. Unfortunately similarly to the university, the Swedish era library in Tartu was dissolved and a new library was founded for the university in 1802. Of the first 4,000 volumes in the library, about 900 were donated by the same J.F.E. von Ungern-Sternberg. In 1806, about 170 books from ... collection from his private library also made their way into the university library.

The first director of the library, you can see below was Johan Karl Simon Morgenstern, who was also the first professor of rhetoric, classical philology, aesthetics, literature, and art history. He was the director of the library for 37 years and responsible for its development into a significant research library. And obviously also a brother. Upon his death, he donated his own private library, which at that time was the largest in Tartu to the university library. From his manuscript collection there are more than 3000 letters, more than 700 correspondences, including with King Frederick I of Prussia, Schiller, Goethe and Kant. And as you can see, in true masonic form the building of the library, the housing of the word was used as a pretence to restore the medieval church in which the library was based until it became too large. And now it houses a museum of the university.

But when talking about museums, in addition to the libraries, a valuable source for research and preservation are indeed museums as a well-rounded man and mason Morgenstern was also the founder of the Tartu University Art Museum. Another very important museum was founded upon the collection of brother Johannes VIII Burchard. He was the town pharmacist in Tallinn. He was a member of the Burchard dynasty that operated in Tallinn old town pharmacy Raeapteek for 10 generations from 1582 to 1911. In addition to being a doctor and pharmacist, he was also an avid historian and

collector. His private collection, which was first publicly exhibited in 1822 in the House of the Blackheads, included objects from ancient Egypt and Rome as well as numerous other important objects. In 1842, the Estonian Literary Society began collecting materials to found the first provincial Museum. Burchard's collection was added as part of the museum, which was finally opened in 1864.

That museum was in turn the basis for the Estonian History Museum when the materials of the Provincial Museum were nationalised by the Soviets. In addition to Burchard's collection, many other important items made their way into the Provincial Museum, such as the original manuscripts for Brother Wolfgang Mozart's Piano Concerto number 27, which was donated by artist and brother G. Hippus. And indeed, as I just mentioned, the Estonian History Museum now includes the Great Guild building in Tallinn Old Town as well as Maarjamäe Manor, where the museum has been kind enough to the rest of you today and in the main house where you just enjoyed your lunch. After the dissolution of masonic lodges by Alexander I in 1822, it should be mentioned that the masonic lodges in Estonia and Latvia were dissolved before they were in the rest of the Russia, obviously because they seem to be more dangerous. Many of the families chose to donate their masonic inheritances and archives to the Provincial Museum. Unfortunately, we have to admit that the new Soviet History Museum that replaced the Provincial Museum chose to destroy significant parts of their collections that did not align with Soviet ideology. Luckily, most of the Masonic collections were either transferred to other museums or were strategically misplaced by archivists into collections that were acceptable to the Soviets and rediscovered after independence.

And the basis of those collections were in fact the basis of the exhibition that we had upon the anniversary of freemasonry - the 250th anniversary in Estonia that we discussed. It should also be mentioned that Johannes VIII's father, Johannes VII was a brother initiated in Leipzig, but who joined Isis in 1775 after his return to Estonia. His membership certificate - for those who don't believe it, was up on the screen. And for those who have enjoyed the uptake or make their books and films, it would be reasonable to mention that a room in the old town pharmacy once served as the temple for the Isis Lodge. And for those of our dear guests who join us for the tour tomorrow morning, I will be happy to show that to you.

So far, we have discussed how a strong and sustainable ethnic culture developed through the Enlightenment. Local speech was formalised as a written language with improved education. Literature began to flourish. History became more valued and was preserved both in books and museums, but the culture was not yet independent. It was curated by an upper class that had a distinct subculture here. I cannot say Baltic German culture was not and should not be a part of modern Estonian culture. It was and should be, but the dominance had shifted and that has made the culture free. That is the small miracle that allows us all to be here today. And Freemasons did not play a small role in that miracle.

In the 18th and 19th century serfdom and slavery were not at all uncommon as previously mentioned. And while enslaved people can have a culture, it can in no way be considered an independent culture. The views and actions of freemasons in different countries with respect to that topic during that period would provide material for 10 conferences. However, the actual results of the efforts of the brethren of Estonia and Livonia deserve notice. While academic discussion on the justice of serfdom and human rights started much earlier, the first major step toward freedom for the peasants, I'll use the word peasant even though it might not be considered a pretty term, it's accurate - "talurahvas" - or the people of the land known as the farm folk as well.

The first major step in freeing them from the land was the Vigala Peasant law, which was signed in 1789, the same year incidentally as the signing of the United States Constitution. It was proclaimed by Baron VII von Uexküll at his Vana-Vigala Manor, both of which you can see above. He was the Chief of the Knighthood, commander of the land militia, civil governor, secret advisor to the Czar and brother in the ... lodges. He was also an active supporter of the abolition of serfdom. The Vigala Law as it was known, provided for limited rights peasants as well as the obligation to send their children to school. It set up a municipal system for the Vigala district, including a local court with judges here. I would mention that one of the primary benefits of being selected as a judge was that for the period of service you were exempted from corporal punishment. So you were not allowed to beat the judges at least as long as they were in service.

Serfs on the other hand, in general, were served property and they could be bought and sold by the manor owner. But according to this law, they could now own their own movable property. Serfs also were given a limited right of

inheritance, meaning that a serf could request that his property be inherited by his son, but the landowner still had to approve it, so it seems kind of difficult to believe that, but even when they were given the right to own something, it still wasn't really theirs. Parents were also required to teach their children to read, and if they themselves did not know how to read and they were required to send their children to school, Baron VII also expanded the school network within the Vigala district. And when he became the civil governor of Estonia, he expanded the school system across all of Estonia. These may seem like very small steps, but opposition amongst the aristocracy was still very large, and while the law only affected one particular district, it later became the basis for many other laws giving rights to the peasants.

Now, for the big step. In 1802 Codex of Rights were given to the peasants across the governor of Estonia, and these were colloquially known as “Iggaüks”. Here you can see the centre text as part of those laws. It was marked as 1816, but “Iggaüks” started out in 1802. The laws were composed in a large part by Chief of the Knighthood J.G. von Berg, who I previously mentioned with respect to the university and who was a member of the Lodge Isis. But the laws were finally implemented by the next Chief of the Knighthood Gustav Heinrich von Wetter-Rosenthal. He was a very interesting character. He was often better known as Major John Rose, who after fleeing persecution for murdering someone in a duel, went to the American colonies, fought in the American Revolution, was finally granted a pardon by Catherine II, returned to Estonia and then became a very important force in sort of bringing the Enlightenment ideals back across the ocean to Estonia. He was also known to frequent the circles of many American freemasons at the time, including General George Washington.

There have been a number of questions as to whether or not he himself was a mason. His own circle of friends and relatives included many masons. In preparation for the speech, I spoke to the Grand Lodge of New York and attempted to find some proof. Unfortunately, I have not yet found that, but let that be, shall we say, a hit to the next generation of presenters. Would be a very interesting topic to look into.

But the 1816 Peasants Act was a fundamental change in the status of the foreign folk. “Eestimaa Talurahva Seadmised” and “Eestimaa Talurahva Käsuraamat” ended serfdom finally and codified the rights for the people. As per those laws, a peasant could no longer be bought or sold, given or mortgaged individually or as a family. Peasants had the right to acquire movable and immovable property buying real estate. Before that, they were real estate and they were allowed to inherit property according to the law. They were allowed to marry without permission of the landlord. That's an important thing. And upon marriage, a wife became entitled to the same rights as her husband and children inherited their parents' rights. Now that's an interesting piece, again, as the German system of nobility more includes for rights when they're held by both parents and in cases where one parent has fewer rights then their descendants have fewer rights. So having the rights pass from that parent who had more rights I think was a very interesting and important step. A 20-year-old peasant was considered an adult and had the right to enter into contracts. Men and women were equal before the law, unless specifically determined otherwise.

These laws were prepared in the second term as Chief of the Knighthood of J.G von Berg, who was also a member of the Peasant Commission and Chairman of the Provincial Legislative Committee. ... von Ungern-Sternberg, a brother in ... lodge was also a member of the commission that composed the laws and as the ideas spread, Livonia was not far behind. A similar law was approved in 1816, although coming into effect only in 1819, and again in trend with the rest of the presentation, one of the main forces behind this law was Gustav Johan von Buddenbrock - Livonian Land Marshall, counsellor and mason. Another proponent was Brother ..., a Livonian land counsellor. And when we look again at the Livonian laws, I would mention that the responsibility for translating the laws into the local language was given to O.W. Masing, who we have also mentioned before.

But to take the picture a little bit wider, we should note that in Europe, while the Russian Empire was the last to emancipate slavery in 1861, 40 years after the Baltic provinces, the United States ended slavery four years later in 1865. Vermont was the first state to outlaw slavery in 1777 with the rest of the Northern states following. But there was no consensus even among Masons. Benjamin Franklin, Past Grand Master of Pennsylvania, first publisher of Anderson's Constitutions in the Americas and opponent of slavery at the end of his life was still most likely a slaveholder at his death. George Washington also a slave holder, but he made the decision to free his slaves upon his death. Even as a beacon of democracy, the United States of America was unable to resolve the issue of slavery without a bloody civil war. France was obviously no different.

Even in the 1860s the relationship between masonry and slavery in the United States was not a simple one. One good example is Albert Pike, who most of you probably know as author of “Morals and Dogma” and long serving Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, Scottish Rite U.S. Southern Jurisdiction. Although as a lawyer, Pike fought successfully for the rights of Native Americans. He was later a General in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, fighting against the emancipation of the slaves. There are many pointed tales of freemasons on both sides of the Civil War, giving the appropriate signs in the battlefield to opposing forces and being spared. Some of them are true, some of them are not, but they're good stories. As a side note here, I would mention that my own great, great great grandfather and namesake David Jenkins was a mason and fought for the Northern States in the process of abolishing slavery in the United States. I'm sure you can all notice resemblance. But clearly looking at how the situation resolved itself in the United States, we should be especially grateful to our Baltic German brethren who are able to resolve the situation peacefully granting freedom for the local people in Estonia and Livonia without significant bloodshed.

The implementation of these laws in Estonia and Livonia were the foundation for the building of an independent modern Estonian nation, similarly to Latvia. But while the ground had been prepared, the actual laying of the cornerstone would still have to wait for another hundred years. Whether Alexander I decision to close the Lodges in Estonia and Livonia in 1820 played a pivotal role in that hundred year gap is open to debate, but freemasonry continued to develop outside the Russian Empire in that period and it still influenced the thought and helped to shift enlightenment ideas into reality in the region here.

An interesting example again, of how masonry brought together those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance and brought together ideas and cultures that otherwise might not seem to fit together. I would bring the example of freemason Édouard René de Laboulaye. He was a French lawyer, author, and anti-slavery activist. In addition to being a brother, as an author he published a book of folk tales, one of which was an Estonian tale entitled “The Fairy Crawfish”. In this tale, a poor fisherman Lopi finds a magical crawfish that can grant all of his wishes. Lopi is satisfied with very small things, but his nagging wife Maasika is always asking more and more from the crawfish. It's a familiar tale. I won't go any further than that, but as you can see, de Laboulaye's compilation of folk tales was quite popular. As was his translation of the biography of Benjamin Franklin. But the primary reason that he is remembered has more to do with the statue. E. R. de Laboulaye is known as the father of the Statue of Liberty. In 1865 at the end of the Civil War in the United States, he proposed the idea of a monument for the United States to his friend, sculptor, and later a brother, Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi who was a brother in the Lodge Alsace-Lorraine in Paris. De Laboulaye was the primary fundraiser and the driving force for placing the iconic statue into the harbour of New York. One early draft of the statue had Lady Liberty holding broken shackles in her hand. The shackles now are located at her feet, but still serve to remind us that her beacon shows the way to freedom. Every American knows at least part of Emma Lazarus's poem dedicated to the Statue of Liberty:

" Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

That golden door was built by masons and all those who have passed under Lady Liberty's torch, including the thousands of Estonian refugees after the second World War, understand their debt to those who left the East to seek the light in the West and return.

And that brings us to today. The road goes on. Thank you.

Q&A

Moderator:

Just another presentation that makes you a little bit thoughtful before crying out. But Ryan is very eager to answer questions or are you a little bit too tired already?

Question 1:

Thank you very much for the presentation. Is this the Jewel of the ... ?

Presenter:

Indeed it is. It is the Master's Jewel.

Question 1 (continued):

Wow. And which Grand Lodge did it belong to?

Presenter:

It was the Russian Grand Lodge. **Ostrea.**

Question 2:

And then the next question is what happened after 1822 in Estonia? Was Freemasonry also shut down?

Presenter:

It was shut down. As I said, the brethren and the families donated what they wanted to save to museums in order to preserve it. The brethren found other, shall we say, places to meet. They got involved in founding public libraries in Tallinn, meeting in other societies that weren't considered secret societies or dangerous and the literary society. They found other places where they could still meet freely and express their thoughts, but unfortunately not within the frame of freemasonry.

Question 3:

How would you describe the situation of freemasonry in Estonian society today?

Presenter:

I think it's at a very interesting stage in its growth right now. If you look at masonry in many of the developed nations, it has hit some of the problems that you were discussing where membership is declining and people have been forced to ask questions of what is it that masonry provides to potential members that other various hobbies and past times don't offer? How can we add value to the scope of free time activities, which is a very sort of pragmatic view, but something extremely important. Right now we have the luxury of being, shall we say, sought after as we still have membership as a percentage of the adult male population, very small compared to Finland or the UK. We have the luxury of choosing and we've seen, at least in my circles, we've seen a big uptick in younger brethren who have the habit of also inviting other younger brethren who are very active, who are interested in sharing their ideas with an educated society that otherwise perhaps is not as easy to find. I think we have made some very good steps in having activities that are also very family friendly, including for the rest of the family. So it's not something that you feel like you have to hide from your children. We're not open, obviously in as much as we don't share our register. But we also, for instance, today we'll be having tours of the grand lodge rooms and I think one of the main benefits here, I'll mention as well, Estonia is one of the least religious countries in Europe right now. Also, as you mentioned, the church is having problems finding members, and in Estonia it's a truly significant problem. But for those who have perhaps been brought up either under a socialist regime or post socialist regime where they didn't have the religious foundation that I had, that I think probably a lot of our foreign guests have had right now, a lot of the people in that generation are looking for a ground and not just philosophy, but a higher meaning.

They're looking for the light and that's something that masonry unabashedly offers. We say you must have a belief in a higher being, whereas in most organisations they say, no, no, we are inclusive. You can believe whatever you want. We say no, we will gather together society who has fundamental beliefs in common. And that means you have the safety of getting together and having discussions that maybe you would be embarrassed to have in a group where you are not as comfortable sharing your beliefs because you know that the people in the room, they agree with you at least on fundamental values. Beyond that, then it gets interesting.

Questions 4&5:

First of all, compliments for this academic presentation. It's an investigative research, and I think masonry needs these kind of presentations. Because you give us the basis to work. Not only data, and this for me is very important. I would like to do two comments and two questions.

The first comment is that in many presentations slides we saw in the title in the beginning is the word, and this is very complicated to translate it, to understand it and to express it because the first, the original word when it was written, it was written in Greek. The word “logos”, but the problem is even for Greeks, that “logos” has four meanings. It's not one, it's four meanings. So even for Greeks, if you ask for Greeks what it means, you will hear four different explanations, but they really exist, all of them. And I would like to invite everybody to research what means in Greek, because I didn't come here to make the teacher, you are the teacher and the professor. But masonry is always about research, as you mentioned before. So please investigate results, what means “logos”. One of the meanings is a word. But please research. In masonry we have made a lot of analysis about it in our Grand Lodges what means “logos”. We found something different than the word in English. Of course here the most suitable expression is word, but please make a research. I would propose.

Presenter:

Obviously as masons, we all search for deeper meaning and everything has multiple layers.

Questions 4&5 (continued):

And we accept any meaning because it is symbols. But please, sometimes, or maybe I will send you the form. The second comment is that you made me understand that the 25 years include not 25 years of masonry. This is clear, at least for me, this is a number, but you have a big history with a lot of influences from the whole Europe. So this is amazing. That's why in 25 years you made so many things because it's not 25 years of knowledge as I understood.

And now I would like to make a question. How many editions of books in Estonian language are there in the market now? For everybody to study and understand and have informations. Books about freemasonry in Estonian?

Presenter:

Probably 20-25, something like that.

Questions 4&5 (continued):

And the second thing is if in any university of Estonia in the literature department or philosophy department, they include philosophy lessons about freemasonry?

Presenter:

Not yet

Question (comment) 6:

Thank you, Ryan. I would just like to add a comment because during last, last decade I have been the person who was dealing with public relations and communicating with the press. And I would like to put forward that the time has changed very fast and during the years, because now in last years, I have to say that talking with the journalist or any people, because I'm a public person, lot of people ask me: “Oh, why are you a freemason?” And the question is not about the history, but they are asking: “Why you have chosen to be a mason? Okay, I understand you want to be the better man, but why you have chosen this difficult and very long route?” I think these questions are coming because nowadays everybody wants to get everything fast. Not today, but yesterday and all in one package. And this is the main task I have seen that to explain why we have chosen this step-by-step-way to become better men. And what I would say I think Estonians, when I'm speaking with them of Christian values and I would say that they are maybe anti clerical. Almost anybody believes something. But if you are talking about the institutions, they have some doubts. I think that it comes from our background, not even the Soviet, but even in further. This is our heritage, our past, and anyhow, thank you Ryan. Sorry.

Question 7:

Thank you. First of all, a comment. I've noticed in the United States where I'm from, that we have, in relationship to your comment about the younger members is that we were getting a lot of legacy members. And it's not a legacy where there is a father to a son, although we do have then quite a bit. We have the youth groups to support them. However, what I'm seeing right now are younger men rediscovering great, great grandfathers and great, great great grandfathers. We recently had a member of our lodge whose great, great, great, great grandfather signed a declaration of independence,. And then the descendant rediscovered masonry because of him. Wanting to take a look at his background, his family's background. And then I found others who have said that their great grandfather was a Knight's Templar, but not a mason (I said "yes he is!"). And then of course in America we have the shrine and there's a lot of them. My grandfather was a Shriner, but he wasn't a mason. Well, I'm sorry - yes, he was. So I'm seeing a lot of that. They're rediscovering the masonic fraternity from that on.

The philosophy of enlightenment though is my question to you. It seems that the enlightenment period ended at about 1800 – 1820, in that era. And somehow I feel that there's a new enlightenment coming from a darkness, you get to light. And I believe that there's a new enlightenment. We're on the verge of a new enlightenment, but only in warp time and warp speed. In other words, it's not going to take a hundred years, it's going to be a 50 year type deal, it is going to come quick and hopefully it's up to us to keep that enlightenment continuous. And that was my other comment. Do you believe there's a new enlightenment in philosophy or a philosophy of enlightenment coming? And can we as masons kind of light the fire under it and get it going again?

Presenter:

I think you're going to have, and this now gets sort of outside of the scope of what we're discussing here. If you ask my personal views, I think we're going to have two competing enlightenments. One of them is going to be at warp speed due to technology. And the other I think is going to be those who want to take a step back and discover their roots, discover classical thought, explore their ancestors and think about why it is they're here, and get a little bit less away from the ethics of technology and dehumanising and becoming more into the humanisation. How those two competing movements will get together. I don't know, but I think masonry can have an extremely important role in managing at least one of those two movements. And ensuring through that the continuity of thought philosophy and hopefully the human race.

Question 8:

Thank you for this presentation. Your personal opinion about the charity perspectives in Estonia and what do you think, is it a membership obligation or not? We have one Foundation, but is it only one activity or possibly something more?

Presenter:

Good mix of smaller and bigger projects done through the Pelikan Foundation. The foundation was actually set up for a number of reasons. But as Estonia has such a small base, if we have every lodge managing its charity by itself, you can only really focus on very small projects. If you bring everything together under one foundation, then you have the ability to do small projects if you like, but you also have the ability to take on large projects. And I know that in addition to our support of Ukraine, which has been a very large project, we have put together some health-based projects, organised a health conference recently, which was a large project as well as a number of smaller projects which are organised on a lodge by lodge basis. Which also have just as much of an effect, but are not managed centrally.

Question 9:

Thank you. My lodge brother. About slavery. We in Estonia have had a little bit different slavery compared to American slavery, because basically if you were a citizen of town, you were a citizen. And even in bigger households like it was called "suurtalu", they did have contracts between locals and they couldn't send people just to work. It was business. And even in the beginning of 1700's in Estonia in big housings there were guns. But you imagine it's the 1700's, it is not very common to have guns around.

Presenter:

It varied by region, as I know technically the coastal Swedes were never serfs. There was a question of the line between serf, which was tied to the land, and a villain who could have contract. Serf could be sold with the land, could be sold without the land, the villain could be sold with the land only. It's obviously much more complicated. That's why I said the comparison to the word slavery is slightly anachronistic. But that being said, fact is fact. For most of that period, you could say, I'm going to sell you. You have no right to choose who you marry. All of what you own belongs to me. So there you go.

Thank you.