



NUGGET

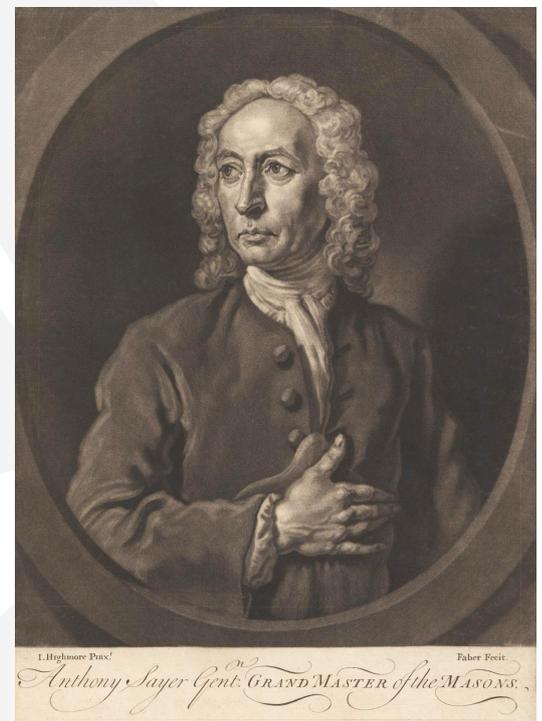
The First Grand Lodge: Anthony Sayer - First Grand Master

Summary: The leader of the first Grand Lodge in England.

It has often been remarked how casually; or maybe accidentally; so many great movements seem to have started. They appear to spring up by themselves at the bidding of impulses of which men may only be vaguely aware. Such is the example of what is described as a 'revival' of Masonry in 1717. It not only gave us an important date for the annals of the fraternity, but a new structure for the organisation of the Craft which launched it to the ends of the earth.

How many Lodges of Masons existed in London at that time is a matter of conjecture. Some seem to have been purely speculative, made up of Accepted Masons, boasting amongst their numbers men of high social rank, including members of the nobility. It was from these Lodges that the real leadership of the movement developed. The only record we have giving a reason for forming a Grand Lodge was:

'The few Lodges at London finding themselves neglected by Sir Christopher Wren (the great architect of the day, who designed St. Paul's Cathedral) thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the centre of Union and Harmony'.¹



Anthony Sayer by John Faber Jr, after Joseph Highmore early-mid 18th century, © National Portrait Gallery, London. Reproduced under Creative Commons, CC BY-NC-ND 3.0

In those days in London Lodges met in taverns and ale-houses, as was the custom of the day, and the four Lodges involved met at:

- The Goose and Gridiron Ale-house in St. Paul's Churchyard.
- The Crown Ale-house in Parker's lane near Drury Lane.
- The Apple Tree Tavern in Charles Street, Covent Garden.
- The Rummer and Grapes Tavern in Channel Row Westminster.

The meeting at which Grand Lodge was actually created took place in June 1717, at *The Goose and Gridiron Ale-house* in St. Paul's Churchyard near the west end of the Cathedral.

'Before dinner, the oldest Master Mason (now the Master of a Lodge) in the Chair, proposed a list of proper candidates; and the Brethren by a majority of hands elected:

*Mr Anthony Sayer, Gentleman, Grand Master of Masons,
Captain Joseph Elliot,
Mr Jacob Lambell, Carpenter* } *Grand Wardens*

Who being forthwith invested with the Badge of Office and Power by the said oldest Master, and install'd, was duly congratulated by the Assembly who pay'd him the Homage. Sayer, Grand Master, commanded the Masters and Wardens of Lodges to meet the Grand Officers every Quarter in Communication at the Place that he should appoint in his Summons sent by the Tyler.²

The First Grand Lodge was formed without a Constitution, and without a set of Regulations; which did not appear until four years later. The Minutes of Grand Lodge only commence six years after the event, in 1723, the story of the progress of Grand Lodge over these six years remaining a matter of conjecture, and was not published until the second edition of the Constitutions of 1738; twenty-one years after the event. It remains one of the true mysteries of the Craft.

Not much is known either, of The First Grand Master Anthony Sayer; we do not even know his date of birth. His life appears to have been uneventful, except for his appointment to such high-office. All that we do know is that he was a 'Gentleman' in the old English meaning of the word, meaning that he did not work for a living, and was not 'in Trade'. He served as Grand Master for one year only, and in June 1718, George Payne succeeded him. Twelve months later, Anthony Sayer was appointed Grand Senior Warden; moving backwards so to speak. Later he fell upon hard times and became Tyler of Old Kings Arms Lodge No.28 meeting at Charing Cross; where it was reported that he was assisted out of the Charity Box. He also understood that he received some financial aid from Grand Lodge. Sadly, no further record of him has been found until his death in 1742 when it was announced in The Evening Post that:

'His corpse was followed by a great number of Gentlemen of that Honorable Society of the best Quality... and decently interr'd in Covent-Garden church' - where his widow was buried a few months later in the same year.

Bibliography

1. Harper, Paul, Famous Freemasons - A Prologue, <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk/mod/resource/view.php?id=2084>

References

1. Anderson, J., (1738), *The History and Constitutions of the Most ancient and honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons*, p. 109, J. Robinson, London.
2. ibid



Recommended use of Nuggets

Nuggets offer a short, simple and readily absorbed means of progressing Masonic knowledge and an easy way to introduce learning to Lodges and Chapters. It is hoped that they will become a regular feature of Lodge and Chapter meetings as well as a source for private-study.

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Themed with the meeting or activity.

Used to initiate a discussion within a Lodge/Chapter, LOI/COI, or group.

Read at home and shared as a topic for a future discussion.

Used as a focus for an unplanned, informal discussion.

*Note: All biblical passages are taken from the Authorized King James version unless otherwise specified.

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