

A wink, a nod, or a shake of the hand: on the Masons

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The point of a club is not who it lets in, but who it keeps out. The club is based on two ancient British ideas the segregation of classes, and the segregation of sexes: and they even remain insistent on keeping people out, long after they have stopped wanting to come in.

— Anthony Sampson, *Anatomy of Britain*

If secrecy is to be considered a factor in British politics and commerce then without doubt Freemasonry is one of its principal vehicles. Freemasonry is the largest semi-covert organisation of the western bourgeoisie, with over six million members worldwide sharing a vision of a unified world order bound together through a series of interlocking Masonic alliances. Among the worlds most influential institutions must be the United Grand Lodge of England, the mother lodge of Craft Freemasonry, with its headquarters at Freemasons Hall in Great Queen Street near Covent Garden. It is here that the wealthy and influential members of the British Establishment meet in conditions of ritual secrecy, ostensibly to listen to lectures on Masonic history and to discuss charitable and other Masonic business. In practice, the Masonic brotherhood constitutes a clandestine network for the defence of the status quo and established privilege, a mutual-aid society for the British ruling class.

Of course just as a mutual-aid society for gaolers will be different in aims and functions from a mutual-aid society for prisoners (one providing clubs and the other hacksaws), so the mutual-aid society of societys privileged power elite will be different from the mutual-aid societies which provide assistance among those whose continued deprivation of the good things in life is the essential condition for the preservation of the privileges of the few.

Since the benefits of privilege as opposed to its outward trappings are necessarily largely hidden, so the efforts, the necessarily combined efforts, of those who would defend their privilege are also hidden; that is to say, they are more than discreet, being secret and even conspiratorial. Indeed we should not really be surprised to find the US historian Carl Oglesby writing in his book *The Yankee and Cowboy War* :

Clandestinism is not the usage of a handful of rogues, it is a formalised practice of an entire class in which a thousand hands spontaneously join. Conspiracy is the normal continuation of normal politics by normal means.

Freemasonry is one of principal structures that allow the joining of the hands to be a little more than wholly spontaneous.

What Is Freemasonry?

Freemasonry is a particularly British creation which first emerged in the early seventeenth century. Essentially, it consists of three degrees or grades: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft Mason and Master Mason. The central theme of all Masonic ritual is the building of Solomons temple and the soap opera incidents surrounding its construction such as the murder of the principal architect Hiram Abiff and the continuing search for the secret of the lost Keystone. The sinister daftness of it all illustrates the essential madness and badness of power elites as well as providing a diversionary spectacle for the curious outsider.

In addition to the three Craft degrees of Freemasonry, which are open to all males who profess a belief in an Almighty Being including Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Roman Catholics¹, etc. there are additional side or Higher degrees such as the Knights Templar (no relation to the original Middle East Task Force) and the Ancient and Accepted (Scottish) Rite 33°, who despite the word Scottish are exclusively White, Anglo-Saxon and Protestant. These side degrees are higher only in the numerical sense, ostensibly, as the Grand Lodge of England practises Freemasonry only within the three Craft degrees and does not admit the existence of any superior Masonic authority. The side degrees are conferred by patronage only on a specially approved and strictly limited number of candidates totalling at most a few hundred brothers, all drawn exclusively from the intimate friendship circles of the British ruling class.

The top three degrees of 33° Freemasonry are themselves conferred only after a unanimous vote of approval by the Supreme Council 33 of the Ancient and Accepted Rite of Freemasonry, which itself is recruited, incestuously, from among the Grand Officers or Past Grand Officers of the Grand Lodge of England. The headquarters of this inner Masonic organisation is the Grand Temple of the Rose Croix (no relation to the Rosicrucians) at 10 Duke Street, St James's. It is interesting to note the strong military presence among the exclusively WASP 33°: Major-General Sir Ralph Hone, KCMG, Major General Sir Allen Adair, GCVO, Brigadier Alex Cosby Fishburn Jackson, ex-ADC to the Queen.

The principal figure in English Freemasonry is the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, who is invariably selected from the Royal Family and/or the English aristocracy. The present incumbent is H.R.H. Edward Duke of Kent. Once installed the Grand Master then appoints the officers of the Grand Lodge himself there is no pretence at democracy, which would, after all, be out of place among so many aristocrats, captains of industry and masters of our fate.

Apart from the three degrees of Craft Masonry and the confusing number of side degrees there is a complex and labyrinthine pecking order of rank and precedence among the officers of the exclusive Grand Lodge, which covers over seventy grades of current and past office-holders.

There is no publicly available information on the structure, membership or workings of the Grand Lodge, which actively discourages any attempt at investigation. While researching this article I spoke to the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of England, Commander Michael Higham RN, but he refused to allow me to interview him nor would he comment on any of the questions I put to him on the telephone.

Masonic officials are highly paid. No details are available concerning the salaries paid to the thirty-five full-time employees of the Grand Lodge, but they must at least be commensurate with the 20 million lire (approx. £10,000) plus lavish expenses paid for the part-time services of the Grand Master of the Italian counterpart, the Grand Orient of Italy, Signor Armando Corona. Additionally, Grand Lodge officials have wide-ranging powers of patronage accorded to them by the Constitution. The most powerful position of all is that of Grand Secretary who is appointed by the Grand Master himself and who remains in office until retirement.

¹ Solemn excommunication for baptised believers who become Freemasons is no longer automatic according to the recently published Codex of Canon Law in the Roman Catholic Church. there is also a document from the Congregation for Doctrine and the Faith which, together with a series of official and semi-official pronouncements, has more or less cemented the peace between the Vatican and Freemasonry.

Joining the Brethren

To become a Freemason is not difficult. The requirements for a prospective candidate are that he must be male, twenty-one, and in reputable circumstances; he must profess a belief in a God and be prepared to take an oath on a book of Sacred Law under no less a penalty of ritual murder, mutilation and being disappeared just like a victim of a Latin American death squad.

The would-be initiate is also forbidden to countenance any act which may subvert the peace and good order of society, must pay due obedience to the law of the state and must never be remiss in the allegiance due to the sovereign of his native land. To the above list might be added a predilection for dressing up and performing dramatic ritual. The members of the Lodge to which initiation is sought are balloted as to the candidates acceptability to their company, and membership is refused if three black balls are cast against him in the voting.

The vast majority of the half-million Craft Freemasons who come under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge are obliged by the limitations of their friendship circles and income to remain at the level of the Third Degree, that of Master Mason. The Higher degrees and officership of the Grand Lodge are the prerogative of the rich and powerful and not for the likes of working-class brothers from Hackney or Dalston. The following advice given by the Masonic Record in June 1964, although couched in suitably diplomatic language, reminded the Freemason of proletarian origin to remember his place:

He [the brother] must consider how much time he can devote to Freemasonry without detriment to family, business and his other commitments. The more he progresses in Freemasonry the greater will be the demands on his pocket and he must decide whether he can meet these extra financial obligations.

For those with time, money, friends and influence the Masonic world is their oyster and they can join as many lodges as they can afford and will have them. Nor are the restrictions imposed by the credit-rating of the less-privileged brethren the only drawbacks to Masonic advancement. Aspiring, upwardly mobile Freemasons who join with an eye to discussing the price of beer with the Duke of Edinburgh, the Duke of Kent, Lord Cornwallis and other distinguished members of the Craft are in for a disappointment there are lodges and lodges and, like Orwells animals, some brethren are more equal than others.

As with the now notorious secret or covered lodges P1 and P2 in Italy, the latter of which had a coded membership of 2,400 brothers although only 953 names were disclosed² there are a number of the 1679 lodges in London and the 5,865 provincial lodges whose purpose is to bring together into single discreet bodies brothers who hold high public or private office and who wish to remain at a suitable distance from the hoi polloi of Freemasonry.

Thus, there are lodges whose members are recruited exclusively and selectively from among the ranks of particular power elites: mayors and Lord Mayors of London, the Bank of England, chartered accountants, architects, the legal profession, the merchant navy, the armed services, the Metropolitan Police, broadcasting. There is even a Council of Public School Lodges.

Success and promotion in any of the professions is eased by membership of the Craft. The Royal College of Surgeons and Royal College of Physicians, for example, appear to be an exclusively

² During the investigation into Michele Sindona's Banca Privata Italiana, a conduit for Mafia, fascist and secret service money, police discovered a list of 953 members of Lodge P2, who included three cabinet ministers, 30 generals, eight admirals, including the head of the armed forces, the heads of two intelligence services as well as the civilian collator of intelligence, 43 MPs, police chiefs of Italy's four main cities, etc.

Masonic preserve. In his book *The Doctors* (Gollancz, 1965), Paul Ferris quotes a senior physician as saying No one would become surgeon to the Queen unless he was a Mason. This tradition dates back at least as far as Queen Victoria when, under the patronage of the Prince of Wales, who was Grand Master of England from 1875 until his accession to the throne in 1901, when he assumed the title Protector of the Craft, the British Establishment consolidated its hold on Freemasonry. It would appear that the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) successfully used Freemasonry as a parallel policy-making and action body to influence the affairs of state from which he had been excluded by his mother (herself, of course, ineligible for membership, as a woman). A particularly unpleasant example of such parallel policymaking may have been the so-called Jack the Ripper murders of 1889–90. These, it has been argued convincingly, were in fact terminations carried out by Sir William Gull, personal surgeon to Queen Victoria and a member of the Prince of Wales Lodge, in order to cover up the embarrassing and potentially dangerous secret marriage of the Duke of Clarence, the Prince of Wales's oldest son and the heir to the throne of England, to an Irish Roman Catholic servant girl. The victims were in fact the Duchess herself and her friends, witnesses to the marriage.

Freemasonry is particularly strong within the armed services, where it is seen as an extension of the fellowship of the regiment. There are 42 lodges in the British cavalry regiments alone, 25 in the Royal Regiment of Artillery and a number of Royal Marine lodges. The exclusive elite of the British Army, the 22nd SAS and Artists Rifles (21st SAS), have a lodge (Byfield) which meets on the second Monday of every month at the Duke of Yorks HQ in Chelsea. The Senior Service have their own exclusive lodges such as Royal Navy Lodge 2612, whose members include such worthies as the Duke of Edinburgh and the present Grand Secretary, Commander Michael Higham.

Hopeful squaddies and matelots looking for rapid advancement or simply good Masonic friendship should know, however, that since 1815 naval and military lodges have introduced by-laws excluding all civilians and stating that no sailor below the rank of Petty Officer or no soldier below the rank of Sergeant is eligible for initiation into the Brotherhood. Masonic researcher John Dewar, author of the authoritative study of contemporary Freemasonry, *The Unlocked Secret*, was told by a spokesman for a large Masonic outfitter in Great Queen Street that much of the firm's successful business rested on export orders for regalia received from NATO troops in Europe, an indication as to the extent of Masonic strength among the officer corps of the British and other NATO armed services.

Less bloodthirsty oaths than Masonic ones, but instead administered by trade unionists in the early part of the nineteenth century, were punished severely, as in the case of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Here are some Masonic examples:

I, in the presence of the Great Architect of the Universe, and of this worthy, worshipful, and warranted Lodge, sincerely and solemnly promise and swear, that I will always help conceal and never reveal any part or parts, point or points of the secrets or mysteries of or belonging to Free and Accepted Masons in Masonry, under no less a penalty, on the violation of any of them, than that of having my throat cut across, my tongue torn out by the root, and buried at a cables length from the shore, where the tide regularly ebbs and flows twice in twenty-four hours, So help me, God, and keep me steadfast in this my Great and Solemn Obligation of an Entered Apprentice Freemason. (The candidate then seals his oath by kissing the volume of Sacred Law.)

— Oath of Obligation administered during the Ceremony of Initiation

I, in the presence of the Grand Geometrician , under no less a penalty , than that of having my left breast laid open, my heart torn therefrom, and given to the ravenous birds of the air, or devouring beasts of the field as prey. So help me Almighty God.

— Oath of Obligation, Second Degree

I , in the presence of the Most High , solemnly promise and swear , under no less a penalty , than that of being severed in two, my bowels burned to ashes and those ashes scattered over the face of the earth and wafted by the four cardinal winds of heaven.

— Oath of Obligation, Third Degree

I , in the presence of the True and Living God , solemnly promise , under no less a penalty , than that of having my head struck off.

— Oath of Obligation, Holy Royal Arch Chapter

And here are some of the laws which might have applied:

Every person, who shall in any manner or form whatsoever administer or cause to be administered, or be assisting at the administering of any oath or engagement, purporting or intending to bind the person taking the same to commit any treason or murder , shall, on conviction thereof by due course of law, be adjudged guilty of felony.

— Unlawful Oaths Act 1812

All persons who shall conspire, confederate and agree to murder any person, whether he be a subject of Her Majesty or not, and whether he be within the Queens dominions or not, shall be guilty of a misdemeanour and shall be liable to imprisonment for any term not more than ten years.

— Offences Against the Person Act 1861

In fact, however, Freemasonry, being an arm of the Establishment, has been able to circumvent or ignore the law of the land relating to secret societies and conspiracy for two hundred years now. Masonic lodges were specifically exempted from the Unlawful Societies Act 1799 by the intervention of the Fourth Duke of Atholl and the Earl of Moira. They were equally able to ignore other repressive statutes and legislation directed against the nascent working-class and radical organisations: the Seditious Meetings Act 1817 and the Promissory Oaths Act 1868 which specifically provided that any society requiring members to take an oath when they join shall substitute a declaration for an oath.

Every Masonic lodge is required, however, to submit an annual return of the names, addresses and occupations of its subscribing members to the Clerk of the Peace for the county in which the lodge is held. This information is not available to the general public nor is it, apparently, collated by central government. The fact that most Clerks of the Peace are likely to be Freemasons themselves will help ensure the information remains among friends.

A Criminal Conspiracy?

Although most of the laws relating to the taking of oaths were cleared from the Statute Books with the Criminal Law Act 1967 the Masonic oaths even though they have for the most part, since 1964, been abbreviated for the benefit of the squeamish to the euphemistic ever bearing in mind the ancient penalty are clearly in contravention of the conspiracy laws so beloved of the English judiciary for use against the organised working class.

The prime justification for the use of the conspiracy laws is that it enables the law to intervene at an early stage before a contemplated crime has actually been committed. Lord Diplock defined conspiracy thus: [T]he offence lies not in the overt acts themselves, but in an inferred anterior agreement to commit them, There can be little doubt that a sacred promise to countenance and agree to premeditated ritual mutilation and murder falls within the category of an agreement to commit a crime.

In his summing up in the conspiracy trial of the Shrewsbury Three in 1974, Mr Justice Mais directed the jury to consider the following:

...conspirators do not publish their agreement or design. The whole object of conspiracy is something secret, and so it is necessary to see whether the surrounding circumstances and facts as found by you are such that you can infer a conspiracy and that an accused was part of that conspiracy, I must tell you that conspiracy, generally speaking, is a matter of inference. It is seldom expressed in words still less in writing, and it can be inferred from conduct, by the words and actions of those concerned, Now it is not necessary that all conspirators, or the accused here, should join the conspiracy at one and the same time. It is not necessary that they should all join at the beginning, or that they all originated the idea. They neednt all know the smallest detail but there must be knowledge of the general scheme, a man, as I say, who joins a conspiracy after its formation, who lends his aid to it knowingly, in furtherance of its objects, is just as guilty as the man who was there at the beginning. He can even join during the implementation of the conspiracy.

Also, the permeation of the entire legal profession by Freemasonry from the Lord Chancellors Office to the most far-flung provincial lawyer and JP or Sheriff the conspiracy makers and arbiters themselves will no doubt ensure that Freemasonry remains a locked secret.

In April 1951 Fred Longden, a Labour MP, called for a Royal Commission of Inquiry into Freemasonry, but this was rejected by Herbert Morrison the then Home Secretary and the matter has never been raised seriously since then.

Who's Who?

In national affairs of State and business there is little doubt that Freemasonry provides a serious instrument of influence for the relatively small number of people who wield real political and economic power in Britain today: cabinet ministers, senior civil servants, senior police officers and leading members of the armed services, executives of local authorities, senior judges, prominent churchmen, industrialists and trade union leaders.

The following list is a breakdown of just some of the 400-odd people past and present we have been able to identify as office-holders in the Grand Lodge of England for the years 1982/83:

Legal

The Rt Hon. Sir John Arnold (President, Family Division); His Honour Judge Rodney Bax QC, the Rt Hon. Viscount Bledisloe QC, Mr Registrar John Bradburn (Registrar in Bankruptcy and of the Companies Court, High Court of Justice, Clerk of the Restrictive Practices Court and Lord Chancellors Legal Visitor), Sir Lionel Brett, the Hon. Mr Justice Mervyn Davies, Mr Registrar T.L. Dewhurst, the Hon. Mr Justice Drake, the Hon. Robert Kinley Eason, His Hon. Judge Brian Gibbens QC, His Hon. Judge J.E. Jones, the Hon. Mr Justice Leonard (Common Sergeant in the City of London, ex-Chairman, Criminal Bar Association, etc.), F. Ashe Lincoln QC, the Hon. Mr Justice Reeve, His Hon. Judge Michael Underhill QC, His Hon. Judge P.M. Slot, His Hon. Judge Sir William Stabb QC, Sir John Chalmer Stebbings, (partner, Payne Hicks Beach & Co. solicitors, president of the Law Society), Andrew Felix Waley QC (recorder of the Crown Court), the Rt Hon. Lord Justice Waller OBE.

Aristocracy

The Hon. Edward Latham Baillieu, the Rt Hon. Lord Barnard, Viscount Chelsea, the Rt Hon. Lord Cornwallis, Most Hon. Marquess of Donegal, the Rt Hon. Earl of Eglinton and Winton, H.R.H. the Duke of Kent, H.R.H. Prince Michael of Kent, the Rt Hon. Lord Kenyon (Director, Lloyds Bank), the Rt Hon. Lord Rathcreedan, the Rt Hon. the Earl of Shannon, the Earl of Stradbroke, the Earl of Derby, Earl Cadogan, the Rt Hon. Lord Porritt, the Rt Hon. Lord Harris, Lt-Col the Rt Hon. Lord Burnham, the Rt Hon. Lord Swansea, the Most Hon. the Marquess of Zetland.

Commerce

Arthur J. Davis (Chief General Manager, Lloyds Bank), Sir Knowles Edge (ex-Managing Director, Wm. Edge & Sons), Alex Stewart Frere (ex-President, William Heinemann Ltd, publishers), Sir Peter Gadsen (ex-lord mayor of London, Member of Lloyds), Sir Gilbert S. Inglefield (ex-Lord Mayor of London), Arthur Harris Ley, FRSA, FRIBA (former Partner, Ley Colbeck & Partners, architects), Alan Lamboll (Member of Lloyds, ex-Sheriff of London and Secretary, Ross McWhirter Foundation), Sir Kenneth Newman (Chairman, Garnar Scotblair Ltd, General Commissioner for Income Tax), Sir Oliver Chesterton (Chairman, Woolwich Building Society and Crown Estates Commissioner), Sir Alexander Ross (Chairman, United Dominion Trust Ltd, Eagle Star), Sir James Stubbs, Lt-Col Neil Gordon Thorne, OBE, MP (ex-Partner, Hull & Co., chartered surveyors).

Civil Service

Sir Arthur Llewellyn Armitage (Professor Emeritus of Common Law, University of Manchester, Chairman, Social Security Advisory Committee and numerous other advisory committees including the Political Activities of Civil Servants and the National Advisory Council on the Training of Magistrates), William Derrick Pattinson (ex-Treasury, now Secretary-General of the

General Synod of the Church of England), Anthony F.A. Sutherland (ex-Under-Secretary, Department of Employment), Sir Herbert Tetley KBE (ex-Government Actuary), Charles Freedman (Commissioner, Customs & Excise).

Armed Services

Major General Sir Allen Henry Adair GCVO, General Sir Rodney Moore GCVO (Chief Steward, Hampton Court Palace), Major General Sir Ralph Hone KCMG, Major General Sir Leonard Atkinson. There are also 1 brigadier, 10 colonels, 4 lieutenant-colonels, 1 major and 1 captain representing the Army; 1 captain, 3 commanders and 1 lieutenant-commander from the Navy and 1 wing-commander and 1 squadron-leaders from the Royal Air Force.

The list of officers of the Grand Lodge also contains 14 privy councillors and 21 deputy lieutenants of counties.

Mafiosi

It is not only in national affairs that Freemasons can exert their influence. The extent to which Freemasonry can exert a powerful grip on the life of a community has been illustrated by the investigations carried out by local radical papers such as Rebecca and Tameside Eye. Journalists from both papers obtained the Masonic membership lists for their respective areas. The investigation into the Abergavenny Freemasons showed just how ubiquitous and pervasive Freemasonry can be within the power structure of local politics,, commerce and privilege.

Abergavenny is a quiet market town with a population of about 10,000 and one Masonic lodge with about 170 members. On the Conservative-controlled, 16-seat council many of the Tories were Freemasons, including solicitors and the managers of the three High Street Banks, the Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk, the Borough Treasurer, the Housing Manager, the Clerk to the Magistrates, the owners of the Abergavenny Chronicle, the Master of the Talybont Hunt, the head of the Abergavenny police force, three sergeants and a detective constable, 17 shopkeepers and 16 local businessmen. If Abergavenny could be said to have an Establishment it was to be found at the monthly meetings of the local St Johns Lodge. The Tameside Eye investigation into the sixty lodges in the Greater Manchester area showed a similar picture of a cohesive and all-pervasive network underpinning vested interest and privilege.

Charity Begins At Home

Freemasonry claims for itself the status of a private, exclusively male club whose members are dedicated to the ideals of universal brotherhood and morality which finds its principal expression in its charitable works. But in the UK as opposed to Craft Freemasonry in the US the main benefactors of Masonic charities are: the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institute (which owns a block of a hundred flats at Harewood Court, Hove), the Royal Masonic Institute for Girls, the RMI for Boys and the Royal Masonic Hospital. The Queen is patron of all with the exception of the hospital.

In 1981 Commander Higham, the Grand Secretary, authorised the transfer of the assets of the Fund of Benevolence which at the time stood at £2,496,961 to the Grand Charity, the only registered Masonic charity which does not mention a specific purpose in its articles of association (e.g. for relief of distressed dependants of Masons). In fact the stated aims of the Grand Charity are sufficiently vague as to cast serious doubt as to its claims to be a charity. The monies at its disposal can now be distributed to: such charitable institutions, objects or purposes as the council shall have at its absolute discretion determine. The assets of the Grand Charity at the end of 1981 stood at £2,638,447 while its income for the year was £834,589, including over £500,000 in contributions from the Craft and £250,000 in dividends and interest from stocks and bonds (Distillers, Imperial Group, Marks & Spencers, Rank Hovis McDougall, etc.). The 25 members of the Executive Council of the Grand Charity include a Commissioner of Customs and Excise (Charles Freedman), one ex-Lord Mayor of London (Sir Peter Gadsden) and the President of the Law- Society (Sir John Chalmer Stebbings).

Masonic charities would appear to come under the category of Friendly Societies as they are primarily self-serving institutions, but they are in fact registered Charities and present their accounts infrequently.

International Links

For many years the Grand Lodge of England disavowed the European Grand Orient Lodge because of their alleged permeation by freethinkers and revolutionaries. It may not be entirely coincidental that the Grand Lodge of England finally recognised the Grand Orient of Italy in 1972 at the height of extreme right-wing machinations in both the UK and Italy (in Italy these being most closely linked with the Italian Grand Lodge and the secret lodges such as P1 and P2), thus bringing Italy back into full membership of the international Masonic community after 110 years in the wilderness.

The principal architect of this historic rapprochement was the then Grand Master of the Grand Orient, Lino Salvini, an extreme right winger who immediately set about involving the Masonic movement in a series of financial and political intrigues which included moves to sabotage the proposed amalgamation of the three main Italian trade unions. These manoeuvres had the financial backing of Fiat and the Italian employers' federation, which donate in the region of 100 million lire a year to Masonic coffers.

It is equally a matter of interest that within 24 hours of the discovery of the hanged body of Roberto Calvi on 17 June 1982 a death which occurred in an almost ritualistic setting under the arches of Blackfriars Bridge with the tidal waters of the River Thames lapping at his feet (P2 members were known as the Black Brothers) the present Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Italy, Armando Corona, made a hurried trip to London accompanied by his Grand Secretary, De Stefano, to discuss Calvi's death with officials of the Grand Lodge in England.

Calvi's escape to England had been organised throughout by fellow P2 member and neo-fascist financier Flavio Carboni, and the man who safehoused Calvi in London was a London Freemason by the name of Michael Morris.

Whose Conspiracy?

“As long as you know what the agreement is, then you are a conspirator. You neednt necessarily know your fellow conspirators, nor need you always be active in the conspiracy. All you need know is the agreement. It can be effected by a wink or a nod, without a word being exchanged. It need have no particular time limit, no particular form, no boundaries.” — Mr Justice James (later Lord James) summing up in the Angry Brigade trial, 1971

Freemasonry is not a conspiracy in itself, nor is it the repository of any hidden secret or arcane knowledge. Neither is Freemasonry attractive to fascists of the old or new variety, who view it with the greatest antagonism, seeing in it the hidden hand of Bolshevik subversion and a tool of international finance capital a coded reference to the Jewish world conspiracy which they profess to see all around them . Politically speaking, Freemasonry is a vehicle for the extremists of the centre.

For the vast majority of Freemasons the Craft permits them to get away from their wives on a regular basis and rationalise it to themselves and others in a good and worthy cause. The Minister at Londons City Temple, the Reverend Leonard Griffith, explained his misogyny to Masonic researcher James Dewar:

I think there is a mans world and I think every man needs to get into that world occasionally and Masonry is perhaps one expression of this. Certainly in the Churches Ive always been depressed by the fact that there seems to be a much larger proportion of women than men. I like to be with men and perhaps thats one reason why I enjoy attending a meeting of the Masonic Lodge.

What inference can we draw concerning the covert power and influence which Freemasonry may exercise among its members? There are, after all, many secret, semi-secret and exclusive societies and clubs either contending for power or warding off attempts by outsiders to undermine their own position in the great pecking order.

Success in an authoritarian and competitive society as in totalitarian societies depends on knowing more about the opposition and their plans together with the ability to monopolise that information and use it intelligently. Conspiracy is, as Carl Oglesby affirms, standard practice among all power groups, occult or otherwise. What they fail to recognise is that ultimately secrets are more dangerous to those who hoard them than to those excluded from the information cycle.

Freemasonry is all things to men. Freemasons argue that the Craft consists of enlightened and disinterested persons who cherish humanitarian and charitable goals and who combine cooperatively to realise mutual aspirations. In reality Freemasonry cannot but provide a conduit for the bribery, corruption and subornation that are endemic in any system of privilege. The secrecy and exclusiveness of the Craft creates an unbridgeable gap between the Masonic view of the world and those outside the brotherhood, who, in effect, do not exist for Freemasons except inasmuch as they aid or hinder their political or career ambitions. Count Windischgratz, an astute observer of human nature and the activities of secret societies, wrote in 1788:

[T]hey are likely to encourage habits of mind and behaviour destructive of attention to the ordinary moral and social duties. The danger of degeneration from the high ideals of a secret brotherhood will always be present because of the difficulties of reconciling the secret obligations to the society with the outside world. Claims to use the opportunities of secret organisations for the preparation of the regeneration of the world are always to be regarded as dubious, given mens ordinary weaknesses.

The claim by Freemasons that the Craft provides brotherhood is equally fictitious. The exclusiveness of the inner circles of the Higher degrees and the hierarchical structure of the Grand Lodge itself based on patronage, rank, precedence and wealth have more in common with the murdering barbarians of the Mafia or the Union Corse than with a universal brotherhood.

Although Freemasons do constitute a powerful pressure group because of their positions in society it would of course be very wrong and misleading to see them as some sort of omnipotent cabal controlling the course of human affairs. Freemasons, like the Roman Catholic Catenian Association, the editorial board of Searchlight, MI5, the KGB or any other exclusive group, have as much idea as anyone else as to what is going on in the world. What Freemasonry provides is a well-organised and efficient syndicate capable of defending and extending the influence of those who already wield power.

Certainly, no evidence exists of criminal manipulation of the Craft by Freemasons. Finding tangible proof of criminal conspiracy among any cohesive and tenacious combination or friendship circle is like hunting for something solid in a sea of tapioca pudding. Also, most conspiracy theories are invariably so loosely defined that all evidence which does not tie in with the thesis is usually dismissed as part of the cover-up, but the law is quite specific.

In his summing up in the Shrewsbury Three conspiracy trial in 1974, Mr Justice Mais told the jury:

[A conspiracy] is seldom expressed in words, still less in writing, and it can be inferred from the conduct, by the words and by the acts of those concerned...

The one solid conclusion we can reach is that Freemasons do constitute an important political, social and business pressure group and have the potential, at least, to exert a powerful influence at national and international as well as local level. The relationship between the members of the Establishment is symbiotic and mutually supportive, and the Craft provides a parallel power structure linking financial, administrative, military and other power elites whose vision of a healthy world order depends on strong Masonic alliances among right-thinking men.

For those of us who believe in an open and accountable society it is important to be able to identify the power-wielders and backroom policymakers in our local communities. Mason spotting is one such way of going about this. Lodge meetings and Masonic functions are usually advertised in the local papers, while the more important events in the Masonic calendar are covered regularly in the Daily Telegraph. Masons themselves can be easily identified going to and from the Masonic Hall, restaurant, hotel or pub where the lodge or function is being held by their dark suits and small cases in which they carry their regalia and jewels. Apart from the regular lodge meetings it is useful to know Freemasons also celebrate certain saints days and attend special lodge functions on or close to those days: St John the Evangelist, 27 December (1st Sunday after Christmas); St Georges Day, 23 April (1st Wednesday after); St John the Baptist, 24 June. St Barbara, St Thomas and the Four Crowned Martyrs are among other saints with particular significance to members of the Craft.

A photographer working with the Welsh investigative magazine Rebecca showed great initiative when she managed to smuggle herself into the annual meeting of the South Wales Provinces Eastern Division Grand Lodge while it was in full session and take photographs. She was grabbed by the Lodge Tyler a Masonic security officer whose function is to guard the lodge while in session and who, historically, has had the task of organising and carrying out the ritual murder of Masonic Deep Throats but she managed to throw the camera to a waiting colleague and save the film. As there is no publicly available register of the membership of this particular secret society

and it is unlikely the Clerks of the Peace will agree to make their lists available for inspection then only actions such as the above are likely to identify the membership of one of the central pillars of privilege in clandestine Britain.

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Stuart Christie
A wink, a nod, or a shake of the hand: on the Masons
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