



The Liverpool Masonic Rebellion and the Grand Lodge of Wigan

David Harrison



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On 22 December 1823 a group of Masonic rebels met at the Shakespeare Tavern in Williamson Square in Liverpool to re-establish the Antient Grand Lodge, a Grand Lodge that had officially merged with the Moderns ten years previously. The group of Freemasons, led by local tailor Michael Alexander Gage, were rebelling against the central control of London and what they saw as the 'tyranny' of the Duke of Sussex, who had neglected their grievances concerning the ritualistic and administrative practices that had been imposed on them. The rebellion in Liverpool was the culmination of discontent within the large Lancashire Province, which seemed to have been simmering since the Union of the Antients and the Moderns Grand Lodges in 1813.

The Moderns or Premier Grand Lodge claimed to be the official body of English Freemasons: formed in 1717, they had been central to the modernisation of Freemasonry. However, in 1751, the Antients Grand Lodge was formed, which rebelled against the Moderns for what they saw as their tampering with Freemasonry. Both Grand Lodges existed side by side throughout the remainder of the eighteenth century, operating as rivals, but in 1813 they came together and formed the United Grand Lodge of England - though, as we shall see, some lodges in certain areas on England were not happy with this move. The Antients had different ritualistic views; for example, besides having the usual three Craft degrees, they practised a fourth degree called The Royal Arch, though the Moderns used the Royal Arch ritual as an awkward 'add-on' to their third degree. Administration was also different: both Grand Lodges having different methods of running their lodges; the Antients having travelling Warrants which meant a lodge could in effect travel around the country. The lodge could also die out, but its Warrant could be purchased and a lodge set up elsewhere.¹

The Lodge of Friendship No. 277 in Oldham had witnessed disruption a few years after the Union in 1817, the bickering between the Brethren splitting the Lodge in two and the rift only being healed the following year after the direct intervention of the Provincial Grand Master, Francis Dukinfield Astley.² Disruptions in Liverpool had previously taken place in 1806, when the Grand Secretary of the Antients Grand Lodge was forced to write a letter to Lodge No. 53b, which met at the Cheshire Coffee House at Old Dock Gate, after receiving a complaint - apparently from other Liverpool Antient lodges - that the Lodge was open at unreasonable hours and that several members of the Lodge were confined for breaking into a warehouse and stealing. The Grand Secretary requested that the Lodge should suspend all Masonic business until they were cleared of the charges brought against them, but despite this request, the Lodge continued to meet. The Mayor of Liverpool became involved when he received a letter from the other Antient lodges of the

port, and the Committee of the Masters of the Antient lodges in Liverpool started an official investigation which concluded that Lodge No. 53b had been involved in 'unmasonic behaviour' resulting in their Warrant being withdrawn by the Antient Grand Lodge in 1807. The following year however, despite all the trouble, a number of the Brethren of the erased Lodge were desperately seeking a new Warrant to form a new Lodge.³

The Liverpool rebellion of 1823 certainly reflected the spirit of internal bickering and 'unmasonic behaviour' that had resulted in the closure of Lodge No. 53b. The rebellion was also tainted with an element of isolationism and networking 'cliques' within the lodges; some of the outlying industrial towns such as Wigan, Warrington and Ashton-in-Makerfield had strong business links to Liverpool, mainly in relation to the cotton and coal trade, and these towns became the location for lodges which came under the sway of the rebels. Many of the Liverpool lodges, like other lodges based in the neighbouring industrial towns, were also suffering from low membership and in the acrid climate where the threat of closure and the loss of traditional rights caused increasing dissatisfaction amongst the Masons, revolt spread quickly, gaining momentum and stamina.

Many of the Liverpool Masonic rebels, who were mainly a collective of Liverpool- and Wigan-based tradesmen and merchants, eventually returned to the United Grand Lodge, renouncing their initial grievances and apologising. But a hardcore remained, and under the leadership of the tempestuous Michael Alexander Gage, the rebels created the groundbreaking *Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom* and formed the *Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of England According to the Old Constitutions*, which was later to become the *Grand Lodge held at Wigan*.⁴ The *Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom* was a bold Masonic statement for the time, the majority of which was probably written by Gage himself. It reflected the rebels' grievances and outlined their hope for an independent future, but it also reflected Gage's egotistical personality and set him up as a 'founding father' of the re-launch of Antient Freemasonry. Ironically, many of the Liverpool-based Masonic rebels were originally from outside Liverpool; such as Gage, who was born in Norfolk; John Robert Goepel, a jeweller who originated from London; and James Broadhurst, a watchmaker from Great Sankey near Warrington.

At a Provincial Grand Lodge meeting held at Ye Spread Eagle Inn, Hanging Ditch, Manchester, during the October of 1818, a motion was passed which declared that any lodge whose membership is reduced to less than seven should not be considered as a regular lodge and the Warrant be declared void. This motion, which was seen as a move to correct a defect in the *New Constitution-Book*, was actually made by Michael Alexander Gage with the overwhelming support of



his fellow Brethren. This motion was then duly passed on to the Board of General Purposes, but instead of it being presented by them to the United Grand Lodge, the motion was not reported and the Board remained silent on the issue. Certain Liverpool lodges, such as the Ancient Union Lodge No. 348, an old 'Antient' Lodge, only had ten members at the time and the Lodge had held an emergency meeting prior to the Provincial Grand Lodge meeting, sending a brother to attend, keeping an eye on the proceedings.⁵

In September 1819 it was proposed by Gage that a letter should be drafted,⁶ addressed to the Grand Master himself, the Duke of Sussex, which would thus outline the grievances of Gage and his supporters, focussing on the fact that the motion passed during the meeting the previous year had not been presented by the Board of General Purposes to the United Grand Lodge. In the letter to the Duke, the rebels also referred to an incident in Bath, where Petitions for Royal Arch Chapters were dismissed by the Grand Chapter because it was:

*not desirable to make the Number of Chapters in any place equal to the Number of Lodges.*⁷

The rebels seized upon this example, and, being of Antient persuasion, they indicated that they saw the Royal Arch as part of Craft Masonry and the rejection of the Petitions was an abuse of power. The Duke of Sussex, however, did not reply to the letter. Indeed, the Masonic historian Beesley puts forward the theory that the letter may have been destroyed, as it was addressed directly to the Duke of Sussex and not addressed through the normal administrative channels of the United Grand Lodge.⁸ The fact that there was no reply only intensified the anger of the rebels and culminated in a decisive meeting in the Castle Inn, North Liverpool on 26 November 1821 that would launch the revival of the Antients.

The Duke seemed to have been quite dismissive of any disagreeable elements within Freemasonry and had little sympathy for rebels within the society. Such was the case with the outspoken Freemason Dr George Oliver, whose removal from his Provincial office was engineered by the Duke after Oliver incurred his dislike.⁹ The letter had been extremely direct and revealed the anger felt by the rebels, complaining how certain Modern practices were being enforced and how new rules concerning the Royal Arch conflicted with the *Ancient Landmarks*. Gage and his fellow rebels had given the Duke plenty of time to reply, but with no response it could be said the Duke had played into their hands.

The decisive meeting at the Castle Inn, North Liverpool in the November of 1821 set the final scene for rebellion. A document was drafted with thirty-four signatures, including Gage and Broadhurst, outlining the dissatisfaction felt by the rebels. The other Lodges included in the rebellion were Lodge No. 74 and Sincerity Lodge No. 486 (both based in Wigan), as well as a number of Brethren from the Liverpool-based Mariners Lodge No. 466, the Ancient Union Lodge, the Sea Captains Lodge and the Merchants Lodge.

The thirty-four brethren who signed the document were subsequently suspended by the United Grand Lodge, and Gage's Lodge No. 31 was erased, an action that mirrored the erasing of Lodge No. 53b in 1807. This action created further isolation for the suspended rebels as they were not allowed to visit any other lodges, ultimately providing greater bonding between them and giving them further cause to complain about the 'tyranny' of the United Grand Lodge. The dissent spread rapidly through Liverpool as certain lodges began to support their fellow Brethren. The Liverpool-based Sea Captain's Lodge No. 140 threatened to separate itself entirely from the United Grand Lodge if Lodge No.

31 was not re-instated and by the middle of 1822 an increased number of sixty-five Brethren from Liverpool and Wigan were recorded as being suspended.

Gage's Lodge No. 31 had been the senior Lodge amongst the Antient lodges in Liverpool, having the oldest Warrant, and therefore being in the position to settle the disputes that occurred within other Antient lodges in the town. The Lodge had been called Lodge No. 20 before the Union, but had been subsequently renumbered, and, in doing so, had lost some of its local prestige. This renumbering was obviously a sore point for the Lodge as they reverted back to No. 20 on the creation of the rebel Grand Lodge in 1823 - thus displacing the local St George's Lodge, which, despite being founded in 1786, had a Warrant which dated from 1755.¹⁰ When looking at the membership make-up of the St George's Lodge, a greater number of local gentlemen are evident, whereas in Lodge No. 31 the membership make-up had a greater number of tradesmen, such as Gage, who was a tailor. There was a clear issue of class within the dispute, and this may explain the anger felt by Gage - a man with aspirations.

On 5 March 1823, the United Grand Lodge finally expelled twenty-six Brethren, stating that the rebels had:

been found guilty of various Acts of insubordination against the Authority of the Grand Lodge, and having been summoned to show cause why they should not therefore be expelled from the Craft; have not sent any sufficient apology for their late misconduct.

Their rebellious activities were described as an 'insult' by the United Grand Lodge and the Brethren, having 'violated the laws of the Craft', were ostracized.¹¹ Gage and his followers were now free to proceed with their master-plan - to resurrect the Antient Grand Lodge. The plan was certainly to go national and to spread the influence of the rebel Grand Lodge, and it was declared that the causes which led to the re-establishment of the Antient Grand Lodge were to be advertised in four of the London newspapers, a public declaration which would be guaranteed to reach the eyes of the leaders of the United Grand Lodge.

Gage took on the role of Deputy Grand Master, while George Woodcock Esq. was duly elected as the Grand Master of the rebel Grand Lodge. Woodcock was a prominent member of the Barnsley-based Friendly Lodge No. 557 and fully supported the *Antient landmarks of Freemasonry*. He was in correspondence with Gage and Lodge No. 31 in Liverpool from early 1823, Woodcock writing an eight-part resolution which outlined the 'sorrow and regret at these severe measures which the G. Lodge has thought it proper to exercise towards Twenty-six respectable members of the Society'.¹² The new Grand Master was listed as a Gentleman in the minutes of his Lodge meetings, but he worked as a bank manager for a fellow member of the Lodge, John Staniforth Beckett, a member of a local banking family. Despite this, Woodcock appears to have been in control of the Lodge and certainly engineered the Lodge joining the rebellion: a decision that split his Lodge in two, mirroring the incident which had occurred at the Lodge of Friendship in Oldham. Woodcock definitely shared the same spirit as his fellow rebels in Liverpool and Wigan, though events were to dampen the fire of revolt.

The new Grand Lodge soon ran into trouble - at a meeting of the Grand Lodge held at the Cross Keys in Wigan on 23 June 1824, the ex-Grand Secretary John Eden was:

*for ever expelled...in consequence of his having Embezzled the funds of the Grand Lodge for his contempt of Summonses and other unmasonic conduct.*¹³



James Broadhurst's Wigan Grand Lodge Certificate of 1817



James Miller's Wigan Grand Lodge Certificate of 1910



James Miller, last surviving member of the Wigan Grand Lodge



Eden had been a member of Gage's Lodge, and this would have been a personal blow to the leader and would have created financial difficulties in the early days of the rebel Grand Lodge. Part of the Grand Secretary's job would have been to assist in looking after funds, and Eden had certainly abused the trust that had been placed in him. The returns paid to the Grand Secretary from certain lodges under the sway of the new rebel Grand Lodge (such as the Barnsley Lodge) had not been passed on to the Grand Treasurer, with Eden fraudulently using the funds. It seems that this incident had certainly shaken the fledgling rebel Grand Lodge, affecting the Brethren deeply, some of whom became quickly disenchanted.

During the same year, James Broadhurst turned his back on the rebellion and conformed. Along with a number of other rebels, Broadhurst presented an apology to the United Grand Lodge, which brought them back into the fold. He immediately rejoined the Merchants Lodge, but his payments ceased in 1826, the experience of the rebellion and the subsequent fallout perhaps affecting the camaraderie of the Lodge. Out of the original rebels representing the Ancient Union Lodge, only Thomas Berry remained to become an active member of what would become the Grand Lodge of Wigan. Berry attended the first meeting of the rebel Grand Lodge at the Shakespeare Tavern in 1823 and served as Secretary at the March meeting of 1825.

George Woodcock's Barnsley Lodge became alarmed at the financial irregularities occurring in the administration of the rebel Grand Lodge and formally separated themselves from their Lancashire Brethren in 1827, Woodcock going on to resign his office as Grand Master.¹⁴ The Barnsley Lodge - being the only Yorkshire Lodge in support of the rebellion - thus styled themselves as *The Yorkshire Lodge of Ancient Masons*, and Woodcock continued to lead his Lodge in isolation until his death in 1842.¹⁵ Gage himself seemed to have slowly distanced himself from the rebels, and it was as if the Liverpool Brethren became disillusioned, the energy of the rebels quickly ebbing away.

The Masonic Rebellion in Liverpool had included from the outset a number of Wigan lodges, and after 1825, no minutes exist of the Grand Lodge meeting in Liverpool, though in Gage's resignation letter, written in 1842, he stated that he had:

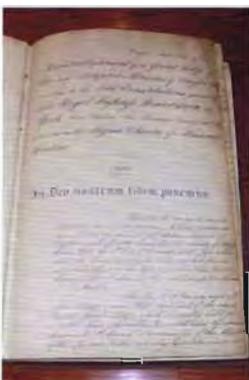
*not had the pleasure of meeting the Grand Lodge, nor in fact any private Lodge during the last fifteen years.*¹⁶

The makeup of the Liverpool and Wigan lodges that were involved in the rebellion were similar, with the majority being tradesmen and merchants, all sharing the same grievances, but the shift from Liverpool to Wigan was to become a permanent one. Another leading Liverpool rebel, John Eltonhead, returned to the United Grand Lodge on 7 March 1827,¹⁷ the same year that Gage had stated that he had last attended a lodge. With these two leading rebels gone, it left only a handful of active Liverpool Brethren, such as Thomas Page, Thomas Berry and John Robert Goepel, mixing with an influx of leading Wigan rebels, such as John Atherton, Ralph Ball and Robert Bolton.

There is a large gap in the minute book from the last known meeting in Liverpool in 1825 until 13 April 1838 when the Grand Lodge suddenly met in Wigan at the Hole I'th' Wall tavern in the Market Place. Gage was not in attendance, but original rebels Thomas Page, from the Antient Liverpool Lodge No. 31 (renumbered to its original pre-Union number of 20 after the rebellion) and Robert Bolton, from the Wigan based Sincerity Lodge No. 492, were present. A new Grand Master, William Farrimond Esq., was elected, officially replacing George Woodcock, who - according to the surviving minutes - had never actually attended the Grand Lodge meetings,



The signatures of the rebels who signed the original Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom in 1823



The copy of the Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom in the minute book of the Rebel Grand Lodge in 1823

and the rebel Grand Lodge began a new phase as it took on more of a Wigan identity, gradually severing its ties with Liverpool.

After 1838, the meetings of the Grand Lodge took place regularly every quarter in various Wigan taverns, some of which were run by its own Freemasons, such as the Hole I'th' Wall which was run by Brother Thomas Johnson; the Banker's Arms, which was run by Brother Thomas Bolton, and the Angel Inn in nearby Ashton-in-Makerfield, which was run by Brother Timothy Turton. Wigan was well placed in the centre of Lancashire, and at its height in the early 1840s the Wigan Grand Lodge had lodges in Wigan, Liverpool, Ashton-in-Makerfield and Warrington. It had also been in close contact with an Antient lodge in Lynn Regis in Norfolk, which may have been because Gage originated from there and had continuing links with the town.¹⁸

By mid 1842 Gage finally resigned from the Wigan Grand Lodge, angry at not being asked to review the renumbering of lodges and the granting of new Warrants, a decision that had taken place in a meeting held on 15 August 1838. The Wigan-based Sincerity Lodge became Lodge No. 1, and the Liverpool Lodge No. 20 became Lodge No. 2, a move which may have added to Gage's anger and revealed how Wigan had become more dominant and more pro-active in the administration. This new pro-active stance by the Wigan-based Grand Lodge began to pay off and its influence slowly began to spread. It had five lodges under its jurisdiction by the early 1840s, though George Woodcock's Barnsley Lodge had declined an offer to join the Wigan Grand Lodge and a Lodge in nearby Warrington, called the Lodge of Knowledge, was relatively short-lived. Two more Lodges were given Warrants: one based in nearby Ashton-in-Makerfield named Harmony and Perseverance; the other, named the St Paul's Lodge, which was based in Ashton-under-Lyne. All of these Lodges except for the Lodge of Sincerity seemed to have disappeared by the 1860s.

Gage had always been given the title of Deputy Grand Master, courteously being given the task of supervising some of the activities by correspondence. However, he was deeply upset that the *Magna Charta* had been breached, as it had originally stated that on the creation of the rebel Grand Lodge, all lodge numbers pre-1823 had been changed back to their pre-Union numbers before 1813. On 10 June 1842 Gage wrote a lengthy letter of resignation, in which he outlined his feelings at not being asked to review the decision of the new Warrants. He was a proud man, and as he was the person who had instigated the Liverpool Masonic Rebellion, he appeared to have been hurt by the decision. In the letter he made references to the *Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom*, reminding the Brethren of their origins:

*It was therefore from an ardent desire to hand down to posterity the Ancient Landmarks Customs and Usage of Masonry that we re-established the Ancient Grand Lodge this act however could only justified by a strict Adherence on our parts to the Ancient Laws Landmarks and Usages of Masonry.*¹⁹

Gage also sternly refused a request to write a pamphlet detailing the causes of the rebellion. Despite Gage's coldness, he was still the spiritual leader of the Antients, and in the reply to his resignation, Gage was described by the Grand Master as a man whom:

*the tyrants in the Masonic world would have always looked upon with dread.*²⁰

Gage was always an obstinate man: passionate, arrogant and confident in the face of opposition, and his fight for the cause of Antient Freemasonry had been extremely fierce and pro-active. However, he never came back and never replied to Bolton's letter. Increasing the



Case holding a copy of the Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom dating from 1839, a gift to second Grand Master William Farrimond

isolation of the Wigan Grand Lodge, Thomas Page and John Robert Goepel, two of the last remaining original rebels from Liverpool, returned to the United Grand Lodge on 1 December 1858.²¹ Like Gage, John Robert Goepel had dramatically changed his career, going from a jeweller to a dentist after the Masonic Rebellion, a

profession that he engaged in until his death in 1862.²² Gage held the respect of his fellow rebels, and without him there would have been no Wigan Grand Lodge, his leadership influencing its original design. He had aspired to greater things - Gage, a mere tailor, having written to the Duke of Sussex complaining about the way certain Brethren in Liverpool were being mistreated being an excellent example of an attempt to break down the class and social divisions. Gage died in 1867 aged 79, though his actions would continue to inspire the Wigan Grand Lodge.²³ The success of the rebellion - albeit on a local basis - is revealed in its organization and the proactive stance of the Wigan Grand Lodge; its effect on the United Grand Lodge also proved permanent, with the

rather large Lancashire province being divided in two shortly after the rebellion, creating the more manageable western and eastern divisions.

The minute book for the Wigan Grand Lodge ends in 1866, though James Miller, who wrote his memories of the Lodge of Sincerity in the 1950s, stated that the Grand Lodge of Wigan did survive, supervising the last remaining Lodge, the Lodge of Sincerity. Its last Grand Master was John Mort who served as Grand Master from 1886 until the Lodge returned to the United Grand Lodge in

1913. James Miller was a young man when he was initiated into the Lodge of Sincerity in 1908. He followed his father, his grandfather and great-grandfather in becoming a Freemason under the Wigan Grand Lodge, and would become instrumental in the survival of its memory. Miller discusses in his memoirs the festival of St John, which was celebrated by all lodges before the Union, and mentions the practice of the Royal Arch, its apron being worn by the Grand Master, John Mort, at all times. The Order of the Knights Templar was also practised, and Miller mentions a sickness and burial society within the Lodge, which may be a continuation of the 'funeral fund' that was mentioned in the minutes of the Wigan Grand Lodge in 1839.

Miller was to witness the end of the Grand Lodge of Wigan, its last surviving Lodge being isolated and alone, and, as a relic of the Antients of the eighteenth century, it was not recognised by other local Masonic lodges.

Despite the ruling passed in the early days of the Grand Lodge that it was forbidden to discuss the United Grand Lodge, Miller mentions that 'heated arguments' on re-joining had been going on for two or three years leading up to 1913. The matter was brought to a head, as Miller puts it, in 1912, when an unnamed newly-raised brother received an invitation to visit a Masonic Lodge under the United Grand Lodge of England. On presenting himself to the Lodge and showing his certificate, he was refused admission, which led him to write a rather abusive letter, calling the Lodge a bogus institution and stating he was the victim of a fraud. This incident seemed to confirm that the Sincerity Lodge, the last surviving Lodge under the Grand Lodge of Wigan, had a bleak future and if it was to survive, it needed to adapt.

A meeting between both Grand Lodges was sought, and Sincerity Lodge was visited by Worshipful Brother J D Murrey from Provincial Grand Lodge, who was satisfied with what he witnessed of the working of the Lodge. Miller recites that developments moved quickly, and the Lodge could keep the name 'Sincerity' but would have to be renumbered. Ironically, the issue over the renumbering of lodges after the Union was an issue that had moved Gage to rebel against the United Grand Lodge in the first place. The Lodge would lose its original number of 486; it would surrender its old Warrant; and despite being founded in 1786, it would have a new number of 3677 and in the official United Grand Lodge records the Lodge of Sincerity would have 26 September 1913 as the date of its Consecration.

All the Brethren of the Wigan Grand Lodge then had to be initiated, passed and raised, in a ceremony which was reminiscent of the pre-Union 're-making' ceremony, when an Antient Mason joined a Modern lodge. Miller seemed to have mixed feelings about his Lodge rejoining the United Grand Lodge and he ended his memoirs with a haunting image:

But one can still wonder if the ghosts of those old brethren of an unrecognised Lodge still linger around Sincerity.²⁴

Miller was speaking with some regret of the surrender of what was effectively the last surviving relic of the Antients and was perhaps referring to the ghost of Michael Alexander Gage, still lingering in the Lodge room with his Masonic rebels. It had been ninety years since Gage presided over the first meeting at the Shakespeare Tavern in Liverpool. In the Masonic Rooms at Wigan Gage's dream finally ended, as the last surviving Lodge under the Grand Lodge of Wigan re-joined the United Grand Lodge of England, bringing the rebellion to an end.

The rebellion represented feelings of dissatisfaction and discrimination amongst some Freemasons, especially within the then large Lancashire province. Feeling that their grievances were being ignored, they broke away from the United Grand Lodge in London and went their own way. The rebellion can also be seen to reflect a revolt by the merchants and tradesmen of Liverpool against the 'tyranny' of the Duke of Sussex; Freemasons and tradesmen such as Gage and Broadhurst seeing the leadership of the United Grand Lodge firmly in the hands of London-based aristocracy, a leadership that had neglected the issues raised by the Brethren of the leading port in the industrial north-west of England. This is evident, not only in the name and the wording of the *Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom*, but also in the aggressive attitude of the leading rebels, some of whom, such as Gage, clearly had personal aspirations. The rebellion was the last stand of the Antients, and despite it taking place, the expansion of Freemasonry under the United Grand Lodge of England continued apace during the later half of the nineteenth century.



The surrender of the San Jose to Nelson at the Battle of Cape St. Vincent; one of the rebels James Broadhurst served on the San Jose while it was Nelson's flagship

Right: Royal Arch apron worn by John Mort Snr - the last Grand Master of the Wigan Grand Lodge





Endnotes

1 See David Harrison, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, Lewis Masonic (2009). Also see David Harrison, *The Transformation of Freemasonry*, Arima (2010).

2 See *Minutes of the Lodge of Friendship, No. 277, Masonic Hall, Oldham, 26 February, 1817 – 20 May, 1818*. Not Listed.

3 *Letters concerning the Lodge at the Cheshire Coffee House, Old Dock Gate, No. 53b [erased], Liverpool Annual Returns, AR/906, 1797-1809, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, UGLE, Great Queen Street, London*.

4 *The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of England According to the Old Constitutions*, first met officially in Liverpool in the July of 1823, which resulted in the declaration of the *Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom* which was read out in the aforementioned meeting in the Shakespeare Tavern the following December. The *Magna Charta of Masonic Freedom* was a document which put forward the theme of a new dawn in Masonry; free from what was seen as the 'despotic power' of the United Grand Lodge. The Grand Lodge first met in Wigan on 1 March 1824, and with no mention of the Grand Lodge meeting in Liverpool again after 1825, it became known as The Wigan Grand Lodge.

5 E B Beesley, *The History of the Wigan Grand Lodge*, Manchester Association for Masonic Research (1920), pp. 2-4.

6 Beesley, *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

7 A Copy of the Address to His Royal Highness Prince Augustus Frederick, The Duke of Sussex, Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of England, in Beesley, *Wigan Grand Lodge*, p. 132.

8 Beesley, *ibid.*, p. 5.

9 R S E Sandbach, *Priest and Freemason: The Life of George Oliver*, The Aquarian Press (1988), p. 99.

10 St George's Lodge of Harmony No. 32 had been No. 25c, changing to No. 38 in 1814. It was renumbered again to No. 35 in 1832, and changed to its present number in 1863. See Lane's Masonic Records 1717-1894 online: <http://freemasonry.dept.shef.ac.uk/lane/> [accessed 25 January 2010].

11 Beesley, *Wigan Grand Lodge*, pp. 16-19.

12 Will Read, 'The Spurious Lodge and Chapter at Barnsley', in *AQC*, Vol. 90 (1977), pp. 1-36, on p.10.

13 Beesley, *Wigan Grand Lodge*, pp. 46-47.

14 Read, *AQC*, Vol. 90 (1977), pp. 16-17.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

16 An excerpt from Michael Alexander Gage's resignation letter, 10 June 1842, in Beesley, *Wigan Grand Lodge*, p. 85.

17 Michael J Spurr, 'The Liverpool Rebellion', in *AQC*, Vol. 85, (1972), pp. 29-60, on p. 42.

18 1851 Census for Liverpool, Lancashire. Liverpool Library. Ref: HO153/2183.

19 A transcribed excerpt from Michael Alexander Gage's resignation letter, 10 June 1842, in Beesley, *Wigan Grand Lodge*, p. 84.

20 *Ibid.*, pp. 83-88.

21 Spurr, 'The Liverpool Rebellion', *AQC*, Vol. 85 (1972), p. 42.

22 Goepel's occupation is given as 'Dentist' age 50, and his birthplace as London in the 1851 Census for Liverpool, Lancashire. Liverpool Library, Ref: HO107/2180. However, Goepel was listed as a 'Jeweller', aged 40 in the 1841 Census for Liverpool, Lancashire. Liverpool Library, Ref: HO107/556/28. Deaths registered in June, 1862, John Robert Goepel, Liverpool. Ref: 8b. 113.

23 Deaths registered in January, February and March, 1867, Michael Alexander Gage, aged 79, West Derby, Liverpool. Ref: 8b. 331.

24 *Reminiscences of an Unrecognised Lodge, namely Old Sincerity Lodge No. 486 by James Miller*. Some of Miller's regalia is currently held by the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England. Many thanks to the Revd Neville Cryer who supplied a copy of the memoirs of James Miller. Not Listed.

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