

1666 – ATKINSON MANUSCRIPT

One of the Old Charges, or records of Freemasonry now in the custody of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, was formerly preserved in the archives of the Aitchison-Haven Lodge, which met later on at Musselburgh in Scotland. The manuscript. is engrossed in the Minute Book of Aitchison-Haven Lodge. The writer attests to his transcription in the following manner:

“Insert by me undersub and the 19th of May, 1666, Jo. Auchinleck, clerk to the Masones of Achisones Lodge.”

This manuscript. has been reproduced, with 24 lines in facsimile, by D. Murray Lyon in his History of the Lodge of Edinburgh.

1701 - ALNWICK MANUSCRIPT

This manuscript is written on twelve quarto pages as a preface to the Minute Book of the Company and Fellowship of Freemasons of a Lodge held at Alnwick, where it appears under the heading of The Masons' Constitutions. The document tells us of the “Orders to be observed by the Company and Fellowship of Freemasons at a Lodge held at Alnwick, September 29, 1701, being the General Head Meeting Day.”

Among the items are the fifth and ninth which are of especial interest to us:

“No mason shall take any Apprentice (but he must) enter him and give him his charge within one whole year after.”

“There shall no apprentice after he have served seven years be admitted or accepted but upon the Feast of St. Michael the Archangel. “

But, the festival was in 1704 changed to that of Saint John the Evangelist and later entries of” made Free December 27th” indicate clearly that. those, who had served their time were admitted or accepted on that date according to the purpose of the ninth “Order.”

This record was first published in 1871 in Hughan's Masonic Sketches and Reprints, American edition, and again in 1872 by, the same author in his Old Charges of the British Freemasons. In this latter work, Brother Hughan says of the records of this old Lodge that, “ranging from 1703 to 1757 they mostly, refer to indentures, fines, and initiations, the Lodge from first to last remaining true to its operative origin.

The members were required annually to ‘appear at the Parish Church of Alnwick with their aprons on and common squares as aforesaid on Saint John's Day in Christmas, when a sermon was provided and preached by some clergyman at their appointment.’ A. D. 1708.” The manuscript was reproduced in facsimile by the Newcastle College of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia in 1895.

11812 – ANTIQUITY MANUSCRIPT

This celebrated manuscript is now, and has long been, in the possession of the Lodge of Antiquity, at London. It is stated in the subscription to have been written, in 1686, by, “Robert Padgett, Clearke to the Worshipful Society of the Freemasons of the city of London.” The whole manuscript was first published by W. J. Hughan in his *Old Charges of British Freemasons* on page 64, but a part had been previously inserted by Preston in his *Illustrations* (see book ii, section vi, pages 81-3, 1812 edition).

Here we have evidence of a curious tendency to alter or interpolate passages in old documents whenever it was required to confirm a preconceived theory.

Thus, Preston had intimated that there was before 1717 an Installation Ceremony for newly elected Masters of Lodges, a claim of doubtful worth. He inserts what he calls “the ancient Charges that were used on this occasion,” taken from the manuscript of the Lodge of Antiquity,. To confirm the statement, that they were used for this purpose, he comes to the conclusion of the manuscript in the following words:

“These be all the charges and covenants that ought to be read at the installment of Master, or making of a Freemason or Freemasons.” The words in italics are not to be found in the original manuscript. Brother E. Jackson Barron had an exact transcript made of this manuscript, which he carefully collated, and which was published by Brother Hughan. Brother Barron gives the following description of the document:

“The manuscript copy of the Charges of Freemasons is on a roll of parchment nine feet long by eleven inches wide, the roll being formed of four pieces of parchment glued together; and some few years ago it was partially mounted (but not very skillfully) on a backing of parchment for its better preservation.

“The Rolls are headed by an engraving of the Royal Arms, after the fashion usual in deeds of the period; the date of the engraving in this case being fixed by the initials at the top, 1. 2. R. “Under this engraving are emblazoned in separate shields the Arms of the city of London, which are too well known to require description, and the Arms of the Masons Company of London, Sable on a chevron between three castles argent, a pair of compasses of the first surrounded by appropriate mantling.

“The writing is a good specimen of the ordinary law writing of the times, interspersed with words in text. There is a margin of about an inch on the left a side, which is marked by a continuous double red ink line throughout, and there are similar double lines down both edges of the parchment. The letter U is used throughout the manuscript for V, with but two or three exceptions” (see Hughan’s *Old Charges*, 1872, page 14).