



Internet Lodge 9659
United Grand Lodge of England
Province of East Lancashire
<http://internet.lodge.org.uk>

Short Papers Competition 2007

The opinions reflected by the author are not necessarily those of Internet Lodge, The Province of East Lancashire or the United Grand Lodge of England.

Paper 41/2007

Title **Ancient Charges And Regulations,
Ancient Charges And The Old Charges**
Author **Bro Fred Lomax – United Kingdom**

The first two can be found in the *Book of Constitutions* of the United Grand Lodge of England. But what are they? Where did they come from? How old are they? Are they really Ancient?

An Ancient Charge may be read in a Lodge, often after the minutes, as a reminder to Brethren to follow the Charges of a Freemason, but how many of us bother to actually read them? They can be found from page 147 in the *Book of Constitutions* but they are different to the Ancient Charges and Regulations starting on page vii. These are the Ancient Charges & Regulations read to and acknowledged by the Master Elect at his Installation ceremony and are much shorter than the former. These are regulatory in nature and to which the Master Elect must acknowledge his consent before he can be Installed into the Chair of King Solomon.

An Ancient Charge on the other hand concerns a Freemason's moral duties,
of God and Religion, of the Civil Magistrate,
Supreme and Subordinate, of Lodges,
of Masters, Wardens, Fellows and Apprentices,
of behaviour: In the Lodge whilst constituted;
After the Lodge is over and the Brethren not gone,
When Brethren meet without, Strangers, but not in a Lodge;
In the presence of Strangers, but not in a Lodge;
At Home and in the Neighbourhood;
And towards a strange Brother

Those are the Ancient Charges used by many Lodges and it is likely that they were devised by the Rev James Anderson when he wrote the first *Book of Constitutions* in 1723. However, he must have had some original material to have arrived at this moral code. George Payne, the second Grand Master in 1718, asked for any old documents appertaining to Craft to be brought in to show the usages in Ancient times and this is where the Old Charges come in.

In fact these are more ancient than the Ancient Charges and there numerous originals still in existence ranging from the *Regius MS* of 1390 and the *Cooke MS* of 1410 to *The Grand Lodge MS* of 1583, about 130 in all. There several written in the seventeenth century and some from the eighteenth, after the formation of Grand Lodge. Most a have three sections, a prayer, and historical part and the charges. A famous one is the *Beswick-Royd MS* which was discovered in 1915 and is now in the Museum at Freemasons' Hall, Bridge Street, Manchester, is believed to have been written in the early part of the 16th century on four strips of parchment, approximately six inches wide, stitched together to form a continuous strip 6ft. 10 ins (2008mm's) in length.

Historians believe that they are essentially English in origin and no other Craft than masonry possessed or used them.

Why don't you take a look at them next time you pick up your *Book of Constitutions*?

Short papers are intended to be read aloud in lodge meetings as a form of Masonic Education. Whilst we encourage you to use them for their intended purpose they must not be reproduced for publication in any manner without the prior permission of Internet Lodge No 9659 E.C. or the author.
© 2008 Internet Lodge and the author