



Internet Lodge 9659
United Grand Lodge of England
Province of East Lancashire
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Short Papers Competition 2007

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Title **The Grand Lodge in Wigan**
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The Union of the two rival Grand Lodges, the 'Moderns' and the 'Antients' which had existed in England previously, took place in 1813 and became United Grand Lodge of England and, for a few years, all was going reasonably well. That is until dissent broke out in Liverpool when, in 1818, Lodge No. 31, in trying to establish itself as the senior lodge in the city wrote to the Board of General Purposes seeking to have Lodges whose membership had fallen below seven, be not considered a regular Lodge, the Warrant be declared void and the number put at the disposal of Grand Lodge.

The Board didn't reply and so members of the Liverpool lodge decided to write directly to the Grand Master, the Duke of Sussex, complaining in fairly strong terms of the lack of response by the Board of General Purposes. Again they didn't get a reply.

The letter was not well received in London and Grand Lodge accused No. 31 of a Breach of Masonic Law and summoned them to appear to explain themselves. They refused.

The Liverpool Lodge remained obdurate, and several Wigan Masons from the Lodge of Sincerity No. 486 and the Lodge of Integrity No. 74 joined the dissenters. The dispute rumbled on for another two years with even more lodges joining in. Finally Grand Lodge's patience was becoming exhausted and they again demanded that Liverpool No. 31 appear at Grand Lodge to explain themselves and again they refused. Several brethren then retracted their support of No. 31 when expulsion was threatened and sought a pardon from Grand Lodge, but thirty four brethren refused to comply and finally No 31 was struck off and the brethren expelled from Freemasonry for ever. Another Liverpool Lodge, Sea Captains No. 120 complained and stated that they would leave United Grand Lodge if No. 31 wasn't reinstated. They were also expelled from Freemasonry for ever.

Not deterred the dissenters re-formed the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons According to the Old Institutions, (or Constitutions) the former 'Antients Grand Lodge, initially in Liverpool. It met a few times in the city but then a dispute arose between the Wigan Masons and their Liverpool colleagues when the Grand Secretary embezzled all the Grand Lodge funds. This was further exacerbated when the new Grand Secretary complained that the Wigan Masons had not paid their subscriptions.

Consequently, the Grand Lodge only met a couple times after that and, by 1838, the Wigan Masons had decided to take it over and it operated out of the town, later becoming known as the Grand Lodge in Wigan. It had a maximum of eleven lodges on its roll but, eventually, it became reduced to one, the Lodge of Sincerity No. 1 and had its final meeting as a Grand Lodge in 1860. However, Sincerity continued stubbornly on its own until 1913 when it came back under United Grand Lodge as Sincerity Lodge No. 3677 and to this day it still meets in Wigan.

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