

Sir James Stubbs KCVO.

Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge

James Stubbs was a Freemason who played one of the most important roles in the enhancement and development of the Craft in the 20th Century.

A Yorkshire man and grandson of a Bishop by descent, he was educated at Charterhouse and Brasenose College, Oxford where he studied “Mods”, whilst noting a number of fine scholars’ and athletes from The Manchester Grammar School; and was initiated into Apollo University Lodge, in 1930.

In those days this Lodge was seen a sit of a “sausage machine” for the purposes of initiation , but as Stubbs himself said in later life in retrospect, apologising to Winston Churchill, ‘some machine, some sausage’

His Masonic career was rapid and within one year he was the Assistant Secretary: unlike today a position he referred to as merely counting heads for dinner

After university his teaching career at St Pauls was “interrupted “by the Second World War where he served in the army before continuing his Masonic career.

It was a career with an amazing meteoric rise starting as a Principal Assistant at Grand lodge; ultimately becoming a professional Freemason: Despite the fact that at his interview for the position he told the panel he always used electric razors when one of the interviewers was Chairman Of the Gillette Company!

Stubbs always took great pleasure from the fact that despite the war years taking a great toll on freemasonry in general, the post war years saw the pent up enthusiasm for masonry growing exponentially from petitions for new lodges in 1941 to 1948 growing form 7 to 202 and lodge certificates issued doubling from 11, 00 to 22,000 during the same period.

Stubbs was keenly involved with the installation of the new Grand Master the Duke Oid Devonshire in 1948, [and the present Grand Master, the Duke of Kent in 1967,] by the King himself no less.

However, to his horror - and this is indicative of how things do not really sometimes change very much - he noted the ill behaved actions of some senior Grand Officers who left the dais BEFORE the grand lodge was closed! On a positive note there was only one fatality at the installation: the Provincial GM for Middlesex.

Thereafter Stubbs took in many ways and forms to modernise the craft the Grand Lodge and the committees that ran the craft. Indeed it was his idea to finally create an index of all members of the craft; something that had never been done before.

In real terms Stubbs dragged Freemasonry and its charitable endeavours into the 20th Century; and assisted in the revival of masonry overseas during his many visits abroad. Indeed he was in a potentially fatal situation when an earthquake hit his lodge visit in Greece in 1953. He also defended the craft from insidious attacks by the church in the 1950s. Often, he was apt to quote the Eighteenth century Parliamentarian Horace Walpole, 'Nothing but a persecution will bring the Freemasons into vogue again'.

After 22 years from 1958 as Grand Secretary, it is fair to say this intelligent Masonic scholar and humble man dedicated his life to the cause and the good that Freemasonry is at its heart; still being installed as a Master [Old Union Lodge no. 46] as late as 1982 at the age of 71.

This is no more than a meagre attempt to recall and highlight the memory of a man who epitomises for me all that we should attempt to achieve in our lives as brothers within our Lodges and craft.

Bro Steven Levine
Zion Menorah Lodge 1798