

# The Museum Collection

No.25

## The Seal of the R.A.O.B., G.L.E.



A fascinating look into the origin and  
development of the Royal Antediluvian Order  
of Buffaloes, Grand Lodge of England  
Seal

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## FOREWORD

This book in the series of Museum Collections deals with the seal of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes under the Grand Lodge of England and although it is basically a research into our seal, to give the book a flowing picture it must, by necessity deal with other Banners as well.

I have used some of the text in talks that I have given whilst visiting Lodges up and down the country and it has been well received by the members attending such lodges; by putting these views into a Museum Collection book I feel it has given me a bit more freedom and poetic license to expand my views with extra information without it being too deep.

The illustrations I have used are those that have been scanned from various sources along with photographs I have managed to take, some have been re-drawn; unfortunately some of the graphics in my collection are not as good as I would like and have been omitted because of reproduction difficulties.

I have tried, with the contents of this book to give the reader a picture of how the seal of our Order originated and has changed and grown over the time the Order has been in existence, but with no written records to fall back on it has been a difficult journey but very rewarding.

The contents expressed in this book remain the views of myself as the author of this publication and in no way reflect the views of the RAOB GLE, other Banners or any of its members.

Read and enjoy.

*Mick Walker ROH Grand Primo 2006  
September 2009*

## Also available in the Museum Collection series

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **THE SEAL OF THE RAOB GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND (and others)**

**A**nybody who knows me will be aware of my fixation as to the history and origins of the Order and after completing several small articles for my web page and having compiled and edited most of the Museum Collections, my thoughts turned to the Seal of the Order.

The research has not been easy and I have followed many different avenues to obtain these results. But there was still those nagging thoughts that no tangible proof backed any of my feelings and with this in mind I set about with a more determined effort but as I have already stated, the lack of any real historic records means that anyone researching the history of the seal is just confronted with blank pages.

Again the more you look at a particular subject, the more questions you tend to ask, with the hope of getting more answers? Solving a puzzle like this then lends itself to even more questions, until you realise that you are not being given all the answers and the research stops.

Research such as this can of course be either a hassle and therefore dropped quickly due to boredom and lack of interest, or it can be rewarding in many ways. So what drives us on, I suppose it is that insatiable thirst for knowledge, to seek out the history of our Order.

Now then, how does one research something that has no written historical records? A good question, the answer is that you trawl through endless books and papers on subjects that you think might give you a hint

of what you are seeking, from old Journals and papers, to documents that are so old and frail that they can only be viewed through glass, anything that might lead you to the goal you seek.

Curiously enough there are no records at all to be found about the Seal of the Order either at Grand Lodge or in the Provinces, and as this must be a history compiled from records in my possession or documents I have seen, and those records of the ancient epoch are somewhat scanty, this story must necessarily be rather fragmented and disconnected.

To build up to the explanation of the seal itself it is necessary for me to give you several history lessons and to take passages from other authors who have, in their own small way, shed a little light on the subject.

I have researched this explanation for the last thirty five years and can be sure that there is a lot more documentation and research to be done, many other historians will come up with different ideas on this subject, I hope they do. This book is part of my overall plan and with other books will form the basis of an on going research into the history of our Order, a plan which I personally have been committed to for a good number of years now.



Whilst it is true to say that the R.A.O.B. G.L.E. seal is just a logo to apply to letterheads, certificates, etc. or is just a piece of enamelled metal, it is the intricate design of the seal that attracts the attention of those who look closely at it.

One could compare it to a flawless diamond who's real beauty lies beneath the the surface and who's many faces hide the intricate design associated with it's polished surface.

The following is my interpretation of this beautiful diamond we call "The Seal of the Order".

Certainly, up until 1960 all limited companies must have a Seal and though most consist of a simple circle, some are encompassed by what appears in every day words as a belt, as shown on many KOM jewels where the head of the buffalo is surrounded by a belt, I am assured however by a higher authority that it is indeed a garter as worn by the Knights of the Order of the Garter, the oldest Order of Chivalry in this country.



The Most Noble Order of the Garter is an order of chivalry, or knighthood, originating in medieval England. The Order is dedicated to the image and arms of St. George as England's patron saint, and is presently bestowed on recipients from British and other Realms; it is the pinnacle of the honours system in the United Kingdom. Membership in the order is limited to the sovereign, the Prince of Wales, and no more than twenty four members, or Companions.

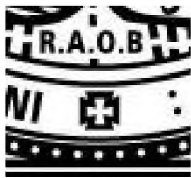
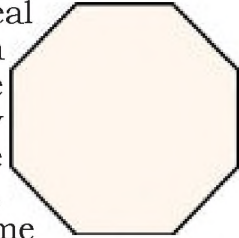
Bestowing the honour has been described as one of the Monarch's few remaining truly personal, executive prerogatives.

The Garter is still mentioned in a lot of our ceremonies, for example the paragraph which appears in the ceremony for the presentation of Honorary Membership reads "At the head is the badge of the Order

with a garter ribbon bearing the motto *Nemo Mortalium Omnibus Horis Sapit*".

Similarly many rubber stamps are of this pattern and there is no doubt that in the days we are talking about our Order was not so affluent that it could go to the College of Heraldry for a proper grant of Arms, which could have run into hundreds of pounds.

It is the octagonal design of our Seal that some may think might be a connection between the Order and the octagonal plans of the churches built by the Knights Templar to whom reference was made in ceremonies now discarded, even today there is reference to the old time



Knights, this being the small plain Maltese Cross at the bottom of the circle. Closer examination of the older seal shows the wording around the circle reads, "In · things · essential · Unity : In · things · doubtful · Liberty : and · in · all · things · Charity · &". This is quite clearly shown on the front cover of Mervyn Payne's 'Origin and Development of the Royal Antediluvian Order of Buffaloes'. It just goes to show that proof readers were as bad in the olden days as they are today.

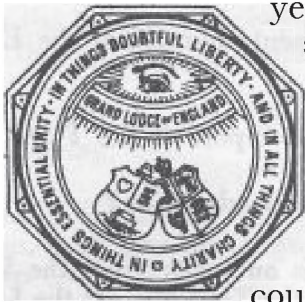
The words quoted in the above paragraph are the motto of Saint Augustine of Hippo who lived in the fourth Century, St. Augustine of Hippo is the patron Saint of brewers because of his conversion from a former life of loose living, which included parties, entertainment, and worldly ambitions. His complete turnaround and conversion has been an inspiration to many who struggle with a particular vice or habit they long to break.



This famous son of St. Monica was born in Africa and spent many years of his life in wicked living and false beliefs. Though he was one of the most intelligent men who ever lived and though he had been brought up a Christian, his sins of impurity and his pride darkened his mind so much, that he could not see or understand the Divine Truth anymore.

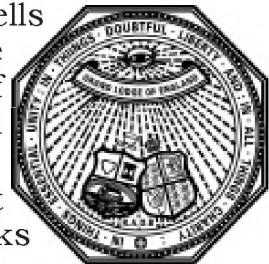
Full of bitter sorrow, Augustine flung himself out into the garden and cried out to God, "How long more, O Lord? Why does not this hour put an end to my sins?" Just then he heard a child singing, "Take up and read!" Thinking that God intended him to hear those words, he picked up the book of the Letters of St. Paul, and read the first passage his gaze fell on. It was just what Augustine needed, for in it, St. Paul says to put away all impurity and to live in imitation of Jesus. That did it! From then on, Augustine began a new life. Seems to have a remarkable resemblance to some people in today's society.

Another difference in the seal of today and that of yesteryears is that the older style



shows the outer circle supported by eight triangles, the importance of which seems to be to give the impression that the outer circle is raised up, today's seal shows the inner circle encompassed by a ring of beads or diamonds, now this could be emblematically explained by

using this illustration as a Golden Chain which, when used in the dedication of new Lodges tells us "The Golden Chain encircling the Spirit Fire teaches us the eternity of True Friendship". This Golden Chain is emblematic of Prudence.



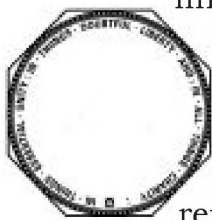
An Odd Fellows Author tells us that "Friendship, love, truth, golden links



these, that not only bind together their obligated votaries, but that recognize and embrace, because of worthiness and plighted faith, that behind the back as well as face to face, have a defensive, kindly word and a brother's generous deed; that, amid the upheavals of communities and the crumbling of nations, systems and governments, swerve not from their course, and are corralled by no arbitrary bounds, and that, whatever the dialect, the nationality or the religion of men, read upon humanity's brow the inscription written by the finger of infinite love. A faithful and true friend is a living treasure, estimable in possession and deeply to be lamented when gone. Nothing is more common than to talk of a friend; nothing more difficult than to find one; nothing more rare than to improve by one as we ought”.

Records are so scanty that it cannot positively be said whether the seal was the production of an individual or a committee. My own view is that the choice of an octagon was purely fortuitous, as it seemed to be the easiest way to stamp out a piece of metal or cut out a piece of wood for the base construction of the seal.

The circle itself could be interpreted as an unbroken link, for love, especially Brotherly Love, never weaves a chain whose link can be broken. The concept of an “Unbroken Chain or Link” usually applies to the theory of transmission of authority down across the generations. This would also remind us that this is the link of brotherly



love and good fellowship and is used by us in remembrance of our obligation, wherein we promise to succour and defend a worthy brother to the extent of our power.

The Circle symbolises the Oneness of our Order, Symbol of the Universe:— (Rejoice and sing the Glories of our Mystic Ring). It is also the Male representation of

our Order giving rise to the fact that as an organisation we are dominated by the male only gender.



I have searched old documents, certificates and so on and it can be stated quite positively, our Seal as it stands today, did not exist before 1880 as no documents prior to that date and bearing a this Seal exist. But shortly after then, dispensations bearing the Seal began to appear.

I had the opportunity to attend the Grove House Garden Party in July of 2002 over a period of two days and with the help of the RAOB GLE Museum Curator, Bro. Stan Stirman, I have examined a dispensation issued in 1880 by the Grand Primo Lodge of England



wherein the Gold blocked seal depicts the Royal Coat of Arms, and next to it is a circle with a pair of buffalo horns curling down to the bottom with a ribbon attached in the centre, the words Grand Lodge of England encircle the horns in Old English. In the centre and in script

underneath the horns are the initials RAOB. Could this then indicate that the Grand Primo Lodge of England was changed to the Grand Lodge of England around this era?

I also had the opportunity of examining one of the earliest dispensations to be held at the RAOB GLE Museum, one which was issued to the Lord Nelson Lodge number 7 on 19th December 1857.

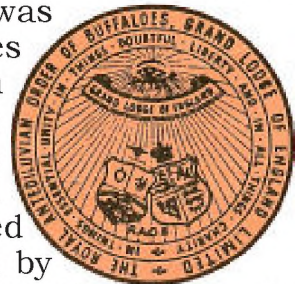


This particular document was issued by the Grand Executive Council of Management and is signed by Parkin Pearson,

Grand Primo Buffo. There are two seals on this document and both are impressed in red wax. The first is a circle in which are the words Grand Lodge Seal and underneath is the figure of a buffalo, the second is a circle enclosing the words Parkin Pearson around the top half with No.1 in the top centre and a buffalo underneath the words. I have no doubt that the ensuing Primo Buffo's had their own seals but I could not see any other documents from around that year. The size of the seals were approximately one and a half inches across.

We must fall back on supposition that the printers were called into collaboration and our Seal, like Topsy, just grew. This conclusion is assuredly borne out by comparing the head of the buffalo, which appears on many certificates as late as the 1920's. The head of the animal has no resemblance whatsoever to a pure buffalo or American bison but would well do to serve the local butcher in his advertisement for "Prime Beef".

It is interesting to note that the reason there were so many variations of the seal doing the rounds at the early part of the century was that the "Limited" section took with them the Seal, as it was at the time of the "Great Split" in 1897. This section of the RAOB still lay claim to being the rightful owners of the seal and just to prove how silly the whole thing was becoming, let me take a few passages from Mervyn Payne's book which reads :- "The ownership of the copyright of the emblem was another bone of contention and after long and sometimes heated debate and mature consideration by Grand Lodge, its leaders, the question as to who possessed the right to use the Emblem was settled by "two (unnamed) London Past Grand Primo's and the Grand Secretary, Brother Wilson Marsh.



For a very long period this had been the source of great bitterness between the “Limited Company” and ourselves and Counsels opinion, said to have been in our favour had been duly taken and proceedings threatened.

*Robert Wilson Marsh ROH*

In 1903 at the Worcester Convention Wilson-Marsh tells us that “It will be gratifying to the members to know that after considerable and delicate negotiations on the part of our two London Past Grand Primos and myself, we have been able to obtain the copyright of, and in, the Emblem of the Order, and the same is now vested in myself and registered in my name, on behalf of the Order. Consequently the issue, or the causing to be issued, of any copy of that Emblem without my consent, is an infringement of the Copyright Act, and though



*Grand Secretary 1899 - 1908  
Grand Primo 1897*

the Limited Company have still the courage to issue these in defiance of the notice given to it, and its officers, of my being the registered proprietor of the copyright, the Convention will be asked to deal with this matter with a view to every person, except the representative of the Grand Lodge of England, being stopped from this illegal issue”.

So, where is that copyright which, after delicate negotiations was now ours? We must remember that Wilson-Marsh was expelled the Order in 1908 so perhaps it is little wonder that nobody, to this date, seems to know where the registration is.

It appears that in spite of this registration, the Limited Section gaily continued to issue it as their own, and

threats of dire penalties if this flagrant breach of the Law continued filled the air. As far as I am able to see, nothing happened and of all the reasons ever given for the blatant disregard of legal formality shown by the "Limited", the one suggested by Wilson Marsh is surely unique.

He was of the opinion that they had grounds for believing he would be defeated when his position came up for election at the next Convention and that his successor would be a brother more inclined to compromise on this issue.

"That", said the Grand Secretary, "is for the members of the Order to determine, for assuredly I shall not decline nomination to suit the most passionate and the most fervent wishes of the leaders of the Limited company".

Another brief period and at the Bournemouth 1903 Convention the matter which took up the greater time was a proposal to institute proceedings against the Limited Banner for infringement of copyright, they having used, quite openly, "Our" emblem.

Many favoured the viewpoint of Bro. T. H. Hogarth, who said that the Limited were dying out naturally and to fight them in a Court of Law was flogging a dead horse. Others thought it might be cheaper to design a new emblem of our own; one small voice from the north, Bro. Ellis, said he would be disappointed if they decided to fight the Limited as he had come prepared to hold out the hand of fellowship to all banners and hoped amalgamation was not far away".

And in any case, surely the old adage comes into its own on this occasion when it is said "that possession is nine tenths of the law" and they had the seal and that was that!!

One of the oldest and clearest seals that I was able to view was one that was issued by the Britannia Lodge No.2 of the South London District on a membership

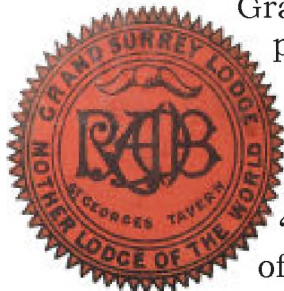


certificate of September 27th 1866 to Brother Alfred Mitchell, it is signed by Brother G. E. Harland Alley, Secretary and is countersigned by Brother Edmond St. Albryn, Primo Buffo.



The Seal of the Grand Surrey Banner is merely an embossed ring containing Buffalo horns and the interwoven initials G.S.B. whereas the seal of the

Grand Surrey Lodge is a very ornate pointed circle with a pair of Buffalo horns within the inner circle, a fancy font showing RAOB and the meeting place of St. Georges Tavern, finished off with the outer circle proclaiming "Grand Surrey Lodge, Mother Lodge of the World"





The Seal of the Grand Executive Banner is even more austere with the name of the section as a circle border and the initials RAOB included in Old English type.

The official Seal of the Grand Council combines these two ideas by the initials being contained within the outline of what is usually termed a Tudor Rose.



The Seal of the Manchester Banner of the Loyal Ancient Order of Buffaloes bears a great deal of resemblance to ours — octagon, etc. till one examines more closely its constituents, and just to prove the different ideas extant I will refer to a First Degree emblem of the Manchester Banner bearing the octagonal seal, the reproduction is so small it is barely possible to discern what is represented. The device is repeated at the top in imitation gold printing, which is even less translatable. However using a powerful magnifying glass I give the following description. The top left-hand corner is a bird, apparently a dove, in flight. The top right hand corner is so blurred its anybody's guess; I would suggest either a sheep fleece or a buffalo in full coat. The bottom left hand corner is a spray of leaves, possibly an olive branch whilst the right hand bottom corner we meet a skull and crossbones, possibly the combination of Primo and Constable.



The Skull and Crossbones have long been known to have Masonic connections and is usually accompanied by the Latin inscription “Virtus Iunxit Mors Non Separabit” which, being freely translated means “whom virtue has united, death shall not separate”.

It was commonly used as a symbol on Masonic Grave sites in the past. The Skull and Crossbones, Masonic or not point out to us all, our own mortality and eventual death. This image of mortality was believed to figure in Templar ritual. Now while this claim in and of itself seems quite believable, one of the legends of how it came to be is not.

It is well known that the order of the Templars were monastic in nature and therefore forbidden to have involvement with women.

The legend of the “Skull of Sidon” claims that one Templar Knight had a relationship with a woman who died. He dug up the woman’s corpse and consummated their relationship resulting in a most grisly birth nine months later.



A great lady of Maraclea was loved by a Templar, a Lord of Sidon; but she died in her youth, and on the night of her burial, this wicked lover crept to the grave, dug up her body and violated it.

Then a voice from the void bade him return in nine months time for he would find a son.

He returned at the appointed time, opened the grave again and found a head on the leg bones of the skeleton (skull and crossbones).

The same voice bade him ‘guard it well, for it would be the giver of all good things’, and so he carried it



away with him, it became his protecting genius, and he was able to defeat his enemies by merely showing them the magic head. In due course, it passed to the possession of the Order.

This tale can be traced back to a twelfth century author named Walter Mapp, although the story at this time is not connected with the Templar Knights. However, at the time of their trials 1307-1314 it was well woven into the Templar legend. In fact it was called upon during the actual trials of the Templars.

The skull was used in the Enrolment Ceremonies of Knights of the Golden Horn wherein the candidate swears with his hand on a human skull and is explained thus:- You were sworn with your hand upon a human skull, the Emblem of Death, to remind you of your mortality, and also that, when your head, now so full of life and vigour, shall assume that same condition, you will have to answer before another tribunal for any violation of this your most solemn pledge. This ceremony is still in use today in the Grand United Order of Knights of the Golden Horn, a fraternity which is a brotherhood of the same ilk as our own.



The seal of the Grand Executive Council is a pointed Circle with the words inside saying “RAOB under the Banner of the Grand Executive Council”, a very simple but effective seal which gives any document a ‘legal’ look.

To conclude these descriptions I have examined a Primo certificate of the Grand Certifying Council of our own Banner issued in 1925, and the printer’s imprint, which was supposed to protect the Copyright, set in type close to our Seal says “Entered at Stationers’ Hall No. 7647 and in the finest of type

3/7/95 or is it 3/7/99, which would imply that the seal was not copyright until then, so I would then state as positively as I can that our Seal can have no historical significance whatsoever or surely the various Banners would have perpetuated it in its original form instead of the infinite variety we find to day.

But historical or not just what does it depict? What were our forefathers trying to convey?

I am afraid that the following is the best explanation I can give and I would emphasise that it represents my personal interpretation only, since there does not appear to be any written authority on the subject.

The symbol of the “all seeing eye” is undoubtedly taken from our Masonic friends

and would indicate the all seeing eye of God, although in these modern days, and to be politically correct even the Masons would like to refer to it as the all



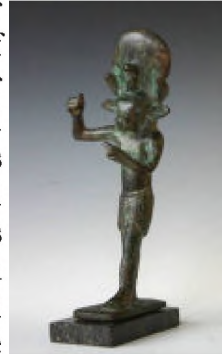
seeing eye of a supreme being, but in Buffalo circles it would appear to indicate the advancement of personal knowledge or wisdom through membership of and advancement in the Order.

The Eye of Providence, or the all-seeing eye of God, is a symbol showing an eye often surrounded by rays of light or a glory and usually enclosed by a triangle. It is sometimes interpreted as representing the eye of God watching over humankind. It is found in many eras and cultures. It is generally a symbol of the watchful and protective power of the Supreme Being, especially when that entity is considered in a solar or heavenly context.

It is interesting to note that one of the older seals shows the all Seeing Eye being a side on view with the eye pointing to the left. The seal in use today shows

the eye of the Cyclops, that one eyed Giant of Greek Mythology with the eye pointing straight ahead.

I am sure we are all aware of how much influence the ancient Egyptians played in our past and another interesting story in this phase of our history regarding this phenomenon of the all seeing eye is that Atum was the primeval Egyptian sun god and creator of the world. He is the evening aspect of the sun, representing the setting sun. Later he was syncretized with Re as the god Atum-Re. According to the myths, he was the first substance (a hill) who emerged from the primeval waters. Atum created his children, the deities Shu and Tefnut from his spittle. Atum was especially worshipped at Heliopolis, where he was the head of the Ennead cult. He was represented by the black bull Mnewer, who bore the sun disk between its horns. As the father of the pharaoh, he played an important part in the coronation rites. Atum was depicted as an old man symbolizing the setting sun, but he appeared also as a snake, a scarab, and a pharaoh hat. The snake, bull, lion, lizard and ichneumon are his sacred animals. The Memphite creation myth stated that Atum was conceived in the heart of Ptah and was created by his word. Literally, “he who completes, or perfects”.



Atum was the Egyptian God who had the all seeing eye. Atum was blessed with two children, Shu and Tefnut and the story goes that while they were separating the land and the sky from the world, Shu and Tefnut became lost in the darkness. Atum lost sight of his children and became worried. He ripped out his all seeing eye and used its power to search for them. Another eye grew from the void and took its place. The eye searched the darkness until it found Shu and Tefnut and showed them the way back into the light. Atum

used the all seeing eye on his crown so that he could continually keep an eye on the world.

The Banner ribbon under the All Seeing Eye can be explained from one of our own long forgotten ceremonies, the quotes of which are still being used by various other Sections today. “The only

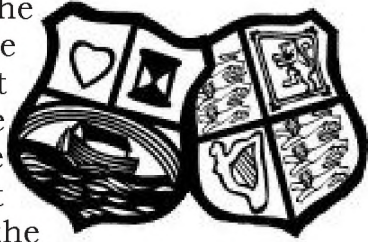


Buffaloess we ever had was Elizabeth, Queen of England, at that time the Earl of Essex was Grand Primo, and in order to convince her Majesty that our society was not a political one, the Earl had full permission to inscribe her name on the books of the lodge, upon which she expressed herself convinced how beneficial the Order was to a well regulated government, that she presented us with a banner of silk, emblazoned with gold bearing the motto of our Order in Latin ‘Nemo Mortalium Omnibus Horis Sapit’, which means ‘Mortals are not wise at all hours’ doubtless bearing reference to her own ill founded suspicions as to what Buffaloism was before she was initiated”. Another instance where we can safely assume that it indicates, the Loyalty of our Order to the Crown and Constitution. Today however it proclaims that we are “The Grand Lodge of Engand”.

The rays emanating from the eye in today’s seal reach every part of the inner circle yet that in yester-years seal only reach halfway down, a possible reason being that when printers had to reproduce a printing block of the seal it was usually on a zinc or lead base and in the reproduction process some of the finer artwork got lost.



If we look at the placing of the shields we can see that they are not centrally lined up but overlapping, now if we compare this style of placement with the style of the arts we will find that a similarity occurs between the



seal style and the two shields representing the drama and arts, one could assume that this style is derived from the roots of our order which is well known to be the thespians of Drury Lane, hence the connection between us and the theatrical world.



The right hand shield surmounted by a crown is the Royal Standard and I would like to add that we, as an Order have no right whatsoever to use this emblem. In order to show to the authorities that the Buffaloes were not subversive to the interest of the state, the Order decided to describe itself as the Loyal Order of Buffaloes. It only needs a slip of the tongue for 'loyal' to become 'royal' and in a very short time Joe Public accepted that the Order was indeed Royal.

A Royal Charter has never been issued to the Buffaloes. Indeed, under the current regulations it is unlikely that one will. Over the years there have been a number of internal differences of opinion leading to break away formations operating under the same principles and still using the name of the Buffaloes. These groups or 'constitutions' are generally referred to as Banners. The Royal Warrants Act requires the applicant to be the one and only representative body.

The introduction of the Royal Warrant Act, in the early 1900's, required anyone using the 'Royal' prefix to register with the Lord Chancellors Office and to stop using the title if permission to continue doing so was

not granted. Since the Buffaloes had been using the title from the 1840's the Lord Chancellor agreed that no objection would be raised on our continued use of the title on the grounds of long usage, provided no act by the Order arose which would disgrace its use.

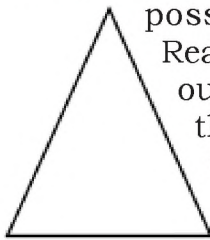
It could be that the various items within the shield show that our Order has Lodges in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, if this is so then why are we not called the Grand Lodge of the United Kingdom instead of the Grand Lodge of England for this was in use long before we had lodges outside of the United Kingdom.

The only saving grace is that it can be argued that it is not the whole shield, as can be seen by the left hand shield covering the top left hand part of the Royal Standard, but again, in Buffalo circles we would like to think that it indicates the loyalty of the Order to the British Crown and Constitution.

The units within the left hand shield are three in total and we must look to the various ceremonies within our Order to seek out the significance of them. First, the motto of our Order is in three parts as shown in the presentation of the First Degree Emblem, viz: "below are the words "In things essential Unity, in things doubtful Liberty, and in all things Charity". In these words, which are also contained in our Official Seal, are found some of the leading principles of our Order, namely Tolerance, Brotherly Love and Good Fellowship, the constant practice of which will bring a new joy into your life". Second, we find J.P. Dowling writes in his Old Ritual Book issued supposedly in 1874 under the League of Light:- "when three well known Occultists, whose names are veiled in our old Ritual in a



Tri-Temura, viz., George, Cooper, Murray, each name having six letters, were responsible for certain Egyptian mysteries performed for the first time in France in a vast mansion in the Rue Saint Honore, Paris, on the 9th of August, 1785, with the Elector of Hanover as Grand Hierophant”, thirdly that other gentleman who had such a great influence in the origins of our Order, namely Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and finally, The Triangle, the first perfect form symbol of the Full Man. Creature of Three Dimensions each equal and also



possessing three Characteristics:— Body, Reason, and Spirit. Symbolic of the No. 3 in our Order:— Three Knocks, Three Rings on the Pipes, Three Degrees etc, (it is noted that in many of the Banners there should only be THREE Degrees). If Knights of the Order of Merit call to mind the Password of the Third Degree, this should enlighten them.

It should also remind us that the call to order in our lodges is given by three knocks; there are three charges to be heard when a new Primo is installed in the Royal Chair and three pence is the total amount to be paid in respect of these charges.

We are told in the Second Degree ceremony “That you will constantly and zealously devote yourself to the advancement of Buffaloinism, inculcate the principles of brotherly love in your intercourse with the Brethren and never deviate from the landmarks of our Order — Justice, Truth and Philanthropy”.

Three questions are asked in the Third Degree lecture “How say you standing before me, giving the Sign of Fidelity, have you at all times acted in conformity with our laws, discharged the duties of your office with impartiality and devoted yourself to the advancement of our Order?”

During the Fourth Degree ceremony we use three

words to explain - "There is no one in this august assemblage of true and good hearted Brothers who can say "Sir ..... was ever a coward, a craven or a recreant Knight".

There are three virtues in life "Faith, Hope and Charity".

So, whether the significance of three items in the left hand shield was by design or accidental, it is as though some greater authority had an influence in its design and in the production of the ceremonies which were used in olden days and to some extent are used today.

The figure surmounting the left hand shield is a container of some description similar to the Juniper Cup used by the Alderman of Juniper in ceremonies. If it is indeed a Spirit Cup, then is this the cup from which the spirit of Truth flows, for inevitably from the Spirit of Truth flows the Spirit of Love, and where there is the Spirit of Love, blessings are counted and shared, that which is shared in love is always



multiplied in Joy. Brother Stan and I have also closely examined several seals of the 1892 era and have found that the symbol above the left-hand shield is undoubtedly a front facing buffalo's head with a corded rope (as in a coronet) underneath. The symbol in today's seal one could argue that it could be a chalice similar to the Holy Grail reminding us to constantly seek for truth in all our affairs with others. Whilst I do not wish to get too involved with religion I have to explain the meaning of this symbol. The Holy Grail first appears as simply "a grail" in the works of Chrétien de Troyes. The word is probably derived from the Old French word *grail* meaning a "broad and capacious dish or salver". Though usually thought of as being a cup or chalice, the Grail has indeed been variously described as a platter, dish,



a cornucopia, or a horn of plenty, all of which is symbolically represented in the tools and furniture of the modern day lodge.

The bottom half of the shield represents Noah's Ark surrounded by water indicating the antediluvian nature of the Order. This has changed over the years, in the old design it would appear as Noah's Ark in all its glory or then again it could be that rain is falling on to the Ark indicating "before the flood". Some members of the Order and particularly those who are of the Masonic Order as well (and there are quite a few), could well argue and have you believe that the Ark comes from a



branch of Freemasonry called Royal Ark Mariner. As its name suggests, it has a nautical flavour taking for its setting the circumstances leading up to the Great Flood and the steps taken by Noah to build the Ark by which mankind was preserved from perishing in the 'Universal Deluge'. It is based on an established fact or actual happening, i.e. the Great Flood, as recorded in the Bible and as verified in 1929 by the archaeologist Sir Leonard Woolley, who not only found clear evidence of the flood, but established that it had occurred some 6,000 years previously.

The legend of Noah, his sons, the Ark and the Deluge were enacted in the Mystery Plays of the seventeenth century and continued as catechisms in many of the early Masonic rituals, commemorating the providence and mercy of God, with regard to the legend of the Deluge, as recorded in Genesis. Analogies are drawn between the dangers of the flood and the dangers of life. How we should strive to reach the "Ark", the haven of rest, just as Noah's family and the other occupants of his Ark did.

Again, in my close examination of the best 1892 seal I could lay my hands on, I find that the Ark is riding on

stormy waters and that in the top left hand corner is a dove, who's coming signifies the peace which is ever present in the hearts of those who sacrifice for the good of others. This also would be indicative of Noah, who was ordered to build an Ark which floated on the waters of deluge 40 days and 40 nights, at the expiration of that time Noah sent out a bird which did not return, he then sent out another bird which returned with an olive branch in its beak, a symbol denoting peace and when Noah saw this he was assured that the waters of the deluge had abated and that there was land.

Today's seal shows the Ark surmounted by what appears to be a rainbow, signifying the end of the deluge responsible for the flood, if this is so, then why the reference to the end of it. Could it mean that the literal translation has been taken too far and the meaning of "antediluvian" or "before the flood" really means that our Order is of great age. Why Antediluvian? The Order was founded in 1822, which certainly was not before the flood, and no satisfactory answer can be found in the records that have survived the ravages of time. We must remember that the bulk of our members at that time were involved in one of the theatre professions, and skilled orators would have written their own ceremonies, often designed to impress the unenlightened with the great antiquity of the Order. Similarities were deduced to the rights of bull worship at the time of the Pharaohs in ancient Egypt. The Knights of St. John of Jerusalem, and other nations of Christendom, Peter the Hermit and the Saracenic wars were also quoted. The desires of mankind to relieve the poverty of ones fellow have been around since the earliest ages, and if that is not antediluvian, what is? Certainly the word has a better ring to it than 'ancient'. So! Antediluvian we became! This surely is an



implication only, as it can be proved beyond doubt that the Order was formed in the early part of the eighteen hundreds. It is also significant that this bottom half of the shield contains three elements, the Ark, the Water and the Rainbow.

The top half of the Shield is divided into two quarters, and once again the older seal shows that it is merely bisected not in quarters, the first of which contains a heart suggesting the fraternal sign given when taking the obligation to succour and defend a good and worthy brother during the initiation ceremony. It has been suggested that this particular symbol could have been an apple, and in my examination of the old seals, it would definitely point to a fruit of some description, with a stalk protruding out of the top, if so, was there a connection with Adam and Eve, perhaps a warning to be aware of sinners and untruths. If the truth were known it would probably be that it is a heart with the main aorta coming out from the top as is depicted in some of the old time medical journals.

The right hand quarter shows an hourglass. The use of this last symbol is obviously linked up with the old initiation ceremony, which was changed by Convention some seventy years ago. One classic phrase in that ceremony says, and you will excuse my Latin, "*O vita! misero longa felici brevis*", which being freely translated means, "Oh life, an age to him that is in misery, and to him that is happy, a moment". This phrase was still in use in the initiation ceremony of the Grand Lodge of Victoria as late as 1970 and sounds very Shakespearean in



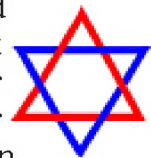
character, and once again indicates that Shakespeare played a very important part in our history as the words in the presentation of the first degree emblem say “In the centre is the portrait of Shakespeare, one of the most talented men portrayed in history”. This also could mean that symbolically we should all lead a well ordered life.



Again, in collaboration with Stan we have found that on the very old seals this is not an hourglass, but what might be construed as a star or even a chair. The snag is with these old seals there is no clarity attached to any of them.

The significance of a star could point to a part in the initiation ceremony wherein we sing “the base or means must never mar the glories of our radiant star”.

The Star is two Triangles interlocked or reversed upon each other. The Seal of Buffaloinism, Symbol of a Buff Lodge. Symbolising the Union of Heaven and Earth, thus bringing into direct communication with the Divine. The Buff Star heralding the new born Buff (initiate). The Star which rising before dawn was said to herald in the new born day:—(Rejoice for none can mar the brilliance of our Radiant Star), again, if it were to be a chair it would indicate that to occupy the Royal Chair in a minor lodge is the ultimate ambition for all brethren as they must obtain the degree of a Primo before they can take the chair, which itself is the key to further advancement.



Since the writing of this article I have found another seal with a little bit more clarity, I have found that this ‘hour glass’ is really a square or portal and we can explain this in three ways, the first is that we can assume that the two side pillars are two of the pillars of

wisdom and the bars running across the top and the bottom are those which are used in the old initiation ceremony of 1790 by the RAOB League of Light, this story is told by that prolific writer J. P. Dowling and is published in the Museum Collection No.4. I quote the following passage “....the Candidate slowly wends his way within the circle twice, in custody of the City Constable, a Brother holds now and again a light walking cane at a level with his forehead and again at a lower part of his legs in order to give the impression that he is passing under low arches or stumbling up steps, these ideas encouraged by the City Constable whispering “Lower your head, lift your foot”, according to the position of the cane.....”.

The second is from the same ceremony and refers to the meanings of salt, wherein the candidate is told “..... the ancient customs of our Order enjoined that all initiates into our Bull or Buffalo Mysteries should neither eat salt, of which the Candidate has just been reminded, salt crystallises into squares, a square has four points and the number four is the number of God, the symbolic meanings of salt are most profound.....”.



The square also represents the Cubic Chamber, the Sanctum Sanctorium in the Ancient Temples were in cubic form. In such a chamber, all the Initiates to the Bull or Buff Mysteries were made.

The third is possibly the best, in that this square or portal could show that in the olden days the lodge was divided into four 'Wards', those being 'Poverty', 'Juniper', 'Suicide', and 'Lunatic'. The right hand corner of the room was the part designated as 'Suicide Ward'. The left hand corner was known as 'Poverty Ward'. In the corner directly opposite 'Suicide' was situated 'Lunatic' and in the corner directly opposite 'Poverty' was 'Juniper Ward'.



**I** have thrown in many red herrings and suppositions in my explanation of the seal but with good reason, **nobody has yet to come up with an alternative answer!!**

I can tell you now that the present day seal of the Order is only as old as 1981, the RAOB GLE commissioned the drawing of a new seal, or rather an updated version of the seal in this year, and although I haven't seen it I am assured that it is quite large. As far as I am aware, the reason for the re-drawing of the seal was that the National Union of Journalists refused to allow their members in the printing trade to use the existing block because it was not union approved. This was really saying that the existing block was not up to the standard that commercial printers required and if, for example you print a letterhead with a dodgy block, you get resulting rubbish, and as you may be aware that the National Union of Journalists are very powerful in the printing trade and what they say goes.

So, how does one sum up the foregoing observations in a few sentences, I will attempt to give you a two shilling and sixpence tour of the seal as it appears today:

1. The Octagon is a very simple way of supporting and enhancing the two inner rings and would give them depth and striking appearance.
2. The wording on the inner ring is the motto of the Order and the banner under the eye is the Silken Banner presented to the Earl of Essex and proclaims that we are the Grand Lodge of England.
3. The all seeing eye is that which looks over us in all our daily supplications, and the rays emanating from it would imply that it is looking over the whole of the globe or that we are a world wide organisation.

4. The right hand shield is the Royal Standard indicating our loyalty to the Crown and Constitution.
5. The cup above the left-hand shield is the Juniper cup used in our ceremonies.
6. The heart in the top left-hand shield is to remind us of our obligation to succour and defend a good and worthy Brother.
7. The hour glass in the top right hand shield is to remind us that we should do all we can in our various walks of life to succour and defend our fellow man for surely the sands of time are slowly sifting away for everyone.

***Finally***

8. The Noah's Ark tells us of the antediluvian nature of our Order.

You may bemoan the fact that my results have been entirely supposition on my part, but it has, at least, paved the way for a portion of our history that will be researched by other members who may be as interested as I am and find proof to substantiate or repudiate my findings.

One further observation, if any lodge or province were to use the seal of the Order then you would get a short sharp slap from Grand Lodge Office telling you that it is for the exclusive use of the Grand Lodge of England and you will be quoted Rule No. 143(*b*) which states "All documents shall bear the G.L.E. Seal and none other shall be recognised"

But nowhere in the current Rule Book does it say, you cannot use it!!

If anybody can tell me different about the Seal of our Order then I would like to hear from them.



## Notes