

## WILLIAM PRESTON (1742 - 1818) AND THE PRESTONIAN LECTURE

WILLIAM PRESTON WAS INITIATED INTO FREEMASONRY IN 1763, APPOINTED ASSISTANT to the Grand



Secretary in 1768, and became heavily involved in the project to build Freemasons Hall. He also wrote about freemasonry and, in 1772, he published his *Illustrations of Masonry* which eventually ran to seventeen editions. Having Joined the Lodge of Antiquity in 1774, he became its Master after three months, remained in the chair for three and a half years, became involved in bringing in new members to rebuild the membership which had dwindled to single figures at the time of his joining. Also during this time he compiled an appendix to the 1767 edition of the *Book of Constitution* which was printed in 1776. Unfortunately, Preston's, enthusiasm was not always appreciated by the older member, of the Lodge of Antiquity. In addition his relations with the Grand Secretary became rather strained following his issuing of official Grand Lodge papers under his own name. He resigned his assistant secretarial duties at the end of 1777. At the same time, Preston decided not to seek re-election to the chair of the Lodge of Antiquity and was succeeded as Master by John Wilson on 3 December 1777.

During a high profile and at times controversial Masonic career Preston became involved in the short-lived 'Grand Lodge of England south of the River Trent' of which he became Deputy Grand Master, but this ceased to exist in 1789. In the latter part of his career Preston developed a catechetical lecture system for the Craft. Which was worked weekly in London in the Grand Chapter of Harodim, founded by him in 1787. Preston died in 1818 and was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. He left a sum of £300 as an endowment for Grand Lodge to perpetuate his Lecture system. The Duke of Sussex appointed Preston's friend Stephen Jones as the first lecturer. The first lecture was delivered on an annual basis and then on a more irregular interval until 1856 when, for reasons unknown, the appointment seems to have lapsed. Since 1924, when the appointment was revived, a lecturer has been appointed annually (with the exception of the years 1940 - 46) and has been allowed to deliver a lecture on a subject of his own choosing which should 'instruct and entertain a general lodge audience'.

The Prestonian Lecture is the only lecture held under the authority of the United Grand Lodge of England and, with the exception of the years 1940-46, regular appointments have been made annually since 1924 to the present day. The list of brethren so honoured and the titles of their lectures appear at the end of the Masonic Year Book.

## 'Go and do thou likewise': English Masonic Processions from the 18th to the 20th Centuries. (The Prestonian Lecture for 2009)

In this paper Bro. John Wade looks at Masonic processions, which were a regular occurrence in many parts of England from the first quarter of the eighteenth century to the immediate pre-second world war period in the late 1930s. Very few have occurred in the last seventy-five years. This paper asks why freemasons have retreated from public space during this period, have, perhaps, become nervous about the public perception of them, or, perhaps, are embarrassed about themselves. The lecture surveys public processions of masons over two centuries and examines the association of civic, to ecclesiastical and Masonic bodies in public ceremonies of foundation stone laying, the dedication of completed buildings and other occasions for public thanksgiving. Bro. Wade argues that as freemasonry moves further into the twenty-first century, it needs to be more proactive about its civic identity. He feels that for the man in the street freemasons should be demonstrating that they have an association with the community, and that they are not a secret society or private members' club - though they do have their private space. Bro. Wade suggests that freemasons explore the possibility for a return of some of these public activities. He considers that as far as the public image of freemasonry is concerned, it has lost that civic association it has had for hundreds of years. Its forefathers among the leaders of both the civic and ecclesiastical authorities appreciated the symbolic importance of the presence of the masons on these major occasions for the community.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE PAPER Bro. John Stephen Wade was born in Edinburgh in 1947, but moved to Leeds when his father was appointed lecturer at the university there. He was educated at High Storrs Grammar School Sheffield and the University of Durham where he read Classics. Following a 20-year career as a Classics teacher in Sheffield, during which time he wrote a thesis on Philip of Macedon for his MA degree, he transferred his Classics teaching to Further Education and then on to Higher Education at the University of Sheffield, where he finished his full time career as Teaching Fellow in Latin and Greek. Having taken early retirement in 2005, John Wade continues to teach Latin to postgraduate students at the University, to assist in the Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternity in the Humanities Research Institute, and has just successfully completed his doctorate with a thesis on the Latin writings of the Tudor martyrologist, John Foxe.

Bro. Wade was initiated into Fellowship Lodge No. 4069 in 1981 and exalted into Fellowship Royal Arch Chapter No. 4069 in 1985. He was installed as Master of Fellowship Lodge in 1991 and was the founding Master of Amadeus Lodge No 9359 in 1994. He is a Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden in both Yorkshire West Riding and Derbyshire, and a Past Provincial Grand Sojourner in the Royal Arch. From 2003-2005 he was President of the Sheffield Masonic Study Circle. Having been elected a full member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge in 2005, he was appointed Secretary of the Lodge in November 2008. Bro. Wade also manages to find time to be a member of lodges in Scotland, Ireland, Italy and the United States and to be the musical director of the Sheffield and District Masonic Choir which he founded in 1991.

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From: [http://www.shef.ac.uk/history/staff/john\\_wade.html](http://www.shef.ac.uk/history/staff/john_wade.html)

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Although he has retired from full-time lecturing, John Wade continues to teach Latin, both classical and medieval, to small groups of postgraduates, mainly for the Department of History. He is now based in the History Department in Jessop West, and will continue his research in both Foxian Latin and Masonic History.

### Research Interests

- Having been involved with the British Academy John Foxe Project as a consultant for the Latin material in the new electronic edition of the Acts and Monuments being prepared by the Project based in the Humanities Research Institute at Sheffield, I am intending to publish an edition of John Foxe's Latin correspondence, with a commentary based on my PhD thesis.
- Completed my PhD thesis on 'John Foxe's Latin Writings: their intellectual and social context, with special reference to the period of his exile, 1554-1559'
- Eighteenth-Century English Masonic history.

### Publications

#### Books

- R.L. Cooper and J.S. Wade (edd.), *The Genealogie of the Sinclairs of Rosslyn* by Father Richard Augustine Hay Prior of Piermont, Grand Lodge of Scotland, Edinburgh, August 2002.

#### Contributions to Books

- J.S. Wade, 'Thanksgiving from Germany in 1559: an analysis of the content, sources and style of John Foxe's *Germaniae ad Angliam Gratulatio*' in David Loades (Ed.), *John Foxe at Home and Abroad*, Ashgate, 2004, pp. 157 – 222.
- Translation from Latin into English of the Roman inscriptions and Latin literary sources for the revised guide book to Roman-Germanic Cologne, Gerta Wolff, 2003.

#### Papers

- D.N.Riley, P.C. Buckland and J.S. Wade, 'Aerial Reconnaissance and Excavation at Littleborough on Trent, Notts.' Nov. 1995 in *Britannia* Vol. XXV 1994.
- J.S. Wade, 'The Establishment of Lodge Roman Eagle in Edinburgh: its use of Latin from 1785 – 1793' In: *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum: Transactions of the Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076*, Vol. 120 (2007), x-y.