

Provincial Grand Masters in the Eighteenth Century

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THIS YEAR THE PROVINCE OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND HAS BEEN marking the 250th anniversary of the appointment of its first Provincial Grand Master. I hope therefore that I will be forgiven for returning at our meeting today in Leicester to a theme which has been a favourite of mine for many years – the nature of the office of Provincial Grand Master in England during the eighteenth century; the connection of that office with the leading Freemasons within that Province; and the way in which the community within the Province had organized itself.

Let me start however by making some comments upon the nature of the County community in general, for it represents one of the oldest institutions in English government and society, with unbroken links to the Anglo-Saxons. By the middle of the eighteenth century the leaders of the County community – most especially the landowning gentry within it – had come to be responsible not only for the administration of justice through the activities of the bench of magistrates – the justices of the peace – but also for the upkeep of the roads, the administration of the poor laws, and even the price of bread. Any occasion when these individuals came together, whether it be for a fox-hunt, a steeplechase, a social assembly, or the election to the House of Commons of

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the two Knights of the Shire, represented yet another meeting of the community of the shire. It is therefore not surprising that the development and growth of Freemasons' lodges during the eighteenth century should have been closely connected with the strength and organization of that community.

The appearance of a structure of Provincial Grand Masters becomes in part the unsurprising consequence of the spread of Freemasonry from a Grand Lodge based in effect on the lodges in London and Westminster to a wider body covering most of England and Wales. But I would also point out that, just as in other aspects of eighteenth-century England, there existed what I would judge to be an element of social snobbery, so too I would suggest that such social snobbery was to appear also in the structure of English Freemasonry. It is significant, for example, that even though the rival Grand Lodge, the Antients, were active in appointing local Grand Masters outside England elsewhere, such as in North America, they did not create a similar structure in England. It would seem that many of the Antients' lodges attracted a membership drawn largely from lower social classes than the Moderns.

Equally interesting is the way in which Freemasonry in Scotland and Ireland were to develop their own structures on a different basis, and even though they do have supervisory bodies operating under the authority of their Grand Lodges the bases of the authority of these bodies are derived from above rather than from the basic local community and lodges. I would point out in this connection that local government in Scotland and Ireland was also constructed on a different basis.

From its beginning the Grand Lodge of London and Westminster had faced two sets of problems. There was a group of Freemasons meeting in York which had existed since at least 1705 under the name of the *Ancient Society of Freemasons in the City of York*. But in 1725, possibly in response to the expansion of the new body in London, the members of this group styled themselves the *Grand Lodge of All England Meeting at York*.¹ Their Minutes for 10 August 1725 describe their Master as 'Worshipful Master', but on 27 December 1725 Charles Bathurst was elected as Grand Master. The next year his Junior Warden, a local antiquarian, delivered a speech in which he said that he was content for the London Grand Lodge to have the title Grand Master of England, but claiming for York the status of covering *Totius Angliae* (All England). The York Grand Master was later to declare:

This Lodge acknowledges no superiors and owes subjection to none; she exists in her own right, giving Constitutions and Certificate, in the same way as the Grand Lodge of England in London has asserted her claims there from time immemorial.²

¹ See T. B. Whytehead, 'The Grand Lodge at York', *AQC* 2 (1889), 110–15; G. Markham, 'The York *MS No. 1*', *AQC* 102 (1989), 205.

² See N. B. Cryer, *York Mysteries Revealed* (Hersham: Ian Allan Printing Ltd, 1988), 327.

Meanwhile the Grand Lodge in London had originally been set up to deal with the lodges in and around the Cities of London and Westminster. But by 1725 it was outgrowing its original boundaries. Lodges outside London were acknowledging the pre-eminence of London and seeking its recognition. The Minutes of Grand Lodge show the appearance at its meetings of representatives of lodges based at Bath, Bristol, Norwich, Chichester, Chester, Reading, Gosport, Carmarthen, Salford, and Warwick, as well as approaches being made by groups of Masons outside London seeking recognition and a warrant from Grand Lodge. This growth in the Grand Lodge in London is marked in particular by the emergence of a level of administration between the individual lodge and Grand Lodge. This was the appearance in 1725 of a Provincial Grand Master. The first of these appears in Chester. Letters found in the papers of one of the early Grand Masters, the 2nd Duke of Richmond, dated April 1725, throw considerable light upon this event. In one of them the new Provincial Grand Master writes to the Duke:

The Brotherhood being greatly increased, it was thought advisable for the preservation of good order and the greater conveniency of meeting, to form them into two lodges (to which we have since admitted a third) and each of them to make choice and have their own proposed Master and Wardens . . . [These] have come to the following Resolution, with all due respect and submission to your Grace as the General Grand Master, that it was proper and highly necessary for the good of all, because of the great distance, that some person of note from among the Brethren should be annually chosen to preside over all by the style and title of Provincial Grand Master and he to name his Deputy and Grand Wardens that immediate recourse might be had to them for the preservation of peace and good fellowship and by their influence and example, not only order, regularity and unanimity may be continued but others thereby encouraged to come in to the increase and flourishing of the said society.³

A second letter throws further light on the circumstances of the need for this new office:

Upon our dividing into three Lodges, which we thought convenient because several of our Brethren who are poor artificers but being Old Masons could not support the expense of associating with the Gentlemen, we found it necessary that there should be a Provincial Grand Master to visit and superintend at the Lodges to be intended that Harmony and unanimity might be kept up amongst us and that we might all be under the same regulation.⁴

³ Letter from Francis Columbine, PGM, to the 2nd Duke of Richmond, dated 19 April 1725, West Sussex County Record Office.

⁴ Letter from Francis Columbine, PGM, to an unknown brother, also dated 19 April 1725, West Sussex County Record Office.

And, following on a visit to the Province two years later by the Deputy Grand Master, the then Provincial Grand Master wrote to London:

. . . We are to express . . . The full sense we have of the great honour done us by your Worship's most affectionate letter and the kind Visitation of our Lodges by your most acceptable Deputy. . . . Our whole fraternity are resolved in our strenuous endeavours to deserve such high compliments by improving ourselves in all Mason like accomplishments and by showing our most cheerful obedience and extensive gratitude to our Superiors in London and Westminster.

By 1727 the Minutes of Grand Lodge register not only the existence of Provincial Grand Masters in Cheshire and North and South Wales, but also a growth in the number of so-called Deputations of Authority by the Grand Master. Such Deputations had been granted in 1727 to individuals in Wales, and later they had been requested by, and sent to, four counties in England. Grand Lodge records also show sixteen *ad hoc* appointments at different dates for areas in Central Europe, especially for Hamburg and Hanover; one for East India 'where nobody is to be found'; and similar appointments for North America and Africa. Such officers were sometimes appointed without there being any definite plan about their powers. Clearly, it would seem, they were to represent the Grand Master in places considered too far distant from London for the Grand Lodge to be able to exert any effective authority. In 1732 one such authority had been sent to Shropshire, while in 1734 similar authorizations were issued to Lancashire, Durham, and Northumberland. The second edition of Anderson's *Book of Constitutions* in 1738 refers to Provincial Grand Masters of Cheshire and North Wales and of South Wales as well as Grand Masters of Bengal, Lower Saxony, New Jersey, Russia, Andalucia, South America, Gambia, New England, South Carolina, Cape Coast Castle in Africa, Montserrat, Geneva, Upper Saxony, New York, Africa, the Leeward Islands & the islands of America 'except where a Provincial GM is already deputed'.⁵

The Province of Northumberland came into being in 1734, the first Provincial Grand Master being the scion of an old Northumbrian family, Matthew Ridley. At this time, there were actually very few lodges in existence in Northumberland. There are known to have been at least three lodges in the Province, one at Alnwick, and possibly two at Newcastle. The absence of official records makes precise dating and naming the lodges difficult, as lodges were generally known by the place where they held meetings; as for example a note that 'On 16th June 1731, a Lodge was held at the house of Jonah Gray, Kings Arms.'⁶

While there may have been sporadic meetings involving these lodges, the existence and the functions of Provincial Grand Lodges were not immediately recognized. For

⁵J. Anderson, *The New Book of Constitutions* (London: Caesar Ward and Richard Chandler, 1738), 190, 194–195.

⁶ See <https://northumberlandomasons.org.uk/what-is-freemasonry/history-of-freemasonry-in-northumberland/>

example, the first ‘official’ meeting of a Provincial Grand Lodge for Northumberland was recorded as having been held on 27th December 1797 at the White Hart Inn, Newcastle, under the direction of the amiable and notoriously eccentric John Errington, Provincial Grand Master. There were three Lodges represented : St. Nicholas (Newcastle), St. Bede’s (Morpeth) and St. George’s (North Shields).⁷

The Masonic Province of Durham is another Province which has strong and firm Masonic foundations and a rich history. In 1734, only seventeen years after the formation of the Grand Lodge of England in 1717, Joseph Laycock had been appointed the first Provincial Grand Master for the County of Durham. Prior to this, a number of lodges were operating independently in the County and the newly-appointed Provincial Grand Master was given the task of persuading them to join the Grand Lodge and to form new lodges. He met with little success, but in 1735 he ‘constituted’ a lodge already meeting at Swalwell as a regular lodge under the Grand Lodge of England. He also formed another, ‘The Fountain’ in Pipewellgate, Gateshead.⁸

The Lodge at Swalwell has Minutes dating from 1725 and had evidently been in existence as an active organization long before that year. Essentially operative in character, the Orders of Antiquity, the Apprentices Orders, and other documents point to this lodge being active at least in the seventeenth century. It provides a most interesting study of this early period and possibly points out the link between operative and speculative Freemasonry. The lodge, now known as the Lodge of Industry No. 48 at Gateshead, still meets today. During this earliest period, the lodge at Swalwell believed that the patent of 1734 gave the lodge the right to elect successive Provincial Grand Masters.⁹ Joseph Laycock was succeeded by Edward Alport, James Smithson, George Thompson, and David Richardson. But there is no trace of a Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham before 1792 when ‘William Henry Lambton was installed at the first meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham in ample form with the accustomed honours on 9th September, in the presence of more than 150 brethren.’¹⁰

In addition to listing these early Provincial Grand Masters Anderson wrote in his *Book of Constitutions* that the Old Lodge at York and the Lodges of Scotland, Ireland, France, and Italy were all were ‘under their own Grand Masters.’¹¹ However, it is noteworthy that within a generation a number of individuals were being named as Provincial Grand Masters for Provinces even where there were no local lodges for them to manage. It would seem that giving such individuals this rank was in effect giving the recipient an additional status within Grand Lodge and Freemasonry as a whole. There were for example several

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See <https://durhamfreemasons.org/earliest-records-to-1734>

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ See <https://durhamfreemasons.org/our-history-1788-present>

¹¹ Anderson, *New Book of Constitutions*, 196.

individuals who at various times during the century were appointed Provincial Grand Master of Rutland, where there were no lodges. And in other cases, individuals were appointed to being Provincial Grand Master where the only lodges in existence owed allegiance to the Antients rather than to the Premier or Moderns Grand Lodge. It would seem that, not only did an appointment as Provincial Grand Master give an individual high status in Grand Lodge itself, but it also seems to have given such an individual considerable additional status amongst the leading local families in the Province.

It was never clear as to what range of duties was expected of Provincial Grand Masters. Their activities were always very vague and unclear. This is perhaps best illustrated by the case of the Provincial Grand Master in Yorkshire, Sir Walter Vavasour. After some years as Provincial Grand Master he was asked by a number of Yorkshire gentry to resign because during that time he had never done any work in that office. He replied that he did so willingly. Had he known that there was any work associated with the appointment he would never have accepted the office in the first place.

Another feature in these years was that there were individuals appointed for several Provinces at the same time. In Leicester, for example, there is the case of Thomas Boothby Parkins, created Lord Rancliffe in the Irish Peerage 'after an expensive and gay career as a companion of George, Prince of Wales.'¹² He was the Provincial Grand Master of Nottinghamshire from 1783 to 1800, and in 1789 he was appointed as Provincial Grand Master for Derbyshire, for Leicestershire, and for Rutland. He resigned from Derbyshire in 1792 and Rutland in 1798. And although he was described as 'a zealous Patron of the Order,'¹³ he was hardly a model of Masonic zeal; when a Moderns lodge was eventually founded in Leicester he seems to have attended it only once. Nor did he ever convene a meeting of any Provincial Grand Lodges during his tenure of office.

Another such appointment raises a number of issues involved and points to a most interesting character who, however, could hardly be described as a leading and active Freemason, Robert Cornwall. He was a leading West Country gentleman who had entered the army in 1715, but who seems to have resigned his commission in 1718 on inheriting his father's estates. Thereafter, claiming that George I had promised his father a baronetcy, he styled himself 'Sir Robert de Cornwall'. Cornwall served as High Sheriff of Radnorshire in 1738, before making several unsuccessful attempts to be elected to Parliament until 1747, when he was at last successful. In 1753 he received a number of appointments as Provincial Grand Master. On 8 January 1753 he was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Gloucestershire; on 9 January he was appointed Provincial Grand Master for Worcestershire. Herefordshire followed on 2 June, and Monmouthshire on 5 June.

¹² See A. Newman, D. Hughes & D. Peacock, *A History of the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland* (Leicester: Provincial Grand Lodge of Leicestershire and Rutland, 2010), 7.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 8.

He died on 4 April 1756. There is no record of any Masonic action by him in any of these Provinces, nor is there any mention of him as having been in attendance at meetings of Grand Lodge.

The Revd Francis Henry Egerton, later eighteenth Earl of Bridgwater, was another noted collector of appointments as Provincial Grand Master. From 10 August 1786 until 1800 he was Provincial Grand Master for Shropshire and North Wales, adding Staffordshire, Flint, Denbighshire, and Montgomeryshire in 1791. He was the target of complaints from within one or other of these provinces that he was an almost complete absentee. Although the duties associated with the position at that time were light, he was clearly not interested in dealing with them, and he was in many instances happy to leave most of the work in the hands of his Deputy and Provincial Grand Secretary, Charles Shirreff. However, the fact that there were such complaints from various Provinces suggests that there were a number of country gentry who did see some merit in having an active Provincial Grand Master locally accessible.

A feature of the slow growth in the Provinces is that it was not until late in the century that many of the Provinces were given their own Provincial authority. For example, although there were many old lodges in Devonshire, it was not until 1775 that the county was warranted as a Province by the Grand Lodge. This relatively late recognition was despite the fact that within Devonshire were some of the oldest Masonic lodges in the world, most notably St John the Baptist Lodge No. 39, which has continuously worked in Exeter since 1732. The original request for a Provincial Grand Master for Devonshire had been made by members of the Union Lodge, which was started in 1766 with an exclusive and influential membership limited to twenty-four. After seeking the approval of three other lodges in Exeter – St Georges No. 112, The Ship Masters, and (belatedly) St John the Baptist No. 39 – the Union Lodge sent a petition to the Grand Master in London asking for such an appointment to be made. A Minute of the Union Lodge of Exeter on 20 Dec 1774 ordered

that a letter be written to the Grand Secretary desiring him to inform the Lodge of the proper steps to be taken for the appointment of a Provincial Grand Master.' A week later a message was sent to another Lodge in Devon 'proposing Br Bampfylde as a Provincial Grand Master, and both Lodges agreed to appoint him.

He was in due time appointed, and at his Installation the Installing Master declared:

To see a Provincial Grand Master for the County of Devon and the City and County of Exeter has long been the earnest wish of the zealous and worthy Members of our Order in this County.¹⁴

¹⁴ See C. E. Summers (Ed.), *The Masonic Province of Devonshire* (Exeter: The Province of Devonshire, 2003), 50.

Sir Charles's uncle, the Master of the Union Lodge, John Codrington, was installed as Deputy Provincial Grand Master and was responsible for organizing the Province while Sir Charles, who was also the Whig Member of Parliament for Exeter, was away in London. Not all the Devonshire lodges agreed with this appointment. The members of St John the Baptist Lodge No. 39 appeared to have had a grievance with the way in which the Provincial Grand Master was appointed and the dominance of members of Union Lodge in the Provincial hierarchy. They wrote to Grand Lodge querying the appointment, and lodges in Tiverton and Topsham also sent similar comments. Each lodge received confirmation that Sir Charles Bampfylde had indeed been appointed as Provincial Grand Master. Sir Charles Bampfylde was only fifteen years old when he became a Freemason, probably one of the youngest initiates ever. He became Provincial Grand Master at the age of twenty-two and he continued in that position for forty-four years, longer than any other Provincial Grand Master. He resigned in 1819. On the other hand, in the years following the warranting of the Province in 1775 Freemasonry seems to have taken a decline in Devonshire. Several lodges closed and charity returns to Grand Lodge become either minimal or absent altogether. Of the twenty-two known 'Moderns' lodges in operation when that Province was established six are still in existence, and of the 'Antient' lodges, two are still in operation. There are now 135 operational lodges in the Province.

What of course is of equal significance to the appointment of a Provincial Grand Master is the emergence of Provincial Grand Lodges. John Entick's edition of the *Book of Constitutions* in 1756 contains four chapters about Provincial Grand Masters and their status, but there is nothing about Provincial Grand Lodges and their constitution, and it is not until his revised edition of 1767 that he discusses the status of Provincial Grand Officers, and this illustrates the growing significance of office at a Provincial level.

The Provincial Grand Master . . . is invested with the Power and Honour of a Grand Master in his particular District and is entitled to wear the clothing of a Grand Officer, to constitute Lodges within his own Province He is also empowered to appoint a Deputy, Wardens, Treasurer, Secretary and Sword Bearer who are intitled to wear the clothing of Grand Officers while they officiate as such within that particular District.¹⁵

Much of the growth in the various English Provinces and the emergence of Provincial Grand Lodges arose out of the activities of one of the leading Freemasons of the second half of the eighteenth century, Thomas Dunckerley. He was to hold the office of Provincial Grand Master for several Provinces at the same time, promoted Royal Arch Masonry, introduced Mark Masonry to England, and instituted a national body for Templar Masonry. Dunckerley was Provincial Grand Master of eight of the thirty-four Provinces recognized by the Moderns' Grand Lodge in 1795, and he had a considerable part in

¹⁵ Anderson, *Constitutions* (Ed. Entinck, 1756), 292.

creating and presiding over another two. In addition he was Superintendent of a number of Royal Arch Provinces.

Dunckerley had been initiated into Freemasonry at Lodge No. 31, at the Three Tuns in Portsmouth, in January 1754. In 1760 he obtained a warrant for a lodge aboard *HMS Vanguard*, which he took to form London Lodge (now No. 108) in 1768. With this *Vanguard* warrant he obtained a roving commission from the Premier Grand Lodge of England to inspect the state of the craft wherever he went, including 'to regulate Masonic affairs in the newly acquired Canadian provinces.'¹⁶ Under this authority, and acting as Grand Master of all warranted lodges in Quebec, he installed the first Provincial Grand Master of Canada, Col. Simon Fraser, in Quebec in 1760.¹⁷

In 1767 he was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Hampshire. At that time there were very few holders of such offices; indeed it might even be argued that that office had virtually fallen into disuse, but Dunckerley was personally to revive it in several counties. He served as the Provincial Grand Master for Essex from 1776, for Dorsetshire and Wiltshire from 1777, and for Gloucestershire and Hampshire in 1784, all at the same time. A document of 1786 appointed him Provincial Grand Master for the Counties of Dorset, Essex, Gloucester, and Somerset, the City and County of Bristol, and the Isle of Wight.¹⁸ In 1785 Dunckerley founded the Lodge of Harmony, No. 255 at the Toy Inn at Hampton Court, presumably as his own home lodge. It was at his request that the Province of Bristol had been created, still unique in English Freemasonry as the only Province confined to a single city, and having all of its lodges meeting in the same building. In 1790 he was also made Provincial Grand Master of Herefordshire. His motives in creating and expanding these Provinces were clear. When, for example, Bristol was created a Province on its own, Dunckerley remarked that this would enable him

to appoint a greater number of blue and red aprons, which I find of great advantage to the Society as it attracts the notice of the principal Gentlemen in the several counties, whom seem ambitious to attend me at my Provincial Grand Lodges.¹⁹

His services were certainly very much in demand by Provincial gentry. The Masons of Somerset, for example, wanted him as their Provincial Grand Master, and they wrote to the Grand Lodge:

We have petitioned our most worthy Bro. Thomas Dunckerley to accept that office: he informs us the Grand Lodge will not permit him to preside over any more prov-

¹⁶ H. Sadler, *Thomas Dunckerley: His Life, Labours, and Letters* (London: Diprose, bateman and Co., 1891), 52.

¹⁷ Sadler, *Dunckerley*, 54.

¹⁸ Sadler, *Dunckerley*, 11, 201.

¹⁹ Sadler, *Dunckerley*, 143.

inces than what he already holds. We should esteem it a particular favour of the Grand Lodge to nominate a Gentleman for us who lives in or near this County.²⁰

They eventually got their way and Dunckerley was so appointed. Another letter he wrote goes a long way to explaining why he was so popular. No one else put on as grand a show as he did.

I also held a Provincial Grand Lodge at Poole, on the 12th of August in honour of the Prince of Wales completing his twenty-first year. We embark'd in three sloops, preceded by the Dorsetshire Band and din'd by the Castle belonging to Mr Sturt [MP for the county] where the flag was display'd and a Royal salute was made from the Battery which we return'd with three times three. In the evening grand fireworks were exhibited on our return to Poole.²¹

He was by any definition active as Provincial Grand Master, but he insisted on having full control locally. He objected for instance to the Grand Secretary making direct contact with the Lodges in any of his Provinces. 'I beg your Assistant Clerk may not send any more letters to the Lodges in the Counties I have the honour to Superintend. I will save him the trouble of writing 90 letters a year.'²² In 1784 he made the request that 'in future no lodge under my care may be struck off the list before inquiry has been made of me concerning their behaviour, and I shall at all times be happy to inform Grand Lodge of the same.'²³ He was a pioneer in insisting on proper warrants, payments, and returns of members, and in sending cash and regular returns to London.

Dunckerley was certainly active in visiting the Provinces of which he was head, and in many cases he was the only member of Grand Lodge that many Freemasons would have met. He was very alive to a need to strengthen the links between Grand Lodge in London and Freemasonry in the Provinces, above all in terms of gaining the support of the gentry. In the background there was the desire of the Moderns' Grand Lodge to assert itself against the Antients, in part by establishing and funding of a Grand Hall in London. He campaigned and raised funds for this first dedicated headquarters of English Freemasonry.

He did not restrict himself to the Craft. In addition to being the Provincial Grand Master for the Counties above mentioned during his career he held various high Masonic offices in other Orders. Her was Grand Superintendent of Royal Arch Masons over eighteen counties. There is evidence of his participation in Mark ceremonies, and indeed he is known to have presided at the earliest known Mark ceremony in Portsmouth in

²⁰ Sadler, *Dunckerley*, 206.

²¹ Sadler, *Dunckerley*, 192.

²² Sadler, *Dunckerley*, 215.

²³ R. Chudley, *Thomas Dunckerley: A Remarkable Freemason* (London, Lewis Masonic, 1982), 40.

1769. Above all he became Grand Master of the Most Noble and Exalted Religious and Military Order of Masonic Knights Templar of Saint John of Jerusalem.²⁴

His contribution to the growth of Freemasonry, and to the position of Provincial Grand Master was recognized by his contemporaries. William Preston in his *Illustrations of Masonry* wrote that ‘by the indefatigable assiduity of that masonic luminary, Thomas Dunckerley . . . Masonry has made considerable progress, not only within his Province but in other Counties in England,’²⁵ and a notice after his death reported: ‘Died on Thursday at Portsmouth . . . Thomas Dunckerley Esq., Provincial Grand Master of England.’²⁶

Grand Lodge did not always appreciate the significance of his activities or give him the credit which he felt he deserved. In 1784 for instance he wrote to Grand Lodge mentioning how zealous and useful he had been as Provincial Grand Master, and that he had ‘collected and remitted Large Sums of Money for the Charity and Hall Funds.’²⁷ Grand Lodge in reply drafted a hearty vote of thanks. His problem was that, while he held rank in Grand Lodge as a Provincial Grand Master, there would be no provision for him after he retired, and he was anxious still to hold a place in Grand Lodge. In 1786 he tried again, a little more obviously.

Every Honour that the Society can with propriety confer on me, I am anxious to obtain. Surely it is in their Power to give me the Rank of a Past Senior Grand Warden & give notice of the same in the next printed Account of the Quarterly Communication. I leave this to the consideration of Bro. Heseltine & yourself.²⁸

This time he was more successful, and the Minutes of Grand Lodge for 22 November 1786 noted:

That the rank of Past Senior Grand Warden . . . be granted to Thomas Dunckerley . . . in grateful Testimony of the high sense the Grand Lodge entertains of his zealous and indefatigable Exertions for many years to promote the honour and interest of the Society.

The importance of Dunckerley at the Provincial level is well illustrated by the way that not only were successors appointed to his own Provinces, but that before the end of the century a further six new Provinces had been established, each headed by a member of the local aristocracy.

The office of Provincial Grand Master was to develop much further during the years following the Union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813, and indeed the nineteenth century

²⁴ Sadler, *Dunckerley*, x.

²⁵ W. Preston, *Illustrations of Masonry* (London: G. & T. Wilkie, 1788), 292.

²⁶ *Lloyd’s Evening Post*, 25 November 1795.

²⁷ *Moderns Grand Lodge Minute Book*, 17 November 1784.

²⁸ Letter from Dunckerley to William White, dated 15 November 1786. Museum of Freemasonry, GBR 1991 HC8 /A/26.

was to see Grand Lodge exploiting the opportunities of persuading the Provinces to make substantial contributions to the running expenses of Freemasons' Hall or the maintenance of the Masonic Charity Schools. But we can look at the activities of men like Dunckerley and appreciate that modern Freemasonry owes a great debt to the way in which he was able to harness local ties for the benefit of Freemasonry as a whole.



