

## A Masonic Minute

### *“To the Queen and the Craft”*

On June 2, 1953, Queen Elizabeth II was crowned “*By the grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of her other realms and territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith*” with great pomp and ceremony in Westminster Abbey. ‘Her other realms’ includes Canada.

It may justly be said that Her Majesty comes from a Masonic family. Her husband, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, was initiated in 1952, the year of her accession to the throne. Her father, King George VI was an active Freemason. As Prince Albert, Duke of York, he was initiated in 1919. Her great-grandfather, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, son of Victoria and Albert, was initiated in Sweden in 1868, and served as Grand Master in England from 1874 until his accession as King Edward VII in 1901. Her grandfather, King George V, was not a Freemason, but three of his sons were: Edward, Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII, Albert, Duke of York, later King George VI, and George, Duke of Kent. The Queen’s first cousin, H.R.H. Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, is the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England, serving in that office since 1967.

The articles of union which joined the rival Grand Lodges, the Moderns and the Ancients in 1813 were signed by two Royal brothers, the Duke of Sussex and Prince Edward, the Duke of Kent as Grand Masters of the respective Grand Lodges

The first member of the British royal family to be initiated in England was Frederick Lewis, Prince of Wales, in 1737. However, King James VI of Scotland who became King James I of England in 1603, was admitted to Masonry in 1601, qualifying him to be Honoured as the first King of Great Britain to be a Freemason..

All of which proves the veracity of the statement, “*that in every age monarchs themselves have been promoters of the art; have not thought it derogatory from their dignity to exchange the sceptre for the gavel, have patronized our mysteries and have joined our assemblies.*”

Freemasonry is described as “*a noble science and royal art.*” In the traditional history of the Order, Solomon, King of Israel, and Hiram, King of Tyre, are named as two of the first Grand Masters, and figure prominently in our Rites and Ceremonies. At the high point of the Coronation Service the anthem written by George Frideric Handel for the Coronation of King George II in 1727, and sung at every Coronation since:, “*Zadok the Priest and Nathan the Prophet anointed Solomon King*” (1 Kings, 1:34). The text has special connotation for Freemasons.

We should remember that it was during the reign of George I that the first Grand Lodge was formed in London when the members of four old lodges met at the Goose and Gridiron Ale House under the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral on 24 June 1717.

The Loyal Toast to the Queen and the Craft proposed at every formal banquet takes on great significance in this context – it is a tangible demonstration that loyalty to the reigning Monarch is an essential principle of Freemasonry..

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