



From the Library of

# Internet Lodge of Research

© 2001

## The Good the Bad and the Ugly

MWBro Hugh Young<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to examine various aspects of the Internet and Technology in general as it relates to the present and future welfare of Freemasonry.

The title reflects my method of delivery although my analysis of what I consider “good”, “bad” or “ugly” may not coincide with your own. Such is the nature of Freemasonry — an appreciation of free thought and the recognition of another’s ideas as being neither superior nor inferior to your own — only different.

I will conclude this paper with some suggestions and cautions which I trust will be appreciated.

The Internet, as we know it today, is derived from the ARPANET. This was originally designed to allow scientists to access remote computers and share data. Quickly, email became its greatest use.<sup>2</sup>

In today’s internet, while now a megalopolis compared to the village of the Arpanet, it is amazing how the initial concepts — to access remote computers and share data — are still valid, as is the high usage of email. However, unlike the original where scientific knowledge was exchanged with a high level of credibility between people, today we must be cautious as to the source of “information” on the electronic highway. Today we must be cautious of our emails to ensure that we do not inherit a virus.

When it comes to the origin of modern Freemasonry, there are many variants as to why the Grand Lodge of England was founded in 1717.

*... is the “Revival” of Masonry in 1717, which not only gave a new date to our annals, but a new form and force to the Craft, sending it to the ends of the earth on its benign mission.<sup>3</sup>*

*Perhaps the Freemasons of 1716 began to see the possibilities of the fraternal growth and thought that some central control was necessary. If Freemasonry was to be universal then some higher authority must bind the fraternity together.<sup>4</sup>*

*There is a reason for everything, even for a superstition, if we seek far enough to find it. There was a reason, both in the spirit of the age and the state of the Craft, for the “revival” of Masonry in 1717. It was the fad of the day to form all sorts of queer clubs and secret societies, some of them with odd, fantastic names. Our Craft was caught by that craze, but Masonry lived, while the rest, were left in limbo.<sup>5</sup>*

*...1717 is a watershed year; factual knowledge of Freemasonry increases or decreases dramatically as one moves forward or backwards in time from the first meeting of the premier Grand Lodge in 1717. The most popular and widely accepted theory of origin is that of direct descent from the cathedral building guilds.<sup>6</sup>*

My own belief is that the formation was a pre-emptive strike.

The year 1715 — 2 years before the formation of the Grand Lodge of England — saw the first Jacobite Rebellion under James Stewart and there is no doubt that paranoia existed that the Jacobites would rebel again. (This proved true but not until the '45 rebellion under Bonnie Prince Charlie.) Four London Lodges, recognizing that due to their “secrecy” (privacy) in meetings, combined with a belief that they were Jacobite in nature could be viewed as a threat to the new Hanoverian King. Therefore, to legitimize their existence, they formed a Grand Lodge and a respectable public profile.

These ideas bear some credence when you read the Constitutions created by Anderson which links the establishment of the Grand Lodge with the Hanoverian Line. He writes:

*King George I entered London most magnificently on 20th September 1714 and after the rebellion was over AD 1716 the few lodges at London finding themselves neglected by Sir Christopher Wren thought fit to cement under a Grand Master as the centre of union and harmony.<sup>7</sup>*

So much for the beginnings, now let's move on to the first area of today's examination of the Web and its impact on Freemasonry.

## **The Good**

Where to begin?

To me, the best aspect of the Internet as it relates to Freemasonry is the ready availability of good information to Masons and non-Masons alike. Some of the sites are formal ones; some best described as semi-formal; and others personal pages. Some are Masonic and some are very definitely not Masonic.

Examples of quality formal Masonic pages are:

- The Masonic Information Center is operated by The Masonic Service Association of North America and works hard at providing factual, current information about Freemasonry to all — whether or not they want to listen. Bodies who have been

intent on destroying our Craft have found worthy adversaries in this group of dedicated Masons. You can visit their pages at:

<http://www.msana.com/mic.htm>

- A personal favourite of mine is the Grand Lodge of Scotland's site as it provides a variety of information specific that country and the Lodges under its jurisdiction. You can find this Grand Lodge at

<http://www.grandlodgescotland.com/>

- For a semi-formal page, perhaps one of the better examples is that of the "eMason at <http://freemasonry.org/>

or from England, how about the Freemasonry Network

<http://www.freemasonry.net/>

- The personal pages are numerous and certainly create a feeling of well-being and hope for the future of our Craft. Have at look at these few.

[Paul M. Bessel's Homepage](#)

[Ed Greenberg \(edg@greenberg.org\)](mailto:edg@greenberg.org)

[Freemasonry in Israel](#)

[P-S Review of Freemasonry made by Free Masons...](#)

[Baseline Lodge #198 - Masonic Home Page](#)

The other part of "Good" must be the ease with which brethren can communicate with brethren around the world on Masonic matters.

A good example of this is several years ago, when the Internet was in its infancy, I received a message from a brother in Swift Current, Saskatchewan who had received it from Nova Scotia from a brother in England, whose elderly father had passed away suddenly while on a bus trip by himself in Banff.

I was able to assist this brother in a difficult time by arranging for a funeral home, a short service by a Minister who was a Mason prior to cremation with a few photographs being taken. In the days before the Internet, I know that this would not have happened with the speed that it did.

Now that we've a look at the best of the "New World Order," it's time to move downscale to the next category.

## **The Bad**

It seems that with all good things come the not so good. Of course, this is nothing new. Whether or not something is good or bad is not usually based on that item but on Man's use of it. Only through the use of dynamite could major engineering works have been accomplished to the betterment of Society as a whole. However, the same explosions have caused and continue to cause major suffering when used as weapons of war.

My late Mother-in-Law was an expert in showing the opposites of everything. I was in Scotland one time and my Mother-in-Law was complaining about the weather when I pointed out that the sun had shone each and every day that we had been there — sometimes only for a few minutes — but every day. Of course, I had to remark that “the sun shines on the righteous” to be rebuked by my Mother-in-Law that “the Devil is good to his own.”

So much for my preamble and now for that which I consider to be bad.

There are sites which provide information about Freemasonry and Freemasons but with their own subtle and sometimes not so subtle message. The majority of these sites have relationships with Fundamentalist Religious groups and, of course, as such have a proven track record of not being open to rationale discussion or truth. In my opinion, all Masons should visit these sites so that they can be in a position to respond to questions from non-Masons based on these sites.

[Saints Alive In Jesus - Ed Decker](#)

[How can you lead Masons away from the Masonic...](#)

[Crank Dot Net | satanism](#)

This list could be much longer but once you’ve read one, you’ve read them all.

A second area where anti-Masonic diatribe is rampant is in the unmoderated newsgroups such as “alt.freemasonry” and while much of this newsgroup is pretty bad, you can find some gems of wisdom and humour. I recently found this gem which is a prayer.

*Oh, Lord, bless this glorious Order; bless its friends; yea, bless its enemies, and make their hearts as soft as their heads. Amen.*

(quoted in *Masonic Trivia And Facts* by Allen E. Roberts, p. 177 )

Even email can be challenging at times. I once received an email addressed to the [Webmaster@freemasons.ab.ca](mailto:Webmaster@freemasons.ab.ca) which said very clearly, although in poor English,

“I Hate Freemasons. I kill you all.”

As the email appeared to have originated in England, I didn’t feel too threatened. I did, however, report it to my ISP’s Spam Control.

Another email received by a brother in the States which he forwarded to me, was from “The Illuminati Order” and encouraged “all enlightened Masons, regardless of Masonic degree” to spend \$95.00 US to join and perhaps to be recruited by one of the world’s Secret Service organizations. Don’t believe that such a group exists? Check out

[oneworldorder.org](http://oneworldorder.org) - [Welcome](#)

As you can see there is a very definite negative side to modern technology and I am saving the worst to the last.

## **The Ugly**

No doubt you have thought that I have pretty well covered the negative aspects of the 'net as it relates to Freemasonry but, regrettably, you are wrong.

What I consider to be ugly may surprise you as it relates to Masons use of the Internet.

No. 1 in the Ugly list has to be Lodge sites which do not present a professional image. Those are sites which use graphics out of place, which link to any and all sites to show how widespread Freemasonry is (or it may just be to show how many the page creator has found). Pages which have no focus and are often found on free sites (sometimes with gambling and sex adverts popping up).

I will not identify any of these sites as I have no wish to embarrass a brother, who I am sure had the best of intentions in the design of his site.

No. 2 in the Ugly list is the overuse of email.

There appears to be a desire to forward email just because it's so easy to do. Now don't get me wrong — I enjoy some of the jokes; I never read the Virus Warnings; and I may read the chain letters telling me to send it on to another dozen or twenty people so that good things will happen or bad things won't happen but I do not send them on unless I can see a reason to do so.

However, the ugly part of emails, to my mind is its overuse to the detriment of other forms of communication. The telephone still works as does meeting a brother for a coffee. Each form of communication has its place not just email.

## **Conclusion**

I've spent some time detailing The Good, the Bad and The Ugly, now a time for reflection and conclusion.

The one common element in each of the categories — “good”, “bad” and “ugly” is that it is not the technology which has these attributes but ours and others use of that technology.

The Internet provides us with opportunities to present ourselves as we would like the world to see us; to communicate with brethren in other parts of the world; to assist brethren from other parts of the world; to use the resources of the web to expand our knowledge of the world and of Freemasonry.

As I mentioned earlier, I believe that the first Grand Lodge came into existence to present a unified positive image to the public at large. This is a mandate which I believe all Grand Lodges should maintain and we, as individual Masons, must support with our knowledge and our willingness to stand up for the Order when it is attacked from without.

The challenge is in our hands, let us not falter but move forward well into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century using the tools of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to expand our organization which is for all time.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Presented in Lodge 15 September 2001.

<sup>2</sup> [Life on the Internet: Net Timeline](#)

<sup>3</sup> The Short Talk Bulletin of the Masonic Service Association, December 1928 as quoted at <http://ncmason.org/book2/1928/stbdec28.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> *The Formation of the Grand Lodge of England. Why did the Brethren of 1716 Want to Form a Grand Lodge* by Abraham Benjamin <http://www.geocities.com/CapeCanaveral/Lab/2168/essay19.html> (September 2001.)

<sup>5</sup> The Short Talk Bulletin of the Masonic Service Association, February 1929 as quoted at <http://ncmason.org/book2/1929/stbfeb29.htm>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.srmasons-sj.org/mp2/newpage2.htm> (September 2001)

<sup>7</sup> *The Book of Constitutions*, compiled by James Anderson as quoted at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~crf/inaug/inaug3.htm> (September 2001)