



How does one spend Halloween? No witches, no Trick or Treat! But 4,000 Masons assembled here in the Royal Albert Hall!

Yes, this was the venue for the Tercentenary Celebration of the founding of the Premier Grand Lodge. The Royal Albert Hall was packed to capacity for a two and a half hours Extravaganza as a fitting tribute to Masonry past and present, part ceremony and part entertainment.

Grand Masters from 136 Grand Lodges in harmony with UGLE represented their own territories and were acknowledged as the Celebration commenced.

The pageant that unfolded told the story of Freemasonry over the 300 years by taking an Initiate through some of the ceremony of his Initiation (without divulging Secrets) in a dialogue with his Conductor, with a cast of many well-known actors led by Derek Jacobi, culminating in the Initiate kneeling before the Grand Master to discover "Light".

Towards the end of the Celebration, the Grand Master moved from the Royal Box to the arena and onto the stage, which was set up as the east end of the Temple. The Loyal Address to Her majesty the Queen was read, together with the response from Her Majesty. Following this, the Deputy Masters of the Time Immemorial Lodges presented the Great Lights and the Wren Maul, after which a new replica of Soane's Ark was brought onto the stage. The three Great Lights were then placed in the

Soane Ark* which was then blessed and dedicated by the Grand Chaplain.

You may ask how Grand Lodge was opened and closed. Given the number of Masons present, and the fact that the Celebration involved non-masons, Grand Lodge was opened in a private room and called-off before the Celebration commenced. Afterwards, it was called-on again and closed privately.

The Celebration was an afternoon event, commencing at 1515 and concluding soon after 1730. About 1,800 Masons who attended then moved to Battersea Evolution where a Reception and Banquet ensued during the evening. We all moved by coach from one venue to the other, right in the middle of the evening rush-hour traffic. I am sure that our 36 coachloads provided even more congestion than usual.

The evening was certainly less formal than the Celebration, with "Taking wine", speeches and Toasts being kept to the minimum. I was able to catch up with the New Zealand Grand Master and his Deputy but missed our own North Island District Grand Master.

Two abiding memories: I have never seen so much dark blue, probably more than 60% of those at the Celebration, and I have never seen so many masons gathered together in one place.

Notes: The asterisk beside the word Ark above needs clarification. The original Ark, a piece of furniture, was known as Soane's Ark, whereas the replica is known simply as Soane Ark.

The URL below gives an easy link to the video of the Celebration, without having to log in as a mason. Simply copy it over into your Browser and see what happens.

W. Bro. Peter B Snow

<http://www.freemasonrytoday.com/ugle-sgc/ugle/watch-a-screening-of-ugle-s-tercentenary-celebrations-at-the-royal-albert-hall>