

The MASONIC EMPORIUM

Selling to the World



Masonic ceramics, dated 1858 to 1939,
by William Henry Goss of Stoke on Trent



1930's candlesticks supplied by Kenning

When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 there were about 500 Masonic lodges in the British Empire. By the time she died in 1901, there were nearly 2,000. All these new lodges needed equipment and all the new members needed their ceremonial costumes so these years also saw the development of specialist retailers who adopted modern marketing techniques to reach their audience. '*The Masonic Emporium*' exhibition at the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in Freemasons' Hall in London's Covent Garden explores the development of this market, telling the story of its suppliers and customers. It runs from Thursday 1 July to Thursday 23 December 2010 and is free of charge to all visitors.

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LIBRARY & MUSEUM OF FREEMASONRY
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www.freemasonry.london.museum



One such supplier was George Kenning. The son of an East End oyster seller, Kenning realised the potential of the market: he not only manufactured the costumes, but sold a range of products from his shops across Britain. He set up a mail order business which operated across the British Empire and was keen to develop new markets in the USA. He became a media magnate and advertised in his own widely read newspaper: *The Freemason*. He even extended the brand by becoming closely involved in developing new Masonic orders all of which needed special costumes and props.

Kenning was only one example of the manufacturers, publishers and photographers whose business was freemasonry. Amongst the items on display are the furniture and costumes that featured in the trade catalogues of the time as well as souvenir ceramics made by the manufacturer William Henry Goss who extended his range into the Masonic market and some of the trade cards from the many local photographers who captured images of local freemasons.

Amongst the customers were lodges in Australia and South Africa, the Grand Lodge itself right down to individual but well known members, such as Winston Churchill. Every lodge and every mason could acquire their full complement of required clothing and equipment from a single supplier.

The exhibition also explores how manufacturing for this market changed from a small scale cottage industry to larger scale production and how Masonic manufacturing took full advantage of increasing industrialisation. As Grand Lodge standardised the design of its regalia we find Masonic jewels changing from individual works by craftsmen like Thomas Harper to the commemorative medals for Queen Victoria's Royal Jubilees in 1887 and 1897, made in their thousands by different companies to an identical pattern.

Robes and aprons, jewels and collars, tracing board and working tools, books and lodge stationery, decorative china and commemorative silverware, the needs of the individual mason both at the lodge and at

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Toye & Co Ltd advertisement in *The Freemason*, July 1933



Wedgwood plate, c. 1800



Kenning 'broken column' moneybox alongside a Spencer globe-topped warden's column. 1930s

home, the needs of both an ordinary lodge and the United Grand Lodge of England, this was the market the various companies competed against each other to supply. The fruits of their labour can be seen in the Library and Museum today. This is the history explored in '*The Masonic Emporium*'.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Exhibition Title: The Masonic Emporium

Venue: The Library and Museum of Freemasonry, Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street, London, WC2B 5AZ

Exhibition dates: Thursday 1 July - Thursday 23 December 2010.

Exhibition free of charge to all visitors

Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 10am to 5pm. Museum closed at weekends.

Visitor information: www.freemasonry.london.museum
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Mid-19th century chair, supplied by George Kenning, commissioned by the Grand Lodge