

Masonic manuscripts

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There are a number of **masonic manuscripts** that are historically important in the development of Freemasonry. Most numerous are the Old Charges or Constitutions. These documents outlined a "history" of masonry, tracing its origins to a biblical or classical root, followed by the regulations of the organisation, and the responsibilities of its different grades. More rare are old hand-written copies of ritual, affording a limited understanding of early masonic rites. Lastly, the minutes of early lodges and Grand Lodges allow a glimpse of the personalities and events that shaped Freemasonry in its early days.

Other early documentation is included in this article. The Kirkwall Scroll is a hand painted roll of linen, probably used as a floorcloth, now in the care of a lodge in Orkney. Its dating and the meaning of its symbols have generated considerable debate. Early operative documents and the later printed constitutions are briefly covered.

Contents

- 1 Old Charges
 - 1.1 Evolution of the York Legend
 - 1.1.1 Halliwell Manuscript, or Regius Poem
 - 1.1.2 Matthew Cooke Manuscript
 - 1.1.3 Dowland Manuscript
 - 1.1.4 Grand Lodge No 1
 - 1.2 Later Manuscripts
 - 1.2.1 Lansdowne
 - 1.2.2 York No 4
 - 1.2.3 Melrose No 2
 - 1.3 Printed Constitutions
- 2 Rituals
 - 2.1 Edinburgh Register House MS
 - 2.2 Trinity College, Dublin
 - 2.3 Graham Manuscript
- 3 Minutes
 - 3.1 Mary's Chapel
 - 3.2 York
 - 3.3 London Grand Lodges
- 4 Other Masonic Documents
 - 4.1 Kirkwall Scroll
 - 4.2 Statutes of Ratisbon
 - 4.3 Fabric Rolls of York Minster
 - 4.4 Schaw Statutes
- 5 References
- 6 Sources
- 7 External links