

A Guided Tour of Great Queen Street

- Reviews by Northeasterly

“Freemasons' Hall – the Home and Heritage of the Craft”, a book by RW Bro Sir James Stubbs and W Bro Terence Haunch; “Grand Lodge – The Ultimate Tour”, a DVD/VHS presentation by First Degree Productions.

At the intersection of Great Queen Street, Drury Lane and Wild Street in Central London, is a magnificent edifice, that looks as if it had been built for an art deco Egyptian Pharaoh. At its western end are two magnificent great bronze doors, which always seem to be closed. Occasionally the passer-by would see smartly dressed gentlemen with funny-looking brief cases going into the side entrance in Great Queen Street. This building is the headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Provided there are no bookings by Grand Lodge, or a Provincial Grand Lodge, there are guided tours for the public and visiting brethren. The tours take in all of the lodge rooms, including the main Temple. The interior is truly magnificent, a triumph of art deco design and an essential visit for anyone going to see London. The British Museum is only a ten-minute walk away, and the two visits, with lunch in one of the very good pubs in the area, would make for a good day's sightseeing.

“Freemasons' Hall – the Home and Heritage of the Craft” was written by a past Grand

Secretary of UGLE and a past Librarian and Curator of the GQS museum. It gives a history of the three Grand Lodge buildings erected on that site. The first was opened in 1776. It was adapted and added to over the years, and so, in 1869, the second Grand Lodge building was opened. After the First World War, that building was torn down and the Masonic Peace Memorial (as it was then known) was finally dedicated in 1933.

The book also contains a description of some of the architectural features of the present building, including the Grand Temple Doors which weigh 1¼ tons each and, it is said, are so well balanced that they can be opened with a touch of a finger. This fine book concludes with a description of the library and museum.

“Grand Lodge – the Ultimate Tour” is a VHS/DVD presentation made in the mid 1990s. The presenter is a familiar face from news magazine programmes of that time, and is proud to wear his square and compasses pin. Although slightly dated, the tour takes in all the nooks and crannies of GQS, including the Grand Master's robing room.

Both book and a VHS tape are available for loan from the GL Library.

