

## The Rushton Triangular Lodge

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The Triangular Lodge was commissioned by Sir Thomas Tresham and constructed on his estate, Rushton Hall, between 1593 and 1597. It is a three sided triangular shaped building, each side measuring 33 feet in length. The three levels have three windows on each side with a different ornate design on each level. Each side is capped with three gables and the whole building is topped by a central triangular chimney. Below the gables on each side is a Latin quote 33 letters in length taken from biblical texts. On each gable is a 3 x 3 foot plaque upon which are carved esoteric emblems such as the seven eyes of God, the Pelican in her piety and a seven-branched candelabrum. Inside the Lodge the 3 levels, from the basement to the upper level, are connected by a winding stair-case of 33 steps.

Sir Thomas Tresham was a gentleman from a wealthy land-owning family, a family of committed Catholics, although Sir Thomas was brought up a Protestant and was even knighted by Queen Elizabeth in 1577. He was intelligent and well educated, moving in the highest circles of Elizabethan English society. Sir Thomas had a privileged upbringing and enjoyed an opulent lifestyle – few people in Elizabethan England could afford to build such an ornate “folly” on the grounds of their estate.

At the age 15 he succeeded to the estates of Rushton and Lyvedon in Northamptonshire. However in 1580 Sir Thomas reverted to Catholicism, which was not a popular idea in England at that time, and was eventually imprisoned in 1581 for harbouring a Jesuit priest. Sir Thomas had flair for architectural design and upon his release in 1588 embarked on a number of building projects, including the Rushton Lodge.

The “Lodge” is a testament to Sir Thomas’ religious beliefs, which included numerology and Trinitarian mysticism, and is also an example of the Elizabethan love of allegory.

The Triangular Lodge has always been considered a “folly” constructed by rabid Catholic as a pun on his name (tres = three). However, in England in the 1500’s there was only Trinitarian Christianity, albeit of various shades, and in many of the Old Charges of Masonry up to the 1720’s the trinity was ever present, quite often with hidden meanings through the use of groups of three, or the triangle.



It would appear that the trinity, as a concept, had a central significance to early English speculative Freemasonry. The opening lines of the *Grand Lodge No.1 MS* are;

*“The mighte of the Father of Heaven and the wysdome of the glorious sonne through the grace and the goodness of the Holy Ghost that bee three persons in One God...”*

Interestingly, the London Company of Freemasons always carried a banner of the Holy Trinity in processions, a banner originating from the “Guild of the Holy Trinity in the City of London”, which was established in 1373.\*

J T Thorp wrote in an article for the Leicester Lodge of Research (1914-1915) that, “...the Operative Masons claim that Sir Thomas Tresham was Master of their Society in 1590, and would therefore be well acquainted with the “Triangle”...the whole structure is Masonic, having a vast number of operative masons’ marks and designs thereon, and was used by the Masters of the Operative Free Masons during the time that Rushton Hall was under construction...”