



## THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

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### ARCHIVES

Thomas Jefferson who helped draw up the American Declaration of Independence said "History by apprising men of the past, will enable them to judge the future."

Many lodges possess a great number of historical documents such as minute books, Installation cards, Lodge histories; and it is a matter of considerable regret that so many of these records lie to-day, neglected and half forgotten in the most inhospitable and unsavoury conditions. These records often contain not only valuable information relating to the Lodge itself but also to Freemasonry generally. Some Lodges may be unaware of the exact nature of the records in their possession and may not be aware of the special care that is needed to ensure their preservation.

Mould spores are always present in the air and are capable of lying dormant for long periods until environmental conditions are favourable. Mould and mildew are recognisable by the powdery colonies of spores which they form on infected materials. Leather, starches, glues and cellulose fibres in paper are particularly susceptible to mould attack. If allowed to flourish Mould can cause severe staining, obliterate images and even reduce paper to a crumbling pulp.

The most important single factor affecting mould growth is humidity. Hence the most effective way to prevent mould growth is to insure that the relative humidity remains stable. Other factors encouraging mould growth include, dust build-up, warm conditions, darkness, and bad ventilation. The combination of these factors is a certain recipe for disaster. Good housekeeping procedures will go a long way to preventing mould growth. Ensure that valuable items, Minute books etc. are kept in well ventilated areas, clean and free of dust.

The best way of preserving our history is to house these records minute books Installation cards etc in the controlled atmosphere of the Grand Lodge Archives, where they will be cared for by a trained archivist and will be available for consultation at a moments notice. Unfortunately there have already been instances where the only existing records of our early history have been lost either as a result of fire or water damage or simply because they have been mislaid, lost, or inadvertently destroyed.

Much of our early history has been retained by Lodge Secretaries and when these men pass on, this history is often mistaken for "old rubbish" by the widow and is relegated to the garbage tip. Most of the records that still survive have already begun to deteriorate it will not be long before they too will be lost to us, if we do nothing to halt the decay process, by housing this history in the controlled environment of the Archives.

There is little doubt that unless we take steps now to preserve a record of our day to day activities when, by the passing of time these activities become history, no record of them will be available.

Unless we act now to halt this decay there will be no history for us to use in the future and our early history will be lost to us, we must take steps to-day to halt the decay of our early historical records

