



The Essex Oaths Project.

The Essex Oaths Project involves transcribing all of the details from the surviving Returns made by Essex Lodges in accordance with the Unlawful Societies Act of 1799 and held by the Essex Record Office.

In the atmosphere of late 1798 and 1799, both the King and Parliament were concerned that a Jacobin plot to overthrow the King and Government was being hatched in seditious societies bound by secret oaths. This atmosphere created a groundswell of support for the passage, in July 1799, of one of the most sweeping of the legislative measures introduced by Pitt's government to forestall the threat of revolution. This act, 'An act for the more effectual suppression of societies established for seditious and treasonable purposes; and for the better preventing treasonable and seditious practices', to give its full name would have been a serious and maybe mortal blow to Freemasonry.

The Prime Minister, William Pitt was approached by Masonic representatives including Lord Moira, Acting Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, the Duke of Atholl, Grand Master of the Ancients' Grand Lodge and Past Grand Master Mason of Scotland, as well as other grand officers. As a result, and because of Masonic charitable activities, Freemasonry was made an exception to the Act provided they made an annual return disclosing the place of meetings and the names, address and occupation of all members of the Lodge.

There is a more in depth explanation in the article "Secrecy and Suppression" by David Harrison published in *Freemasonry Today*, Issue 2 (Spring 2008) and available in the Masonic Index at <http://www.philbrick2255.org.uk/mi/knowledge.php>

These Returns are the subject of the Essex Oaths Project and our objective is to provide an important research and educational resource for Social Historians, Masonic Historians and Genealogists.

Our thoughts are that the database will cover the period 1799-1900. The Provincial Library has few records prior to 1900 and the Oaths database will be freely available on our web site to anyone else who is interested at <http://www.philbrick2255.org.uk/p-oaths.php>

The Library and Museum of Freemasonry have also provided a link to Essex Oaths on the 'Resources' page of their web site at: <http://www.freemasonry.london.museum/>

Alternatively, you can enter 'ESSEX OATHS' into your Google search engine to obtain links.

There is still much work to do and if you would like to participate in this fantastic and useful project then please contact us through the web site.