

# Letter of complaint to the Guardian newspaper from UGLE CEO.

(Reproduced from the UGLE website)

Tuesday, 06 February 2018

Dear Sir/Madam,

## **Complaint – Article published on Sunday 4 February**

This is a complaint pursuant to your Editorial Code about an article published on Sunday 4 February on your website and in print on Monday 5 February. The article was headlined "[Two Freemasons' Lodges Operating Secretly at Westminster](#)" and Ian Cobain was credited with the byline. It contained significant inaccuracies which created a substantially misleading article. The existence of the two lodges in question is not secret, they don't operate at Westminster and they don't have MPs or journalists in their respective memberships.

In particular:

1. The article claimed that "Two Freemasons' lodges set up for members of parliament and political journalists are continuing to operate secretly at Westminster". This is inaccurate. The Lodges do not operate at Westminster and only meet in Camden at Freemasons' Hall.
2. The article stated "Exclusive: Lodges for MPs and journalists are so covert even lobby reporters do not know members". The Lodges in the article do not have any MPs or journalists as members.
3. The Lodges are not secret. Their meeting place is open to the public all year and their meeting dates are published in the [United Grand Lodge of England](#) directory of Lodges and Chapters available for the public to buy from most Masonic retailers. Details of the founding of the New Welcome Lodge were published in the press including in the Daily Telegraph. The New Welcome Lodge and Gallery Lodge are referred to in Hansard and have had Wikipedia pages for 12 years. Both Lodges feature in publicly available academic articles (on Researchgate, among other resources)

and press. A detailed history of Gallery Lodge, together with it's past and present members, was published in 1968. It is wilfully misleading for the Guardian to state that the Lodges operate secretly or to imply that their existence is "secret" or "covert".

4. The article claimed that "The New Welcome Lodge has about 30 to 40 members ... only about four of the current members are MPs". This is fictitious, as anybody connected with the Lodge would know. New Welcome Lodge only has 22 members. There are no current MPs who are members of New Welcome Lodge.

We provided extensive information and quotes to Ian Cobain in answer to his questions about Freemasonry and he used this information in other contemporaneous articles about Freemasonry. He chose not to ask us about New Welcome Lodge and appears to have ignored all of the widely published and available information about it and Gallery Lodge. He did not provide us with any opportunity to correct the errors in his article. Instead, inaccurate information has been published to create a misleading impression of Freemasonry. The reader is deliberately left to infer that journalists and MPs meet in secret at Westminster as Freemasons, which is untrue and which the author must have known or suspected to be untrue. There is no evidence for, or truth in, these inferences in the article about Freemasonry.

By publishing inaccuracies which foster and promote popular prejudices against Freemasonry concerning corruption, power and control, the article damaged the reputation of the United Grand Lodge of England as a membership organisation and encouraged further discrimination against individual Freemasons.

We request that you publish a retraction of the article in an agreed form which confirms that journalists and MPs don't meet in secret at Westminster as Freemasons. We also request that you publish an apology to Freemasons for misleading the public about the nature of Freemasonry.

Yours faithfully,

**Dr David Staples**  
**CEO**  
**For and on behalf of**  
**The United Grand Lodge of England**