

CORONA GLADIORUM

Transactions

of the

Bristol Masonic Society

Volume

2004 - 2005

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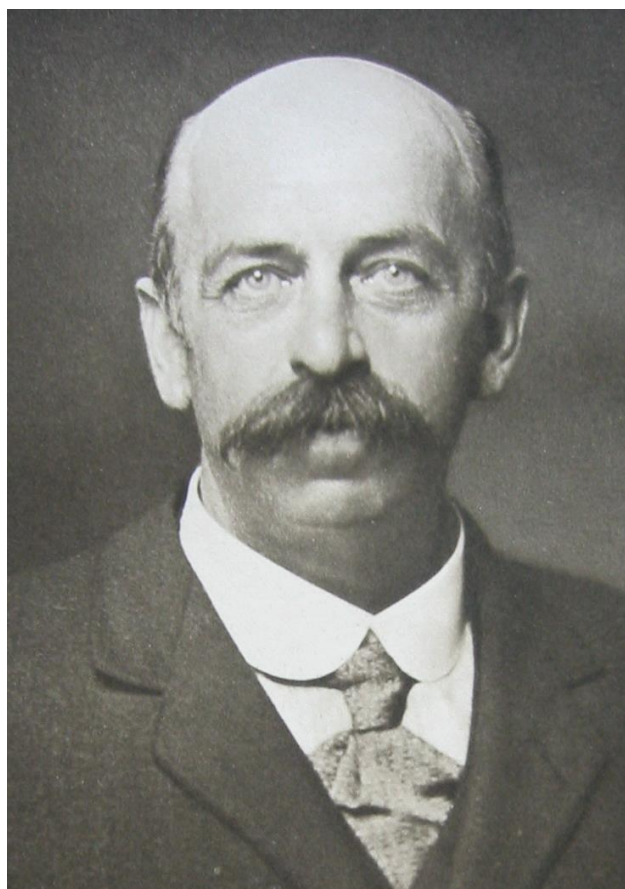
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The pagination of the volume as printed is different from this on-line version. The page numbers printed in red and in parenthesis are the numbers in the ‘hard-copy’ volume as printed – Ed.

DEDICATION



Arthur Cecil Powell (1868-1949)

Portrait by permission of QCCC Ltd

This first edition of our annual *Transactions* is dedicated to, arguably, the most influential, yet sadly undervalued, figure in Bristol Freemasonry over the past one hundred years. In the study of this eminently intriguing western Province, it would be difficult to find anyone whose fraternal endeavours matched those of Arthur Cecil Powell. As an assiduous researcher and local historian, who associated and corresponded with all of the Masonic luminaries of his day, he is justly entitled to the reverence and gratitude of all Bristolian Craftsmen – albeit some fifty-six years after his death.

Bro Powell came from a very distinguished Bristol Masonic background, in that his uncle, William Augustus Frederick Powell, had served as Provincial Grand Master from 1889 to 1906. In due course, however, Arthur Cecil the nephew was to emulate his familial predecessor in truly spectacular fashion. Born in 1868, little is known of the young Powell's early life, other than the fact that he was a member of a traditional glass-making family whose manufactory, the Phoenix Glass Works, was located in the St. Philips district of Bristol.

In common with that well-known 18th century rogue, Bamfield Moore Carew, the one-time King of the Gypsies, Bro Powell was sent away to boarding school at Blundell's. Without feeling either the necessity, or the apparent desirability, of going up to university in those distant mid-Victorian days, he clearly received a good educational grounding, which would hold him in future good stead, both in the family business and in his amateur pursuit of local history and Masonic research.

Initiated at the age of twenty-one into Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality, No. 187, in 1889, Bro Powell was installed as Master just seven years later in 1896. This was merely the prelude to a truly remarkable Masonic career of some sixty years duration.

Meanwhile in 1910, the year he was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Mark Master Masons, aged forty-two, he privately published, entirely at his own expense, a collaborative work (with Joseph Littleton) entitled: *A History of Freemasonry in Bristol*. This remains the only major history produced in the Province, to date. Two years later, in 1912, he became both the R.E. Provincial Prior and Inspector General, thus commencing an astonishing thirty-seven year period as ruler over Bristol's venerable Camp of Baldwyn. As an Associate Member of the distinguished Lodge of Research CC of Ireland, he displayed a refreshingly open minded approach to the origin and development of Freemasonry in Bristol, and would appear to have accepted that the Masonic Order of Knights Templar most probably arrived in the city during the late 18th century from the shores of Hibernia.

Of particular interest to readers of this volume is that, during the fraught events of the First World War, Bro Powell emerged as the major force behind the formation of the Bristol Masonic Society. This coincided with the year in which he occupied the Chair of England's premier Lodge of Research – Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) – the only Bristol-born Mason in the Province to achieve this distinction, to date. It has often been surmised that, had Powell not been obligated in this latter regard, he would have almost certainly superseded his friend, Dr E.H. Cook, as the Inaugural President of the Society in 1917. In fact, he assumed the presidency twelve months later.

In the midst of subsequent national emergency, twenty-four years later, there occurred the sudden resignation of (by now Sir) Ernest Cook, and it fell to Bro Powell to hold together, and re-build the Bristol Craft as Provincial Grand Master during, and immediately after, the Second World War. This was a time that had seen the complete destruction of Freemasons' Hall in Park Street as a result of a particularly severe aerial bombing raid by the German Luftwaffe in November 1940.

Once again, Bro Powell displayed great presence of mind and foresight in time of war. As a zealous custodian of the Transactions of his Mother Lodge, Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality (whose available records go back to 1772 and pre-date the actual formation of the Province), he conveyed each of these valuable Minute Books – together with those of older, now extinct, Bristol Lodges – to his home at "The Hermitage" in Weston-super-Mare upon the outbreak of hostilities in 1939. Consequently, these priceless annals were the only 18th century records to survive the obliteration of the Hall in 1940 – much to the distress of other Lodges in the Province of Bristol.

Following his final appointment as Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent of the Craft and Royal Arch, Bro Powell presided simultaneously over every Order of Freemasonry working in Bristol – an awesome combination of responsibility unlikely to be repeated.

However, as an indication of his evident humility, this most modest of men continued to serve his Mother Lodge – as Honorary Treasurer – for some twenty-five years, whilst at the same time leading all other aspects of fraternal endeavour in the Province!

This remarkable “Man-for-all-Seasons,” was also elected Master of the Ancient Society of Merchant Venturers and, in his fiftieth year, presided likewise over the Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Shipping. He was also Past President of the Colston Society.

Throughout most of his long and active life, Bro Powell remained unmarried, and was universally assumed among his friends and Brethren in Bristol to be a confirmed bachelor. However, from recent research by the author of these notes it is clear that he embarked upon matrimony for the very first time during the course of his eightieth year. It is perhaps not too surprising that he had by this time retired as Treasurer of his Mother Lodge, and shortly thereafter, on 12th October, 1949, he passed away at his home in Weston-super-Mare.

It is in his capacity as a distinguished Founder and one-time President of the Bristol Masonic Society that we pay tribute to his immense contribution to the fraternal well-being and development of the Province, which has been for so long largely forgotten. (C.W.W-N)

INTRODUCTION

by

The R. W. Provincial Grand Master for Bristol

In my introduction to the Anthology Volume of the *Transactions of the Bristol Masonic Society* covering the period from 1992 to 2004, I described it as a most compulsive read. This description may equally be attributed to the first annual volume of the *BMS Transactions* during the period 2004-2005.

The dedication of this volume brings vividly to our attention the extreme importance to the Province of Bristol of the late Arthur Cecil Powell (1868-1949) who, during an illustrious Masonic career, presided over every available Order of Freemasonry in Bristol. Amongst his Masonic achievements – and there were many, as will be noted – it was he who, in conjunction with Joseph Littleton, privately published in 1910 *A History of Freemasonry in Bristol* which remains the only major history produced in the Province to date. We should all be grateful to him for the wonderful legacy he has left to us.

The four sections which follow encompass a wide range of information of Masonic interest, ranging from notable and disreputable Masons of the past to exploration of the meanings and messages behind our ritual. Much of the fascinating history of Bristol Freemasonry is also highlighted. It is pleasing to note in addition that members of the Society have delivered papers outside of the Province.

I would congratulate the Bristol Masonic Society on this most interesting first annual volume.

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style and reads "Michael J. Flynn".

Michael J. Flynn, J.P.
Provincial Grand Master for Bristol

20th April 2006

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY 2004 - 2005

President	A.R. Baker
Vice-President	T.O. Langmaid
Treasurer	F. Payne
Secretary	G.W.H. Reed
Asst. Secretary	A.J. Rhodes
Organist	Dr. J.A. Bennett

PUBLICATION COMMITTEE

A.R. Baker	Editor
M.J. Crossley Evans	
R.A. Gilbert	
A.B. Jenkins	
C.W. Wallis-Newport	
F. Payne	Treasurer
G.W.H. Reed	Secretary

Extract from a Letter by Dr. M.J. Crossley Evans Christmas 2005

I have formed part of the Publications Committee of the Bristol Masonic Society. Under the chairmanship of the long-suffering Mr A.R. Baker, senior surgeon at Frenchay hospital, (whose mother was a student with mine at the Radbrook Domestic Science College, near Shrewsbury in the 1940s), the committee has brought to press the Anthology Volume of lecture papers from the period 1992-2004, helped by gargantuan meals washed down, a case at a time, by the finest Rioja. Like a circus-master he attempts to instil order into meetings which routinely last from 6.00 pm to 2.00 am, whilst every comma, semi-colon and grammatical infelicity is fought over with a tenacity and savagery which would surprise the uninitiated.

The committee has its mavericks: Charles Wallis-Newport (marine surveyor); George Reed (mining engineer); and Robert Andrew Gilbert (antiquarian bookseller), whose usual means of dispatching their opponents include verbally tossing, trampling and goring them; and Frank Payne and Bryan Jenkins, our chartered accountants, who sit at the ring-side, occasionally offering words of consolation, encouragement or refreshment to their favoured combatants and who combine their love of esoteric knowledge and scholarship with the gentler arts of persuasion.

I leave my readers to determine where I fall among them.

THE SOCIETY'S LODGE REPRESENTATIVES 2004-2005

The Royal Clarence Lodge	J.W.G. Creech
The Beaufort Lodge	D.C. Mander
Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality	A.J. Counsell
The Moira Lodge of Honour	D.J. Maddy
The Colston Lodge	M.P. Burrridge
The Jerusalem Lodge	P.A. Corder
The Canynges Lodge	E. Guy
The Saint Vincent Lodge	A.S. Lodge
The Powell Lodge	D.G. McCarthy
The Whitson Lodge	A. King
The St. Augustine Lodge	J.E. Holmes
St Stephen Lodge	K.G. Pope
The Robert Thorne Lodge	P. Deverell
The Cabot Lodge	D.J. Ellett
Peace Lodge	S.R. Starr
The Dolphin Lodge	B.G. Beaven
The Redcliffe Lodge	D.W.J. Atkinson
The St. Nicholas Lodge	R.K. Laurence
The Lodge of Virtue and Industry	C.F. Hunt
The Semper Fidelis Lodge	A.J. Baxter
The Baily Lodge	A.R. Hemsworth
The Chatterton Lodge	I.D. Millard
The Saint Paul Lodge	J. Trudgian
The Anchor Lodge	G.D. Addis
The Temple Lodge	R.W. Martini
The Castle Lodge	M.B. Nicholls
The Francis Rawdon Lodge	R.K. Taylor
The Burnett Lodge	D.E. Phillips
The Saint Katherine Lodge	R.J. Rawle
The Lodge of Harmony	D.H. Westbrook
Brunel Lodge	N.F. Bevan
The Lodge of Unity	D.W.A. Satherley
The Matthew Lodge	A. Scott

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

‘Masonry in the Man’ Year

2004

Thursday 30th September
6.45 pm. INSTALLATION MEETING
 “JSM Ward: Brother and Father.”
 Presidential Address

Monday 29th November CW Wallis-Newport
7.00 pm (Prestonian Lecturer 2002)
 “Francis George Irwin”

Sunday 12th December BMS Carol Service
3.00 pm. St. Mary Redcliffe

2005

Tuesday 25th January RA Gilbert BA, PPrSGD
7.00 pm. (Prestonian Lecturer 1997)
 “The Nature and Purpose of Ritual.”

Tuesday 29th March MN Buckley FRAsiaticS, LGR
7.00 pm. “The Esoteric Tradition in Masonry.”

Friday 29th April RA Crane MA, PGTreas
7.00 pm. (Prestonian Lecturer 2000)
 “The Spiritual Message of the Royal Arch.”

Tuesday 31st May A Russian 1st Degree Ceremony of 1810
6.30 pm. The Masonic Demonstration Team

Saturday 9th July SUMMER OUTING to Glastonbury
12.00 Midday “In the Footsteps of Bro. F. Bligh Bond.”
 CW Wallis-Newport
 (Prestonian Lecturer 2002)

Friday 30th September INSTALLATION MEETING
6.45 pm. and Presidential Address

The meetings are open to all Master Masons
All meetings are held at Freemason’s Hall, Park Street, Bristol BS1 5NH
unless stated otherwise.

Dress is informal; no regalia is required
Brethren requiring a meal after any meeting must **on each occasion**
contact the Hon. Treasurer **at least one week in advance.**

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Tony BAKER

was born in Welshpool, Powys in 1953, and educated at Shrewsbury School, Cambridge University and St. Thomas' Hospital. After training in Leicester, where he gained an MD, he moved to Bristol where he practises as a consultant vascular and general surgeon.

He was initiated in Powis Lodge (No. 7355) in 1984 and exalted in 1986. He was WM of The Saint Vincent Lodge No. 1404, in 1999. He has also occupied the Chairs of Goodwin Mark Lodge No 1563 (2002), and King Richard I Preceptory Knights Templar No. 341 (2003), served as First Principal of Jerusalem Chapter No. 686 (2004), and is currently MWS of Sympathy & Grace Rose Croix Chapter No. 947.

He is a member of The Masonic Study Society and an Associate Member of the Lodge of Living Stones (No. 4957). As President of the Bristol Masonic Society he has organised the publication of *Transactions* for the first time (A.R.B).

Michael BUCKLEY

was born in Calcutta in 1943 and educated at Millfield. In his professional life he has retired from being a Lloyds insurance broker and underwriting member of Lloyds of London (F.C.M.I.).

He was initiated in Lloyds' Lodge (No 5673) in 1973. In the Masonic world he is a holder of LGR in the Craft and SLGCR in the Royal Arch. He is PGJD in the Mark Degree and holds Grand Rank in Royal Ark Mariners. He is PGBB in the Order of the Secret Monitor, PGStB in the Allied Masonic Degrees and PAGDC in Royal and Select Masters and has reached VII° in the Operatives.

In the Royal Order of Scotland he is a Past Substitute Grand Master for the Province of the City of London and in Rose Croix he has the 30°. He is Past Great Warden of Regalia in Knights Templar and is a Past Grand Warden of Regalia in the Red Cross of Constantine. He is also a Past Grand VI Pillar in Holy Royal Arch Knight Templar Priests. He is a Past Supreme Magus in the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia and Grand Chancellor of the Royal Order of Eri (M.N.B).

Richard CRANE

was born in 1934 and educated at Gillingham Grammar School. After a four-year commission in the R.A.F., he spent twenty-five years in industry, where he rose from the factory floor to become chairman and managing director of a UK brand leader in supermarket shelving systems. He retired from this post at the age of forty-five to study music and religion.

He studied music and religious philosophy at the University of London, gaining a BA. and took a master's degree in Theology at the University of Bristol in 1989. He enjoys choral

singing and is a natural male soprano – the first recorded example of this voice since 1625; its earlier rarity gave rise to the use of “Castrati” in the Sistine Chapel.

He was initiated in St. Mary’s Gillingham Green Lodge (No. 6499) in 1961 and is now Past Grand Treasurer in the Craft and the Royal Arch. He was appointed to the General Council of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1999 and is Past Third Provincial Grand Principal in Surrey. He is a member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge and is their Treasurer and a director of the Correspondence Circle. He is also on the Library and Museum committee. He was the Millennial Prestonian lecturer (A.R.B).

Alderman Sir Ernest Henry COOK

(1855-1945) was born in the South-Bristol parish of Bedminster, then in Somerset. His early education was at the Bristol Trade and Mining School where he acquired a life-long passion for the game of cricket. As a fourteen year old opening batsman for the school in 1869, he scored an undefeated sixty-seven runs, in a total of 112 all out, against the Queen Elizabeth Hospital School. He then opened the bowling and took the first two Q.E.H. wickets, thus securing victory for his team. He went on to play at county level and represented Somerset in the county championship on several occasions. Until quite late in life, he frequently turned up for work at his laboratory, covered in cuts and bruises sustained in week-end encounters on the field of play.

He obtained a scholarship to the Royal College of Science in Dublin and, on graduating, was appointed an examiner in Chemistry. He went on to obtain a doctorate in science at London University before setting up as a consulting and analytical chemist at No. 27 (“Clifton House”) Berkeley Square in Bristol. He ran his practice in conjunction with a successful private school, known as “The Clifton Laboratory.”

He was for twenty-five years a tutor at the (pre-University) Merchant Venturers’ School from which he resigned after an unsuccessful attempt to become headmaster. His unexpected rejection in favour of an outside candidate led to widespread unease and comment in the Bristol Press at the time. He went on to become one of the founders of the University of Bristol and held the important post of Director of the Training Colleges at the University between 1910 and 1921. These colleges were principally involved with the education of teachers for the Board of Education. He was at the same time chairman of the Bristol Education Committee.

He was initiated in The Beaufort Lodge (No. 103) in 1883 and was the first President of the Bristol Masonic Society. He was a long-serving Deputy Provincial Grand Master from 1910 to 1932 in support of an often absent Provincial Grand Master, the future Lord Wraxall (RWBro Gibbs, of Tyntesfield House). He served as Provincial Grand Master between 1932 and 1941.

He was knighted in 1923 and became a Chevalier de la Legion d’Honneur in 1927. He had by that time become an Alderman and JP and served as Lord Mayor of Bristol for 1921/22 (C.W.W-N. & M.J.C.E).

Dr Martin CROSSLEY EVANS MBE

was educated at Wellington Independent Grammar School, Wirral, and the University of Bristol. After training as a school master at the University of Keele he taught at Shrewsbury School and Gresham's School, Holt, before returning to Bristol where he is currently Assistant Secretary to the University and Warden of Manor Hall. He was awarded an MBE in 2001 for services to higher education.

He is one of the church wardens of Christ Church with St. Ewen's, Broad Street, chairman of the Council of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society and a JP for Bristol. His published work mainly relates to the educational and ecclesiastical history of Cheshire, Lancashire, Norfolk and Bristol.

He was initiated in the Old Greshamian Lodge (No 5769), in 1982 and served as WM in 1992. He is a joining member of The Saint Vincent Lodge (No 1404) and was exalted in Jerusalem Chapter, No 686 (M.J.C.E).

Robert A. GILBERT

was once praised – or so he likes to believe – by an editor for having committed the cardinal 'sin of brevity.' Encouraged by this, and taking Mark Twain as his exemplar, he has endeavoured to repeat this sin here. Thus, he was born at an early age and his mother was present at the birth. He is a Freemason.

However, the strictures of the present editor have led him to expand this a little. His place of birth was Bristol, where he has lived, been educated and worked from 1942 to the present day. After reading Philosophy & Psychology he took up antiquarian bookselling, and is now active as a writer (on weekdays) and as a lay preacher (on Sundays). His family has now extended unto the third generation and is proving more congenial than many of his former Masonic pursuits. Of these he feels that he need mention only his time as editor of *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* and, in 1997, as Prestonian Lecturer (R.A.G).

Francis John HECTOR

was born on 12th October 1894, entered university in October 1917 with a Somerset county scholarship and qualified MB, ChB in 1923 and as MD in 1925 at the University of Bristol. He was a committed and active member of the University's graduate body, Convocation, and at one time served as a representative on the Court of the University. As an undergraduate he served as one of the two student editors of the University magazine, *The Nonesuch* from 1918 to 1919. His interest in chivalry and high romance can be seen in his poem 'Avalon' [see below]. He retained a close interest in his university and was to serve as one of the Convocation (graduate) representatives on the Court of the University between 1964 and 1974.

Following his award of FRCS(Eng) he was appointed Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University on 1st August 1932 and remained in post until his retirement in 1959. He was also appointed Assistant Obstetrician of the Bristol Royal Infirmary in 1932.

He was initiated into Masonry on 24th May 1923 in The Saint Vincent Lodge (No. 1404), which had served as the *de facto* University Lodge since the 1890's. He was proposed by Professor Isaac Walker Hall (1868-1953), Professor of Pathology and Morbid Anatomy at the University from 1906 to 1933 (and W.M. of the St. Vincent Lodge from 1916 to 1917 and D.C. from 1918 to 1919, and 1921 and 1926). Hector subsequently served as WM of The Saint Vincent Lodge from 1940 to 1941, as Director of Ceremonies from 1944 to 1945, Preceptor 1945-51 and Treasurer 1952-1958, before becoming PrSGW in 1953, DPGM in 1960 and PGM in 1961, a post he held until a few months before his death on 11th November 1977, aged eighty-three.

He was a good judge of character and his judicious proposals into the Lodge included Dr Clifford Douglas Evans (1907-1979), clinical teacher in Dermatology, who served as Secretary between 1968 and 1978; Dr. James Arnold Lanson Roberts, Hector's student contemporary, who was Treasurer between 1961 and 1972; and Dr. Russell Hastings Moore (1908-1973), Clinical teacher in Anaesthetics at the University between 1939 and 1972, who proposed no less than sixteen medical graduates and members of staff either as Initiates or Joining Members of Saint Vincent, during his membership.

One of his first acts upon becoming PGM in 1961 was to try to change the Lodge's original bye-law No. 6:

“Candidates for admission to this Lodge must be members of the University of Oxford, or of Cambridge; of the learned professions, church, law, or physic; of the Public Schools; or Gentlemen holding Her Majesty's Commission,”

which he considered to constitute a restrictive entry requirement contrary to the spirit of Masonry. His efforts were thwarted and eventually he summoned the WM for 1971-2, Dr Brian William Hill, and the Treasurer, Dr Lanson Roberts, and told them that he considered the Lodge was actually illegally operating and ordered that the bye-laws be changed. Many committee meetings later and after at least two different sets of bye-laws were rejected, the Lodge eventually agreed on the model set.

Dr Hector was introduced into the Bristol Masonic Society by his old teacher, Professor Hall, and subsequently served as its President in 1947-8. He worked in close collaboration with Professor J.R. Nixon CMG (1874-1951); the University Librarian, J. Shum Cox (1900-1967) and the Society's Secretary, Irving Vincent Hall (1894-1985), to ensure that the Society survived the destruction of the Library and Museum that it had so carefully created and nurtured, and that what has now become the Provincial Library and Museum was reassembled from scratch in the face of many difficulties and discouragements in the post-war period.

He was briefly engaged to be married to one of the Matrons at the Bristol Royal Infirmary during the early part of World War II. Although he had the reputation of being an austere, hard working, focussed, severe, puritanical and humourless bachelor, another perspective is given by the vignette of him as an elderly man repairing with a small group of friends to the home of the distinguished paediatrician, Dr Beryl Corner, on Sunday evenings to sing the great hymns of the late Victorian Christian revivals, written by Ira Sankey and D.L. Moody, illustrating his firm Christian faith and faithfulness to the practices and customs prevalent in his youth (M.J.C.E).

Bryan JENKINS

was born in Bristol in 1928 but was educated at the Royal Masonic School for Boys, near Watford, following the death of his father in 1939. After leaving school he qualified as a Chartered Accountant and took up a career in business systems and management consultancy.

He was initiated in The St. Nicholas Lodge (No 4561) in 1956 and was WM in 1972. He is a Past First Principal of Peace Chapter, a Past Master of Ernest Dunscombe Mark Lodge, a member of Dunckerley Royal Ark Mariners Lodge, Past MWS in the Rose Croix and a Past Preceptor in K.T. at Keynsham. He is a Past President of the Bristol Masonic Society and also the local Bristol Secretary of the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle.

He is married to Carole and they have a son, a major in the Army Intelligence Corps, two married daughters and two grandchildren. Bryan, now retired, has more time to spend on his general interest in Masonry and Esotericism. However, he is a practical man and can still be seen at the top of a ladder painting the eaves of his house or replacing a window-pane. He enjoys visiting sacred sites and likes nothing better on fine sunny days than to potter around the Mendips and the Somerset Levels on his vintage motorcycle (A.B.J.).

Angus RHODES

was born on 20th June 1978. In May 1999 he was initiated in the Athelstan Lodge (No. 9033) in Weston-super-Mare, the only Taylor's Working Lodge in the Province of Somerset. Every Lodge he visited used a different working from that of his Mother Lodge and this gave him a great interest in the variations in Masonic ritual.

In September 2001 he joined The Saint Vincent Lodge (No. 1404) in the Province of Bristol and soon thereafter, the Bristol Masonic Society, of which he is now the Assistant Secretary.

He is continuing his research into Masonic ritual and is always grateful to receive any information, loans or copies of different rituals, which may be of use in this regard (A.J.R.).

Charles WALLIS-NEWPORT

is descended from a junior branch of the first Earls of Bradford, and the bones of his mediaeval Newport ancestors lie in leisured ease in the ancient parish church of Wroxeter, in Shropshire. A Bristolian by birth, Bro Wallis-Newport spent all of his childhood and schooling far removed from his native city, to which he returned in adult life, following a career at sea. Being of *Anglo- Hibernian* and *West Anglian* parentage, he has a familial foot in both Bristol and Ireland, and nowadays regards himself as a fully fledged member of that Masonically significant section of the city's population: the *Bristol-Irish*.

As an ex-seafarer and Marine Surveyor, with maritime experience of both Cork and Bristol, he frequently follows in the wake of his Elizabethan forebears by exploring the coastline and harbours of Munster, seeking to discover – not least of all – the origin of the *Bristol Working*! Bro Wallis-Newport has an early 18th century ancestral connection with the old Grand Lodge

of Munster, and in 1997 was installed as Master of its ancient progenitor, the First Lodge of Ireland, which meets in Bristol's sister-seaport of Cork.

Having passed the Chair of Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality (No. 187) in 1994 and that of Jerusalem Chapter (No. 686) in the year 2000, he served as both Deputy Director of Ceremonies and Principal Sojourner, in the Province of Bristol, during 2001-2002. He was elected to the Chair of the Bristol Masonic Society in 1997, has served as Preceptor of King Arthur of Avalon Preceptory (No. 551) at Glastonbury and is a Past Provincial Registrar in the Provincial Priory of Somerset.

A long-time admirer of his fellow ex-seafarer, Henry Sadler (1840-1911), he is also devoted to the memory of Robertus de Fluctibus, the Lady Freemason of Munster and Brian Boru – to which end he was received into the Brian Boru Faslaire of the Royal Order of Eri at the hands of Em. Kt. Cdr. Robert A. Gilbert !

Bro Wallis-Newport was appointed the Prestonian Lecturer for 2002, during which year he accepted invitations to visit locations as far afield as Singapore, Jamaica, the Republic of Ireland and New Zealand. In one form or another, he continues to deliver his much sought-after address of 'Anglo-Irish Masonic Connections', and over the past twelve months (2005/06) has raised a further £1,129 on behalf of St. Dunstan's, the Blind Ex-Servicemen's Association (C.W.W-N).

Section I

Papers Delivered to BMS Meetings

2004-2005

Together with Introductions and Discussions

‘Masonry in the Man Year’

Introduction at BMS Installation Meeting – 30th September 2004

Thank you Frank [F.R. Clarke],
Thank you, Brethren.

It is a great honour to be the President of the Bristol Masonic Society – an honour I had turned down on a couple of occasions because I had not done any Masonic research but these guys don’t let you get away with that for long. I was persuaded to do some and you’re going to hear the results tonight.

Why am I standing in front of you in my academic robes? Is it just because I am a member of Saint Vincent Lodge and therefore a bit of a dandy – any excuse to dress up? Actually it is in allusion to Walter Willson Jervis whose portrait in academic robes, you will remember, hangs in Lodge room No 1. He was a joining member of Saint Vincent in 1920 and was Professor of Geography 1933 – 1957. He was Dep PGM 1950 – 1960 and became the 15th President of the BMS in 1931.

At his Installation as President he wore his academic robes and I am led to believe that he championed the view that all Masonic ranks and distinctions should be dispensed with at the BMS and no-one should be called ‘Sir.’ But in wearing his academic robes he emphasised the academic nature of the BMS. And, as you can see tonight, I am supported by some of the Past Presidents who are also splendidly turned out.

The BMS was founded in 1917 and the first President was then Dr, later Sir, Ernest Cook. I would like, if I may, to read you a short quote from his inaugural address:

“The active masonic life of the ordinary man is a very short one. He comes into our meetings in much the same way as a bird flies from the blackness of the night into an illuminated building. He flutters about in our lodge room in his gay plumage for a few years and then his place knows him no more. He returns to the darkness whence he came. But I sincerely trust not the same person. His mind has been awakened, his outlook on life altered. The poor and the outcast he now knows, may have as pure a soul as he himself, and certainly has the same inheritance in the Grand Lodge above. If he has really imbibed the true principles of Masonry, the deadening influence of self in all his former actions will have departed.”

Last year, Brethren, we had “Freemasonry in the Community Week.” This year in the Bristol Masonic Society we are having “Masonry in the Man Year.” We are going to look at why Masonry is important to us, what it means, why we keep coming to the same old ceremonies, and what they are trying to tell us. Tonight I am going to kick off with a biography of a largely forgotten Masonic scholar, J.S.M. Ward who introduced me to interpretation of the Craft ceremonies.

After I had been initiated, passed and raised in my father’s old Lodge in Welshpool, mid-Wales, I inherited his Masonic regalia and other belongings. These included the contents of a glass-fronted shelf in his wardrobe. I can still remember the smell of the contents now – a mixture of old books and fading mothballs. The books were: a few ritual texts; *The Builders* by Joseph Fort Newton; nineteen of the twenty volume series *British Masonic Miscellany*;

and three small books by J.S.M. Ward, *The EA's Handbook*, *The FC's Handbook* and *The MM's Book*.

These three little books by Ward seemed a good place to start but who was J.S.M. Ward? The books had no dust jacket with a potted biography on the fly-leaf. Gradually I obtained more until I had all of his Masonic works but still I had no biographical information. A quick check in Masonic periodicals showed that there was no obituary for him in *AQC* or *The Masonic Record*. The only information I could find was a tantalising half-page biography in Frederick Smyth's *Reference Book for Freemasons*. So I thought to dig a little deeper and this paper is the result.

JOHN SEBASTIAN MARLOW WARD – BROTHER AND FATHER

by

**A.R. Baker – PM 1404.
(30th September 2004)**

John Sebastian Marlow Ward was both the son and the grandson of a priest. He was born in Belize, British Honduras, on 22nd December 1885 where his father was a missionary. He was educated at Merchant Taylor's School, Charterhouse and gained an open scholarship to Trinity Hall Cambridge. He went up in 1905 to read history and gained a BA 2nd Class in 1908.

Close friends called him "Jack" and on 18th December 1908, three months after going down from Cambridge, he was married by his father to Eleanor Caroline Lanchester, his cousin "Carrie." They had a daughter, Blanche, born in October 1909. Ward was a teacher in various schools in England until 1914 when he moved to Burma to become head of the Diocesan Boys' School in Rangoon. His uncle Henry Jones Lanchester, Carrie's father, had a vision and was able to reassure Jack: "You need have no anxiety as to the journey. You will arrive in Burma safely." They did and it was during his two years there that he acquired a lifelong interest in eastern art and religion.

Ward had one brother, three years younger than himself who was a Lieutenant in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment and died in the trenches in Flanders in 1916. The climate in Burma had not suited Ward and this combined with the death of his brother led to a complete change of direction. So in 1916 he returned to England and worked as a first class clerk in the War Department of Customs. In 1917 he joined the staff of the Federation of British Industries and the following year was appointed their Director of Intelligence. Carrie had died and in April 1927 Ward, aged forty-one, married Jessie Page, a thirty-nine year old spinster and headmistress.

Outside Masonry his achievements were enormous. He set up the first Folk Park in the British Empire and his museum work was way ahead of its time. He was also a poet and was nominated for Poet Laureate of the Empire. He was author, scholar, historian, spymaster and mystic. He was a figure much larger than life, charismatic, eccentric and very colourful. He was at one time teacher, priest and cult leader. But his life, so full of achievement was destined to end in scandal, exile and financial ruin.

Masonic Biography

Ward was initiated at the age of twenty, by special dispensation in the Isaac Newton Lodge, of Cambridge University and the following year he was exalted in the Euclid Chapter. In India in 1915 he joined Lodge Rangoon and became Lodge Secretary. He obviously enjoyed his Masonry abroad and remarked: "how little those know of Masonry who only London

know.” Back in England in 1920 he was a founder member of Industries Lodge (No. 4100) and also of the Royal Standard Chapter (No. 1298) and he went through the chairs of both.

He looked upon Masonry as a spiritual or mystical quest and wrote: ‘Man, being finite, cannot comprehend the Infinite,’ yet, because of the Divine Spark within him he is always sensible of a feeling of separation and loss, and to repair that loss he starts on the Quest. He elaborated the view that we are all looking for the God within. Masons are on a quest for knowledge of God and union with God and come to Freemasonry to try and comprehend through the use of symbols what God really is. His view of Masonry might be called “Gnostic” as he once wrote: ‘our predecessor in the Craft could not reveal the secret, for it was an experience and not to be communicated by words to any living man.’

The three little Craft Handbooks, first published in 1923, are all still in print today, published by Ian Allan in paperback. They are the reason that Ward’s name is still so familiar. They provide an introduction to the esoteric interpretation of Masonry and were intended to open the reader’s eyes to the fact that there is a deeper meaning to our ceremonies. He explained many of the symbols and actions used in Lodge and examined the Solar Myth aspects of the three Degrees but he was always looking for a Christian interpretation of our rites. He pointed out that we are not entitled to say one meaning is right and another wrong but that there are many layers of meaning.

He viewed the three Craft Degrees as corresponding with the birth, life and death of Christ; the resurrection being represented by installation into the Chair. The year as WM represented Christ’s forty days on Earth and when these were over, he ascended into heaven which is represented by Passing the Veils. He felt that the secrets of the Royal Arch belonged originally to the Chair and were conferred on the Master at the end of his year as a reward for performing adequately the duties of Master of his Lodge. He described the Royal Arch as a highly mystical Degree representing man coming into the presence of God and wrote: ‘The Secret of the Royal Arch is the Christ spirit within us.’

He also described himself: ‘as one who has taken practically all the degrees for which he is qualified.’ He felt that many of the higher Degrees: ‘contain within themselves even today, despite numerous revisions, relics of the ancient lore as to what befell a man after he entered the under-world.’ He wrote that the pathway of the mystic’s life is set forth with astonishing clarity in the higher Degrees but that most of those who entered these Orders did not realise it. Of the Red Cross of Constantine he wrote: ‘The ceremonies are solemn, dramatic and of deep mystical significance [. . .] here we are definitely told that our ceremonies have a secret inner meaning.’

Theories and Views of Masonry

He published eighteen Masonic books between 1921 and 1929. They are a cohesive group and propounded two main ideas: first that many of our signs and symbols are derived from primitive tribal initiation rites; and second that the Masonic ceremonies are the heirs of the ancient mysteries. None of this was in accord with mainstream Masonic thought at the time. Nevertheless, he championed these views in journals and at meetings, as well as in his books. In this way he made himself extremely unpopular with the Masonic hierarchy.

It seems that his first clash with the accepted view came in March 1920 when he visited Quatuor Coronati Lodge as a member of the correspondence circle. Bro Gordon Hills read a paper entitled 'Women and Freemasonry' and in discussion Ward pointed out that Hills had not given any reason why women should not be admitted into Masonry and suggested that the explanation might be found in the view that Freemasonry was a survival of the primitive initiatory rites of the savages. He concluded that it would naturally follow that women would be excluded, for it was death for a woman to approach a man's lodge, and a similar fate awaited any man who approached a woman's lodge when its members were initiating a girl into womanhood.

Hills' response was curt and to the point: 'Bro Ward's comments,' he said, "raise several points [...] surely I need say no more than that **WOMEN ARE NOT ELIGIBLE TO BECOME FREEMASONS BECAUSE OUR CRAFT IS A MEN'S SOCIETY.**" One gets the feeling that Ward was a lone voice in this forum and that he was not at all welcome.

Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods, his first Masonic book, was published in 1921. In it he announced a new school of Masonic research and named it the "Anthropological School" as distinct from the current "Authentic School." In the first two parts of the book he elaborated his view that Freemasonry was descended from the primitive initiation rites of a boy into manhood. He argued that these tribal ceremonies evolved into the Ancient Mysteries of Egypt and Rome which carefully maintained the old signs. He then traced these rites and signs through the Roman College of Architects, the Comacine masons, and so to the Freemasons and provided supporting examples and illustrations from many cultures. In Part III he boldly outlined a vision of the possible future role of Freemasonry as a force for world unity and peace! Not surprisingly the book caused considerable controversy and no review of it appeared in *AQC*.

In May 1922, Quatuor Coronati Lodge heard a paper read by Bro Walter Hobbs entitled: 'The Antiquity of Freemasonry.' Hobbs dismissed mysticism in Masonry and went on to say that: 'Anthropomorphism and all its adjuncts seem to me to be entirely unnecessary to real Freemasonry, and to be a kind of excrescence or fungus growing on the wall of our hallowed institution.'

Ward's comments in discussion fill three and a half pages in *AQC*: "The whole of the rituals," he said, "bear unmistakable evidence of mystical teaching, and I will quote just one salient fact – the point within a circle. I ask you, what on earth that means? Remember the circumstances under which it is mentioned. 'Where do you hope to find them?' 'At the centre.' Now if the point within the circle is a geometrical figure and no more, that answer is rubbish. How can the genuine secrets be found there?"

As the discussion went on Bro John Thorp stated: "There ought not to be an irreconcilable division between the supposed two schools of thought, *viz.* the Authentic and the so-called Anthropological." So perhaps Ward had one friend in Quatuor Coronati Lodge after all. There was a proposal in 1922 to invite him to full membership of the Lodge but this was not accepted. Colin Dyer recorded that the committee 'considered seventeen names, including that of J.S.M. Ward, whose masonic writings were not considered in line with the objects of the lodge ... Five names were put forward by the selection committee but only three found favour with all members.' Ward's was not one of them!

In 1921 Ward had been instrumental in founding his own Masonic Study Society. The objects of which were he said:

‘To study the Symbolism of Freemasonry and its various degrees and to investigate its origin and meaning [...] on the lines of comparative Religions, Anthropology and Folklore [...] [devoting] special attention to the symbolic and mystical meaning of the various degrees.’

Ward expressed the Society’s hope:

‘to be able to do valuable work in connection with the so-called higher degrees which cannot be studied, as a rule, in a research lodge.’

The original concept was of a twelve-graded society. All wore the Masonic Study Society jewel, differentiated in rank by the colour of the ribbon. The inaugural meeting of the Society was held in June 1921 and the *Transactions* recorded that ‘there was a large attendance of keen masons including a noticeably large proportion of younger brethren ... there was unanimous agreement that the new society in no way infringed on the existing masonic research societies, but rather that it filled a gap.’

Ward himself gave the paper at the third meeting in 1921 and *The Masonic Record* stated:

‘perhaps, what impresses us most is the evident awakening throughout the whole of the Craft of a keen desire to learn more about the meaning of our rituals and the spiritual side of Freemasonry.’

I sometimes wonder whatever happened to this awakening!

When Canon Wigram gave a paper entitled ‘Mystery Rites among Primitive Peoples,’ he began:

‘In other papers that I have read to this society, I have produced for you studies of the Mystery rites of the Eleusinian, Orphic, Mithraic and Kabeiric Mysteries. We have seen how in all of them those ideas are expressed which in a later age found their expression in Masonry!’

Ward was ecstatic: “The opening words,” he said, “will live in our hearts for the rest of our lives [...] I am satisfied that the races of man have a higher side to their teaching and that it is given only to those who are worthy. The unworthy never seek further than the letter of the ritual.”

When he wrote the section on Freemasonry in the 13th edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, published in 1926, Ward added a section on the Anthropological school and concluded it with the words:

‘Although this school has produced much interesting data, its conclusions are not yet universally accepted by the older or “documentary” school, the members of which consider that coincidence may explain the similarities to which their attention has been directed.’

He went on to publish *The Sign Language of the Mysteries*, in 1928, which was really an answer to these criticisms that *Freemasonry and the Ancient Gods* had received. He gave literally hundreds of examples from all over the world, including sculpture and illuminated manuscripts, which seem to contradict the coincidence theory and he wrote:

‘We can show, century by century, these signs descending through the ages down to the present day. We are, I consider, justified in claiming that they are proofs of the survival of at any rate portions of the Ancient Mysteries and the teachings which they enshrined.’

In *Freemasonry: Its Aims and Ideals*, published in 1923, Ward again promoted his visionary future for World Masonry. He was highly critical of the Masonic hierarchy and proposed major changes to the organisation of Masonry worldwide. He described Past Masters as: ‘old men completely out of touch with modern movements.’

‘The titular Grand Lodge Officers,” he wrote, “past or present, are equally non-representative...What we want is masons of experience and standing who are in touch with their constituents and responsible to them.’

Needless to say, this was not a book written by someone looking for high Provincial honours! It was reviewed in *AQC* by Songhurst. He quoted Ward’s plan to set up an Imperial Grand Lodge for the British Empire with its headquarters at Malta and a Federal Grand Lodge for the United States. These two Grand Lodges, Ward had advised, should then form an International Grand Lodge and the main function of this he wrote:

‘would be to stand forth as an apostle of peace, of love and good fellowship between all nations...the influence of such a body on the politicians of every country would be enormous.’

Songhurst wrote:

‘The whole idea is chimerical. Bro Ward notes a difference between politics and party politics but Freemasonry has no concern whatever with politics whether party or otherwise.’

In *Who Was Hiram Abiff?* published in 1926, Ward examined rites of death and resurrection and set out to prove that Hiram should be identified with the central figure of one of the Ancient Mysteries. He showed that the Earthly representative of a God was often sacrificed and that the death of Hiram might be seen as a foundation sacrifice for the temple. Canon Wigram wrote an Essay on this book in which he stated that Ward was:

‘known among masons as a master of much curious learning...and his conclusions are not to be despised just because they look surprising...No mason need accept Bro. Ward’s theories as an article of masonic faith, but none should despise them until he has studied them.’

It was *Who was Hiram Abiff?* about which Ward was questioned in court in 1945. He said he had written the book for Freemasons and denied the barrister’s suggestion that it had a greater: “pornographic interest.” He was asked: “Is this the sort of stuff that Dorothy Lough would come into contact” and he replied: “She never saw it. She is not a Freemason.”

Ward’s Masonic books and his efforts to popularise them raised hackles in official circles. WBro Ticehurst, Provincial Grand Secretary of the Province of Gloucestershire, wrote to the Grand Secretary in October 1944 enclosing some advertisements for Ward’s books. He asked the Grand Secretary: ‘Is anything known of J.S.M. Ward and his works? He seems to need a tourniquet on his activities.’ Bro. Heron Lepper wrote in reply:

‘Ward is simply a publicist and self-advertiser; no scholar and without any scruples in my humble opinion...In reply to your query my feeling would be to say that the activities of JSMW are well known to the authorities, but that they do not consider him worth powder and shot. He has his following of admirers, but his influence on

the Craft is completely negligible, and his opinions do not cut any ice with genuine masonic scholars.’

In 1987 Grand Lodge publicly expressed a view on Ward in their *Evidence on the Compatibility of Freemasonry and Christianity* in which they said:

“Ward’s handbooks have no official standing and are not issued by lodges to candidates. They were personal and very idiosyncratic interpretations of the history and meaning of the Craft rituals. Ward was a poor historian and [his] interpretations of masonic ritual meet with as little support among the generality of freemasons as did his religious activities with the Anglican church.”

Ward and the Anti-Masons

Even though his views were not accepted as orthodox by the Masonic establishment, ironically Ward’s books have often been cited by those writing attacks on Freemasonry as examples of the supposedly undesirable attitude of the whole of Freemasonry towards Christianity. The more his works were used in this way the more undesirable and unhelpful his contributions must have seemed to Grand Lodge.

Light Invisible: The Freemason’s Answer to Darkness Visible however pointed out that the inner meaning of Masonry’s symbols, as apart from the moral lessons to be drawn from them, is nowhere authoritatively declared nor officially interpreted” and the author went on:

‘Ward has in his day come in for a good deal of criticism for his exaggerated and sometimes fantastic interpretations of masonic symbolism. There is however complete freedom of interpretation within the Brotherhood, and he is as entitled to his views as any other freemason of whatever rank or position in the Craft.’

Non-Masonic Works

Ward wrote on many non-masonic subjects. The two most significant volumes from an esoteric point of view are *Gone West* and *The Psychic Powers of Christ*.

Gone West appeared before any of his Masonic works. The title is, of course, intriguing to Freemasons who are taught to leave the East and go to the West in search of that which was lost. It was subtitled *Three Narratives of After-Death Experiences communicated through the mediumship of J.S.M. Ward*. It related a series of visions and episodes of “automatic writing” in which Ward communicated with his dead uncle, Henry Jones Lanchester, Carrie’s Father, beginning in December 1913. It was very popular and is still in print.

In *The Psychic Powers of Christ* Ward attempted to prove the historical truth of the virgin birth and the physical resurrection of the body. He felt that many professing Christians believed Christ’s teachings to be Divine but did not believe in the literal truth of these two events arguing that they had been added as embellishments to Christ’s story to make Him appear unarguably divine. Ward found this whole approach unacceptable. He felt that the teachings of Jesus: ‘run dead contrary to the law of survival of the fittest, to the rule of self preservation and to the inherited instincts of every average man.’ He argued the other way around: that once these two events were proven to be historical fact then Christ’s divinity was unquestionable and his teachings then had to be accepted as Divine no matter how

contrary to the human instinct they may appear. He believed passionately: 'that these doctrines are fundamental to the Christian faith and without them the whole fabric of Christianity rests on falsehood and delusion.'

The Confraternity of the Kingdom of Christ

In October 1928 Ward and his second wife Jessie had visions in which they were warned that the end of this Age was approaching, and that Christ would come in judgement. They were led into the presence of Christ the King and, by Him, given the requisite authority to organise the [necessary] work and to found an abbey.

By 1930 Ward had resigned his membership of most of his Lodges, though he continued to attend the meetings of the Masonic Study Society. In January 1930 he resigned his post as Head of the Intelligence Department of the Federation of British Industries to devote his life to the pursuit of esoteric knowledge. He and six others signed a Common Deed stating that they: 'swear to live together in one Confraternity in love and union with all their fellow members until the end of their lives.' They bought Hadley Hall at New Barnet, a semi-detached three-storeyed house of nearly twenty rooms standing in five acres of its own grounds.

In February 1930 they: 'received instructions in the mystical state to go down to Birchington, in Kent where they would find a building which would form the Chapel of the Confraternity.' They went as instructed and found a 13th century half-timbered barn which they took down timber by timber, brought it back to New Barnet and re-erected it as their chapel. The altar was flanked with thrones for the Reverend Father and Reverend Mother.

The first members of the community took up residence in Hadley Hall in June 1930, and it was renamed "The Abbey of Christ the King." In February 1931 the Bishop of St. Albans, dedicated the Chapel with Anglican rites but towards the end of 1934 he refused to renew the Chaplain's licence. So Ward turned first to the Autonomous African Universal Church and then to the Orthodox Catholic Church in England in which on 5th October 1935, he was ordained priest and then consecrated a bishop the following day. In December 1938, on the death of his consecrator, Ward succeeded to the primacy of the Orthodox Catholic Church in England and became Archbishop Ward.

Local residents recalled that Archbishop Ward made a striking figure when he went shopping in New Barnet. He was a tall, and by this time white-haired man who wore a scarlet cassock, cape and biretta. Very often he would be accompanied by his wife who wore a picturesque white habit, coif and veil, with white stockings and shoes, all set off by a large gold pectoral cross suspended on a gold chain. Ward was remembered attending Masonic meetings in London, robed as a major prelate of the Latin rite; and that a collar and apron over a scarlet cassock, and a scarlet biretta hanging on a peg in the anteroom, added an unusual note of colour on such occasions.

The Abbey Folk Park

The Confraternity had originally run a school – St. Michael's College – in which children were given a thorough grounding in the Christian religion as interpreted by the Wards. In

1929 the school was closed and a Folk Park was constructed in the grounds of The Abbey. Old buildings or replicas of old buildings were erected, which were then furnished appropriately to show the evolution of everyday life. In 1930 this was a revolutionary, pioneering idea.

When it was opened in June 1934 the Folk Park contained nine show buildings; by the time of its first anniversary it had twenty-nine; and by 1937 there were forty-five buildings housing some 42,000 objects in eleven galleries and five period rooms. So the Confraternity worked at a prodigious rate on its development. Gerald Gardner (The reputed author of *Gardnerian Wicca*) said of Ward in this period: 'Whenever he heard that the local council was going to tear down some nice old building, he would rush up with motor lorries and a gang of monks.'

To mark its first Anniversary in July 1935 a Chinese Temple of Initiation was opened, representing Ward's interest in the Hung Society and their rituals. Another significant exhibit was the 16th century witch's cottage. Later when Ward came to leave England the cottage was exchanged for a piece of land in Cyprus and so came into the possession of Gerald Gardner, the father of modern witchcraft. The outbreak of war in 1939 saw the collections packed away and financial problems, always in the background, became a major concern.

Enticement Case

Concern about Ward's activities at the Abbey was felt in The United Grand Lodge of England in 1945. A WBro Hopping wrote in March 1945 to the Grand Secretary:

'concerning my daughter [Monica] who has for some years been under the influence of a Bro named JSM Ward...I would greatly appreciate [...] your guidance and advice.'

It was the Grand Librarian, Bro. Heron Lepper, who met with him and wrote to the Grand Secretary:

"In accordance with your wish I had an interview this morning with W Bro Hopping [whose] . . daughter...left home and went to live in Ward's community, where [as Sister Gabrielle] she has been ever since...Another aggrieved parent whose daughter has been enticed away from home has not taken the deprivation so calmly...he has entered an action in the High Court...[and]...I expect it will be sensational."

Indeed it was; a Mr Stanley Lough of New Barnet, an engineer and a lapsed Freemason, had charged the Wards with enticing his daughter, Dorothy (Sister Therese) into the Abbey at the age of sixteen. Before the hearing her mother appealed for an order to take Dorothy to a place of safety and she was taken to the Hitchin Girls' Remand Home where she spent ten days that she did not enjoy at all. In referring to this episode Ward wrote: 'Dorothy Lough perished forever in the courthouse at Barnet on October 8th' and in court he said:

'Those who enter the religious life sooner or later pass through a perilous spiritual experience – the mystic death or mystic crucifixion. After Dorothy had been arrested at my Abbey and taken to a remand home she went through ten days of agony. Dorothy Lough the child was destroyed. Every link she had with the past was cut forever.'

The daily papers, of course, completely misinterpreted this statement and published the most sensational headlines such as: “Sister Therese Died” in the *Daily Herald*. As if this was not bad enough Ward went on to say: “Dorothy was not the only girl who died mystically at the Abbey. Monica Hopping [Sister Gabrielle] had died last Monday when she heard that her father had complained bitterly about her stay at the Abbey.” The papers exulted: “Another Girl in Abbey “Died” on Monday” in the *Evening News*.

Ward was not well represented by the newspapers. One recorded that: ‘Ward peered at the court through a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles, when giving evidence. Once he chanted religious responses in a loud deep voice, his eyes raised to the ceiling.’ The judge described him as a:

‘layman who once occupied a high position in the business world, who became a priest one day, a bishop the next and an archbishop in three years.’

He went on to describe the confraternity as:

‘a strange and small body...There are some things about it which appear farcical and at which critics and opponents would be inclined to scoff; but I see no reason to suppose that the defendants and their followers are other than earnest and serious-minded persons believing what they teach and are taught. Some people may think that they are much misguided; but this is a land which tolerates many kinds of religious beliefs...I think there is some force in the suggestion that they are a couple suffering from a form of megalomania, taking delight in high-sounding titles.’

Much to the disappointment of the papers, there was no suggestion in the court proceedings that this enticement involved any sexual motive or impropriety on the part of the Wards. Indeed Mrs Lough: ‘agreed that there was nothing in the Abbey of which she did not approve and nothing scandalous.’ An editorial note in the *All England Law Reports* for 1945 stated: ‘This is a case for which there is no previous authority exactly in point’ since such actions had ‘hitherto arisen as a consequence of seduction. That element is absent here and is replaced by religious inducements.’

The court found in favour of Brother Lough and that:

‘there was enticement by the defendants in this case. A religious influence is very dangerous and very powerful and never so dangerous and never so powerful as when it is exercised by superior minds and older minds over an inferior and younger mind...The influence of one mind over another is very subtle, and of all influences religious influence is the most dangerous and the most powerful.’

The enticement case had made the Abbey of Christ the King well known from one end of Britain to the other. The costs of their defence had been very high. It is said that the case: ‘completely shattered the physique of the Reverend Father, who was a very sensitive man.’ In September 1945 a first meeting of creditors was convened, but the liabilities were discharged. Broken in health and by adverse publicity, as well as mounting financial debt, Ward began to dismember his enormous museum collection. The Folk Park was closed in 1946 and the community moved to Limassol in southern Cyprus where Archbishop Ward spent the last three years of his life sorting what remained of his once vast collection and writing his autobiography. On 2nd July 1949 he suffered a fatal stroke.

Although Canon Wigram, in presenting a paper on the Hung Society to the Masonic Study Society in 1950, described Ward as the founder of the Society, he made no mention of the fact that Ward had died and indeed it is as if he did not know.

Conclusions

J.S.M. Ward was first a teacher and an educator, and secondly he was a collector. As a Mason he seems to have been viewed by the Masonic hierarchy as a somewhat eccentric thinker and teacher but not as any real threat. There was another well-entrenched view and the proponents of this Authentic School were prepared to criticise him and prevent him rising to what they must have seen as any position of power or general influence. Nevertheless he was a great champion of the Anthropological School and it remains his legacy to modern Freemasonry. As Canon Wigram said: 'let us hope that the two schools of masonic research, namely, the Authentic and what we may call the Anthropological School, may be able to work in harmony, side by side. Each needs the other and there is ample room for both.'

By the time he was setting up the Confraternity he had resigned from most of his Lodges and clearly had lost his enthusiasm for Freemasonry. It was as if Masonry had in some way failed to live up to his expectations as a system and so he dropped it and moved on. He now turned his energies to forming the Confraternity, first building the school and later creating the Folk Park Museum. It is a tribute to his success in these endeavours that a sizeable part of his collections survive to this day in the Abbey museum in Caboolture in Queensland, Australia.

It was the enticement case that brought him to the attention of the whole nation and the sensational treatment of the case by the newspapers that cast doubt on his motives and character in the minds of many. In this modern age we are well aware of the effect that the "paparazzi" and their reporting can have on the subjects of their stories.

John Sebastian Marlow Ward died in exile in Cyprus. A man once described as the foremost living authority on Symbolic Masonry passed to the Grand Lodge above without anyone in this country even noting his passing. There was no obituary for him in *The Times* or *The Telegraph*, no obituary in *AQC* or *The Masonic Record*, and no obituary in the *Occult Review* or *The Church Times*. His death was not even noted in the *Transactions* of his own Masonic Study Society. He was misunderstood in life and ignored in death. Brethren, he was a great Masonic scholar by any standards. Even if you disagree with his views, you cannot fail to admit that they are well argued. They remain to stimulate the bored Mason to re-examine the reason that he went to Lodge and used to find it so rewarding. Ward is still persuading the young, and older Mason, of today to think more deeply about what they are doing in their Lodges and for that we should thank him.

(Bro Baker's full paper on J.S.M. Ward can be found in *AQC* 116, (2003), pp. 127-92)

CAPTAIN FRANCIS GEORGE IRWIN (1828-1893), and his revival of an *antient* Hiberno-masonic Royal Order of Ireland in Bristol'

by

**WBro Charles Wallis-Newport
PPrDepDC(Bristol); Past President; Prestonian Lecturer, 2002
(29th November 2004)**

Brother President, members of the Society – Brethren all!

Brother President, when you and I first discussed the subject of tonight's paper, in place of your intended Speaker, it seemed quite natural to suggest a re-delivery of my presentation to *Quatuor Coronati Lodge* two years ago; namely, '*From county Armagh to the Green Fields of Somerset.*' This, you may recall, dealt with the military and Masonic career of *Francis George Irwin* (1828-1893) in some detail. Upon reflection, however, this was considered to be rather too lengthy for this evening's purposes, and it was thought that a slightly amended version of that paper might, perhaps, be a more appropriate contribution to our current proceedings.

Brother President, by an interesting coincidence, the year of the Catholic Reform Bill in 1828 saw the birth in Armagh of one of the more remarkable Freemasons of any generation to venture forth into the West of England. His name was Francis George Irwin, and he first drew breath in that ancient seat of early Celtic Christianity on 19th June of the year in question. Before the end of the 19th century, this future Adjutant of Volunteer Royal Engineers was to leave an indelible mark, not only in Bristol – where he was to spend the final years of his life – but in various esoteric and chivalric Masonic Orders, in Somerset and elsewhere, most of which, thrived throughout much of the 20th century and continue to survive unto the present day.

Foremost among Bro Irwin's achievements in this regard, was the revival of what he almost certainly hoped would become, in due time, a legitimate and fully-recognised *Masonic* Royal Order of Ireland. Based initially upon the historic *Red Branch Knights of Ulster*, such comprised the *Royal Order of Eri* – whose resuscitated '*Brian Boru*' *Encampment, No. 1*, was established, at his own home in lower Totterdown, less than one mile from the quayside of the old city seaport of Bristol. Running parallel with Irwin's Masonic endeavours, however, was his almost single-handed expansion of the military Volunteer Engineer movement in the West – and for whom this most zealous of Recruiting Officers did so much, by way of re-organisation and encouragement, between 1868 and his retirement, seventeen years later, in 1885. In the purely fraternal sense of the phrase, he was the perfect representation of one of John Heron Lepper's "*Poor Common Soldiers*" who did so much to spread the word of Freemasonry, and its associated Orders, throughout the world.

Although nothing is known of our subject's early schooling, whether in Armagh or elsewhere in Ulster, it would appear that – despite having joined the British Army as a Bugler at such a young age – his education was far from rudimentary. In fact, he proved in later life to be a most adept linguist and translator, and was an avid student of Irish history. For example, he was quite well versed in the *Annals of the Four Masters*, as well as in Masonic and other

esoteric matters. He was indeed a worthy successor to that other great Irish exponent of the Craft, one hundred years earlier, Laurence Dermott, whose family background, interestingly, is similarly obscure.

To stress yet again that Irwin was an Irishman, residing in Bristol, is perhaps all too predictable in the context of this paper. What *is* of particular interest, however, is the fact that – in much the same manner that its Scottish equivalent holds in reverence the legendary Kings of Scotland, through the Earls of Elgin, via the Bruce family – the *original* Royal Order of Eri derives *its* legend from the ancient *Annals of Ireland* whereby, most logically, the eventual return of the traditional High King is *implied likewise*. Interestingly, in the event of such an occurrence in the world of today, this title would fall to the present *Earl of Inchiquin*, whose celebrated O'Brien forebear lost his life in a great victory against the Danes, at the Battle of Clontarf, in 1014.

Although emanating from Armagh, of apparent Ulster-Scots ancestry, the early life of Francis George Irwin, sadly, remains a complete mystery. However, at the tender age of fourteen years, four months and nineteen days, he somehow or other managed to find his way to Woolwich where, on 9th November 1842, he enlisted as a Bugler in what was the forerunner of today's Royal Engineers, then known as the Royal Sappers and Miners. Having served variously at Gibraltar, in the Crimea and the Baltic – for which he received the Baltic Sea Medal. He remained in the Regular Army for a total of twenty-five years until demobilised on 30th July 1867. By this time, he had risen to the dizzy heights of Colour Sergeant.

Whilst serving on the Rock of Gibraltar he was initiated, in Calpe Lodge No. 325 of the Irish Constitution in 1842, and in less than two years had joined the then-defunct English *Inhabitants' Lodge No. 178* which, in company with *Lieutenant* Richard Freke Gould – the future Masonic historian – he did much to revive. Joining a further Lodge under the English Constitution, No. 345, in 1858, Irwin continued to make rapid Masonic progress and, in that same year, became acquainted with yet another junior Army Officer who was also to make his mark in the world, both in the military connection and as one who led an important expedition to Palestine in order to carry out archaeological excavations on the Temple at Jerusalem. This soldier was no less than the future General Sir Charles Warren who, although of no higher rank than Bro Gould at the time, was destined to become the founding Worshipful Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge (No. 2076) the so-called premier Lodge of Masonic Research. Sir Charles, it will be remembered, was also the beleaguered first Metropolitan Police Commissioner at the time of the Jack the Ripper affair in 1888.

During his time at Gibraltar, comprising some eleven years in total, the energetic *Sergeant* Irwin occupied the Chair of at least one Craft Lodge in 1859, together with that of Royal Arch Chapter No. 345 the following year. Furthermore in recognition of his services to Freemasonry in the region, this one-time *Irish Mason* of Calpe Lodge was appointed by the United Grand Lodge of *England* as Provincial Junior Grand Warden of the *Province of Andalusia*!

Before leaving the scene of Irwin's extensive Masonic involvement in Gibraltar, mention should be made of a quite remarkable Address presented by him to the *Inhabitants' Lodge* on Christmas Eve of 1858, with *Lieutenant* Gould occupying the chair of King Solomon. Irwin, who was the Senior Warden at that time, with just eighteen months of fraternal experience, delivered an astonishing dissertation of some two thousand nine hundred words comprising a

philosophical and historical resumé from Antiquity to the Renaissance, including the emergence of the European operative craft. Of particular interest, in this day and age, is the fulsome account of Islamic influence on Western Civilisation at a point, in the Victorian era, which was less than a generation away from the very zenith of British Imperialism and the high-water of Empire. In this highly intelligent thirty year old Soldier of the Queen, serving in a militarily strategic outpost, with its own very own historic links to Muslim North Africa, we have an extraordinary example of the liberalising effect of Freemasonry in the very best sense of the term.

It may be safely presumed that Irwin's lecture to the Lodge, presented no doubt in a charismatic and beguiling Ulster brogue, left a tremendous impression upon those such as Gould and Charles Warren, both of whom – as previously indicated – were simply junior Subalterns serving on the Rock of Gibraltar at the time. It is really no wonder that each of these distinguished Brethren, in later life, were to speak of their old Colour Sergeant in very high regard, both Masonically and militarily.

N.B. You may have noticed that, in an attempt to explain the almost mesmeric effect he had upon his fraternal contemporaries, I have had distributed copies of a transcription of Irwin's original hand-written Address of 1858 which, I trust, will be of interest to the Brethren in attendance this evening. I might add that the original manuscript lies in the Archives of the United Grand Lodge of England, London, where I was fortunate enough to discover it during the course of a visit to Great Queen Street in the year 2000. This fascinating item had apparently remained unseen for over one hundred years, since the time Mrs Catherine Irwin had bequeathed her husband's considerable collection of manuscripts and books to Grand Lodge, following his death in 1893.

However, to resume at our subject's post-Gibraltarian period. Upon leaving the Regular Army in due course the recently-discharged Colour Sergeant Francis Irwin was in 1868 promoted to the commissioned rank of Captain in the Royal Volunteer Engineers at Bristol, and this secured for him a permanent home on the outskirts of the city – after spending the previous quarter of a century in the Royal Sappers and Miners.

His subsequent activity, in the formation and consecration of numerous Somerset Masonic assemblies, is beyond the immediate scope of this particular paper. However, having developed an early affinity with the more mystical and spiritual aspects of life, he advanced very rapidly through the various so-called higher Degrees and Orders of Freemasonry. Indeed, he was a Grand Officer in the then Grand Conclave of High Knights Templar as early as 1863, and became the first Deputy Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Mark Lodge of Somerset in 1871. He had already been appointed Intendant General of the Red Cross of Constantine in the county, and became the first provincially-based Chief Adept for the College of *Bristol and the Neighbouring Counties* at an even earlier stage, in April 1869. The latter was a Rosicrucian Society of English Freemasons, which is, in effect, today's *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*. As a measure of the esteem in which Irwin was held by his old military-masonic compatriots whilst at Gibraltar, he also later became – at Sir Charles Warren's specific invitation – one of the early joining members of the latter's celebrated Quatuor Coronati Lodge.

When Irwin first came to Bristol, as Adjutant of the Administrative Battalion of the local Volunteer Engineer Corps, in 1868, he took up residence at Brislington Crescent, and

continued to live there – high above the south bank of the River Avon on the lower slopes of Totterdown – until his death, at sixty-five, some twenty-five years later in 1893.

At the time of Irwin's initial arrival in the area, the traditional Craft – in the city of Bristol as such – had barely changed from its position before the Napoleonic wars and, as I have previously indicated on other occasions, very little real growth had occurred during the first fifty years of the 19th century. Interestingly, there is no evidence that Irwin became directly involved with the *traditionalist* Brethren of Bristol – although, as a result of the strong associations he was to develop with the Brethren to the south of the city in Somerset, it is perhaps easy to understand why he neither considered, nor relished, the prospect. Living as he did, barely one mile from the very conservative enclave of *antient, free and Hibernian-style Masonry* – which continued to work, until 1872, from Bristol's old Freemasons' Hall near the quayside at Bridge Street – this zealous and highly active outsider must have created quite a stir in local Masonic circles.

During his first very active ten-year period in the locality which, it must be remembered, were combined with military duties, *Captain* Irwin – an honorary rank of *Major* only applied after his retirement in 1885 – received frequent correspondence and visits from many of the leading Masonic scholars of the day. In addition to Sir Charles Warren, and R.F. Gould, he was to strike up fruitful liaisons with such distinguished men as Frederick Hockley, Robert Wentworth Little, Kenneth Mackenzie, John Yarker and, not least of all, that most erudite of Rosicrucian Freemasons, Dr William Wynn Westcott. Amidst all of this fraternal discourse, however, he still found time to resurrect a fascinating mystical and historical chivalric Masonic assembly, of ostensibly Antient Irish origin, known as the *Royal Order of Eri*.

The background to this interesting revival is that, whilst Irwin was serving in the Army at Gibraltar, in 1858, a visiting American sea Captain and Freemason conveyed to him the Degrees of the Order. The documentation passed to him at this time, by Captain James P. O'Donnell, was said to have been originally taken from Ireland to New York by one of the latter's ancestors in the year 1757. On leaving the Regular Army and returning to England, some ten years later, Irwin apparently set aside all thoughts of the Order until 1872. Then, having re-produced the necessary rituals, from notes and observations made earlier at Gibraltar, he thereupon established the *Brian Boru Encampment No. 1* – at his private residence – which lay, as indicated, less than one mile, as from the old harbour quayside of Bristol. The house in Brislington Crescent was, at that time, just beyond the county boundary – being therefore within the then *separate* Masonic Province of Somerset. There, on the south bank of the River Avon, the Order's energetic *discoverer* continued to engage in the most exotic fraternal pursuits – although many of his activities were beyond the normal parameters of orthodox Freemasonry. Once again, however, such are not within the particular scope of this evening's presentation.

Among several other intriguing, though rather more conventional achievements by Irwin, was that – when Intendant General of the Red Cross of Constantine – he formed the Weston super Mare conclaves of *Rose and Lily* and *William de Irwin*, the former now revived at Yatton and the latter, at Bath, being the first of four separate foundations in *three different Orders* in Somerset to carry the Irwin ancestral name!

Since approval at a very high level in such Orders would be required to perpetuate the name of a *living* Mason – particularly that of an erstwhile Non-commissioned Officer in the Army – the frequent employment of *Irwin's name* would appear to be an indication of the high

regard in which he was held by the various Masonic hierarchies in London. His energy and achievements were quite phenomenal by any standards, and it has to be borne in mind that all of his West-Country activities – the effects of which are still very evident today – were undertaken during the period in which he performed his duties as Adjutant to the Volunteer Engineers with the same characteristic zeal.

However, the early death in 1879 of his only son Herbert – an aspiring Medical Student – had a devastating effect on Irwin who, in complete contrast to his activities throughout the previous decade, appeared to lose all interest in Freemasonry as such. He did in fact, for a while, retain his connection within *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia* – having served there at a very high level in the Society for many years. In this connection, for example, his earlier involvement as *Chief Adept* in Bristol, led to even further elevation to *Junior Substitute Magus* of the Society – comparable to *Deputy Grand Master* in Craft terms – and he then briefly served as *Senior Substitute Magus* (this being the equivalent of *Pro Grand Master*) before resigning as a Rosicrucian Freemason at the age of fifty-eight, in April 1886.

Thereafter, Irwin turned increasingly to spiritualism and associated interests, and his vast collection of Masonic manuscripts, books and other items – although bequeathed by Will to his wife following his death in 1893 – are now deposited in the archives of the United Grand Lodge of England at Great Queen Street in London.

Irwin's resurrection of the Knights of Eri – being, more correctly, the Red Branch Knights of Ulster and its Appendant Orders – comprises two separate Rituals which, consisting of a rather attractive form of doggerel verse, is not dissimilar to the celebrated Caledonian Royal Order referred to earlier in this account. Otherwise known as the *Clanna Ruid Ruidh*, one could be forgiven for thinking that – although subsequently revised by two of Irwin's senior *English* Masonic friends some years after his death – the rituals should, historically speaking, contain rather more Gaelic-Irish than happens to be the case! The re-introduction of the Order, by way of the *Brian Boru Encampment, No. 1*, at Bristol, led to the carefully selected admission of several of Irwin's high-flying Masonic friends – foremost among whom were John Yarker and Dr William Wynn Westcott. During the subsequent troubled period in Ireland – both North and South – some twenty years after Irwin's death, it was under John Yarker's supervision that no fewer than *fifty-one Candidates* were admitted into the Order, over the course of just two meetings in July and September of that year. One wonders whether, or not, this may have been with a view to bringing the Order back to its native soil, and to re-establish it once more, perhaps, in the Ulster of Brother Irwin's nativity. The fair city of Armagh might very well be an excellent choice of venue.

Currently, the *Red Branch Knights of Ulster* exists within *Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia*, whose one-time Supreme Magus – Dr Wynn Westcott – somewhat *paradoxically* appropriated, and revised the rituals, for the sole purpose of his *English* Society of Rosicrucian Freemasons, and it is in this particular manner that Ireland's Royal Masonic Order continues to meet down to the present day. It is doubtful whether Westcott's action, in '*anchoring*' this decidedly Hibernian Order on the '*wrong*' side of the Irish Sea, would have necessarily coincided with the wishes of Francis George Irwin who, despite his own very senior association with the Rosicrucian movement, was above all an Irishman whose origins lay deeply planted in the green fields of south Ulster.

Brother President and Brethren, I trust that what I have had to say may have been of some interest – and I thank you most kindly for your fraternal forbearance and attention.

APPENDIX – Irwin’s Address at Gibraltar

The transcript below is that of the fascinating Masonic lecture presented on 24th December 1858 to the one-time Antient Inhabitants’ Lodge, No. 178, by the then-Sergeant Francis George Irwin, Senior Warden. At the time in question, WBro Robert Freke Gould occupied the Chair as the first Master of this newly-revived Lodge at Gibraltar. Re-discovered only recently in the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England, the hand-written manuscript under review comprises an item of Irwin’s ‘Masonica Excerpta’ at Freemasons’ Hall, Great Queen Street, London.

Worshipful Master and Brethren – that *Freemasonry is a peculiar system of morality* is one of the great lessons taught by the free and accepted Mason; the words are simple, plain, and intelligible. Yet how vastly comprehensive; so comprehensive that they contain a definition of our science in its most ample sense, its most extended working and expanded perfection.

A *system* is something regularly organised, connected in all its parts, all nicely proportioned, each fitting to each, and forming a perfect whole. Such is Masonry, not a confused mass of ceremonies without meaning, emanating as it were from the whim of this or that individual – not a vehicle of empty show but a ‘System’ well connected in all its parts, all and each calculated and apportioned to our great end; transmitted from age to age, spreading, growing, like a young oak that gradually expands in all its branches until what was the green sapling becomes the sturdy King of the Forest, still preserving its beautiful symetry [*sic*] and just proportioned throughout.

A *peculiar System* is a system, of itself, totally distinct from any other, and known only to the Initiated, preserved in its integrity from the first development to the present day, untouched by and unmixed with various systems which, being the maiden work of man alone and having his ends only in view, have sprung up like mushrooms, expended their strength on nought and have vanished – whilst Masonry founded on an everlasting principle, contrived, strengthened and adorned by infinite wisdom, strength and beauty, has remained, is still and ever shall remain, *intact*. And man, we are taught by that Holy volume which we accept as the rule and guide of our faith, was created in a state of innocence and capable of direct communication with the source of all perfection. The immediate consequence of the fall from that state, in which the G.A.O.T.U. had created the being formed after his own likeness, was the withdrawal of this Divine Presence thus depriving man of that *Light* by which alone he could be guided in his exertions to *regain* the state of perfection.

Man groping in darkness, naturally first turned his thoughts to the invention of some means whereby to appease the wrath of an offended Deity and obtain some knowledge of his Divine will. Thus was the first idea of worship instrumentally connected with the Builders’ Art. Thus, we find Cain and Abel offering sacrifices that are engaged in the worship of the G.A.O.T.U. What was the result? Though Cain’s sacrifice was rejected, Abel’s was accepted, and the Omnipotent deigned to *re-open* communication with man and to reveal some portion of his Divine will, thus affording him a *Light* (at first it is true but a faint glimmering ray)

which served to guide him along the path to perfection, the path of morality. More light must soon have been vouchsafed, for we find it recorded at the birth of Enoc, [sic] Adam's grandchild, *then* began men to call upon the name of the Lord. Immediately we find the great principles of brotherly love, relief and truth at work. Cities were built, Jabal, Tubal, and Tubal Cain respectively, became great promoters of the Arts and Sciences, laying the foundation of all that is considered primarily conducive [sic] to a civilised state of society; one teaching the advantage of mutual association and dependence, with organised rights of property, requiring reciprocal aid and protection – another discovering the wonderful and almost inexplicable laws of harmony, and inventing instruments whereby its mighty influence might be brought into play in elevating man's mental faculties, in soothing his passions, and aiding him in giving to the expression of his feelings in the worship of the G.A.O.T.U. a solemnity and sublimity which it was impossible he could attain by any other means. Whilst the last in search of Heaven-born myth, laid open the treasures of the earth and rendered to posterity an inestimable service by teaching the use of those metals, without which man could never have arrived at his present state of Civilisation.

This Light, however, must have been either much abused or greatly disregarded, for in course of time the Supreme Ruler of the Universe thought to visit the Earth with a deluge which, while for the time it confined the illuminating rays within the narrow limits, *by that very concentration* caused them to shine more intensively, and subsequently re-emanating [sic], by a purified medium, radiates with greater vigour. Guided by designs laid down by the Great Architect, Noah was enabled to construct that first master-piece of Geometrical Science – the Ark – in which, while nearly the whole human race was swept from off the face of the earth the knowledge of time, God and the sacred secrets of our Order ever preserved to be transmitted for the good of future generations. On his release from the Ark, we find that Noah immediately engaged in an act of worship, and at the same time displaying his knowledge of Geometry in erecting an altar built, as tradition informs us, in the form of a Cube or perfect Ashlar – a figure emblematical in its proportions, of most exquisite workmanship and perfect finish. See again the result of their practice of Masonic truth – further communications from God to man with a covenant of Infinite Beneficence [sic] while the Earth remaineth. Seed Time and Harvest – Cold and Heat – Summer and Winter – Day and Night – shall not cease. Noah, actuated by faith in this promise, became a husbandman – and to this day we are partakers of the same promise, in the enjoyment of Corn and Wine and Oil.

Amongst the immediate descendants of Noah, the principles of the Craft seem to have extensively cultivated, Architecture seems particularly to have flourished. Mizriam, [sic] the grandson of Noah, became greatly renowned for the skill he displayed in raising some of those stupendous structures in Egypt, the remains of which, ever at the present day, strike the beholder with awe and wonder. The temples at Memphis and the Egyptian Thebes were undoubtedly reared to the Glory of the one true and living God whom Noah worshipped, although subsequently from some cause or some good reason, known only to the Omnipotent, that light which is from above seems to have been withdrawn from the descendant of Mizriam [sic] in those regions, so that those who endeavoured, unaided, to penetrate into the hidden mysteries of nature and science, only plunged into inextricable confusion, until at last they were groped in total darkness.

The knowledge of the true God and the secrets of our Grand and Royal Art were, however, preserved and cherished by other descendants of Noah – more especially by that family whom God chose out to make of them a people for himself. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were

all endowed with more light and diffused it for the benefit of mankind. Joseph gave a bright example of the exercise of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth, and to Moses and Aaron were vouchsafed extraordinary revelations of the Divine Will under their rule and that of their successors among whom Joshua stands prominently forward. Civilisation progressed and the Children of Israel became a mighty nation – abounding in wealth. This latter circumstance, King David took advantage of, to prepare for carrying into execution a design which must all along have been in contemplation with the Rulers of the Craft from the time when Moses erected the tabernacle in the wilderness; viz. to erect a fitting Temple for worship of the Most High. Of the way in which that great work was executed, I need not here speak, nor dwell on the fact of how vastly, under our Grand Master Solomon's rule, Israel arose in the scale of nations. Neither need I remind you that the spirit of Masonry becomes again prominently demonstrated, when after years of affliction suffered by the Children of Israel in captivity, the Lord stirred up the heart of Cyrus, King of Persia, and let the people go up and rebuild the Temple which had been laid waste.

I would however, in passing, ask you to recollect what height the fame of ancient Greece was brought by the progress made by her Philosophers in the study of the liberal Arts and Sciences, the knowledge of which they undoubtedly first derived from Masonry – and would call your attention also as to what the Craft was doing in the so called Dark Ages.

The written records of those ages are very scant, a sad fatality seems to have attended the attempts to hand down any connective history of the events that passed beyond the limits of the Roman Empire during its decadence, but from the scattered materials which remain assisted by the evidence of stones and ruins yet extant, we may gather that the followers of *Mahomet* were in possession of our Secrets, and that, as the power of mighty Rome gradually declines and during the time that Europe was one mass of discord and confusion, divided into numberless petty states, each striving for the lion's share of the spoils, the *Arab race*, united in action, inspired with fervent zeal for the propagation of the knowledge of the true God according to their creed, pushed their conquests all along the Northern Coast of Africa – crossed the Straits of Gibraltar and established in Spain an Empire which, though of short duration, was at the time unrivalled in its splendour, in its acquaintance with the liberal Arts and Sciences and in its advancement of Philosophy and Literature.

Whence its founders obtained our mysteries does not exactly appear, but the probability is they had them from the immediate descendants of our Ancient Brethren who co-operated with King Solomon and his people in the building of the Temple. I mean the Syrians, with whom the first followers of the Prophet seemed to have been allied. Undoubtedly they were in possession of them, for we heard of the fame of learned men – of men skilled in Astronomy and Philosophy – of Kings, Princes and Rulers engaged in Geometry and Architecture. We find a King Abderraman who waits for, and eagerly seizes, a cessation of hostilities as a fitting moment to expend the wealth he and his predecessors had been for some years amassing, in erecting a Temple to the Most High – a Temple of which he himself traces the plan, at which he zealously and conscientiously laboured for an hour daily, for a series of years – and on the decoration of which he displayed a vast amount of Materials, Art and Finish – and which, when complete, eclipsed in splendour all other edifices then in existence.

Can we, therefore, doubt that King Abderraman, who planned and dedicated this building – the Great Mosque – of Cordova – to the glory of the G.A.O.T.U. – was one of the Chief Rulers of the Craft? and that the many precious pillars of marble that the 38 rows of Arches

of different kinds of Marble, curiously worked, running East and West, and the 19 between North and South that its 19 doors at the South and 9 at each of its Eastern and Western ends, overlaid with panels of bronze of marvellous workmanship – and plates of Gold – can we doubt, I say, that these were the work, the masterpiece, of experienced Craftsmen – or that the three spherical balls, surmounted by a pomegranate of Gold which were placed on the top of its highest Cupola, and which to the initiated may have been explained as bearing allusions to the three quarters of the Globe over a part of each of which the Musselman then, as now, bore sway – has also a Masonic meaning ?

King Abderraman, like David of old, did not live to see the completion of his long cherished design, but the Moorish records inform us that his son, Hixem, applied himself with diligence to the work – like his father devoting one hour a day to it, and enriching it with costly materials and cunning workmanship – he likewise caused many other edifices to be erected, and the present remains of buildings of that date, to be found in Spain, bear witness to the high state to which Architecture had then been brought. But it was not in the Architecture alone that Moors evinced Masonic knowledge. Men of learning resorted to the Court of Cordovia [*sic*] from all parts of the Mahometan Empire, more especially in the east. Conferences (Lodges) of men who applied themselves to the study of the physical sciences, and to astronomy, were held in the houses of some of the principal statesmen. The two physicians of King Abderraman – Iza ben Ishal, who was also a Wazir or Lt. Governor – and Chalef ben Abis – are both especially mentioned as being famous for their learning in all the Sciences, and especially so their learned works on Medicine. They are also reported to have been so virtuous and benevolent that they kept *open house* day and night, and their courtyards (patios) were crowded with the poor, who came to them for assistance.

Several of their Kings are recorded as having been very charitable, and especially tolerant towards the Christians – from whom their forefathers had taken the country of Hixem, who carried on the building of this Mosque of Cordova. It is said that he was much loved of his people on account of his clemency, liberality, and humanity; and that he was extremely charitable towards the poor of every religion. He paid the ransoms of those who fell into the hands of his enemies, and provided for the widows and orphans of those who fell in his cause.

Much more could be adduced to show that the Arabs practised Masonry during the time in which their power was established in Europe, an additional proof of which is the fact that at this moment it is very well known in all those countries where the Moslem faith predominates. In Europe, however, their sin was destined to be observed. Wars of extermination were ranged against them during which the Arts and Sciences of peaceful civilisation were necessarily rejected, but the light of Masonry was not to be extinguished – and those who were most instrumental in Crippling the powers of the Musselman were those who, thenceforth, became the most zealous, and distinguished members of the Order. The Crusaders, many of whom had previously been admitted – and finding the Royal Art practised in the countries they passed through – gave it great attention, collected the fruits of the scientific researches of the Fraternity, in different parts, and by an interchange of knowledge amongst themselves, attained a superiority in the science which they turned to good account – handing down their experience to their posterity until more peaceful times enabled the Craft again to display the wonders of Architectural Geometry to the astonished gaze of the unenlightened multitude.

The masons who had fought under the banners of the Cross, and in their pilgrimage had seen and contemplated the stupendous ruins of Ancient Egypt, and the still visible foundations of King Solomon's Temple, had seen the Grand Mosque at Baghdad – had scanned the sublime edifices of classic Greece – the exquisite workmanship of Moorish Spain – and the grand proportions of the Roman Coliseum – what wonder, amongst the produce of their organised labours, after such training, should be reckoned such structures as the Cathedral of Lichfield and Ely – of Rouen, Strasbourg – Cologne and Antwerp – only by a well organised fraternity, at the same time bound by ties of brotherhood, mutual assistance, and strict discipline – yet free in the individual development of those faculties with which each was blessed – could such Architectural Monuments of man's genius have been raised, as those which spring up in the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries throughout Christendom; all bearing the stamp of unity in the grand pervading principle of the design, yet all varied in the Geometrical detail, structural proportions, and ornamental workmanship – few are the bookish records of the fraternity at that time. Those few, however, inform us that the Masons – who always worked in Guilds or Lodges – were much esteemed – and that many eminent men were enrolled amongst their number.

Since that time, the Speculative element had preponderated in our Society. That speculative element has, however, as a Grand – nay Grander – mission, than the operative elements. It is to form the mind of man; to smooth, polish and adorn, those living stones which, when nicely fitted together by intellectual culture, and cemented by the grand principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth, form a Temple – the most calculated to set forth the Glory of T.G.A.O.T.U.

Comment: Compared with the present time, when the traditional Lectures and Charges are inclined to be discouraged in certain parts of the English Constitution, the effect upon the youthful Lt. Robert Freke Gould of this remarkable Oration, by a thirty year old non-commissioned Officer (with a mere eighteen months of Masonic experience), can only be imagined almost one hundred and fifty years after the event. Presented on the very Eve of Christmas in 1858, and no doubt delivered in a most beguiling Ulster brogue, the Lecture cannot fail to have left a major impression upon Gould and Charles Warren, both of whom were junior Subalterns serving on the Rock of Gibraltar at that time – and were to speak of Irwin in very high regard, Masonically and militarily, following his death in 1893. (C.W.W-N)

(Bro Wallis-Newport's full paper on Captain Francis George Irwin can be found in AQC 114, (2001), pp. 112-81).

DISCUSSION

(The paper as printed is an edited version of what was presented)

A.R. Baker (A.R.B.)

It occurs to me with the references you made to latitude and longitude, what awful chaos the Global Positioning System would cause for modern Astrology.

P. Bowers

Could you tell us a bit more about the Order of the Golden Dawn?

Charles Wallis-Newport (C.W.W-N.)

Actually I think probably Bro Gilbert might be better equipped to answer this. Very briefly, the leading lights: Westcott and others were in fact Freemasons but it was open to all comers as this meeting would have been tonight had our intended speaker been able to be with us. They allowed ladies in as well and non-masons. The most celebrated non-masonic member of the Golden Dawn was, I suppose, the well-known Irish poet and writer W.B. Yeats and others of that particular ilk.

Dr. M.J. Crossley Evans (M.J.C.E.)

Perhaps also, WBro Wallis-Newport, you could have added Mrs Oscar Wilde as well.

C.W.W-N.

Indeed, yes.

M.J.C.E. gave a formal Vote of Thanks

Thank you very much WBro President. I will try and follow the advice of a well-known Conservative Member of Parliament after the war, Sir Walter Bromley-Davenport, who said that the art of good speaking is: "Standing up, speaking up and shutting up."

So I shall follow his example by praising our speaker, from my heart, for following the Latin tag: *multum in parvum* – much in little, because it is very rare that WBro Charles is able to condense (*Laughter*) such a tremendous amount of material into forty minutes. Unfortunately many speakers, I am sure not in the Bristol Masonic Society, have the opposite Latin tag: *parvum in multum* – little in much. But we can never accuse WBro Charles of falling into that trap.

We are very fortunate I think, in the Bristol Masonic Society, to have amongst our Past Presidents two Prestonian Lecturers of the standing and the scholarship of WBro Wallis-Newport and WBro Gilbert. And, if I may say so WBro President, yourself in the making (*more laughter – probably derisive! [Ed]*).

WBro Charles never fails to astonish with his erudition, his scholarly approach to his studies. And he, like many Irishmen or Anglo-Irishmen, has a love of the English language and a

great facility with its use – loquacious and yet erudite. What a marvellous epitaph that would be for his tombstone (*laughter*).

Perhaps one day you might actually have the pleasure of putting it on mine! I hoped that we might follow up certain lines of discourse which I am sure he would have followed up had he seen his lecture through to the end. Perhaps we would all like to know, over the meal, a little bit about his involvement with people such as Sir Charles Warren whom he mentioned and who, many of you will remember, was the Commissioner of Police during the Jack the Ripper investigations, particularly of interest at the moment as the watch which was the property of James Maybrick the Liverpool cotton broker, now thought to be the probable Mason who was Jack the Ripper, engraved with the names of the murder victims has just undergone analysis at the University of Bristol. Some of this was published in the newspapers the other day. So Charles, I am sure, would be willing to enlighten us on some of the connections with Sir Charles Warren.

Charles, thank you very much indeed for a beautifully delivered paper, clearly enunciated, very scholarly and we are very much in your debt; and thank you also for keeping closely within the time limits and allowing us to perambulate down to supper in reasonable time. Thank you very much.

Introduction for R.A. Gilbert

Brethren, I would now like to give the floor to a man who needs no introduction here. He is a prolific Masonic author and speaker, as a member and Past Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge. He was Prestonian lecturer in 1997.

He is an expert, an authority, nay an adept to his acolytes, a glittering jewel in the crown of this Society.

Brethren, I give you Brother Bob Gilbert.

THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF RITUAL

by

WBro R.A. Gilbert, PPrSGD (Glos.)
(25th January 2005)

Let me begin by telling you what this paper is not. There will be no history of specific rituals nor of ritual forms in general – although we must consider the various types and applications of rituals – and I am not concerned with the practicalities (the organisation and the mechanics) of particular rituals. The essence of my text is the personal experience of ritual: the manner in which it affects us physically, psychologically and psycho-spiritually; the moral and spiritual end to which a given ritual is directed; and the way in which the effect of the ritual is dependent upon that specific goal.

But first we need to answer the question, what *is* ritual? It must be defined, and it must also be distinguished from words that are commonly, if somewhat inaccurately, used as synonyms for ritual – especially among Freemasons, who ought to know better. Just as there is much confusion over the proper use of such terms as Order, Rite and Degree in a Masonic context, so the words rite, ritual, ceremony and ceremonial are often used indiscriminately, as nouns, as if they were interchangeable. They are not.

There is the added problem that the word ‘ritual’ has different meanings in different contexts. In contemporary secular society a ‘ritual’ tends to be seen as an irrational and meaningless activity – a perception not helped by the tendency of psychiatrists to describe the obsessively repeated trivial actions of the anxiety neurotic (such as counting and recounting railings as one walks past them) as ‘ritualised behaviour.’ These actions are simply inappropriate *habits* that need to be unlearned. Other problems of perception arise from vague and misleading definitions of the term ritual, such as ‘any habitual detailed method of procedure’ – which definition more properly applies to a *custom*.

Customs, especially the calendrical customs so assiduously collected by folklorists, may, however, enshrine the rules of a vanished social order and will often involve rituals. This gives us the anthropologist’s definition of ritual, for whom a ritual refers to any prescribed pattern of social acts, while the word itself is defined as meaning ‘corporate symbolic activity.’ Such a definition may avoid any contentious value judgement, but it also denudes the concept of ritual of any sense of the numinous – the religious awe that it properly possesses. For that we must turn to its liturgical use, that is, within the context of public religious worship, especially the service of Holy Communion. Here ‘ritual’ refers to the prescribed form of *words* that constitute an act of worship, as opposed to the performance of the sequence of actions, which are termed variously, the ‘ceremony,’ ‘ceremonial,’ or ‘rite.’ For our purposes, to avoid confusion, I shall include both words and actions under the heading of ‘ritual’ and will define it as, the prescribed or customary form for conducting a religious or other solemn ceremony.

What constitutes a ‘solemn ceremony’ is, of course, a subjective matter, but for our purposes we may consider it to be an event in which a sense of awe is both anticipated and engendered – by both the active participants and the passive observers (and here I should point out that the boundary between participant and observer is often blurred). The ceremony in question

need not be religious: solemnity is expected, if not always present, in many secular ceremonies. For example, in the civic ceremony of investing a Lord Mayor; in the academic ceremony of awarding degrees; in the legal ceremony of opening a court sitting; and in such State occasions as the opening of Parliament by the monarch. And in each of these secular examples the setting identifies the purpose of the ceremony; it is clear from the outset, to observers as well as participants exactly what the ritual is for.

It is also possible for the secular and the sacred to combine ritually in one setting. An obvious example is the spectacular pageant of the coronation ceremony. In this, temporal triumphalism is balanced by the public statement of the earthly ruler's subordination to divine authority. Traditionally a coronation emphasised and cemented the hierarchical relationship between God, king and subject, and although this original purpose has gone with the passing of belief in the Divine Right of kings, and the loss by royalty of any real temporal power, coronations – and other royal pageants – still serve a significant social function. They serve to promote a sense of both national identity and national unity, and to ensure continuing social cohesion. There is also something else.

The prevailing mood of contemporary society is egalitarian, but public reaction to such ceremonies suggests an underlying acceptance of some form of innate hierarchical social order, if not in the material world then in the spiritual realm. The drama and pageantry of this kind of public ritual (and this was especially evident at the funeral of Princess Diana) seems to trigger in us an awareness, at a deeper level than that of the conscious mind, of the spiritual world; a world whose nature and structure we cannot adequately express in everyday language; a world which we can comprehend most easily in terms of a hierarchy, and for which we tend to seek parallels in the hierarchies of this world. That, of course, is a psychological explanation for such feelings and actions; we cannot prove objectively by the aid of *any* ritual that there is a spiritual reality beyond the material world.

We might reflect, however, that every human society, from the earliest known human culture to the present day, has developed ceremonies designed to build a bridge between this world and that. The form and structure of such ceremonies have changed with our changing views of the spiritual world and of our relationship to it, but there are two constant factors. First, there is an acceptance of the reality of the spiritual world, and second there is an experience of a change in our state of being as we become aware of that world. Such states of awareness are today described as 'altered states of consciousness' and it is these that may be attained as a consequence of participation in the 'corporate symbolic acts' of certain religious and quasi-religious rituals. It does not follow, and I am certainly not suggesting, that this is a necessary consequence for each individual in the course of every act of religious worship.

Public religious worship implies an acceptance of the reality of a spiritual world, but it is not necessarily directed towards attaining a state of awareness in which we directly experience that world. However, the element of personal experience is now recognised as being of much greater importance than when J.G. Frazer defined religion as:

'a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life.'¹

Today propitiation has given way to the establishment of a fellowship between God and man, a personal relationship that is expressed in public worship (within the many branches of the

¹ Sir James George Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. 1911, 3rd ed. Vol. 1, p222

Christian faith) through the ceremony of the Eucharist: the formally structured ritual that enables us properly to respond to God. Our response to this communion is, of course, deeply personal and while it may indeed bring about a change in consciousness, this is neither an inevitable nor a necessary consequence. Ritual is not solely about exalted religious experience, but it *is* about change.

The change with which ritual is concerned varies according to its nature. Secular rituals may celebrate the arrival of a new incumbent in public office, the commencement of a new session of a public activity, or an advance in academic or professional status. In general they relate to a material change of association for the individual in a communal setting; they are rarely, if ever, concerned with a change in the inner state of the individual. Public religious rituals reflect the desire of individuals to show their personal and communal commitment to a specific faith, and while such desire may follow a change in inner state, the rituals do not of themselves cause such a change. Inner change is the province of rituals of initiation.

And what is initiation? For Freemasons the word brings to mind the Entered Apprentice ceremony in Craft Freemasonry, for that is the ritual by which we were initiated into Freemasonry. But we must take a wider view of initiation. The most satisfactory definition is that given by the historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, for whom:

‘The term initiation in the most general sense denotes a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated. In philosophical terms, initiation is equivalent to a basic change in existential condition: the novice emerges from the ordeal endowed with a totally different being from that which he possessed before his initiation; he has become *another*.’²

The act of initiation may also be described as a ‘Rite of Passage.’ This is a term coined by the Belgian anthropologist, van Gennep. He applied it to rituals which had been developed specifically:

‘to ensure a change of condition or a passage from one magico-religious or secular group to another.’³

Van Gennep divided such rites into three stages. First comes the ‘pre-liminal’ stage (from the Latin *limen*, a threshold), a stage of separation in which the individual, or group, is taken either literally or symbolically out of his or their previous state. Next is the ‘liminal’ stage, a transitional state of which the characteristic is marginalisation, and which often involves ritual trials or disorientation. Last is the ‘post-liminal’ stage, in which the individual is reintegrated into society with a new status conferred upon him, or is integrated into a wholly new condition. The function of this last stage van Gennep termed ‘aggregation’ and ‘re-aggregation’. Fortunately for us we do not need to use the terminology of social anthropology.

In western society, initiation in an institutional religious context is usually represented by baptism, the rite by which the would-be Christian is initiated into the body of the Church, either directly and personally or, in the case of infant baptism, with the aid of proxies who undergo the verbal trial – the recital of the catechism – on the child’s behalf. This is not the only form of initiation ritual within sacramental Christianity: the change of state may be that

² Mircea Eliade, *Rites and Symbols of Initiation*. New York, 1965, p x

³ Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage*. 1909 [English translation, *Rites of Passage*. 1960, p11)

of entering the priesthood, or becoming a professed religious (*ie.* a monk or nun) subject to a new set of rules by which he or she must live. One must presume that all of these forms of initiation involve an alteration of the inner state of the individual, leading at least to a new perception of spiritual reality.

But what of Initiation in the context of esoteric ritual? By this I mean the rituals of ‘closed’ groups that are, like the Church, dedicated to bringing about a profound change in the consciousness and approach to life of their members, but which carry out their ritual practices in private. Such societies include Freemasonry, although what Freemasonry seeks to convey is quite different from the teaching content of what are more properly termed ‘Esoteric Orders’. An esoteric, as opposed to a Masonic Order has been defined as a fraternity:

‘wherein a secret wisdom unknown to the generality of mankind might be learnt, and to which admission was obtained by means of an initiation in which tests and ritual played their part.’⁴

An esoteric Order (as opposed to a magical Order, the nature of which we will consider in due course) might also be described as a communal spiritual path that seeks, by way of ritual practice, to return to the presence of God and ultimately to attain the union of the created with its creator. Its doctrines are an exposition of the nature of the Fall and of the Way of Return, while its practices are concerned with actively finding that Way. These practices are analogous to those of the secret part of the Mysteries of Eleusis, which were:

‘designed to bring the initiate to an awareness of the holy and of the timeless state in which it exists, and for him to gain a secret wisdom which must not be shared with the outside, uninitiated world.’⁵

One might add that such secret wisdom entailed a means of access to a *gnosis*, a secret knowledge that helped the initiate to understand the mechanics of the fall (however it may have been expressed mythologically) and to comprehend the relationship between the spiritual and material worlds, their distinct natures, and the correspondences that exist between them. No such secret wisdom is to be found – nor is it offered – within Freemasonry, although the nature of the initiatic process is the same for both Masonic and esoteric Orders. So let us now consider the ritual structure that is common to *all* ‘closed’ rituals of initiation.

Before the ceremony of initiation proper begins, the candidate for initiation will have passed through van Gennep’s first or pre-liminal stage. This will have consisted of an examination or assessment – usually verbal – as to his (or her) fitness to be initiated, followed by acceptance or rejection of the candidate by the future peer group. As all such initiations must be voluntary, the candidate will already be aware of the ethos and general belief system of the peer group to which he seeks admission; but he will not know the form and structure which the ritual initiation takes, nor will he be aware of the specifics of any teaching which he may receive. On the day of the initiation he will be prepared for the ceremony by being suitably clothed (or unclothed if it is a Masonic ceremony) and often by receiving instruction as to his inner preparation, *eg.* an appropriate subject for reflection.

In the ceremony itself most, if not all, of the following elements will be present:

⁴ Dion Fortune, *The Esoteric Orders and their Work*. London, [1928], p. ix.

⁵ R.A. Gilbert, *Elements of Mysticism*, 1991, pp4-5

- 1) The candidate will enter in darkness so that the unfolding ceremony brings him into light.
- 2) He (or she) will undergo one or more numerically significant symbolic journeys involving tests and trials (both verbal and practical); the ritual use of musical sound (usually the unaccompanied human voice); and the stimulation of the senses of touch (perhaps with a symbolic weapon) and of smell (by the use of incense).
- 3) He will give an Obligation to keep secret what he has learned and undergone during the ceremony, and to accept the responsibilities of his new situation [he is, of course, unable to divulge the essence of his inner *experience* of the ceremony as that is, by its very nature, incommunicable to another]
- 4) He will be entrusted with secret knowledge (both practical in the form of signs of recognition; and theoretical as he begins the process of acquiring secret wisdom).
- 5) He will be welcomed into his new peer group in sacramental form (usually by sharing a sacred meal).

The first three of these elements form van Gennep's second, liminal, stage and the final two make up his third, post-liminal stage. However, it will be immediately apparent to Freemasons that the theoretical part of element (4) is very attenuated, and element (5) is absent from most Masonic rituals of Initiation [for those of you who are members of it, a particular Masonic Order in which a special point is made of the symbolic communal 'meal,' will immediately be recognised]. Of course, one could perceive the purely social festive board as representing a shared sacred meal – but this is a parallel extremely difficult to justify for those with experience of Masonic dining.

There are clear similarities between Masonic and non-masonic esoteric rituals. A hierarchical structure is necessary for the effective working of the ceremony (as it must also be for the effective administration of any organisation), and specific regalia to identify the role of all those taking part in the ceremony is also necessary. It should also be recognised that symbols which convey new or unfamiliar concepts to the candidate in non-verbal form are the common currency of all ceremonial, whatever the message that they are designed to convey. But there are equally clear differences between the two.

In Freemasonry, although the specific content of the ceremonies is kept private, the ceremonies themselves are designed solely to convey a series of simple moral precepts – nothing more and nothing less. That this is so is also common knowledge, for Freemasonry is essentially an "open" organisation: it does not hide the fact of its existence or require its members to conceal the fact of their membership; it openly declares its aims and objects; and it makes no secret of the fact that it works ceremonies of Initiation to inculcate and reinforce its moral message. And there is no progressive unfolding of secret knowledge through experience of the rituals.

In their nature, esoteric Orders are very different. Their doctrines, practices and membership are reserved from the outside world, and even their very existence may be kept secret. This secrecy is not for any dubious reason, but to keep private what cannot manifest except in an enclosed environment in which there can be an effective psycho-spiritual interaction of the members of the Order or Society in question. There is also a progressive unfolding of secret knowledge, or gnosis, which is made meaningful by way of ritual experience and the discipline of private spiritual practice (*eg.* prayer, meditation and spiritual exercises such as those laid down by St. Ignatius Loyola). In general terms esoteric movements are illuminating, revelatory and spiritually revolutionary, whereas Freemasonry is prosaic and representative of orthodoxy and the mores of the established social order.

But despite these differences, the nature of the rituals of initiation is the same: the initiate has undergone a transformative experience which has, or should have, subtly altered his self-awareness. It must be admitted that in Freemasonry the change of psycho-spiritual state within the Candidate is metaphorical rather than an actual, and while one cannot deny the possibility that *some* Initiates into Masonry may have truly experienced such a change, I suspect that for the great majority of them this is not so.

Despite this the structural identity of the rituals remains, and on a subjective level change of a kind, however superficial, does take place. Separation from the old, and identification with the new peer group is one defining characteristic of rituals of initiation, and this is as true for the newly made Mason as for the neophyte of an esoteric Order. He is now a part of Freemasonry, with all the privileges and responsibilities that entails – none of which applied to him in his old, non-masonic state.

All of this, however, is outer change. What inner, subjective effect do rituals of initiation have? The elements of alternating sensory deprivation and sensory stimulation are designed not only to disorient the candidate but also to concentrate his attention and to place him in a receptive state of mind both mentally and emotionally. It would, in theory, be possible to measure the precise neuro-physiological changes taking place in his nervous system throughout the ritual of initiation, but however discrete the recording devices were they would be a distraction for the candidate and for his initiators, and would distort both the setting and the process of the ritual. To understand the subjective experience we must, therefore, rely upon the skill of the initiate in communicating what he remembers of his thoughts and feelings during the ceremony, and in describing his new state of being.

The subjective experience of inner change on the part of the initiate will necessarily involve an altered state of consciousness, in which state, in the words of the psychologist Charles Tart, he:

‘clearly feels a *qualitative* shift in his pattern of mental functioning, that is, he feels not just a quantitative shift (more or less alert, more or less visual imagery, sharper or duller etc.), but also that some quality or qualities of his mental processes are *different*. Mental functions operate that do not operate at all ordinarily, perceptual qualities appear that have no normal counterparts, and so forth.’⁶

But as a consequence of this qualitative shift the initiate no longer has an adequate vocabulary to describe what has happened. As with mystical experience, and with *all* exalted religious experience, there is no direct descriptive language, only metaphor, simile, paradox, and even this must often be expressed in the form of visual imagery rather than words. This difficulty is overcome within the ritual by the use of symbols in preference to verbal explanations, precisely because symbols ‘can touch something in us which words and conscious reasoning cannot, or at the most, can do so only with great difficulty.’⁷

This is not because the initiate is inarticulate or incoherent, but simply because the experience falls outside the range to which everyday language can be applied. The experience is perhaps best understood by an outsider in terms of social, behavioural changes – moral changes in effect – that may take place as a consequence of the initiation. Masonic as

⁶ Charles T. Tart (Ed.), *Altered States of Consciousness*. New York, 1972 2nd ed. pp. 1-2.

⁷ Rev. C.J.S. O’Grady, ‘The Philosophy of Ritual’ [Offprint from *Transactions* of the Metropolitan College, SRIA] 1925, p. 1.

well as esoteric initiation should result in the conversion of the initiate into a more ‘moral’ person as he accepts and acts upon the codes of morality and spirituality that prevail in his new peer group. But is it necessarily so?

Here we must consider the problems, the pitfalls and the dangers that may be encountered when working initiatic and other rituals. They may result from poor construction of the ritual itself, from the incompetence or arrogance of the active participants, or from a wrong attitude or intention on the part of either initiate or initiators.

Constructing a successful ritual requires careful attention to ensuring that both actions and words are appropriate to the desired and stated aim. They must be relevant, unambiguous and readily understood by the initiate. For example, the use of symbols and customs drawn from operative masonry satisfies all of these requirements in the context of a Masonic Initiation; they would be inappropriate in, let us say, an esoteric ritual based upon the Rosicrucian myth – more significantly they would confuse the initiate and render the ceremony meaningless and void. It is also essential that the setting in which the ritual takes place is suitable in terms of size, acoustics and privacy: a symbolic journey with numerous steps and turns is utterly ineffective in too confined a space; spoken instructions and directions must be clearly audible, while external sounds must be effectively blocked out.

All of this can be ensured well in advance of the performance of the ritual, and careful rehearsing of the parts to be played by the various active participants (the officers) will avoid unsettling mistakes. But it is also essential that when sensory stimulation is called for it is appropriate and effective, especially in the choice and performance of music, whether vocal or instrumental. Similarly, the colour, shape and appearance of regalia and symbolic images should accurately represent what is called for by the theme and aim of the ritual. In my own experience, as an observer, I hasten to add, one ceremony of Exaltation into the Holy Royal Arch was ruined for the Candidate by the ill-fitting robes of the Principals, faulty floor work by other officers, and a failure to ensure the proper changes from light to darkness and *vice-versa*. It is also a *sine qua non* that the officers should know the sense of what they are supposed to say, even if they lose the exact wording. Extempore lines that are relevant to the ritual are much to be preferred over unhelpful corrections offered from the sidelines.

This was emphasised by C.J. O’Grady in his essay on ‘The Philosophy of Ritual.’ I make no comment on the propriety of his working, but the essence is sound. ‘What I always remember with pleasure about the Irish system, where I was made,’ he wrote,

‘is that we have no set ritual in words. We adapt our wording to the candidate so that he will see what we mean. This I know has good and bad points, as it depends so much on the brother who is conferring the degree, but the principle is, I think, the right one.’⁸

His statement serves also to emphasise the need for all those participating in the ritual to understand its nature. And given that they do understand they should also believe in both its purpose and its efficacy.

If the Master, the Adept or the Priest has no faith in, or despises, the belief system which underpins the ritual he is performing, he degrades himself, deceives the initiate, and devalues the ritual to the point at which it becomes a mere vain observance. On the other hand, if the

⁸ *op. cit.* p. 3.

ritual is worked well technically, does the absence of commitment and belief on the part of the initiators prevent an inner change from taking place in the initiate? I suspect that it does, if only because even the most consummately skilled actor will have difficulty in conveying as spiritual truth what he perceives as untruth – unless he can willingly suspend his disbelief, and if so, then for what? To perpetuate a deceit? A willingness to do that suggests something more malign in his actions.

Which brings me to an area that may arouse your incredulity. I firmly believe that just as there is spiritual good, so there is spiritual evil, and that those persons predisposed to propagating spiritual evil will utilise ritual forms for their own purposes. It is perfectly possible to initiate someone towards an evil rather than a good end. And here I will turn to the question of magical Orders, specifically the rituals that may be worked by self-styled magicians. These may be initiatory rituals or rituals designed to command spiritual forces to a selfish end.

There is a clear distinction between esoteric and magical Orders, set out concisely by Gerald Yorke – who was himself for some years a follower of Aleister Crowley, the very embodiment of the self-centred magician. Yorke used the term ‘Hermetic’ where I would use ‘magical,’ and ‘Rosicrucian’ where I would use ‘esoteric,’ but the two types of Order are clearly distinguished:

‘Now hermetic Orders as such are only Christian in that they include some Christianity but do not stress it. Rosicrucian orders on the other hand are primarily Christian but draw on other pre-Christian sources. In other words the Hermetists always try to become God in his anthropomorphic or in some instances theriomorphic form. They inflame themselves with prayer until they become Adonai the Lord [...] whereas the Christian approached God the Father through Christ (Adonai) but never tried to become Christ, only to become as Christ.’⁹

A distinction, in other words, between arrogance and humility, between selfish and selfless. It does not follow that a ritual undertaken in a spirit of greed, spiritual pride and self-aggrandisement will fail. Human beings, as well as Satan, can say ‘Evil be thou my good,’ and a desire to be initiated into an evil fellowship can be fulfilled if the ceremony of initiation is properly constructed and properly worked. Evil intentions do not preclude the successful working a technically correct process.

But lest you be tempted to meddle with this ritual underworld I would remind you that rituals performed with a wholly selfish intent will be devoid of spiritual safeguards. There is no need to fear external demons: such rituals can draw to the surface destructive forces that lie deep within the innermost self, and it is not easy to hold them at bay. The consequence of drawing them up is, ultimately, the disintegration of the self and the onset of psychosis. There is also the question of spiritual destruction, but this is neither the right time nor the right place to be debating the question of the nature of spiritual evil.

Let us then return to the new initiate and his inner state. We may not be able to access directly the inner state of another, but we can experience the effect of his change of psycho-spiritual state. Whether his initiation has been into a Masonic or an esoteric Order it will, almost certainly, be marked by a more positive attitude to himself and to his fellow men. The change will have been for the better; if it were not then we would not be here, for are we not

⁹ Quoted in Kathleen Raine, *Yeats, the Tarot and the Golden Dawn*. Dublin, 1972, p. 13.

all the products of a great and ancient initiatic system? The value of ritual lies in what we can achieve by using it correctly – the conversion of good men into better men, both morally and spiritually.

Now that would be an ideal point at which to draw to a close. Admittedly, I have left much unsaid because I have simply rambled through the landscape of ritual pointing out such of its features that seem to be of particular interest, to me if not to you. But I would add a codicil. I have pointed out that in terms of its technical structure ritual is morally neutral: an initiation may be conducted successfully (as far as its technical performance is concerned) even when the intent is wicked. Is it then possible for a tried and tested ritual of initiation, that has worked successfully and beneficially for almost two centuries, to be consciously altered and distorted in its structure while yet maintaining its good end? Or will such distortion render its working null and void? I ask this, of course, concerning a hypothetical situation. I could not possibly comment on its having any apparent, but clearly quite unintended, reference to any current situation in the world of esoteric and Masonic ritual.

DISCUSSION

A.R. Baker (A.R.B.)

You seem to have suggested that the purpose of Freemasonry is to moralise on a few builders' tools and to encourage a basic system of ethics that can be found in any of the major religious systems. Surely if that's all Masonry is for then it hardly justifies the existence of a secret society, never mind the structure of Freemasonry. Are you really suggesting that there is nothing mystical, nothing spiritual in Freemasonry?

R.A. Gilbert (R.A.G.)

What I have said is in a large part a reflection of what is said by Grand Lodge. Craft Freemasonry is a system for the moral improvement of the individual Mason. Now it is clearly the case that there are other Orders within Masonry, beyond the Craft, which do have a spiritual element. It is inappropriate to name them but many of you will be aware of such additional Orders. Most if not all of these tend to be restricted, unlike Craft Masonry, in that their membership is for the most part composed entirely of committed Christians. Thus they cannot accept people of other faiths, which is one reason why spirituality is something approached with difficulty within Craft Masonry. There is a tendency for people to cleanse the Craft of anything which might be partisan or particular, and if one looks at current attitudes filtering down from the top of the Craft, the word "philosophical" is used in preference to the word "spiritual." This is simply to avoid the problems that might arise if people begin to question whether we have a spiritual message or not.

Another reason, of course, is that the rulers of the Craft are mightily afraid of the Church [of England]. They fail to realise that the Church no longer has any teeth; what it says is ignored by the bulk of the population. We are not tied to the Church's apron strings in any Masonic forum. We, most of us, have our commitments to our own particular churches. It does not mean that we have to take the rules of that particular church into Masonry with us. It is not a religious body. We are not here for religion; we are here as fellow Masons and the official line is that we are a body concerned with moral improvement. How the individual Mason interprets the ceremonies is another matter. I believe that there is perfect liberty of the individual to draw what he will from the ceremonies and from whatever is written on Masonry. If this aids his spiritual quest, then all well and good, but it is not necessarily designed to do that even though in many cases it actually does.

A.R.B.

Even just considering the Craft Degrees, if you take the point within a circle for instance and we say in the Bristol ritual: "it is that point within, around which a Master Mason cannot materially err." If it is just some fixed post within us, a seat of conscience, a focus for morality, then how can one hope to find the genuine secrets of a Master Mason there? Surely there is something mystical, something spiritual in the Third Degree at least?

R.A.G.

I would draw your attention to my final sentence. The difficulty is always in how we interpret. I agree, Bro President, that one can indeed draw spiritual content from Masonic ceremonies but the fact remains that ever since the Act of Union, the Grand Lodge has stated categorically that Craft Freemasonry does not have a religious or quasi-spiritual content. The fact that that is absolute nonsense is beside the point. We are obliged, as its servants, to echo the sentiments of Grand Lodge even if we do not believe them.

C.W. Wallis-Newport (C.W.W-N.)

This is simply an observation, but it would be ridiculous to regard regular Freemasonry as having something exclusively spiritual in its content, or as its focus, when we have to acknowledge that it excludes half of the human race. I know Bro Gilbert will probably rise to tell us all about ladies in Freemasonry, and we are familiar with an early manifestation of that particular phenomenon in County Cork.

R.A.G.

May I say firstly that if a lady *had* been initiated in County Cork, then the Brethren who initiated her were untrue to their calling because they should have been true to their obligation and killed her on the spot (*Laughter*). Whatever happened there, in the present day we do not admit women to our ceremonies but there are Masonic Orders for women and Masonic Orders that admit both men and women. Now I know from what I am told by the ladies concerned, that in these purely women's Orders the ceremonies are simply a mirror of male Masonry. They are intended to make upright moral women better women.

The Co-masonic Orders, on the other hand, are determinedly and avowedly spiritual in their approach. They are concerned, as they state, with developing our understanding of the spiritual world. But we are not Co-Masons. I am not suggesting that there are no Masonic Orders concerned with spirituality. Manifestly by definition, what I describe as an esoteric Order is concerned with just that but it is not specifically a Masonic Order. We are on difficult ground in terms of terminology. Drawing the line between what is Masonic and what is esoteric is not always easy. There are certain Orders that require their members to be Master Masons, which are undoubtedly, by my definition, esoteric. There are others, which require one to be a Master Mason, that are decidedly not but which nonetheless do have a spiritual element. In general I do feel that Masonry has a spiritual content but objectively we have to take the official line that it exists to promote a moral code. This is a question of what we do, say, believe and how things might change in the future – I do not know. Perhaps the moral element will be attached to the spiritual element but this has not happened yet.

F.R. Clarke (F.R.C.)

I wonder about this spirituality. When we think back to our operative brethren, they were all members of Christian society, they would all have been Christian people. Of course many changes have occurred since then. But I wonder if this spirituality is, as it were, the background radiation reflecting “the big bang.” Is this a reflection of things that used to be and which the Grand Lodge, certainly, is trying to take out of the Order? We have mentioned the Bristol ritual but in *Emulation* we talk of that ‘Bright Morning Star’ whose rising *etc.* which is an obvious religious reference but which is now being diminished. Although the words are still in the ritual the capital letters have been removed so that it does not refer to anything specific. I think there would be a very serious problem for many of us, myself included, if Freemasonry was specifically spiritual because it would then have a direct conflict with any religious feeling or allegiance that one has. So I just wondered if it is a reflection of things past rather than things now.

R.A.G.

I think that, certainly before the Union, there were far more religious references in the ceremonies. It is accepted that we are all required to believe in God anyway. It was accepted, certainly among the Antients, that we were all Christians. I don't think that Masonry attempted even then to be a substitute for religious worship. But it was a kind of support to

one's religious faith, if you like – yet another ritualised expression of one's commitment to the moral and spiritual code of Christianity. The spiritual part of that has dropped away since the Union and the morality has remained – though for some Brethren perhaps not, but that is a road we should not go down! It is this old problem of Craft Masonry being one thing and all the Additional Orders being something different. You could argue, but will never settle, to what extent specific Orders are either more moral or more spiritual. I have my own pecking order but it wouldn't necessarily reflect other people's feelings because it does depend also on how you have reacted to your Initiation into, and your membership of, these other Orders.

C.W.W-N.

Some might suggest that there is more than one path to so-called spiritual enlightenment. I wonder if anyone watched the programme on television last night in which an expedition, led by an ex Royal Marine Commando (Bruce Parry) ventured into the rain forests of the former Belgian Congo – or it may have been part of what used to be French Equatorial West Africa – to live with the Babongo tribe of pygmies. This was part of a series of programmes visiting primitive societies, in which the leader invariably enters into some form of initiatory process. On this occasion – following several days of fasting – he was obliged to chew the bark of a particular tree which had the most profound effect upon him, to the extent that, upon his return to the United Kingdom, he felt that he had gone through a truly life-changing experience at the hands of these ostensibly primitive tribesmen. Henceforth, this otherwise hardened ex-military man resolved to change his entire *modus operandi* and of his sincerity there can be no doubt.

Whilst on this subject, by the way, I came across the most fascinating letter in the Library at Great Queen Street – during my research into the life and times of Francis George Irwin – written to Irwin by John Yarker on 22nd January 1885. The letter described how his brother had brought him back “from India some GANGA – which the Turks called ESKA and the Syrians HASHEESH.” He went on to say that: “. . . smoked in a cigarette (as I did), the Indians call it BHANG” and that it put him “at one with the Infinite Mind . . . and with all the rest of Creation.”

Incidentally, it has also been suggested that Madame Blavatsky, the Theosophist, wrote many of her great works whilst under the influence of Marijuana.

I merely offer all of this to you, Brethren, as possible spiritual alternatives to some of the other interesting theories you may encounter here this evening.

R.A.G.

That in fact is not true, she smoked like a chimney but she smoked ordinary tobacco.

C.W.W-N.

I have read an account which states that she was definitely a devotee of Marijuana. Indeed I seem to recall having seen a reference to it in no less than the *Transactions* of Quatuor Coronati Lodge – No. 2076.

R.A.G.

Well I have never seen any evidence of that because I am not an enthusiast of Madame Blavatsky's. In this question of spirituality found among other cultures, it does depend very much on expectations.

For example, the explorer Michel Peissel travelled widely in the borderlands of Tibet. He spoke Tibetan. He understood the culture. He was profoundly interested in their beliefs. He lived among the people of Mustang and he realised that there were special ceremonies which he was not able to attend because he was not accepted as one of them. But after about six or nine months they realised that he really was genuinely interested in their activities and in what they believed, so they said to him, 'You may come with us to our special ritual meeting' (which was forbidden to all but Tibetans). He was clearly delighted and went off into a hidden valley where this ritual was to take place and to his surprise it was very simple. It consisted of all the men who had gone to take part in the ceremony sitting in a circle – then they drank beer and talked about women! (*Laughter*). So spirituality can be something we expect but do not necessarily find.

F.R.C.

In many of the Lodges that I go to, many of the Brethren go for purely social reasons. In fact without the social cement it probably wouldn't work in any case. But for many of them they would never think of coming here for example because really they would not be interested. Their connections are social; they enjoy the social side. The ritual is the cement which keeps the whole thing together – they recognise that. I just wonder how that reflects upon ritual because ritual obviously affects people who have no interest in going any deeper.

R.A.G.

Two problems arise. One is that we cannot know how individual opinions differ unless we are told that they can [differ]. We all know that Candidates may get up and say what a marvellous experience it was and it was all performed so wonderfully well when actually it was lousy. This is commonplace but it is not possible to know whether they are better people or not because we don't know the effect the rituals have. What I find distressing is something I observe increasingly frequently, where the officers don't seem to care what they are doing. They seem to have little concern whether they are performing correctly or well. They make the right motions, say the right words but there is no meaning underneath. They treat it almost like an entertainment and this I find rather sad.

One of the problems is that we rarely have a genuine Lodge of Instruction. A real Lodge of Instruction where questions are asked and answers are given would actually be very helpful in producing some kind of cementing of the Brethren into a whole that wasn't just for convivial reasons.

C.W.W-N.

I think the only way that you will get an answer to that, of course, is if we reverted to an earlier age where the Lodge did not dine *ad nauseam* month after month along the convivial lines that Frank has outlined. The best test of all would be to have a gathering on a monthly basis, as they do in Ireland and Scotland, without this great big 'shin-dig' that we call the Festive Board or the After-Meeting, to see how many would come down each month to discuss things such as people are talking about now and to listen to ritual of good standard or participate.

R.A.G.

But we know that in the first half of 18th century it was common to break off and have a drink and then return and carry on where they had left off. So the convivial element was always there but unfortunately we don't have what we would really like to have, which are

records of how people reacted to the ceremonies. We don't have letters by people saying: "I have been to a meeting at which this happened and this is what I thought of it."

C.W.W-N.

What we do have a record of, and it's an interesting one historically, is the letter of the late King Edward VIII, then Prince of Wales, writing to one of his mistresses, in which he said that he had just been initiated into Freemasonry: 'where we are expected to eat interminable meals and listen to long boring speeches.'

F.R.C.

That might have been because their chef was not quite as good as the one we have here though the company might be just the same.

D. Satherley

This is an observation. When a person is approached to become a Candidate, he only has to believe in one thing – he comes into the Lodge, is initiated and certain things occur. And in some of the Degrees, notably Rose Croix, there is a definite religious theme. I wonder what happens to a lot of these people who when they went in thought: "I only have to have a belief in a being but what's all this religious stuff?"

R.A.G.

I think that people who think like this would almost certainly not go into the Ancient and Accepted Rite or anything that did have an obviously religious basis because they wouldn't feel comfortable. If they think that they would not want this religious aspect of it they would stick with the Craft. Even the Royal Arch has religious overtones and I suspect, but I am not sure, that part of the reason for meddling with it currently is to try and take account of people who might wish simply to have the convivial and moral part of it and for whom they are separating the Royal Arch from anything religious whatever. I don't know what is intended. I don't know why it is being changed but I suspect perhaps it is because there are people who say: "We don't want anything religious" and are adamant about it. "A belief in God or a stated belief, even if it is not a genuine one, is enough. Why should we have to say anything else?" I hope that is not so but I fear it probably is.

A.R.B.

Just to take you up on the meddling – perhaps the current meddling in the ritual. Do you think that it might not be sensible to meddle with an established successful ritual. Do you think that it is actually possible to write, to formulate, to create a successful initiatory ritual or do you think that such a ritual has to grow in some kind of organic way?

R.A.G.

I really couldn't say because all the rituals with which I am familiar have obviously descended from something that went before but one or two of them, and these are quasi-masonic ones, are clearly so different and in a sense we do know where and how they originated but we can say, if not quite created out of nothing, they at least were very original in their form and structure and also very effective. I can speak of one from my personal experience, which is profoundly moving to me at least. It hasn't descended from obvious sources but was built by taking structural parts from the appropriate rituals of other Orders – not just at random but with a specific end in view and it was designed by someone who knew exactly what he was doing. So they do succeed but obviously you need someone who is competent to work ritual, to understand it and to write it.

A.R.B.

A ritual has to succeed more than once, too, doesn't it? It is no use just succeeding for the Initiate on the first time he is exposed to it.

R.A.G.

I can only talk of my own experience but in this particular case those other people I know who are also members have had similar experiences.

A.R.B.

What I mean is that it has to have value for people to keep coming and seeing the same ritual performed for other Candidates.

R.A.G.

Yes, well it does, I can't explain why but somehow the atmosphere engendered by the working of the ritual does actually work but it does depend on the individual.

C.W.W-N.

Taking as a yard-stick the ceremony of Initiation – surely the most important of all Masonic Degrees – do I detect an element of dissatisfaction in what is being said here this evening? Personally speaking, I think it is hard to fault in its composition, however it is delivered. There have ever been grammatical criticisms and misgivings, not least of all in Bristol before our ritual was drastically revised and “dramatically improved” in 1903 by a quartet of so-called wise men (schoolmasters I suspect).

However, the precepts of the basic Craft Initiation ceremony, I would have thought, could not be faulted – from whatever angle one looks at it.

R.A.G.

We must distinguish between altering the wording and changing the structure. Getting rid of the split infinitives in *Emulation* working is not what I consider significant alteration. The case I had in mind is of a very significant alteration in the structure that alters everything else and I see no point in it.

F.R.C.

Do you mean the Royal Arch?

R.A.G.

How could you possibly suggest such a thing? But let us assume for the sake of argument that this is what I am talking about. I think it is highly dangerous and I am not alone in thinking that. I have discussed it with a good many people and every single one of them is unhappy.

ANON.

Changes could, though, be improvements. What is the meaning, for instance, of “Time Immemorial?” We are certainly not still doing today what they did then otherwise there would be no improvement.

R.A.G.

“Time Immemorial” is simply to say that a Lodge dates from before the official organisation of that specific Masonic Order. So you find a good many Mark Lodges which are “Time Immemorial” because they go back before 1856. If we talk about “Time Immemorial” customs it means that we don’t have the exact date when they began.

ANON.

I have always wondered whether Masonry started from the time of the Masons who built the great churches and cathedrals and that Freemasonry was developed from that and the reason why there is a religious element may be because those Masons were building and working in a religious environment. Is it possible that rituals developed from that fact and it has to go on developing? It cannot go on without changing.

R.A.G.

I am not against natural evolution but forcible and unnecessary change is a different thing. The one is good, the other is not.

A.R.B.

I call upon Dr Crossley Evans to propose a Vote of Thanks.

M.J.C.E.

Thank you WBro President. I rise with a degree of trepidation to say a few words about this evening’s speaker. In fact when our WBro President introduced this evening’s speaker I had a feeling that I was in a Victorian Music Hall and that he was the Master of Ceremonies, because he used such grand and fine words, such grandiloquence, such verbal prestidigitation indeed to describe our speaker.

In fact whenever I hear WBro Gilbert I often feel a very strong desire to burst into song. In this case I also felt the desire to burst into song and I wonder if many of you, like me, are devotees of Gilbert and Sullivan. And I was reminded of a romantic hero. WBro Gilbert did not remind me himself of a romantic hero but Nankipu in the Mikado who sang about his ballads old and new which were things of shreds and patches and I think this evening we were treated to a thing which was of shreds and patches. It brought them together from all kinds of different places but the genius of WBro Gilbert is the fact that he is able to take such diverse material and to create a seamless robe.

There was a great deal of information in this and I, for one, do not feel that however attentively I listened to this evenings talk that I could extract the marrow out of the paper. But there were a number of things that forcibly impressed themselves on me. I am quite involved, as many of you are, in the Church and also deeply suspicious of rituals in the Church. And I was reminded, and I wondered if WBro Gilbert had thought of this, of the words of St. Thomas Aquinas about sacraments, and *inter alia* their attendant rituals, that they are the outward and visible forms of inward grace. Now as a Protestant I really can’t understand a lot of what that means. I do know what the words individually mean but taken together I find them rather difficult to comprehend. But I think I see a little more clearly now than I did before and I think all of us can. I feel that WBro Gilbert, with the help of that marvellous seminal work *The Golden Bough* which I believe you obliquely referred to somewhere in the course of your talk, has presented very strong meat to us. I was reminded when you, perhaps slightly scoffing, spoke about the after-meetings, of the importance in Christianity of the Agape or the love-feast, amongst early Christians. And also as WBro

Charles has mentioned the importance of calling off in the 18th century and often taking refreshment and the importance of that, I think, in the lives of early Masons. I feel that perhaps in your paper you could have discussed in greater detail the importance and significance of symbolism – such as the Cross and the Square & Compasses – as foci of religious devotion and ritual. I was also interested in your reference to incompetent ritualists and I wondered whether you had thought of the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion of the Church of England which tell us that the unworthiness of the minister in no way hinders the efficacy of the Sacraments and whether you feel that a similar doctrine could be set forward for those incompetent ritualists amongst us, of which I number myself, when I am trying to administer a ceremony. Also I wondered whether you might like to bring out, when you revise your paper, the importance of the words of the consecration in the Mass. Now if those are mangled by the priest then the act of trans-substantiation is not able actually to take place and it is not like mangling the ritual when we are trying to initiate a Brother.

I also was interested, as I am sure we all were, in your comments on Aleister Crowley and the Orders that he was associated with. And I was reminded of one of his sayings that was central to his teaching and indeed taken up and echoed I believe by that powerful and successful medium, Vivian Deacon, “Do what thou wilt, and let that be the whole law.”¹⁰ That was claimed to result in a spiritual liberation which resulted in many of the rituals and ceremonies that were practised in the magical Orders in the 1920s and 30s.

WBro Gilbert, you have presented us with a very detailed, a very thought provoking paper. I, for one, will go away with a great deal to think about and ponder and I am sure that all of us would wish to express to you our very sincere gratitude for the amount of time and research that you have put into this paper which you have presented to us this evening with such flair and aplomb.

¹⁰ I cannot let this pass without correction. What Crowley wrote was ‘Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law. Love is the law, love under will.’ His pernicious influence most certainly did *not* extend to any ceremonies and rituals of any period, other than those in use within his own Order. (R.A.G.)

Introduction for Michael Buckley's paper

A.R. Baker (A.R.B.)

Brethren we are indeed honoured this evening to welcome among us Michael Buckley. He is currently second-in-command of the SRIA. I first encountered him in the Masonic Study Society in London. He is going to give us a paper entitled 'The Esoteric tradition in Freemasonry' but first he is going to tell us a little more about himself.

Michael Buckley (M.N.B.)

Thank you Bro President. Before I start I would just like to introduce myself and tell you a bit more about myself. My Masonry is centred around London but less so these days. I hold London Grand Rank. I hold Senior London Chapter Rank and with the Degrees that emanate from Mark Masons Hall, I am a Past Grand Officer in all of them. In addition I am the Grand Master of a number of esoteric Orders, which probably the majority of the Brethren here this evening have never heard of.

It has troubled me somewhat in having to actually write a paper about esoteric Freemasonry because I am a very esoteric person and I hope that a number of topics raised in my paper will not go above your head, however we must wait and see. I am delighted to be here and I hope we will all learn something from the experience.

THE ESOTERIC TRADITION IN FREEMASONRY

by

WBro M.N. Buckley, LGR, SLGCR.
(29th March 2005)

For the average thinking Mason, the main thing that eventually confronts him is that his Lodge is obsessed with ritual and the endless minutiae of how the Lodge should be run according to the *Book of Constitutions* and Lodge By-laws, while on the other hand very little thought is given to Masonic education by those in positions of authority such as long standing Past Masters and those holders of Provincial and Grand Rank; and by that, I don't mean what are the functions of the officers of the Lodge, but proper education on what the Craft Degrees really stand for, which is the spiritual regeneration of man.

Today Craft Masonry has become a vehicle to promote moral and ethical values without the spiritual, and thus can no longer be said to be a genuine mystery school, though a number of references to the mysteries are contained in the ritual of the three Degrees and also symbolically depicted on Lodge Tracing Boards.

So I pose a question, have we made Masonry so boring that it has essentially become a knife and fork social gathering which for many Brethren is what they want, with a bit of ritual thrown in to keep them entertained for an hour or two, thereby encouraging those who are looking for a social club with a good dinner thrown in. In fact even the belief in a Supreme Being appears to have become a mere formality in some instances. For those prompted to join Masonry a few seeking a deeper knowledge and who wish to be pointed in the right direction are quickly disillusioned by an institution as they see it, which is completely out of step with modern society and possess no real instruction to the enquiring mind as to what lies beyond its symbolism and ritual.

In order to see what may be missing in our rituals we have to go back and look at the Esoteric or Secret Tradition in Freemasonry and see what influences came to bear in its development.

For this, we need to turn to John Dee's thoughts which appear to be contained in his famous Preface to the English edition of Euclid, published in 1570. This is a thoroughly Neoplatonic work with many quotations from Pico della Mirandola. It uses the Kabbalistic cosmology of Agrippa and gives fundamental priority to the *Monas*, the one, as the representative of the Divinity.

Dee was by no means the only member of the English Intelligentsia to be interested in the Hermetic/Kabbalistic tradition; and if he was influenced by the work on the Continent, he also affected the views of his colleagues. He is known to have been an important member of Sir Phillip Sidney's (1554-1586) circle; Chapman, Spenser and Shakespeare allow evidence of familiarity with his ideas and with the Hermetica in general. So also do Bacon, Milton, Fludd and later Elias Ashmole. Elias Ashmole's writings show that he was thoroughly conversant with Dee's work, and Newton's interests in the mystical traditions are well known.

With the reception of Elias Ashmole into a Lodge at Warrington in 1646 I believe we see the basis of a hypothesis concerning the intervention of Hermetic Fraternities in the development of speculative Craft Masonry which culminated in the Age of Enlightenment. The hands which transformed Freemasonry were those of a Kabbalistic section of Wardens of the Secret Tradition; their work is especially traceable in the Craft Legend; and that although in its present form this Legend is a much later work of the 18th century, it represents some parts or reflection of those studies of the Zohar which began in England with Robert Fludd, and Thomas Vaughan.

The Great Book of the Zohar contains the whole doctrine of the Hidden Word and the circumstances under which it shall be restored on the coming of Israel out of Exile, in the day of the Messiah.

In another form and aspect it is the philosophy of the Tradition in Masonry, which is another story of a Word in loss or hiddenness, and the fact it might be one of coincidence, is linked up with the Secret Tradition because it is represented invariably by a Sacred Name, which contains a mystery abiding in the Name of God. But the Tradition of the Name in Masonry was taken over by other Brethren, who having found the sacred name on a plate of gold in the Holy Royal Arch came forward and founded the Christian Grades – The Order of the Temple, the Rose Croix, the Red Cross of Constantine and Knights of the Holy Sepulchre. Like other makers of legend, they testified that the Word is Christ.

It follows that hints of a Secret Tradition which are conveyed in the Royal Arch are not confined to it; in one way or another they are in the body general of Masonry. It also signifies that in this Secret of Masonry, that the Word too often lost, is the Secret of Christ realised in the heart of a Mason, and that from beginning to end “our peculiar system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols” has never had another object than to direct us with eyes uplifted to the bright Morning Star, whose rising brings peace and salvation to those who sit in tribulation and in the shadow of death.

The Rituals of Masonry, for example, describe dramatic acts in which the principal parts are taken by the Candidate himself, with the officers of the Lodge shaping his proper course and guiding him and instructing him on the way. In addition to the active and ceremonial part, there is that of the Charges and Legends. Masonic legends and symbolism are concerned with the building of King Solomon’s Temple on the material plane, but behind this is the story, in which the earthly temple is so spiritualised that it can only be erected in the heart and not with the hands of men.

There are three grand steps in the unfoldment of the human soul before it completes the dwelling place of the spirit. These have been called respectively youth, manhood and old age, or as the Mason would say, the Entered apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason. All life passes through these three stages of human consciousness: they can be listed as man on the outside looking in, the man going in, and the inward man.

The Mason must realise that his true Initiation is a spiritual one and not just physical ritual and that his Initiation into the living temple of the spiritual hierarchy regulating Freemasonry may not occur until years after he has taken the physical Degree.

It also follows that the Quest for the Lost Word proclaimed in the Craft Degrees wears a Divine Aspect as it is interpreted and unfolded and finished in the Holy Order of the Royal Arch. All who enter this Sublime Degree come to realise that Freemasonry is a Mystery of Birth, Life, Death and Resurrection.

When the Candidate enters the Lodge he finds a “temple” which is said to have four levels. These are the Ground Floor, a Middle Chamber, a Holy of Holies and, residing within this last, the Divine Presence. We can see immediately the correspondence between the levels in the Masonic Temple and the four levels which characterise each of the four worlds of the Kabbalistic concept of the universe. That is within each World we see a level of Action, Emotion and Intellect and a contact with its source in the World above.

The first three of these levels relate directly to the three Degrees of the Craft, and the nature of the activity which goes on at each level is described by the tools used by Masons of each Degree.

The tools of the First Degree relate to action, to shaping, to cutting and polishing; those of the Second Degree relate, to judgement, to testing and proving; while those of the Third Degree relate to creativity and design.

In the Degree of Entered Apprentice the Candidate signifies his intention to take the rough ashlar, which represents himself, which he cuts from the quarry and prepares for the truing of the Fellow Craft with the tools of the First Degree. In other words, the First Degree is really one of preparation; it is the material step dealing with material things, for the spiritual life must be raised upon a material foundation.

Between Jachin and Boaz the Entered Apprentice is brought through the Gate of Birth into the new life of the Mysteries, being the life of self realisation in the Divine Order of Being, even if he does not realise it at this moment of time, and his task thereafter is to learn not by intellect but by the faith of inward experience, that this Order is God revealing Himself to those who can receive this revelation.

The first stage of growth of an Entered Apprentice towards becoming a Master Mason is to understand the mystery of the concrete conditions of life and the development of sense centres which will later become channels for the expression of spiritual truths.

The Entered Apprentice has as his first duty the awakening of these powers, and like the youth of whom he is the symbol, his ideals and labours must be tied closely to concrete things, For him both points of the compasses are under the square; for him the reasons which manifest through the heart and mind – the two polarities of expression – are darkened and concealed beneath the square which measures the block of bodies or matter. In esoteric terms it is obvious that the rough ashlar symbolises the body.

It also represents cosmic root substance which is taken out of the quarry of the universe by the first expression of intelligence and moulded by him into finer and more perfect lines until finally it becomes the perfect stone for the Builder’s temple.

True to the doctrines of his Craft, the Entered Apprentice must beautify his temple. He must build within himself by his actions by the power of his hand and tools of his craft, certain qualities which make possible his initiation into the higher Degrees of the spiritual Lodge.

The building of this Holy House, that is to say the, the House built in Wisdom, the House of the Secret Doctrine, is where the Hidden Mysteries of Nature and Science were of old studied, and were also communicated. The esoteric tradition is concerned with the Mysteries of Nature and Science and in the High Science of Grace, not in the external love or counsels of relief, not with corporal works of mercy, and not with the principles of good fellowship.

As a Fellow Craft, he is called to leading of such a life as will give him the Knowledge of Doctrine, otherwise the Science of the Holy Place, or alternatively the New Life which is defined as that of the Mysteries; and in the realisation of the Divine Order he grows in the knowledge of God, illustrating in his own person, by his own experience, that God does recompense, those who seek Him.

In the Fellow Craft Degree the two points of the compasses (one higher than the other) symbolise the heart and mind and with the expression of the higher emotions the heart point of the compasses is liberated from the square, which is the instrument used to measure the block of matter and therefore symbolises form.

The Fellow Craft is a worker with elemental fire, which is his duty to transmute into spiritual light. The heart is the centre of his activity and it is while in this Degree that the human side of nature with its constructive emotions should be brought out and emphasised.

The Degree of a Master Mason begins on the hither side of the veils of Palms and Pomegranates and ends in the Holy of Holies, when in a state of figurative and mystical death, as in that of the Greater Mysteries, the Candidate, abstracted from the world without, in suspension of physical senses and removed from the self-centre, beholds in an inmost Sanctuary the abiding Divine Presence as the Holy Shekinah, the Glory of God manifested between the Cherubim on the Mercy Seat.

He knows of another centre, and this is God within him; this is the Third Degree and Craft Masonry, understood at the highest spiritual level.

The Master Mason embodies the power of human mind, that connecting link which binds heaven and earth together in an endless chain. His spiritual light is greater because he has evolved a higher vehicle for its expression. Above even constructive action and emotion soars the power of thought which swiftly flies on wings to the source of Light.

The mind is the highest form of human expression and as he passes into the great darkness of the inner room illuminated only by the fruits of reason, the glorious privileges of a Master Mason are in keeping with his greater knowledge and wisdom. For him the heavens have opened and the Great Light has bathed him in radiance. The prodigal son, so long a wanderer in the regions of darkness, has retuned again to his Father's House as he is raised from the horizontal, a passive state, to the perpendicular, an active state.

This is the state in which man sees his soul lighted by the Eternal Spirit. It is a mastery of spiritual building for those who know the Builder, and he is God within them.

Both points of the compasses are now lifted from under the square. The divine is liberated from its cube; the rose blossoms at the centre of the cross, heart and mind are alike liberated from the symbol of mortality, and as emotion and thought unite for the glorification of the

greatest and the highest, the Sun and Moon are united and the Hermetic Degree is consummated.

The great work of the Master Mason can be called the art of balance. To him is given the work of balancing the opposites displayed in the First and Second Degrees, Boaz and Jachin, by the establishment of that third or central pillar Stability, or the third point of the triangle. The triple energies of thought, desire, and action must be united in a harmonious blending of expression. He holds in his hands the triple keys; he wears the triple crown of the ancient Magus, for he is in truth the King of Heaven, Earth, and Hell. Salt, Sulphur and Mercury are the elements of his work and with philosophical mercury he seeks to blend all powers to the glorifying of one end.

In the Third Degree the slaying of the master builder Hiram Abiff is the doctrine of the new life entered only through figurative or mystical death and realised in mystical resurrection. As the master builder dies under the Old Law, so he rises in Christ.

Craft Masonry delineates the mystery in a pageant and symbolism; but because this mystery has existed since time immemorial, on this occasion and in Free and Accepted Masonry it has been vested in weeds of widowhood to commemorate an immemorial loss. Its deaths and resurrections, its rites and emblems are speculative and not practical, are veiled in allegory and not openly stated, and therefore register the longings of the heart but not its attainment.

The practice signified in symbolism by mystic death and resurrection lies behind the Esoteric Traditions of Christianity, Mithraism and the Ancient Egyptian cult of Osiris.

There is also a strong alchemical element contained in the Third Degree. The Fellow Craft who has to endure mystical death and resurrection is in analogy to the dross of base metal being burned away during its alchemical transmutation into gold. In alchemical terms this represents the burning away of all imperfections in man thus leaving behind an unblemished spiritual being, who may attain union with the divine. The key to this alchemical change rested in the principle that it was possible to separate "body from Soul."

The Traditional History of a Master Mason will recall to us records of experience concerning that state which is called mystical death in figurative and sacramental language that veils Divine Reality, for the human soul passes out of self in God. It is afterwards raised in God to pursue through a new life the science of union.

The Hiramic Myth becomes in this manner a tale of redemption, which is that of Enoch and Elias, who walked with God and whom God took unto himself, as he takes every soul in union.

Finally there are five orders of architecture, as petals of a perfect rose, which build upward from within. These are known in Hidden Rites. There are five points of fellowship which are of the union of souls within God, and in the Secret Tradition they are otherwise called the five virtues which lead to perfection. There are seven liberal arts and sciences, understood as Gifts of the Spirit. There is the point within the circle, these are the two Kabbalistic Pillars; there is a Holy of Holies which represents the presence of the Most High or Kether representing the Crown or the Tetragrammaton of the Holy Kabbalah. In each of their mundane forms they are all part of our Craft Degrees without Candidates ever realising what they represent.

From the foregoing it would seem that my paper in some aspects may be at variance with the official view of Grand Lodge which states that Freemasonry is not a religion. However the rituals used by Masonic Lodges do incorporate many references from the Old Testament, and more particularly in the Holy Royal Arch.

To conclude while Freemasonry has long been de-Christianised and is now universal requiring only a belief in a Supreme Being, it is this very action that has led to most of its esoteric learning being slowly and deliberately suppressed over the centuries. It is also abundantly clear that from an esoteric study of the Craft Degrees they are Hermetic, Alchemical and Kabbalistic in content, and that God moves in all the Degrees for those who have an ear to listen and learn. They also contain the keys to the Greater Mysteries which are now found only in a very few Orders which have a Masonic base such as Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, The Rectified Scottish Rite or C.B.C.S. and some branches of Martinism which require Masonic membership. I trust that my reading of this paper will stimulate Brethren to go out and seek for that esoteric knowledge which is not lost but hidden in our rituals, tracing boards and legends.

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DISCUSSION

A.R. Baker (A.R.B.)

You implied that you think that the de-Christianisation of the Craft rituals has been a bad thing in that we have lost a lot of the esoteric content and message – the element of the Mysteries in Freemasonry. How do you think we can correct that trend and regain the esoteric content? Should we re-Christianise Craft Masonry?

M.N. Buckley (M.N.B.)

No, I don't think that it is possible to turn the clock back to a point where the Craft was Christian. If you look at Craft Masonry, and if any of you are in additional Degrees, the nearest you come to a Christian working of Craft/Royal Arch content is in the Royal Order of Scotland because there you have references to Rosicrucianism, the Hermetic sciences, alchemical references, and a requirement to be a Christian in order to become a member of this most prestigious Order.

I think that what we are talking about is not going back but going forward. I think the current debate, which will eventually raise its head in Craft Masonry, is that all of us are asking the same basic questions: "Where is Craft Masonry going?" "How do we get it back on track?" "What are we going to do about the continuing loss of membership?" No-one has got any adequate answers to these problems which have befuddled Grand Lodge now for almost ten or fifteen years. And I can tell you that having travelled to Australia, New Zealand and Canada, the crisis in Craft Masonry there has been dramatic. In Australia the loss in State Grand Lodges of Craft Masons has almost approached catastrophic proportions. For example, Queensland had, for a huge state, about 27,000 Masons; today Queensland has 13,500 Masons. So this is an indication that it is not just the changing social order that is making Freemasonry unattractive for men to join.

We have got to start looking at what the past is all about. We practise our rituals very diligently. We put our hearts and our souls into trying to make the Candidate for Initiation feel that he has gone through something very special. After you have been through any initiation you should actually feel that you have been touched in a very special way, that you are a changed man, something invisible has happened to you. I don't believe that this is always the case. We are far too obsessed with replacing the numbers that we are losing. Maybe we have got to sit back and take stock and look at some of our continental counterparts where Masonry is actually quite stable. If you look at French, Belgian, Swedish or German Masonry, far from it being in decline it has stabilised and actually has maintained its numbers. We have to ask: "Why have they had success where we have not?" The answer is that they come from, a different school of thought. Their Masonry is very esoteric in part. There is a requirement by Candidates, before they can even go to another Degree, to write a paper about what they understand from the ceremonies that they have already been through. There is a much more philosophical view of what Masonry means to the individual.

And maybe because we are Anglo-Saxons and not French or Italian, we have to now go back and make Freemasonry attractive where it's not just merely going through a ceremony, having a dinner and going home, however well it's done but the men, whatever age they are when they are being initiated, feel that their lives have been changed irrevocably from the time that they stepped into that Lodge room. There has got to be some form of view that they are being regenerated as human beings and that they have got to go out into the world and really practise those virtues that we would expect of Masons and I don't mean charity. We

are obsessed with charity in Freemasonry. What I mean is “Charity of the Heart.” I think it is about time that we all actually loved our Brethren from Grand Lodge downwards and do not think that we are merely backsides on seats, paying capitation fees, and where nobody really cares very much for us except our own kin in our own Lodges and some Lodges don’t even care for their own kin. I really do believe that we have to have a fundamental re-think of what we believe Masonry should be.

R.A. Gilbert (R.A.G.)

I would just like to ask Michael to comment on the proliferation of these “one-day classes.” For those of you who do not know what these are, they are “Classes” where hundreds of people take all the three Degrees in one day and over a weekend carry on and take every other Degree in the book. Several Grand Lodges seem to be using these as a method of increasing their numbers and I wondered whether you had any comment on this.

M.N.B.

I am an American Mason. In fact I lived in America for a period of time. I was privileged to go into their Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Rite. The question of having one-day classes is very much an American way of conducting Masonic business. In the York Rite and certainly in the Ancient and Accepted Rite it is not unusual for anywhere up to a hundred Candidates to go through from the First Degree to the 32nd Degree in thirty-six hours. I do not believe that Masonry is a conveyor belt system like a factory where you are popping Masons out like clones because you cannot impart, however well the ceremonies are done with representative Candidates, the essence of what Freemasonry is. It is a very personal private experience for a Candidate. How can a hundred men or fifty men have that personal experience? It’s rubbish!

Therefore, I believe that our Grand Lodge has made representations through the back door voicing its concerns that Masons are being made in this way. I go back to the esoteric tradition. In the Third Degree when you raise a Candidate you are physically putting your hand on that Candidate. It’s breast to breast, knee to knee, hand over back. You have got him – on your bosom. You are leaving imprints in the Third Degree – the final Degree in Craft Masonry – which are really going to make this imperfect man a new man as far as Masonry is concerned. How can that be achieved with a hundred people at a meeting? And there I rest my case.

I.D. Millard

I am so impressed with what you have said tonight. I have had so many of the same thoughts on these subjects. I am a member of the Church – I am a Verger at the Cathedral – as everybody knows. And the Church is very, very anti-Masonry but the Church has the same problems as we do. We are there to make new men. We are seeking salvation and if we could get our act together Masonry and the Church – I include the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church – what a powerful force we could be. The Church is dying on its feet. It’s got the same problems – its not doing its work; attendances are low.

M.N.B.

Grand Lodge has been very slow and has sat back and allowed various Churches to condemn Freemasonry – mostly on an erroneous basis. The trouble started with the Royal Arch. Those of you who are not members of the Royal Arch will not be able to follow me much further but there are certain words that were amended. Now it has gone on from that and the Church looks upon Freemasonry as not being conducive to Christianity. In fact if, over the next ten

years, our rulers in the Craft start to put back some of these spiritual values which are in our ritual and the Brethren are allowed to understand better, I think that the Church would have no problem with us because Freemasonry supports religion and should be a force to work with religious authorities wherever they are in the world. We as Freemasons are first to issue cheques for Tsunamis and so on but we get no thanks for it. So we have a total and utter breakdown of communication between Freemasonry and religious bodies.

S.A. Hawkins (S.A.H.)

To what extent do you feel if at all that the esoteric tradition and spirituality in Freemasonry has drawn upon the Gnostic Christian tradition?

M.N.B.

Freemasonry in many ways, you have to say, is Gnostic in the sense that if you basically make it theistic then you are talking about the most important Hermetic maxim, which is "Know Thyself" which is part of the Gnostic tradition of Gnosis or knowing your spiritual self. Many of the Gnostic texts which talk about duality, also talk about discovering our respective soul. Much of it is reflected in the Kabbalah. The two pillars which you see in your Lodges represent the Kabbalistic tree of life and when the Candidate comes and should be brought through the pillars to take his Obligation, he represents the central spiritual part of the soul of man trying to uplift himself to the Godhead. So it's all there and Masonry has not understood that in its Lodge rooms, as they are today, you have all the Hermetic aspects that you need to offer a Freemason. Does that answer your question?

F.R. Clarke

You mention that Freemasonry states that it is not in competition with the Church. Is it not a quasi-religious body?

M.N.B.

No, what I am essentially saying is that Freemasonry is not a religion. It is certainly not a religion in the sense that we do not claim that Freemasonry can provide you with salvation. Only your God, be it Allah, or be it Christ, or be it Buddha, or be it Vishnu is going to actually provide you with that. No, what I am saying is that in Freemasonry we have many references to religion from the Old Testament and certainly from the New Testament. It is littered with sayings from the New Testament. So, why use them if our founding fathers were not Christians?

At the time of the de-Christianisation of the Craft, England had fought a Civil War over religion and the origins of Freemasonry, in my personal view, came out of the English Civil War as a vehicle where men of all persuasions could meet and not talk about politics which would be divisive and dangerous and not talk about religion.

R.A.G.

I think it needs emphasising that while we are often used to saying that salvation comes from *your* god, it should be said that salvation comes from God. There is only one God. We may perceive God in different ways depending on what our religion happens to be but there is only one Creator of the Universe. By the act of separating the different notions of God according to the concepts of different Faiths we allow people to believe as they wish but we cannot admit that there are different gods. There are *not*. If we forget that, we should not be Freemasons. We are only asking for belief in a Supreme Being: just in the one.

C.W. Wallis-Newport (C.W.W-N.)

The relationship between religion and Freemasonry is an interesting one, not least of all in Ireland. Whilst in the North, which is largely Protestant, there is a decline in Masonic membership, in the South, which of course is anything up to 97% Roman Catholic, there is now a noticeable increase of interest in Masonry. This is most evident in the old Province of Munster where, until recent years (unlike the 18th century), those of the Roman faith were actively discouraged from joining the Craft. Early Papal Bulls against Freemasonry had little effect on Irish Catholic members throughout much of the 1700s. It was Ireland's contrived "Union" with the rest of Britain, when a combination of religious and political aspirations came seriously into play for the first time in one hundred years, that brought about a major change in attitude towards the Masonic brotherhood.

Going on to another subject, our speaker has brilliantly outlined the esoteric tradition arising out of a late 16th century when, for example in Elizabethan England, evidence of esoteric allegorical allusion could everywhere be found. The Civil War era is also very interesting in the context of our speculative origins, since there is little doubt in my mind that, broadly speaking, the form of Freemasonry we practise today grew out of that traumatic period of socio-religious dissension which affected 17th century England, Scotland and Ireland alike.

On another point incidentally, we are quite naturally obliged to deny that there is a specifically religious connotation in the Craft of today. However, on traditional Irish Grand Lodge Certificates (and two of us here, tonight, are also Irish Masons), there are several examples of biblical and Christian symbolism retained from the early 18th century. It has to be borne in mind, of course, that Craft Certificates issued from Dublin have not altered for over 250 years. Corresponding English Grand Lodge Certificates have been subjected to regular change, throughout the same period, for a variety of reasons – such as the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England, various Royal coats-of-arms, and so on.

M.N.B.

I think that the success of Irish Freemasonry in Southern Ireland is due to the fact that Freemasonry has always been part of a liberating attitude for people. It also played a part in the new ideas that came out of the age of enlightenment. It is part of, if you like, the Reformation. The idea that men could actually think and say what they wanted, in the context of the Catholic South, Freemasonry has been a force for tolerance and free-thinking.

A.B. Jenkins (A.B.J.)

Don't you think the problem of recruitment actually goes back to an earlier stage? It's the culture that we are in. By the time a man has reached say the age of twenty-one in most cases we have already lost him. It goes back to childhood and the environment in which our prospective members have grown up. I would suggest that they are already in a culture which is not conducive to producing potential members for us. And of course most of us think back to the earlier days of Scouts and Cubs and other similar organisations. I think the mistakes they made with the de Molay group are instructive. What I would suggest perhaps is that the Grand Lodge, in considering our falling membership, is starting from too late a stage. We ought to be looking much more and supporting these organisations at the roots of our culture.

M.N.B.

I think that since the 1950s everything has gone too far and too quickly. We are not supposed to talk about politics but we have to if we are to talk about cause and effect in the development of society. The fact is that there has been a lot of social engineering in our

schools. The very institutions which form the fabric of this country: law and order, respect for the monarchy, respect for one's peers, basically things which have been part of Englishness, have disappeared. And if you have a society in which you no longer look up to many of these institutions, then you have a problem because Freemasonry was until very recently, and is still considered to be by some, a part of the Establishment. If the Establishment of the country is not in high regard what incentive is there for men of whatever age to come and join a body such as ours? I can always take out my cheque-book for the Tsunami appeal or Oxfam. I can join the Lions. I don't have to sit in a Lodge. I don't have to do ritual. Basically there is a very big gap in society when it comes to spiritual values and I think it was the Archbishop of York who made the statement: "I do not regard England now as a Christian country." Now that is a very harsh statement but what he was really saying is that the majority of people have got absolutely no fundamental association with any religious body whatsoever and yet there was a *Sunday Times* poll taken of a cross-section of the population and 74% said that they believe in God. But they have no interest in organised or statutory bodies of any sort and this affects us.

A.B.J.

Surely the religious side of life starts with our schools. The government has a responsibility here. 74% have got one point of view. 'That's their problem – not our problem.' It's very sad that in education we don't have religious instruction any more.

M.N.B.

Well we have become so politically correct that we are scared of offending any minority. When I went to school, a state school, there was assembly in the morning and we sang a hymn. It was all over and done with in about fifteen minutes and you went on your way. How can you expect men in the future to answer one fundamental question which every Mason has got to answer: "Do you believe in God?" Increasingly there are going to be men who say: "I don't believe in that." We are living in a society that is becoming increasingly humanistic where you don't have to believe in anything but you can still be a good man or a good woman by doing good work. You don't have to be a religious person and that's what Karl Marx and many others wanted.

S.A.H.

I agree exactly with what you said about the secularisation of our society, however we are beings with various grades of spiritual hunger. Unfortunately as G.K. Chesterton said: "A person who doesn't believe in God doesn't believe in nothing, he believes in anything." A greater understanding of the spiritual dimension is needed. How is the chap, who comes in, going to pick up this spiritual dimension without some instruction?

M.N.B.

I think that the change has got to come from Grand Lodge itself. Grand Lodge is faced with an over-all crisis of losing membership. If you do First, Second, Third Degree, Installation year after year, what after a lifetime of Masonry have you actually learnt? We must ask ourselves this question and I think that the current Pro Grand Master of the Craft is trying to plant a seed by setting up the Canonbury Research Centre very much for the aspiring Mason. The Cornerstone Society has also been set up with many excellent lectures on topics including the esoteric side of Freemasonry. I think that the Pro Grand Master wants to see what reaction he gets and if there is interest in the esoteric side it may be that Grand Lodge will turn in this direction to educate Masons.

R.A.G.

People who become Masons are not instructed. This is why they take up the *Da Vinci Code* and things like this and they believe this rubbish. But the awful thing is that we have people who are influenced by it, who are now becoming Masons because they think that within Masonry they are going to find the answers. Well they don't but there is always this subtle tide of people coming in, who are not instructed either in religion or for that matter in anything esoteric, but are just filled with this ignorant rubbish. This is a danger which we should be aware of. We need to be instructed so that we as Masons can counteract the drivel which is of their making and not just accept it. Real instruction and understanding in a spiritual context would enable us to do this.

C.W.W-N.

On this particular point, I am reminded of a friend, sadly no longer with us, who maintained that he received lessons on Freemasonry whilst at school in Scotland. He came from St. Andrews where he later went to University. His non-masonic father, Dr A.R. Simpson, was one of the great, though undervalued, post-war authorities in secondary education and, having been persuaded to take up a senior Headship in Middlesex, had an immense effect in the life of the Harrow County School some fifty years ago. Personally, I think that the awareness of Masonic matters among young people is a thing that could be encouraged by Grand Lodge, since I feel that attempts to satisfy one's curiosity comes rather too late in most of our lives. I came into the Masonic system at the ripe old age of forty-eight; rather too late, some might say – despite the fact that the average age of today's membership is well above fifty. As Bro Jenkins has said, it is a thing that should be tackled at a much earlier stage before a man is even eligible to join the Craft; otherwise Grand Lodge, in the future, has an impossible task.

A.R.B.

You said that Grand Lodge in the person of the Pro Grand Master is interested in the esoteric aspects of Masonry and has been instrumental in setting up the Canonbury Centre and so on. But on the other hand Grand Lodge seems to be separating the Royal Arch from Craft Masonry. Do you think that is a good idea or do you think that from an esoteric point of view they are shooting themselves in the foot a bit?

M.N.B.

Well I am a London Mason not a Bristol Mason so I can't really comment on how you feel about it. In London I know a number of senior Royal Arch Masons who have adamantly said that they would never work any of those ceremonies that have been proposed by Grand Lodge except the Exaltation ceremony, which by and large is going to remain almost intact. The Royal Arch, for those who are not Royal Arch Masons, is the root and marrow of Freemasonry and it is the completion of the Third Degree. I don't have a problem with it being separated from the Craft. I don't necessarily have a problem with allowing Brethren who have not been through the Chair of a Craft Lodge taking one the three Principals' Chairs. My objection is to what I call the reductionism of the "cut-and-paste brigade" up at Grand Chapter saying we want to cut and edit the Lectures. Now if you are talking about the knowledge encased in the Lectures, you don't have to do all three of the Lectures on one evening though it is customary in some Chapters. That might bore the pants off the new Exalte because they are long lectures. But if you take them and spread them over several meetings by breaking them up you have got all the features of the Royal Arch retained. But if you cut them by a half or reduce them by the levels that are being proposed, what are we losing from the Royal Arch? We are potentially degrading it. We are taking away some at

least of the knowledge. Now I can't agree with that. If the Royal Arch is to remain what it is at present, why try to mend something that isn't broken?

R.W.M. Howes

In this Province the Royal Arch and the Craft are not separate in the way that they are outside. In Bristol the head of our Craft Degrees is also the head of the Royal Arch and we do not do the Lectures as they are done outside. So basically in Bristol the Royal Arch ceremonies will remain the same.

M.N.B.

I am, however aware of the reaction of certain senior members of other Provinces when the Grand Scribe Ezra announced that the Lectures would be changed. The reaction was, I know, that a senior Group Chairman of the Metropolitan Grand Lodge of London begged the Grand Secretary and therefore the First Grand Principal not to embark on something so radical as had been proposed. I know that Bristol is a special case with the Baldwyn Rite for example. But the issue is how far are we going to go in simplifying our ritual? We have a paucity of knowledge already. Why go and reduce it almost to zero? That is my objection. American Masonry still has the Passing of the Veils, as they do in Scotland and Ireland and indeed here in Bristol. The very colours of the Principals' robes are part of the colours of the veils. All that has already gone from most Royal Arch ceremonies – it went years ago except in Bristol and one or two other places.

P. Bowers

What you have said tonight and what is being discussed seems to be rather similar to the ritualistic fate of the Craft. The Hanoverian Dukes and Royal Princes seem to have thrown the baby out with the bath water when they were modifying the Craft rituals.

M.N.B.

There has been so much editing of the Craft rituals I think if you go to the Emulation Lodge of Improvement and look at the *Emulation Lectures* you understand what Craft Masonry was like because these were questions and answers done around the dining table. It still happens in American Masonry where Candidates are actually proved before they can go on to another Degree. They have to actually go through a long and very tedious list of questions and answers and even recite the whole Degree by heart. With regard to what may happen, there are a great many dissatisfied Masons now in this country and I do believe that there is a very good though remote possibility that if things go on the way they are we could find that Grand Lodge could actually split between those who want the old traditions and those who want to modernise it and wish to bring Craft Masonry forward so that in their view it will survive into the future. The battle royal will be over which side actually gains ascendancy in the long run. Whether it will happen in today's age, when people are so laid back and apathetic, I don't know but there is a possibility that there could be a number of Masons who say "To hell with Grand Lodge, there is nothing in the world that says we can't have our own." The mere fact that it won't be recognised by Grand Lodge I don't think would upset them at all.

C.R. Cornish

It has already happened. Four or six Lodges in this country have already joined together to form a breakaway Grand Lodge of their own.

M.N.B.

I know, at the present moment there is dissatisfaction. If you keep on messing around with the ceremonies, Brethren will vote with their feet.

C.W.W-N.

It is quite ironic, since this was the main reason for the so-called schism in the 18th century, when the 'Antients' regarded with disdain the departure from the original Landmarks of the Craft – and the 'Moderns *were* found wanting, one has to say. Had it not been for the 'Antient' input at the time of the Union we wouldn't even have the Royal Arch at all. However, I had no idea there was a present day move abroad to set up another break-away Grand Lodge as mentioned by Bro Cornish.

A.R.B.

We must now begin to close this fascinating discussion though of course we can continue over our dinner. I will, if I may, call upon WBro Gilbert to propose a Vote of Thanks.

R.A.G.

I have to say that I was forewarned of this duty and being forewarned I thought I had better write something suitable so I have here a page of suitable comments but I am not going to read any of them. I think we have shown our appreciation of Michael's paper by the degree of questioning comment that has been made upon it. I think that what he has done is to remind us that Masonry is not simply a process of acting like a sausage-machine to churn out ill-trained half-baked Masons who know nothing of what they are doing and why they are doing it, but that we should look at the inner meaning of it. He has demonstrated the reasons. Whether we agree with the particular points that he has raised is beside the point itself. The important thing is that he has stimulated a discussion with a provocative paper and we cannot ask anything more of any speaker than that. The fact that we will go away equipped to think and deal about these things in our own Lodges makes one think it is a shame that we cannot have such papers delivered in Lodges rather than just in Societies such as this which appeal to too few Masons today. If we persuade one Brother to go away and be a nuisance in his own Lodge to make people think then Michael will have achieved an enormous amount for the body of Masonry in general. I for one am very grateful, as I am sure we all are, and I am sure that we should show our appreciation in the usual manner observed among all civilised men as well as Masons (*Applause*).

M.N.B.

Thank you very much, Brethren, I came here with great trepidation this evening but thank you all very much.

Richard Crane – Introduction – 29/4/05

Brethren, we are all supposed to be speculative Masons though not much speculation goes on in the average Lodge meeting. Many of us here speculate or reflect in quiet moments away from the Lodge. We come to B.M.S. meetings to get fresh food for thought, new angles for reflection and to discuss ideas and views.

Tonight, Brethren, we are privileged to receive a paper from one of the most deeply speculative of modern Masons. Richard Crane is Past Grand Treasurer in the Craft and the Royal Arch and is Past Third Provincial Grand Principal in Surrey. He retired from industry at the age of forty-five to study music and religion. He studied religious philosophy and took a Master's Degree in Theology at the University of Bristol.

He was initiated in 1961 and was the Millennial Prestonian lecturer taking as his title: 'For Therein You will be taught.' He is a member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge and is their Treasurer and a director of the Correspondence Circle. He is also on the Library and Museum committee.

In May 2002 he presented a paper to Quatuor Coronati Lodge entitled: 'That Most Interesting of all Human Studies' in which he applied philosophy and linguistic analysis to the knowledge of the 'Self.' It was a marked departure from the subject matter usually presented to Quatuor Coronati and is in my view a "mind-blowing" paper. It is in *AQC* Volume 115, Brethren, and I strongly recommend it to you.

He is going to talk to us this evening on: 'The Spiritual Message of the Royal Arch.'

THE SPIRITUAL MESSAGE OF THE ROYAL ARCH

by

**Richard A. Crane MA, P.G.Treas.
(29th April 2005)**

I am sure that you will all expect me to deal with just what a spiritual message is, no matter whether it concerns the Royal Arch or not, and this I will attempt to do. But there is one important definition to be considered before we get that far. Have you ever sorted the question out to your own satisfaction of just what the principal concern of the Royal Arch is?

As you may know I was asked to sit on the Royal Arch sub-committee dealing with the recent ritual changes. To me it was important to deal with the then proposed changes within an accurate understanding of what the proposed changes would mean if adopted.

Whilst acknowledging the perfectly acceptable ritual answer to the question in the Craft of “What is Freemasonry?” although I like to add privately that it is a universal system albeit it may, in the old-fashioned sense be peculiar, and albeit Freemasonry requires a belief in the Supreme being, it nevertheless is concerned with morality.

The Royal Arch is a very different proposition. Following discussion with EComp John Hamill at Head Office, I would submit as follows:

“The Holy Royal Arch, being concerned with God’s revelation of Himself to mankind throughout history, and without trespassing on the bounds of religion, leads the Exalte to consider both the nature of God and his personal relationship with God.”

And of course at this point the fun starts. “Heaven forbid, we are talking about God so we must be talking about religion.”

This one point seems to have been a barrier to much research on the ritual of the Royal Arch because, as we all know, discussion about religion is forbidden within Masonic circles. So, inevitably, we must also define religion to see that we do not transgress. So I fall back as ever on the definitions I put forward in the Millennium Prestonian lecture.

Philosophy is man using only his reason – his mind – looking at the world, at Creation about him to determine whether there has to be something behind it all. If his personal answer is “yes” then that something, however he considers it, is usually called God or the Supreme Being or some other title that suits his approach. Man, by looking about him at Creation down here has throughout the ages most often convinced himself that there is, shall we say, “Him up there.”

However I have said that the Royal Arch is concerned with God’s revelation of Himself. So what is revelation? If it is not philosophy, could this be theology?

Theology is different to philosophy in that it works on the basis that “Him up there,” God, the Supreme Being, has revealed Himself to Mankind down here. The belief in God travels from Him to us.

So if philosophy and theology in their different ways can both lead to a belief in God, just what is religion? Religion is man’s quest, man’s attempt, to establish a “personal” relationship with God, and the various religions of the world are the outcome of that attempt.

It can be seen immediately that it is possible to philosophise on the question of God, and to even have been subject to God revealing Himself to us and yet, bearing in mind man’s freewill, not to pursue the quest of a personal relationship with God.

It is within this context that the Royal Arch finds its place. The Royal Arch gives many examples of God revealing Himself within history for us to dwell on. The Royal Arch also gives us many of the attributes of God which mankind has determined throughout the ages. The Royal Arch invites us to consider, if you like, to philosophise on, the nature of the relationship we perhaps should consider as due to our Creator, but it does not involve us in the pursuit of that relationship. We are invited to consider our relationship to The Most High, but not to pursue that relationship within the Royal Arch context. That pursuit is the business of religion and religion alone.

So what does the expression “spiritual message” mean and do we find one within our Royal Arch ritual?

Quite clearly a message is a communication from one person to another by one means or another. If it is a spiritual message it rather obviously has transcendental implications.

So the question to ask is: “Does the Royal Arch, without confusing itself with religion, have any transcendental implications?”

Let us start with looking at some of the extensive list of the attributes of The Most High which mankind throughout the ages has used to try and explain, understand and distinguish the incomprehensible nature of the Deity. Many of these attributes are found within our Royal Arch ritual and, of course, are not peculiar to that ritual. Let us just remind ourselves of some of them. We immediately find within our ritual that the Deity is Omnipotent – that is all-powerful, Omniscient – all-seeing, and Omnipresent – which speaks for itself. And how about His creative, preservative and annihilative powers? These are attributes on which our very existence is dependent. Perhaps the most striking words of our whole ritual, and indeed the centrepiece of the detailing of the attributes of The Most High has to be the description of the Most High found within the Mystical Lecture. You will all know the words so well should I start by saying: “That Great, Awful, Tremendous and Incomprehensible name of The Most High” This is a strictly orthodox explanation of the Supreme being who alone has His Being in and from Himself and who gives to all others their being whilst at the same time remains unchangeable.

Certainly the ritual fulfils the claim within the definition that I have suggested to you that the nature of God is discussed within the Royal Arch.

Let us move on to the question of God revealing Himself to mankind within history. We obviously do not have far to look. Based upon stories found within the Old Testament we

have many examples to choose from. Need I remind you of Moses and the burning bush, or the pillar of fire and cloud? How about God speaking to the boy Samuel in the Temple or the staying of the pestilence? The Royal Arch ritual is full of examples of God revealing Himself and acting within history. Why do you think these examples are given such prominence and what is the message the originators of our ritual are trying to impart?

Well before we deal with that we do have a very different matter to deal with.

Within our ritual and most certainly within the explanation of the signs, we find many examples of how we should behave given our dependence on God and His gift of Creation, or more particularly His gift to us of our very being. These at first sight are problematical because it sounds as if we have crossed the line from theology to religion, even perhaps becoming involved with worship. Surely we are admitting to pursuing a personal relationship with The Most High, which I define as the distinguishing mark of religious practice? Let us examine the problem.

We say that the signs mark in a peculiar manner the relation – yes we actually admit a relationship – the relation we bear to The Most High as creatures offending against His mighty will and power, yet still the adopted children of His mercy. We say that we must bend with humility and resignation beneath His chastening hand. We confess that we can do no manner of good or acceptable service but through Him. We are told that we should prostrate ourselves as an outward form of faith and dependence. We thank Him for the manifold blessings we have received at His hands. There are, of course, other examples. How therefore do we equate this with the above definition and the risk of being accused of being a religion?

The answer lies in understanding the use of the word “personal.”

At the end of our meetings, or perhaps at the Festive Board, we sing the National Anthem where we hope that the Queen may long reign over us. If we should meet the Queen it is expected that we bow or curtsy as a mark of respect. Note that this is a mark of respect not friendship. If we are taken to Court we have to rise as a further mark of respect when the Judge, the representative of the Queen, enters. Her Majesty’s Government, on her behalf in constitutional law, provides a great body of law and practice to which we submit, all of which has been finally approved constitutionally by the Queen. It can well be seen that we certainly have a relationship with our Sovereign, but is it a personal relationship? Are we popping into Buck House for a cup of tea and a chat? No, of course we are not, and of course it is not a personal relationship. Yet we do know about the Queen and also our relative position to her. She is certainly not exactly a stranger to us. Our relationship is that of Subject to Sovereign.

The Royal Arch approach to The Most High behaves in exactly this way. It tells us that we have a relationship to The Most High and tells us quite a lot about The Most High, but at no time is it telling us that we are pursuing or even that we should pursue a “personal” relationship. We may indeed be creatures offending against His almighty will and power yet still the adopted children of His mercy and the Royal Arch may well remind us of that relative position to The Most High, but the next move, if any, depends on our freewill not on our ritual. The Royal Arch teaches or reminds us to consider our relative position to The Most High. I repeat my earlier comment – It is to religion and religion alone that we are recommended to further that quest for a true “personal” relationship with The Most High and

it is not without point that we are recommended to study the Volume of the Sacred Law – whichever one is appropriate to the individual Mason – on our very first night in the Lodge.

So having, I trust, dealt with most of the definition I gave you, what then is the spiritual message of the Royal Arch?

I believe it rests within one very important delivery by the First Principal in the first part of the Exaltation ritual and is then demonstrated – veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols of course – within our little play. The piece I refer to is as follows:

“Let that want of light remind you that man by nature is a child of ignorance and error, and ever would have remained in a state of darkness had it not pleased the Almighty to call him to light and immortality by the revelation of His Holy will and word.”

To me this encapsulates the spiritual message of the Royal Arch. The knowledge that we acquire by our own efforts and experience within this life is insufficient, and we are taught that revelation provides the light, the further knowledge that man needs to live fully the human life.

As we all know, our ceremony falls into two sections. The first is up to the end of the Obligation section and I have detailed above the message about revelation that we find within it. The next section is what I call our little play. Let us now take a look at what we might find in the play, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols, to see if the message of The Most High revealing Himself to mankind also has a place within it.

Once again I will take a key passage to briefly illustrate the spiritual message of the Royal Arch:

“The sun, by this time, had gained its greatest altitude, and darted its rays with meridian splendour into the vault, enabling me clearly to distinguish those objects I had before so imperfectly discovered.”

This passage also is an underlining or reminder to the Companions that the knowledge that man acquires by his own efforts is insufficient and that mankind required God’s revelation of Himself, symbolised by the sun darting its rays, to perfect that knowledge.

Light has always been a symbol of knowledge throughout the ages and has been readily adopted by pure antient Freemasonry. The Master Mason finishes his Third Degree by the light of one flickering candle implying that he has yet to see the full light of knowledge. At what I call that “Royal Arch moment” the Exalte is greeted with a glowing symbolic pattern of candle-light to impress on him the further progress he has made.

And so in our little play, as the sun at its meridian figuratively bursts through the aperture to properly reveal that for which the Companion is seeking, albeit he has had many hints along the way, so once again is underlined the possibility that the knowledge of God, God’s light, God revealing Himself to man, can be within mankind’s experience. The spiritual message to the Companion is that it is possible.

However it must be said that man must be open to receiving this experience. With all the daily problems of just existing in this world it is no wonder that we blot out the chance of

receiving God's revelation of Himself. And even if we were to retire from the world to a monastic life, there is still no guarantee that it would happen. Thus within the symbolic darkness of the vault – representing our daily lives – is that which instinctively we feel that we need to find (heuristic knowledge), but until God's light, the knowledge of revelation is part of our experience we are left searching for the truth.

The Royal Arch, by detailing God's attributes, by giving examples of His action within history and thus by showing us that revelation is possible encourages us to look further. We must remember that it is not the business of the Royal Arch to offer or to guarantee revelatory experiences. However, if our ritual is carefully studied at least the following can be found within it as my opening definition stated:

“The Holy Royal Arch, being concerned with God's revelation of Himself to mankind throughout history, and without trespassing on the bounds of religion, leads the Exalte to consider both the nature of God and his personal relationship with God.”

By the way you might ask, after studying the Royal Arch and spending time to consider the nature of God and the possibility of a “personal” relationship with God: Does Masonry offer any clue which might help us know when it might be possible to experience God's revelation? Our Masonic answer has to be: “when the sun is at its meridian.”

Let me remind you:

“The earth constantly revolving on its axis in its orbit around the sun and Freemasonry being universally spread over its surface, it necessarily follows that the sun must always be at its meridian with respect to Freemasonry.”

It would appear from the foregoing that God's revelation of Himself to mankind is always readily available and you will remember that theology, within my definition states that it comes “from Him to us.” At first it appears to be in His hands alone. Sadly, mankind throughout the ages has so often refused, been unable, or just not bothered, to hear. The spiritual message of the Royal Arch, within its Masonic task of reminding that God's revelation of Himself to mankind is possible should at least teach you to be concerned about it and to consider what best to do.

Of course you know, you can always try your Volume of the Sacred Law because, as we are instructed: “therein you will be taught.”

DISCUSSION

A.R. Baker (A.R.B.)

While they are all getting their thoughts in order, can I just kick off by asking a question? You have told us that in the Royal Arch we are to consider but not pursue our relationship with God, that our belief in and yearning for God comes from Him down to us and that it is possible to experience God, to receive his revelation in this life. I don't really want to introduce a note of levity but I am reminded of a quote though I am not sure who it's from that: "When you talk to God it is called prayer, but when God talks to you it is called schizophrenia!" [*laughter*].

My question is: if God is unchangeable and we should consider our relationship with God in the Royal Arch why should the Royal Arch ritual not remain unchanged?

R.A. Crane (R.A.C.)

Apart from anything else the Royal Arch ritual is language and as we all know language does develop over the ages. Its meanings change depending on its usage within society. So I really don't think that you can truthfully put those two things in the same light. The fact that throughout the Judaic, Christian and Islamic traditions God is unchangeable is one thing. How we talk about Him as mere mortals is another.

A.R.B.

So it is we who are changing then and it is to enable us to continue to relate to the unchangeable that the ritual should be changed.

R.A.C.

Not necessarily; there are other reasons for changing the ritual. I think you have worked a very nice flanker on me here. Who wants to talk about the ritual changes? I am not going to argue for or against the ritual changes, I am merely going to say that I was on the sub-committee that passed recommendations up to the main committee but that is where the big decisions were taken. However, I am to blame for one or two things and I will take the blame for them with pleasure. I argued that we should take out those twenty-seven words as there is no necessary relationship between the Royal Arch and the Craft. In so doing the Royal Arch ritual stands on its own feet and so does that of the Craft. That much I am happy about but beyond that, other than putting the case, that when the two Grand Lodges got together they produced an absolute "fudge" and by so doing, in typical British behaviour they tried to please everybody and ended up by pleasing nobody. However Bob Morrow, our Grand Secretary, will admit too, that even his new words are a "fudge" as well. They actually rejected my words.

If you want to talk further about the ritual changes, we have to accept there are things that a lot of Masons won't like about them because a lot of us are old. If you consider that the average age of an Initiate in the Craft now is forty-seven, think what the average age of members of the Royal Arch might be. At our age, and I am seventy-one, we don't really want to go out and relearn the whole thing do we? So maybe you have got to look at it another way and that is to say that yes, we have all got permission to carry on just as we are doing. And in point of fact I am at the moment First Principal of my Chapter. We did an Exaltation at our previous meeting and I used the traditional ritual because I know it. However when you look at it another way, the pressure on time for young men these days is enormous. They can't scud off like they used to, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon to get to their Masonic Lodges and

Chapters. It's not on any more. When you consider the pressure that is on them as well these days to spend "quality time" with the children and so on, they haven't got time to learn great tracts of ritual straight off and therefore the chance to have a variety of voices, thereby employing more Chapter members in the ritual at any one meeting, putting less pressure on anyone to learn a large amount of ritual at any one time. It is something, I think, that will recommend itself to the Royal Arch over the next twenty or thirty years. If we want the Royal Arch to survive, as long as we keep its spiritual message alive in spite of the changing use of language, perhaps there is good in the changes.

M.J. Crossley Evans (M.J.C.E.)

I would, if I may, like to draw some parallels that worry me very much indeed. I am a church-warden in the Church of England and I am very attached to the language and the liturgy of the Book of Common Prayer. It has been very noticeable that since the Established Church has tampered with its ritual, not only have we had transient, low grade, inferior liturgies, but we have also had extremely ugly enjambments of language where the poetry of the original has been transformed into what at best is dull prose, which seldom rises above pathos. People, in the terrible effort to modernise, have reduced the sense of mystery and spirituality to what Enoch Powell, a great master of language, called "the vulgarity of the language of the bus queue." I think that in many people, not just the older people who attend church, there is a yearning for the liturgy of the past which has not been valued, particularly in the sixties and seventies, and the church has made the terrible mistake of destroying it, of throwing it out, discarding it and thereby impoverishing whole generations of worshippers as a result.

Even worse than this, terrible doctrinal errors have come into the new services because the people who have altered the liturgy often have a profound ignorance not only of the theology behind it but also of linguistics. I call on you just to think of the word "propitiation" – "He is the propitiation for our sins" and the meaning of the word "propitiation." One of the ugly, vulgar, modern versions uses the word "expiation." Now there are tremendous theological differences between these two words and one thousand five hundred years of Christian doctrine has been overturned by either the wilful or unconscious ignorance of the modernisers. It fills me with immense concern that Freemasons feel the desire to run headlong, like the Gadarene swine, into modernising and modifying their rituals, impelled by criticism from those outside.

R.A.C.

Well, of course I am very interested to hear about the Church of England but it is not our business and I have to say that, with all due respect to our friend. I am also a parish church organist and I also brought back into the church the Matins. I also brought back the 1662 evensong. So I agree with you, and when I think of the way the words of some of the Hymns have been changed, it is most undesirable, to say nothing of the Psalms. On the other hand I also go and read to a blind lady and we tried to read from the old Bible and she can't understand it, which is a pity. So I have to take along a more modern Bible to help her to understand. I don't think that is our business. I want you just to take one little look at the ritual which I have here and you will find that in our Exaltation ceremony we took out twenty-seven words and we added a few more words of explanation to help the Exalte. It's not the case that has just been put to you at all – that's the church. In the Royal Arch that did not happen and when it came to revising the Lectures I have to tell you that some of the Lectures are nonsensical and I have taken some of that out in my recommendation. Although, I wasn't involved in it at the end. Some of them are nonsensical and some of them should

never have been in there in the first place. It's this business that Masonry, when you go back to the sixteen and seventeen hundreds, tried to aggregate to itself respectability by bringing in history and other things that really when you look at it make no sense at all either then or now – and that's the problem. So I think when you look at the Lectures you are looking at a slightly different situation. In one of the Lectures we took out three dates. Why? – because they are nonsense. If you look at those dates, as I said on the committee, I am fed up with hearing about this Roman general Anno Lucius for a start [*laughter*]. Everybody knows where the dates came from. Bishop Ussher worked it all out. The trouble is we are a little more intelligent these days and anyone looking at that lot would say: "Well that's crackers! That's not true." And when you find that situation, the next thing you say is: "And nor is the rest of it!" So in a sense we strengthened it by omission – just in that one Lecture. As far as the other two Lectures are concerned, they chose to chop them around differently, to omit sections some of which are nonsense, to make them more understandable, but the language itself is preserved.

When I first saw what they were trying to do, I went up exactly like my friend here [M.J.C.E.]. Three of the words we all love to say – we don't think about them enough but I have used them tonight: the creative, preservative and annihilative – they tried to change. I argued against it. When they tried to take away that meridian light coming through the aperture, I wouldn't have that either. So I was able to put the case – and I was the only theologian on the sub-committee – that they were doing exactly what the Church of England had done. I used this argument that they had without question cheapened the liturgy. I don't think that if you care to look at it seriously that it is now cheapened. What I would say to you is this: of all the most conservative Societies you can come across, it's ourselves and it's a big defence. It's why we have "stood the test of time" and "resisted the wreck of mighty empires," it's why we are still here. However, in my very first submission to the committee I said that the first thing I had done was to construct a concrete bunker and bought a tin helmet. For your information I actually spent twenty quid down at the fancy dress shop on an old ARP tin helmet with every intention of taking it into the committee [*laughter*] although I didn't do so. The reason for this, I said, was that I wanted to suggest some changes (this was the famous twenty-seven words) and I know that if you try to omit one full stop Freemasons go absolutely over the wall. The fact that there are about twenty different rituals doesn't seem to matter. No one gave that a thought! At the end of the day it wasn't possible to bring out what was going to be brought out – a standard form. Why? – because Bristol is so special, because Gloucestershire is so special, because Yorkshire is so special. The guys who pour their hearts into their ritual working and their Chapters of Improvement, don't want to change one iota. What we have changed we hope you will see, if you care to study it with the same attention you give to your Bible, Sir [M.J.C.E.], I think you will find it ain't a bad job. Has anyone heard these new Lectures given yet?

C.W. Wallis-Newport (C.W.W-N.)

Might I make a point, somewhere down the middle path of this great debate?

R.A.C.

Before you do, can I just finish the point I was making. If you haven't heard them I realise it's not easy to consider them. But I want also to make the point again, and then I will sit down. You haven't got to change.

M.J.C.E.

If I may, just before Charles gets up again. My comments were made on a point of principle rather than fact. Because I am a member of a Bristol Royal Arch Chapter I am obviously not fully familiar with these changes. What I am saying is that I am wary of all changes which are motivated by a desire for modernity. This principle is my concern. Rather than actually taking the ritual word by word and arguing the jots and tittles, I want to be certain that the principles underlying the changes are sound.

C.W.W-N.

Bro President, having been bullied into sitting down on my very first ‘rising’ this evening. . .

A.R.B.

Most unusual [*laughter*].

C.W.W-N.

I am going to start by saying that it ill behoves any of us as Bristol Royal Arch Masons to criticise or even speculate upon the recent changes in the ritual since, as most of us know, here in this building we remain singularly unaffected and, therefore, we are not truly qualified to comment upon it. I realise that Martin was talking in a linguistic sense, and although I am not sure that I agree entirely with him; as long as the message is preserved, in my view the words aren’t unduly important. I tend to agree with our distinguished speaker that, when one considers the multiplicity of rituals that exist throughout the English Constitution, it can appear to a Hiberno-Bristol outsider rather confusing, to say the least; in fact, almost mind-boggling at times. The compulsion to be distinctive, yet in so many different Masonic presentations, is an English disease I regret to say. The question of standardising Royal Arch ritual (and that of the Craft with the exception of Munster) was resolved in Ireland a long time ago.

Listening to Bro Crane, it did occur to me that, for all we know, far to the west of the Metropolis, there may be an actual improvement in the spiritual content as a result of these changes – and I was delighted to hear of the steps taken to remove the somewhat confusing ‘constitutional amalgamation’ between the Royal Arch and the Craft.

On the question of what might be described as ‘lost spirituality’ in Freemasonry, it is of interest to quote A.E. Waite in his *New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* published in 1921. The Royal Arch, he declared with characteristic vigour, had suffered ‘in the hands of successive generations of muddled revisers’ until ‘it had lost all logic’ and all of ‘that spirit which is the life of the ceremony.’ Waite went on to say that by lumping it together with the Craft Degrees, as per the *Book of Constitutions*, the reconciling formulators of the United Grand Lodge of England, in 1813, simply displayed their ‘incompetence to deal with matters of symbolism.’ It occurs to me, however, that what our senior Royal Arch Masons have been up to more recently, at Great Queen Street, may well have introduced a renewed spirituality into the revised ritual; notwithstanding the change in linguistics, which so seriously concerns Bro Crossley Evans.

R.A. Gilbert (R.A.G.)

Brother President, may I interject before our speaker replies. It’s time for the third wise monkey to stand up! What I would like to add is simply that what Waite was saying (and I do have some knowledge of Waite!) was that he felt that the Royal Arch had been demeaned by having its Trinitarian content removed and Unitarian blasphemies of the kind we hear from

our learned Brother Crossley Evans added into it! Bearing that in mind and the singularity of Ireland, we are all with one or two exceptions English Masons. Perhaps Richard would like to reply on that basis and that understanding.

R.A.C.

I am sorry, what understanding?

R.A.G.

I merely wanted you to know that you are speaking to a heretic and an alien! [*laughter*].

R.A.C.

I am very happy to have heretics and aliens as my Companions [*laughter*]. I know I have a very religious contingent behind me on the left here [M.J.C.E. & C.W.W-N.]. That's fine, we are all here for different reasons. Presumably they have got the message of the Royal Arch and they have pursued that relationship with The Most High that we are being encouraged to do. They may consider themselves aliens and heretics but you know there is a wonderful saying that having considered your position relative to The Most High, and exercising your free will you decide therefore that you have to pursue it through religion because "Therein you will be taught," "There are as many paths to God as there are souls of men," and that saying comes from Islam. They are very welcome to their opinions and actually I rejoice in them. The worst thing in this world is people who don't care. I love the people who do, even the churchwardens of the Anglican Church and preachers in the Swedenborgian Church.

As I said in my lecture one of the difficulties in research into the Royal Arch was because people felt that they were dealing with religion. We have to try to get a clear understanding. The fact that it might lead you towards religion merely underlines the policy of Grand Lodge that Freemasonry is the "Friend of Religion." This is not something that has come out just in the last two or three years. If you go back in the history of Freemasonry you will find quite eminent people making comments along those lines. So Freemasonry is the "Friend of Religion." Why don't religions like us? – because we won't recommend their religion above any other. We just accept that if a man pursues religion of any denomination that is good enough for us.

C.W.W-N.

In view of my suggestion that the new ritual may have some positive elements, I wonder if Bro Crane might comment as to whether he feels that the spiritual message has been improved as a result of the recent changes.

R.A.C.

The rearguard action which I fought was to preserve the spiritual nature of the Royal Arch because it seemed as if it might be being turned into just an extension of a system of morality. Whether the final result is an improvement or not, I have to be honest, is a question that I have not considered. I am just so relieved that we still have our Royal Arch as the spiritual dimension of Craft Freemasonry.

A.B. Jenkins (A.B.J.)

I was making notes for a future work of my own but if I had to make a comment I suppose it would follow on from the talk. You say Masonry encourages you to seek a religion, to consider a religion, to find a religion. My next question, which it may not be appropriate to consider here, is what can be done to help someone in that position. Should we just leave

them *in limbo*? What should they do? One of the things I think in the Royal Arch is that you are confronted with this marvellous tableau – this wonderful scene of light and so on. It really requires the Candidate to go away and ponder over it, to think about it, to have moments of stillness, of silence. It is at that time that he will make contact perhaps with the Divine. It is a personal contact and it goes beyond the teaching of the Royal Arch. It is that sort of scene that might well be the spark, if you like, that sets him off on his own personal relationship. But, as I say, I have been taking notes thinking of my own development rather than asking questions.

R.A.C.

I think that is a very nice way to look at it. We are digging the allotment ready for the harvest but the harvest is not with us.

G.W.H. Reed (G.W.H.R.)

When you were thinking about the changes that could be made, did you take account of what happens in other Constitutions?

R.A.C.

Personally I did not. When I arrived at the committee I found that they had already done it – it was too late. When I saw what it was that they had done, that's when I had to start making my case. So rather than looking round the other Constitutions, it was more a case of wanting to preserve that which was precious to me, which was the spiritual dimension of the Royal Arch. I consider that we have done that and I am sure that people will look at those Lectures as they now are and will find that they are moved around a bit but not a lot is different.

A.R.B.

I don't want to concentrate entirely this evening on the changes in the Royal Arch ritual. After all we have here the defender of our Royal Arch ritual. We should not be attacking him for the changes. We should be very grateful to him this evening for emphasising to us that there is indeed a spiritual message in the Royal Arch. For many Masons I don't think that is at all obvious and many have not even considered such a possibility.

I wondered if I could ask you to comment on one part of the Royal Arch ritual. You have talked about the symbolism of the light entering the vault. I wonder if you would comment on that part of the ritual where the Candidate is first restored to light and is addressed by the First Principal through an equilateral triangle.

R.A.C.

Although we have someone present who has not been through this and we don't want to spoil it for anybody, the Candidate when he is restored to light, sees the First Principal through an equilateral triangle which is one of the ancient and universal symbols of God predating Freemasonry. There are triune Gods in ancient Egypt as well as in the Andes, Scandinavia, Germany and all sorts of other places. A triune God is not just Christian and certainly not Masonic. The whole point about this is that what the Candidate sees before him is the triangle, which is the symbol of God. In the middle of the triangle is the face of a man. It comes back to this business that a lot of the approach to God is through the way that we behave with our fellow man here on earth. I wish I could put it better. I am struggling to remember the paragraph that I once wrote. If you like I will come down and talk to you again! The approach to God has got to be through a man and if you are a Christian you will

know that it is a very special man. What we are looking at here is symbolism – brotherly love, relief and truth is where it all starts and possibly where it finishes.

F.R. Clarke (F.R.C.)

Can I just change the subject slightly? On a possibly more mundane level, I think you did say that the changes leave Craft Masonry as it is and the Royal Arch as it is and the two are now separate. But on the other hand, we are told, I think, that the Royal Arch is the completion of the Third Degree in Craft Masonry. If that is correct one might have assumed that they should be rather more closely linked than separated. And I cannot reconcile that in my mind.

R.A.C.

Let me help you. Those are the words that have been taken out. The Royal Arch is not the completion of the Third Degree. The Third Degree completes the system of morality. The Royal Arch is the system of spirituality.

If you like you have got the two triangles: one up and one down. May I suggest a perhaps better way of looking at it? This is how I put it forward: I used to run my own group of companies and you can have a holding board which in this case has got written on it “Pure Ancient Freemasonry.” The holding company has got two sister companies: one says “Craft Freemasonry” and the other says “The Holy Royal Arch.”

F.R.C.

So the linkage is still there?

R.A.C.

The linkage is undoubtedly there. We are told that the Grand Master will always remain the head of the Royal Arch. The Pro Grand Master will always be the Pro First Grand Principal. The Grand Scribe E and the Grand Secretary will always be the same person. Where they can the Treasurers will also be the same. What they have tried to do, nevertheless, is to give the Royal Arch just a little bit more attention in a sense because it’s a big job to look after both sides all the time. They have allowed the Second Grand Principal not necessarily to be the Deputy Grand Master. And indeed you have that case right now. But do remember the Third Grand Principal has never had a rank in the hierarchy of the Craft. So I think what they are trying to do is to give the Royal Arch a little bit more help from someone who is going to concentrate on it. The important matter in all of this is to take away those words, which have been misunderstood by Masons following the adoption of the Preliminary Declaration in 1813. The twenty-seven words were added in and therefore they can be taken out.

F.R.C.

They weren’t the residue of previous wisdom?

R.A.C.

No, not at all. When they re-hashed the ritual someone put them in. The fact is that we have always heard them and so we assume that nothing has changed and that that is the way that it ought to be. But this is not the case and this was indeed a later addition to the Royal Arch that we have taken out. Incidentally a lot of the obligation came the same way. We have tried to bully it up a bit. My case included a paper which, I said, shows that in the same way that the Initiation ceremony in the Craft is matched by the Initiation ceremony in the Royal Arch. There are really three Degrees in the Craft because the Installation of a Master does not truly

constitute a Degree. However in the Royal Arch there are all the constituent pieces of four Degrees in the ceremonies that take you through to being the First Principal.

C.W.W-N.

This is a very welcome re-definition in my view of aspects of the Craft and the Royal Arch. Does their separation imply that in due course there will be a change to that very confusing statement in the Book of Constitutions that Craft Freemasonry consists of three Degrees including the Holy Royal Arch?

R.A.C.

You are talking about the preliminary declaration in the *Book of Constitutions* and it has already been altered. It now will have an additional paragraph defining the position, either to other, of the Craft and the Royal Arch. Neither is superior and neither is inferior. The two main changes that we have instituted are removing the famous twenty-seven words and adding to the Preliminary Declaration, which was after all a “fudge.”

M.J.C.E.

I think Worshipful Brother Charles anticipates what I was going to ask: with Craft Masonry being, I think it is agreed, systematically de-Christianised at the time of the Union, should the removal of the twenty-seven words be seen as the continuation, the completion of unfinished business? Should the separation between Craft Masonry and the Arch have happened in 1813 or soon after?

R.A.C.

In 1813 those words were not included in the Royal Arch. They came in afterwards.

P.A. Corder (P.A.C.)

There is one thing I would like to ask our speaker. Has he ever seen a Bristol Exaltation ceremony with our Passing of the Veils?

R.A.C.

I used to live in Hampton Road and my Masonic friends from Bristol invited me to come down and see both an Initiation and an Exaltation and I was so attracted to it I daren't come again! [*laughter*] What more can I say? It's perfectly true. I thought I can't be doing this. I shall be splitting my Masonry between Surrey and Bristol. The geography was difficult and I was a businessman and it was not so easy. So, yes, I have seen it and I loved it and although I wave this ritual book at you for fun I have seen the handwritten rituals you use.

Incidentally, one of my Surrey friends, Paul Townsend, who was First Principal of Whitson Chapter and was going to be with us tonight because he brought me down also on one occasion to see a ceremony. So, thinking about it, I have seen three – two in the Chapter and one in the Craft – and yes it was wonderful! [*laughter*].

C.W.W-N.

What do you feel about the spiritual content of the Veils ceremony, as practised in this building? – bearing in mind, of course, that our present Bristol version dates only from 1899.

R.A.C.

I can't comment because I really don't know.

C.W.W-N.

There's no chance of getting the Veils reintroduced across the rest of the English Constitution I suppose? (*Laughter*)

R.A.C.

Honestly I am a minnow compared to the big decision-makers. You would need to talk to higher levels. I know they do it in Scotland. If I was you I wouldn't allow it. I would stay just as you are because you are so special. Everybody knows this. They run coaches from Surrey to come down here and so they should. It's a very nice experience.

A.R.B.

Thank you for an excellent paper and for leading such a stimulating discussion. Before we retire for dinner I would like to call upon Brother Gilbert to propose a Vote of Thanks.

R.A.G.

I do seem Brother President, to be paying the price of finding so many speakers for you, in that I have to propose the Vote of Thanks. But I can't say I am sorry because being friends of mine I couldn't possibly do that. I don't think there is any question that we have enjoyed the meeting tonight. I have made a little note to say that the paper and discussion were timely, salutary, reassuring and stimulating and also I might add skilful in view of the way he evaded that atrociously worded question which ensnared him.

Responses as you know should be brief and to the point and I shall be. I ought to add one thing. I feel that Richard is being very self-effacing when he underplays his role in the restructuring of the ritual. He was almost single-handedly responsible for preserving what was preserved and he deserves our thanks for that. I think it is clear from what has been said tonight that he has no need to be modest about that. I do feel that the lecture was timely in that we needed to be told something of the way in which the Royal Arch should be perceived and we have been so told: especially in view of the anxieties produced by the changes. Salutary in that it made us realise that we are shouting in the aisles but we don't really know what we are shouting about – now we do. Reassuring in that we know that little has really changed and that we actually have full control over how we interpret and understand it within those general limits, and perceive what the Royal Arch is. And very stimulating in that he produced by what he said quite clearly a tremendous reaction in terms of questions and comments which, while they might have descended one from another, were in no sense hostile to him and we are very grateful for what he has stimulated.

It's amazing that anyone can get so skilfully through this minefield of these fractious, seditious and troublesome people who constitute this Society but so he did. I think in essence we can say that what he has done is to remind us that quite clearly there is a distinction between the Craft and the Royal Arch. In the Craft we are concerned with morality, with our love for our neighbour. In the Royal Arch, as Richard has made quite clear, we are concerned with spirituality, with our understanding of the presence of God and His Revelation and ultimately of our love for God. The symbolism of the Royal Arch is dedicated to that end as he has quite clearly shown. We are reminded that they are not just distinct but that they are necessary and complementary parts of Masonic experience. If nothing else he has certainly reminded me of the need to urge every new Initiate that whether or not he wishes to choose to consider the Royal Arch as the traditional continuation and completion of the Craft Degrees, which clearly it is not, or something else, they are complementary and one should

go with the other. If Richard has done nothing more than just remind us of this he has given us a great deal. But he has done far more. He has given us much to think about. He has encouraged us to think and he has shown the fruits of that in the thinking and the responses that were produced immediately after his lecture. This, I think, is something for which we should be heartily grateful. We owe him a great debt for coming down and so encouraging us and I think we should express it in our usual way which is not to cry: "Let's get down to dinner," but to thank him with applause.

A RUSSIAN FIRST DEGREE CEREMONY DATING FROM 1810

**by
the Masonic Demonstration Team.
(31st May 2005)**

**recorded by
Bro A.J. Rhodes M.M. 1404**

The President introduced WBro Carey, who gave a brief introduction and a history of the Masonic Demonstration Team. The Monmouthshire Masonic Demonstration Team was formed some fifteen years ago by a group of Freemasons from Newport, dedicated to reproducing old Masonic ceremonies in the hope of leading to a better understanding of the development of the ceremonies we enjoy today. The team was drawn from a group of thirty Brethren. They were dressed in period costume and had brought the equipment of a Lodge of the early 19th century with them as props.

The demonstration was based on the account of an Initiation Ceremony in Tolstoy's novel *War and Peace*, Book 5 Chapter 1. Although the novel was published in 1868, the year described is thought to be 1812. The wording of many of the Charges was exactly as quoted in the book, but others had only been described by the author, so the words of these sections had been supplied with great care and, as far as possible, in keeping with Tolstoy's account. It is worthy of note that the text had been submitted to two experienced Russian Freemasons who felt that it was an accurate representation of what was practiced in Russian Lodges at that period.

Freemasonry in Russia was suppressed in 1822 by Czar Alexander I, who was totally opposed to the existence of any secret organisation. Tolstoy himself was not a Freemason, but in 1868 obtained the details of the ceremony from a large collection of Masonic books and manuscripts in the Rumyanster Museum in Moscow.

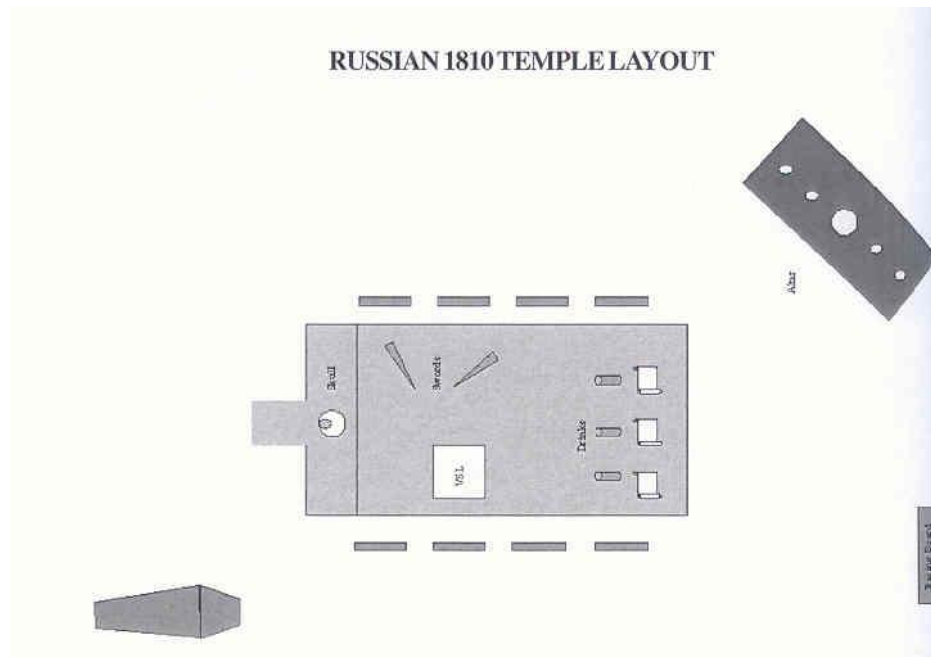
The Initiate in the novel was Pierre, the son of the Count Bezukhov, a wealthy nobleman. He had at this point of the narrative become thoroughly dissatisfied and unhappy with his aimless way of life and is described as confronting himself with questions such as "What is bad, what is good?" "What should one love and what hate?" "What am I?" "What does one live for?" "What is life and what is death?" and "What power governs it all?"

At this crucial moment of his life he left Moscow for St Petersburg, a journey that had unexpected consequences, for he met a stranger who had a decisive impact on his life. Pierre noticed two things about the stranger: first, he wore a cast ring with a seal representing a death's head; and secondly, he studied a small black book with great intensity.

The stranger unexpectedly revealed that he not only knew Pierre's father, but also knew of Pierre's concerns about his way of life. Pierre then suddenly realised that the death's head ring signifies that the stranger is a Mason. The stranger offered to help Pierre and gave him a written introduction to a prominent Mason in St Petersburg and when eventually they met, the Mason offered to sponsor Pierre as a Candidate.

The demonstration was a reproduction of Pierre's Initiation ceremony. During the ceremony short periods of silence occurred, representing much longer periods when the Candidate was

left completely alone to meditate on what had been said to him by the Master of Ceremonies. The first part of the ceremony was a preparatory one and would have taken place in an ante-room adjoining the Temple. For the purposes of the demonstration it was performed in the Lodge room. The second part was performed largely around a large dining table.



WBro Carey explained that the ceremony would begin with the interrogation of the Candidate. He added that the year is 1810 and the lights of the Temple were then dimmed to give the feeling that the ceremony was taking place in candle-light in a country mansion early in 19th century Russia. WBro Carey then retired.

The Ceremony

The Candidate was h.w. and led in by his sponsor bearing a sword and left before a large table (see illustration). The sponsor then lifted the veil covering a skull with a candle inside and lit the candle; he then removed a cloth which was covering the coffin.

Sp—(*addressing JP*)—Are you so resolved?

JP—I am.

Sp—Very well. When you hear a k. at the door uncover your eyes. I wish you courage.

JP waited alone until he heard three ks. at which point he uncovered his eyes. The Master of Ceremonies, then entered and asked JP to read a passage:

JP—In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was God. God, love, death and the brotherhood of man.

MC—Why have you come hither? You who does not believe truth. Who has not seen the light. What do you seek from us?

JP—I seek regeneration.

MC—How?

JP—Through the auspices of Freemasonry.

MC—Have you not tried religion.

JP—Yes and I have found it to be erroneous.

MC—You seek wisdom and virtue.

JP—Yes.

MC—These are the aims of our Order: *(reads aims)*. I will leave you alone again to think this over.

MC then left. Traditionally the Candidate would have been left alone for thirty minutes, deep in thought. During his time alone he paced muttering to himself, but after a while calmed down and there was silence. The MC then returned.

MC—... there are seven steps and seven virtues. It is the duty of every Freemason to encourage his Brethren.

The seven virtues are: 1) Discretion; 2) Obedience; 3) Mercy; 4) C of M; 5) Courage; 6) Generosity; 7) Love of death. Yes death must be so.

The MC once again left the Candidate for a further period during which time the Candidate muttered to himself. On his return the MC read from a scroll and then addressed the Candidate.

MC—Are you still firm in purpose to join the Brotherhood of Freemasonry?

JP—I am.

MC—The Brotherhood delivers teaching by means other than words. This chamber suggests to your heart... Ancient societies communicated their teachings by means of hieroglyphics, symbols, etc.

MC—Take off your valuables.

JP—I have none here.

MC—Give me what you have. In token of obedience give me your coat *(did so)*. Give me your left boot *(did so)*. Now, in token of candour tell me your chief passions.

JP—I have so many.

MC—That lead you to turn from virtue?

JP—Women.

MC—*(sighed)*—Women every time.

The MC then placed the h.w. back on the Candidate.

The Candidate's sponsor then entered the Lodge and addressed the Candidate.

Sp—Jean Pierre, I came to find if you are still firm in your resolve to join us. Are you?

JP—I am.

Sp—Do you face the future with firm resolve?

JP—I do.

Sp—Are you ready?

JP—For anything.

Sp—Will you go forward and not turn back.

JP—Yes, yes.

Sp—Well, I believe you. *(The Candidate was then led outside).*

A Brother in ecclesiastical garb then entered the lodge accompanied by two others uttering a Gregorian style chant. The three then lifted and removed the coffin. The three then returned bearing books, followed by a further two bewigged Brethren. One of the books was then placed on the altar and a further three Brethren (one bewigged) entered bearing swords. The Grand Master took his place on the dais.

GM—Will you see that the lodge is secure?

MC—*(begins to light candles)*—The last lot of candles were useless.

GM—Gorbachev again. Bro. MC the central candle is not lit.

MC—Just testing GM.

SW and JW then checked that the Lodge was secure.

MC—Brethren, I hele.

Breth—We conceal.

MC—GM, Brother Tegalator is improperly dressed again.

GM—No gloves again? You are fined two roubles. Do you have anything to say?

Bro. T—...

GM—*(to SW)*—How do you know yourself to be Freemason?

SW—By regular testing.

GM—*(to JW)*—How do you

JW—By sns., tkns. and the p.ps. of e.

The GM then enquired of the Secretary and Chaplain why they are here to which they responded...

GM—In His Holy Name I declare the Lodge open.

MC—I have several matters of importance: ... is being fixed. We have received invitations to the Grand Master of Russia's ball. The wine has now risen to three times the cost.

GM—Bro Gorbachev?

MC—Yes and the quality is down again. ...

Bro. Gorbachev commented and was fined two roubles by the GM. The GM then enquired if the Candidate was ready.

IG—The Candidate is waiting at the door.

GM—We will receive him.

The Candidate was then led in by his Sponsor bearing his sword. The MC stood by him.

GM—Who is it that ks?

MC—Jean Pierre.

GM—Who is the sponsor?

Sp—I, Count Wukovski.

GM—Then *Bro* Wukovski, lead him around the Temple and place him before me.

The Candidate was led around the Temple and placed before the GM. His Sponsor then gave ks.

GM—Who is it that ks?

Sp—A seeker of knowledge.

GM—This can only be gained by work. Toil ceaselessly — ... greatly.

The Candidate was then led back around the table until he was stopped by the MC who commented negatively on his state of undress. He was then led before the JW where the Sponsor repeated the ks.

JW—Who is it that ks?

Sp—A seeker of knowledge.

JW—He must have knowledge of T.G.A.O.T.U.

The Candidate was then led before the SW where the Sponsor repeated the ks.

SW—Who is it that ks?

Sp—A seeker of knowledge who has suffered much.

SW—Then he will ... amongst us. First he must show faith by entering upon a S.O. at the risk of his life. Are you willing?

JP—I am.

The SW then declared the Candidate's readiness.

GM—*(to two Brethren bearing swords)*—Bro Surgeons be ready to do your duty.

The Brethren bearing swords moved to the right of the altar. The Chaplain moved to the front. The Sponsor guided the Candidate to the front of the altar and left him in the hands of the Chaplain thereafter returning to the table.

Chap—Jean Pierre, hold this to your n.l.b. *(hands Candidate a pair of Cs.)*

The GM then obligated the Candidate after which the MC blew out the candles lighting the room.

...

GM—The MC will now reveal to you the lesser lights. *(MC partially removed h.w., but held it in place. The swords were pointed at the Candidate. All candles were then relit).*

MC—Full light now given *(removes h.w. from Candidate)*. Listen carefully to the GM.

GM—*(The GM then gave an oration including an explanation of the seven lights in the Temple (two in the W and S and five on the altar) and of the seven virtues).*

The Candidate was then led to the NW.

Chap—Now stand before the altar with ft. a r.a. in solemn meditation. *(The Candidate did so)*

Now ... before the altar prostrating yourself at the gates of the Temple as I did before

You will now rise.

The Candidate was then led around the table, clockwise, to the SW. The MC then brought the apron to the SW who invested the Candidate with it.

SW—Bro Jean Pierre, I now invest you with this apron. I now place into your keeping this stone and this pair of gloves. The GM will explain to you the meaning of all these things. Listen carefully.

GM—The apron: leather denotes strength ... direct you to purity of action and will deliver you from vice. The gloves: keep them safe and their meaning will reveal itself. Here are a second pair for you in Lodge and your Brothers and a pair of women's gloves for her you honour most.

The Sponsor then led the Candidate to the front of the GM who rose came around to the front of his pedestal to stand by the Tracing Board. He then opened a scroll and the MC held a candle to light the Tracing Board.

GM—*(then gave a beautiful oration on the symbols on the Tracing Board including the trowel, the rough & smooth ashlar, the pillar reminding us of the pillars of the Temple, the three windows or three dormers, the senses of man etc.)*

The GM then returned to the dais. The Candidate was then led once more to the SW who entrusted him with the sns. and w. including that of an E.A. as known today and that better known in the Ceremony of a certain Christian Degree of Freemasonry and also a Christian Society of Freemasonic membership.

The Candidate was then led to before the GM once more.

GM—Bro Sponsor you will conduct Bro Pierre to the Secretary to enter his name on the register. *(This was accordingly done).*

[JW–Is Bro Gorbachev asleep again?

Other Bro.–Not drunk this time?]

Sp–Bro Jean Pierre this part of the Lodge is set aside for an Initiate. Listen to the GM while he reads the statutes so that neither you nor any other can plead ignorance.

GM–(*did so*).

The GM then came down from his pedestal to welcome the Candidate into Freemasonry and wished him many years of happiness. He then introduced him to each member in turn, each of who perambulated around the Temple greeting the Candidate.

GM–(*to the Candidate*)–Be careful of Bro Gorbachev.

Chap–(*gave prayer regarding the giving of alms*).

GM–Brethren, this is a self-funding organisation and we rely on your generosity (*he added that the Brethren should not worry if they were not roubles*).

The Chaplain and MC then collected the alms from Brethren of the BMS and visitors.

GM–Brethren, we will give thanks that a new Bro has tonight been admitted amongst us.

(*prayer*) Rise and go forth with honour and humility until we return to this place.

The Brethren of the Masonic Demonstration Team then rose and perambulated out of the Temple.

Discussion

WBro Carey and the other members of the Team then reassembled to answer the questions put by the assembled Brethren. WBro Carey first pointed out that they had to a certain extent Anglicised the ceremony. For instance the Candidate would have had two shirts and would have been bled on one of them along with the other brethren (*WBro Carey pointed to a bloody shirt placed at the end of the table*). At the end of the Ceremony the GM would have said “*Preserve that memorial.*”

WBro President observed that he was rather worried about the duties of the “*Surgeons.*”

He then asked if there were any question before the proposing of the Vote of Thanks.

WBro Wallis-Newport then proposed a hearty Vote of Thanks which was received with great enthusiasm by the Brethren who responded with applause.

Vote of Thanks by C.W. Wallis-Newport

I am delighted to have been asked, albeit at very short notice, to propose this Vote of Thanks to our Brethren from South Wales – not least because I had the great pleasure of presenting my Prestonian lecture to their splendid ‘Charles Lynes’ Lodge of Installed Masters in Monmouth about two months ago, when I received a wonderful welcome. I would like to think that, when you have removed your 18th century wigs and costumes I may perhaps recognise one or two of you.

On a flippant point, much mention has been made in the dialogue to Bro Gorbachev, and those who are closely connected to us within the Bristol Masonic Society, will be aware of the fact that this year we have been subjected to very close (almost Soviet-style) control under the presidency of Bro Baker. I am tempted even now to search for ‘bugs’ under the pedestal. We have been recorded and photocopied and I even saw a camera come out a moment ago – all of which, I would have thought, was typical of the more rigid regimes in Eastern Europe of recent time.

I can clearly remember reading the section to which your Orator referred in Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* long before I became a Mason. I was very struck by the fact, as I recall it, that Pierre’s companion in the stage-coach was described as a Rosicrucian Freemason. There is, of course, a tradition of Rosicrucian Freemasonry in Russia and I rather fancy that this fact was illustrated by our Welsh Brethren in their demonstration tonight; one or two familiar signs, symbols and indeed expressions, that emerged in the presentation would perhaps be familiar to a certain minority here this evening.

As indicated, the demonstration was based on Tolstoy’s great novel, which describes Pierre’s subsequent initiation ceremony. As mentioned 18th century Freemasonry in Russia had a very strong Rosicrucian, and typically continental (and rather more philosophical) approach which, once again, the presentation drew out most beautifully. Perhaps our own Masonic predecessors had a somewhat similar mode of working here in England at that time; although far less esoteric than their French and Russian cousins, I dare to suggest.

I would just mention one further thing. You referred to your own relatively recent origins out of the Province of Monmouth, by way of New Zealand and the brother who had apparently come by the ritual. I am currently in the process of researching the history of the Bristol Masonic Society and I seem to recall, although I have not had sufficient time to check up on this, that there was a demonstration team from Swansea some thirty years ago (in 1977) which performed for us a similar 18th century Russian ceremony. Therefore, Brethren of Monmouth, you are presumably the natural successors of those earlier Brethren from South Wales – although I am sure there is no-one here who could confirm it, since it was a rather long time ago.

Brethren, I won’t go on any further since time is getting rather short, but in thanking our Russo-Welsh visitors on your behalf, may I now ask you to show your very warm appreciation in the usual manner.

SUMMER OUTING TO GLASTONBURY

(Saturday 9th July 2005)

by

A.R. Baker

Glastonbury, shrouded in Arthurian myth and rich in mystical associations, was once an important destination for pilgrims and at Glastonbury Abbey, the monks claimed to have found the bones of King Arthur and his wife Guinevere. Glastonbury Tor, a landmark for miles around is a natural hill crowned by the remains of a 14th century church. While water from the Chalice well, it is said, will keep you looking young and healthy.

Six members of the Society, together with their ladies, met up in Glastonbury High Street in time to watch the Church of England procession, which set off from The Parish Church of St. John the Baptist at 11.30 am and made a splendid spectacle.

They then repaired to The George and Pilgrim hotel in the heart of the town for a sumptuous lunch. Built around 1475, the hotel is one of the oldest and finest buildings still standing in Glastonbury. The front of the building is highly decorative with mullioned windows and a striking embattled parapet. Three carved stone shields just above the entranceway add to the overall appearance. Their heraldic insignia are; the arms of Edward IV; St George's Cross; the third is unattributable.

The hotel's cellar on the southern side has the remains of a tunnel that is thought to have run all the way to Glastonbury abbey and the Abbot's gateway where it is believed there was a porter's lodge, a distance of approximately a quarter of a mile. The tunnel is now blocked some twenty feet beyond the hotel under the High Street but a Mrs Bilbrough recorded a trip she made down it in her diary, written on 21st May 1918:

‘Off we started on our underground journey down a flight of fearfully steep steps, dark and damp and slippery . . . We groped our way to where the far-famed passage was; which had a great stone step at the entrance, and was only three feet in height, so that those who used it must have crawled on their knees, resting at intervals where ledges are cut in the sides for that purpose. Fancy going for a quarter of a mile like that, when even a few feet of it made my back ache and my limbs quiver all over from the unnatural strained position.’

Parts of the interior of the hotel still have the original oak beams and stone slab flooring. Early carvings, figurines and statues are still in place in the bar area. The Society had booked one of the upper rooms for lunch and, after eating and drinking well, Bro Charles Wallis-Newport gave a short address on the connection between Glastonbury and Bro Frederick Bligh Bond [his full paper on Bligh Bond appears below].

After lunch the party returned to the church of St. John the Baptist and climbed the 15th century tower, which afforded an excellent view of the surrounding town and countryside. They then proceeded up the High street, pausing at a bookshop or two, on their way to visit the Masonic Hall which was specially opened for them. As time was by then running short the party split up to visit the Abbey and the Chalice Well though no-one had the energy left to climb the Tor.

This was a very enjoyable visit and the party was very grateful to Bro Charles Wallis-Newport for making all the arrangements. It was the first summer outing the Society has made for many years although such an outing used to be a regular feature of the timetable years ago.

We learned a lot of lessons for future visits – not least that we should do more visiting before having lunch and perhaps partake of a smaller and less liquid repast!

Section II

2004-2005

Papers Delivered Elsewhere by BMS Members

THE REASONS FOR MASONIC SECRECY

by

A.R. Baker Pr. G. Chap., P.M.1404.

Presented to The Bristol Installed Masters' Lodge (No. 8168) – 25th May 2005

Freemasons are sworn to secrecy in each of the three Craft Degrees and also in each of the other Orders or “Higher Degrees.”

‘Secret’ is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as meaning: “Kept or to be kept from general knowledge or view, hidden from all or all but a few, unrevealed, covert, confidential.” A secret, therefore, is something known to those who keep it, something to be told to the privileged, and to be kept from those who may not know it. Such a secret separates the group who know, from those who are excluded from knowing. Is such a separation the only reason for Masonic secrecy – to construct a group separate from the outside world? I don’t think so.

A secret often breeds suspicion in those who are not a party to it. Freemasonry has seen persecution from the first Papal Bull in 1738, to the interrogation of John Coustos by the Inquisition in Portugal, down to the Nazis even as close as Jersey and more recently in some Eastern Bloc countries. Freemasonry in this country has even more recently suffered the results of such suspicion and prejudice. Grand Lodge, understandably therefore, has been anxious to play down our categorisation as a Secret Society; first styling Freemasonry as “a society with secrets” and more recently as “a private society.”

The very first thing a Bristol Initiate is told is: *‘as this is a prick to your flesh at this time so should the remembrance be to your conscience hereafter should you ever attempt improperly to reveal any of the secrets ...’* and so on. The Obligations that we have each taken are mainly concerned with the maintenance of secrecy. Each of them was, until comparatively recently, linked to apparently gruesome physical penalties (though interestingly there is no penalty relating to the Rose Croix Degree). These penalties can either be looked upon, in the Craft at least, as symbols relating to the content of each of the Degrees, or else as equivalent to the childhood “cross my heart and hope to die.” If they show nothing else, the penalties demonstrate that Masons were supposed to take their Obligations to secrecy seriously. In the Bristol First Degree we go on to tell the Candidate that if he betrays the trust reposed in him he ‘will become as an Ishmaelite amongst us, perjury will stamp her brand of infamy, the finger of scorn will ever be pointed, curses will supply the place of blessings, the universal hiss of contempt,’ and so on. We are surely talking about important secrets.

As an aside, in the Third Degree, a Mason is also exhorted to preserve the secrets of others when confided to him as such. This, however, is really about the qualities of good friendship and just tells us not to be gossips. It also reminds us that promises are promises – above all, in the whole of life, a man of honour should keep his word. In this sense the secrecy itself is a lesson in morality but this kind of secrecy is not what any of us mean when we talk about the Secrets of Masonry.

The First Degree Obligation implies that the secrets of Freemasonry could be easily communicated, perhaps even by accident unless care is taken to avoid it. Each of us here today has sworn not to write, indite, carve, mark, engrave and so on whereby any letter, character or figure may become legible or intelligible so that our secret arts and hidden mysteries may not improperly become known.

The “Secrets” that we learn and actually impart during each of the three Craft Degrees consist of Steps, Signs, Grips or Tokens, and Words. Such signs were important for the ancient journeyman (operative) mason on arriving at a new building site, to allow him to demonstrate his level of experience and expertise so that he could be employed at an appropriate level and receive his just reward. Even so, the real secrets of the mediaeval operative masons were not these signs but practical secrets such as methods of proving uprights and horizontals and perhaps most important the ability to construct a right angle. So the words and tokens used as modes of recognition even then were not themselves the real secrets but were used to protect the true practical secrets. Grand Lodge has recently suggested that today rather than being considered “secret” these modes of recognition are merely “private” as are other means of identification which it is proper to keep to oneself such as one’s P.I.N. (number). After all in our society secrecy is looked upon with suspicion while privacy is an inalienable right.

In both the sense of recognition and the sense of confidentiality then, Freemasonry has no secrets of value to the outside world. The secrets we impart during each of the three Craft Degrees are only of value to her Brethren in recognising their membership and rank within the organisation. In fact the secrets that we have discussed so far are not really secret at all. These so-called Masonic secrets have been exposed or years – in fact for centuries. Go to any public library and you can discover these secrets. The fact that anyone can find them out if they wish to, in no way however, detracts from the moral lesson provided by a promise of secrecy. But my point is that the protection of secrets such as these together with the promotion of basic morality and charity, as is encouraged by every established religion the world over, would not justify the existence of a secret society and certainly can not explain why Freemasonry has survived for some four centuries.

In the Bristol First Degree we are told that the secrets of the Craft are *‘never indiscriminately given but reserved for Candidates according to their merit and ability.’* So we are obviously not talking about morality or charity, which are after all both common knowledge.

In the questions before Passing the candidate is asked: *What is Masonry?* To which the reply is: *A beautiful system of morality veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols.* There is a pronounced change though by the Third Degree, where the Candidate is told: *guide your reflections to that most interesting of all human studies, the knowledge of yourself.* So that when the Principal Sojourner is asked in the Royal Arch (which was until recently denominated the ‘Completion of the Third Degree’) *What do you mean by Masonry?* He answers: *‘That grand and comprehensive science which more especially teaches us the knowledge of ourselves’* and so on.

It is in the Third Degree that a Mason learns to differentiate between a “secret” and a “mystery.” A “mystery,” in the Masonic sense, is that which is concealed but may be discovered; that which is concealed not by law or promise but hidden by its very nature. It is not so much *kept secret from us* but *unknown to us*, as are all things of which we are ignorant. It is at present hidden from us by our own inability to comprehend it, not because

we are shut out from it, but because we are not yet prepared or equipped to learn or understand it. A “Mystery” in the true sense is hidden not because it is obscure but because it is profound. Such were the Ancient Mysteries and indeed the Christian mystery of which Christ himself said: “He that hath ears to hear; let him hear” (Mark Ch. 4, v. 9).

In present-day speculative Masonry it is not until reaching the Third Degree that the poor Candidate is given a clue that the Signs, Tokens and Words are not the real secrets of Masonry. Even in the Third Degree, after all his patience and effort, he is still only given signs and words but he is for the first time told that these are not the real secrets – only substituted secrets since the real ones, it turns out, have been lost! It is only in the Third Degree that the aspiring Mason gets the first clue as to what the genuine secrets of Masonry might be. The clue comes in the opening of the Degree (which of course he doesn’t see at his own Raising). It is in the opening that the W.M. asks the J.W. where he expects to find the Genuine Secrets. *In the Centre. Why in the Centre, Bro J.W? Because it is that point within around which, if a Master Mason keeps his conduct circumscribed, he cannot materially err.*

Although her “secrets” are of no value outside the brotherhood, Freemasonry’s “mysteries,” her teachings, and her philosophy are all of great value to the world and Freemasonry is keen to give them out to any man who is capable of assimilating them. Such a man should demonstrate a sincere desire to learn that which is necessary as a preliminary preparation for such knowledge. He should show that he is a true and humble seeker and knock on the door of Freemasonry. It will then readily be opened to him for: *‘We have no concealment from those who are worthy of the Light.’*

So, if the secrets imparted during the ceremonies are of no value to one who is not a Freemason and access to the mysteries of Freemasonry is available on request, what are the real reasons for the secrecy required of Freemasons?

There is a very ancient rule by which the possessors of esoteric knowledge have always cautioned their pupils to maintain secrecy. Those who have actually written to open up and explain occult subjects have sometimes changed their minds. Coventry Patmore, for instance, destroyed the manuscript of a volume containing the fruits of ten years of mystical thought. Mrs Atwood got as far as publishing her *Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery* but then had a change of heart and withdrew it, buying back as many of the sold copies as she could and burning them all on her lawn. Within Freemasonry, W.L. Wilmshurst who wrote *The Meaning of Masonry* and *The Masonic Initiation*, often impressed on his followers that by whatever means they discovered profound secrets, their progress in a spiritual sense depended largely on their silence with regard to them. They were to: ‘... govern the lips as they were palace doors, the King within’ (*The Life and Work of W.L. Wilmshurst*, p. 76). And, of course at the conclusion of every Bristol Craft ceremony the I.P.M. says: *‘Brethren, nothing now remains but that we should lock up such secrets as have been entrusted to us in the safe and sacred repository of our hearts...’* and so on.

This type of secrecy could be advocated for one or more of several reasons:

1. Firstly it must be admitted that Initiation is a rite of passage and each of the ceremonies can be regarded as such. A ceremony cannot make much of an impression on the initiate if he knows what is going to happen before he goes through it; so the ceremonies of Freemasonry should remain secret in order to make as profound an impression as possible on the Candidate.

2. The second reason might be to protect the uninitiated, and therefore unprepared, from knowledge that might be harmful to them and if misused possibly harmful to others. In a sense one might say, in the *Star Wars* idiom, that this is to protect them from their own “dark sides.”
3. Thirdly the aim might have been to avoid ridicule from the profane, who are unable to understand a highly spiritual interpretation of the ceremonies which if presented to them leaves them unable to respond without disdain. As the Gospel according to St. Matthew says: “Give not that which is holy unto dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matthew Ch. 7, v. 6).
4. Fourth and lastly the intention might possibly have been to avoid the accusation of blasphemy from the established religions, which are often very exclusive in their view of the acceptable path by which a man should reach towards God. It may be surmised that the Knights Templar unjustly suffered such accusations as also has modern Freemasonry from the attacks of the anti-masons.

For many of us, however, it seems that the true “Secret” of Freemasonry *can not* be communicated for it is not simple information but an actual living experience.

To quote Joseph Fort Newton:

‘The secret of Masonry, like the secret of life, can be known only by those who seek it, serve it, live it. It cannot be uttered; it can only be felt and acted. It is in fact an open secret and each man knows it according to his quest and capacity. Like all the things most worth knowing, no-one can know it for another and no-one can know it alone. It is known only in fellowship, by the touch of life upon life, spirit upon spirit’ (*Short Talks on Masonry*, ‘Secrecy, (1928), p. 61).

One of the great Masonic teachers of the 1920s, J.S.M. Ward, wrote: ‘The lost secrets are the nature and attributes of God, which must be realised by each man for himself, and no other man can really communicate them’ (*The M.M.’s Book*, p. 40). He also wrote that Hiram Abiff: ‘*could not* [his italics] reveal the secret, for it was an experience and not to be communicated by words to any living man’ (*The Masonic Record* 2, (1922), p. 820).

What these authors are referring to is no less than the mystical experience and can no more be communicated by one man to another than you or I can communicate the nature of the colour green to a blind man or describe the symphonies of Mozart to one who is deaf. Even those mystics who have made the attempt to convey their life-changing experience have been unable to do so, real and profound though it has been for them. Each man must find his own path; no system can lay down a path for all to follow. The best that can be done is to point out the direction to those who can appreciate that there is a goal, and outline the dangers which may be involved – especially for the novice working alone – and then leave each to lay his own path to that goal.

But surely, if the secrets of Freemasonry are by their very nature not communicable, then in a sense they might reasonably be expected to protect themselves and any attempted *Masonic Exposure* must surely be futile. In which case why are oaths of secrecy required of Freemasons at every Degree they take?

The answer must surely be at least two-fold:

1. First the intention may have been to imply to the uninitiated that there is something in Freemasonry that is worth having, to encourage the inquisitive man to join and search for the hidden treasure. In this sense Freemasonry could be regarded as using an “illusion of secrecy” for the real secrets are clearly not the modes of recognition that are so readily and early imparted. But the thoughtful and spiritually minded Brother will realise quickly the fact that there is a real “Secret,” that there is more concealed beneath the surface of the ceremonies – more than some simple exhortations to moral conduct, inculcated by every religion the world over, mixed up with encouragement to be charitable to one’s fellow creatures.
2. The second intention might have been to mislead the profane investigator into believing that the private recognition signals are all that Freemasonry is trying to protect so that they delve no further and are protected from the possible psychological trauma risked by unguided voyages into the subconscious.

So I am proposing Brethren, that Masonic secrecy is a kind of smoke-screen that implies to those who can see that there is something of real value behind it but at the same time conceals the truth from those who only give it a casual glance.

In conclusion I will quote again from W.L. Wilmshurst:

‘the only secrets worth the name or the finding are those incommunicable ones which discover themselves within the personal consciousness of the seeker who is in earnest to translate ceremonial representation into facts of spiritual experience’

(The Meaning of Masonry, pp. 138-9).

Brethren, it is our duty in making a daily advancement in Masonic knowledge to ensure that we do not remain among those:

‘who have placed their feet only upon the threshold of our order but wanting knowledge and perseverance have never been able to penetrate into the glorious building, but ... remain ignorant of the mighty splendours blazing forth in the interior of the Temple.’

PEACE CHAPTER – FOUNDERS TOAST

proposed by

WBro A.B. Jenkins PFP, PPrGSN.

(13th May 2005)

Most Excellent, Excellent Companion Second Provincial Grand Principal, Excellent Companions, Companions.

Most Excellent, I am delighted that you have asked me to propose the toast to the Founders of the Chapter. This Toast was always given at Installation meetings right up until the early 1990s and it is particularly appropriate that we should think of our Founders tonight on the 75th anniversary of the Chapter.

I must be one of the few members left who actually knew any of the Founders – for it was as far back as 1959 – forty-six years ago – that as a new Exalte, I had the privilege of meeting and getting to know two Founders: Ex Comp Sydney Bailey who had been the Chapter's very first First Principal in 1930, and Ex Comp Charles Reece who for many, many years was the Chapter's Treasurer.

Unfortunately, I never knew Ex Comp Hubert Hunt who was, perhaps, our most distinguished Founder. He was the Chapter's first Director of Ceremonies. He was the leading light in the local musical world of his day: a Doctor of Music, and the organist at Bristol Cathedral as well as a composer of some repute. He composed songs for many of the Bristol Lodges: for Saint Vincent; Cabot; Peace; and Chatterton; and there must have been many more. I feel I must find out much more about Hubert Hunt and he certainly must have a place of honour when we come to write up our Chapter's history.

It was Charles Reece I got to know the best. He was quite a small chap but he stood out amongst all the Officers as someone who had an immense knowledge of Masonic ritual and of our Rules and Regulations – a man of few words, but, when he did speak, everyone paid attention. We all respected him enormously. Charles Reece told me quite a lot about Bristol Masonry as it was back in the 1920s and 30s, at a time when our Chapter was founded.

How so very different it was then when compared with our Masonry today! The ceremonies are more or less the same but the character and quality of the after-meetings has changed completely; caused almost entirely by the dramatic and extensive economic and cultural changes in society at large during the intervening years. Just think about it – our Founders would have known nothing of television, some would not even have had a radio, and only a few would have owned a motor car or a telephone – and that 'special holiday' for many would have been no more than a week or so at Bournemouth or Torquay. No wonder that Masons of that time looked forward to their Lodge and Chapter meetings as social events – events to be treasured. Everyone then wanted to join us – our Chapter's membership quickly rose to over a hundred and there was a long waiting list.

The after-meetings had many characteristics of an Edwardian dinner party – good manners, 'appropriate' conversation, and a very strict Masonic etiquette, set and enforced by highly respected and rather awesome Past Masters and Principals. This resulted in each Lodge and

Chapter developing a 'personality' of its own – what do you call it? – its own special 'atmosphere,' traces of which can still be seen in some of our Lodges today. Look out for them when you next visit, say, Saint Vincent, Royal Sussex, or Robert Thorne Lodges.

The after-dinner speakers vied with one another as to who could give the most interesting and entertaining speech – there were many quotations from Kipling, whose works were very popular at the time; from Shakespeare, from Robbie Burns; and there were comic pieces such as 'Albert and the Lion.' They had sentimental ballads – often sung by members doing their party-piece, and short piano recitals which would have included many of Hubert Hunt's compositions – no doubt Hubert, himself, would have been an active participant. All this activity helped to create and maintain a very special and quite unique spirit of fellowship among the members and an intense loyalty to their own particular Lodge or Chapter.

One old Past Master of my own Lodge, WBro Sage, told me that when he entered the front door of this building he felt that he had entered another world – a haven of harmony, peace and comradeship – leaving everything to do with the mundane world outside the door – all its hardship, suffering and nastiness. And the world outside was indeed a hard one with high unemployment, no National Health Service and a high death rate from the many diseases which have since been conquered.

When I joined the Chapter in the 50s, our after-meetings still retained many features of the earlier age. The Past Principals were treated with great respect and deference and the few old-timers left, such as Charles Reece, tried to keep the old customs going but the quality of the after-dinner speeches was already falling and those old ballads failed to appeal to the new members of the 60s and 70s.

One interesting point I remember from those days – money was never collected at the dining table. Dining fees were then part of the annual subscription and the Almoner collected any donations for the Masonic institutions very discretely and in private.

We did not have a bar in this building until 1980. It was only after this date that the new Bristol Masonic Club, which ran the bar, started to supply all the drinks to the Lodges and Chapters and they installed mini-bars in all the dining rooms. Before this time, every Treasurer had to order his own crates of beer and soft drinks from Moran's across the road. The Lodge Stewards put out the bottles in little groups on the dining tables and members helped themselves – with many a squabble over 'who had what' from the limited choice. We all needed to bring with us a special 'working-tool' – a bottle-opener! I still have mine, a fine specimen with my Lodge name and number and the square and compasses engraved on the handle.

In general, the post-war members of the Province thought the introduction of the bar was a splendid idea – long overdue. But it did sound the final death knell on the old-fashioned after-meeting. Members now met in the bar before the ceremony, went down to the bar after the ceremony and before dinner which was delayed to give them time to do so, and quite a number also hoped that the after-meeting proceedings would end promptly so that they could go to the bar before leaving for home. And, of course, the Bristol Masonic Club was only too happy to encourage the use of its facilities to provide funds for the Province.

Masonry has had a bad press in the 1980s over various alleged scandals and a suggestion by some Christian Churches that Masonry was not compatible with their teachings. Since then

we have deliberately played down the spiritual element in our own Rituals, particularly in the Royal Arch, and emphasised instead what ‘good fun’ it is to be a Mason and to raise money for a wide range of public charities – in earlier times charity collections were limited to the Masonic Benevolent Institutions, our own schools, hospital and care homes.

Whatever the reasons – and there are many – the membership of our Chapter has fallen dramatically, from 120 in 1960, to 90 in 1980, and now, in 2005 to less than 40.

Our Founders would be disappointed. They had a vision of building a better world founded on the principles of Masonry, where spirituality and morality are combined and where to be a ‘companion’ meant something very special, much more than being just a dining acquaintance! But their vision is not dead, it lies waiting to be rekindled by a new generation of Masons. Our duty to the Founders is to keep their vision alive in these difficult times. Let us now remember and honour them.

Companions – I ask you to rise and drink the Toast to ‘The Founders’ of Peace Chapter.

EARLY REFERENCES TO IRISH ROYAL ARCH MASONRY IN BRISTOL

by

C.W. Wallis-Newport, Prestonian Lecturer 2002.

Presented to Bristol Installed First Principals' Chapter – Sat 9th April 2005

Most Excellent, on receiving the request to deliver a short address to the Chapter this morning, I thought that the first thing I must do was to establish what was meant by a short address. Consequently, I made enquiries with Scribe Ezra, to be told that such should be not much longer than thirty minutes as – by this stage – everyone will be looking forward to the bun fight which awaits us downstairs. Now as it happens, Most Excellent, I am not at all out of sympathy with these sentiments and will, therefore, endeavour to complete my remarks in less than the designated time – and hope that what I will have to say will, nevertheless, be of some small interest to the Companions here this morning.

Some of you will have heard me say in the past that, in terms of the many significant similarities within both the Craft and Royal Arch – and indeed the very logical and identical sequence in which the senior Christian Degrees are received in both Ireland and Bristol – there can be no more interesting liaison anywhere in the Masonic world than that which once existed between Bristol and her sister-city of Cork.

Now, it is often stated on this side of the Irish Sea – quite erroneously as it happens – that the very first reference to Royal Arch Freemasonry occurred in our own native city of Bristol; such being an allusion to a 'Modern' Lodge, No. 220, meeting in the Crown Tavern in Christmas Street on 7th August 1758. This was to precede, six days later, an emergency meeting on 13th August when Bro William Gordon and Bro John Thompson were 'raised' to the Degree of Royal Arch Masons. (As you will appreciate, this is an interesting description in that 'raised' is a term which, nowadays, is solely associated with this Third Degree of Craft Masonry). However, there had been an even earlier Royal Arch reference appearing in the records of the 'Antient' Grand Lodge of England in 1752, with a definitive working of the Degree – in an 'Antient' Lodge, likewise, at Fredericksburg, Virginia – on the 22nd December of the following year, 1753, when an Irish-style form of ceremonial was almost certainly adhered to.

The Bristol record is interesting, however, in that the Grand Lodge of England at the time in question denied the very existence of a Royal Arch Degree; therefore, the manner in which it was worked in Bristol by their ostensible 'Modern' Companions (of Lodge No. 220 at the Crown) was quite clearly 'Antient' working in practice. At that early stage of Masonic development in the city, each of the so-called 'Modern' Lodges followed the 'Antient' Grand Lodge procedure.

It may be recalled that the 'Antient' Grand Lodge not only recognised the Degree from the outset, but permitted it to be worked under the Warrant of the original Craft Lodge. This was,

of course, very much the Irish practice also – and had quite clearly been the *modus operandi* adopted by the Companions of Bristol during the late Summer of 1758.

It may be of interest to observe that Christmas Street, in the mid-18th century, represented the extremity of the quayside in that part of the Old Port situated on what was then the still-tidal River Frome. This entire area was handsomely endowed with Taverns and Ale Houses to accommodate the trading and maritime fraternity – a large proportion of whom, I need hardly tell you, hailed from Ireland. Likewise, many of the Innkeepers, both male and female, originated from the Munster seaports of county Cork – and it is not at all improbable that the Crown Tavern, of early Royal Arch fame, was owned by one such member of the mid-18th century Bristol-Irish community!

Now, as it happens – and this is very much food for thought in terms of the Masonic links between Bristol and county Cork – an even *earlier* reference to Royal Arch activity emanates (perhaps not surprisingly) from the ancient medieval harbour-town of Youghal, which is situated at the mouth of Munster's beautiful and mystic Blackwater River. The relevant event, which is by far the first-ever independent record of Royal Arch Masonry, anywhere in the world, refers to Lodge No. 21 of Ireland – which assembled at Youghal on St. John's Day, the 27th December, 1742. A detailed account in *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* of that time described – among many other fascinating Masonic features – a quite remarkable procession, in which appeared “two Apprentices, bare headed, one with a figure 24 inch Gage (*sic*) and another with Common Gavel; two Excellent Masons, one bearing a Level and the other a Plum (*sic*) Rule; and the ROYAL ARCH carried by two (further) Excellent Masons.”

The occasion must have been one of great Masonic celebration, since the newspaper account was preceded by a statement to the effect that: “The first salutation on the Quay at Youghal – upon their coming out of the LODGE CHAMBER – was the ships firing their guns - - - and with their colours flying!” The obvious importance of this account to the world of Freemasonry, in terms of the Royal Arch Degree, is beyond dispute - - - - and it exemplifies a highly confident, and very public exhibition, of the Craft (and indeed the Royal Arch) in Ireland at that time, with all its attendant symbolism. It remains a vivid indication of the vibrant state of Irish Freemasonry, notably in county Cork, in the first half of the 18th century – there having been no corresponding celebration recorded on the quayside of Bristol or, indeed, at any other English seaport either prior to that point or subsequently.

Before reverting to Bristol – whose first Royal Arch reference, in 1758, ranks not first, but *fifth* in the sequence of recorded events – it is of interest to note that the record which immediately post-dates Youghal, in terms of antiquity, also emanates from Irish sources; namely from the Minute Book of Vernon Lodge, No. 123 at Coleraine, on 16th April 1752 – when a Brother Sampson Moore is nonchalantly, but very distinctly, described as ‘a Royal Arch Mason.’ Thereafter, following a brief reference to the Degree in the Minutes of the ‘Antient’ Grand Lodge (of resident Irishmen in London!) on 22nd September 1752, a transatlantic source then emerges merely fifteen months later; namely, in a Chapter at Fredericksburg, on 22nd December 1753. (Some of you may recall that the celebrated George Washington, himself, was initiated at a Lodge in the same town during the previous year).

Returning to the Bristol scene, fifteen years later, an indication of the confusion which existed among the ‘Antient’ and ‘Modern’ Masons of the city is illustrated by the fact that an ‘Antient’ Lodge (then meeting at the Sun Tavern) accepted an invitation to switch their allegiance to the alternative ‘Modern’ Constitution.

No sooner had they enrolled under the banner of the 'Moderns' than they received a letter from the Grand Secretary, Thomas French, on 6th October 1768, admonishing them for having 'raised' (among five others) a Brother John White to the 'sublime degree of a Royal Arch Mason.' As a consequence of this somewhat cavalier attitude toward the Royal Arch – which the 'Moderns' universally, and consistently, refused to recognise – these opportunistic members of the Sun Lodge then returned, briefly, to the 'Antient' Grand Lodge before their somewhat schizophrenic assembly was removed from the latter's Register, in entirety, very shortly thereafter. At least three of their membership – including George Antrobus (an 18th century rogue of the very lowest order), Joshua French and William Wady – were founders of the Lodge of Hospitality in August 1769, with the same trio becoming founders, also, of the associated Chapter of Charity which was consecrated, as No. 9, on the Register of the then recently-formed 'Modern' Grand Chapter, in December the same year.

It may well have been as a result of the indigent, and highly independent, reaction of those energetic 'Antient' Masons in Bristol – just over one year earlier – that the newly converted 'Modern' Grand Lodge began to 'see the light' with regard to the Holy Royal Arch Degree. Certainly no Chapter, as such, was authorised by the 'Moderns' anywhere in England before 1769!

Sadly, the records of the first fifteen years of our Chapter of Charity (from 1769 to 1784) are no longer available in Bristol, and it is impossible to say with certainty, therefore, how active (or otherwise) this so-called 'Modern' assembly of Royal Arch Masons happened to be at this time. No definitive evidence of the Veils Ceremony exists from this period; although it is almost certain that the concurrent 'Antient' Lodge in Bristol – also formed in 1769 (and to be mentioned, in more detail) – was practising this very important part of Irish Chapter-work at the time in question! It is perhaps equally likely that the 'Modern' Chapter of Charity was *not doing so* – by way of reinforcing the dissension, which then existed between the two diametrically-opposed English Grand Lodges.

In fact, towards the end of the 18th century, the Bristol Craft – which had rarely supported more than two working Lodges (with perhaps ten or twelve members attending each) from the 1750s – barely survived on occasions, and virtually ceased to exist as the final decade of the century came to a close. Paradoxically this was at a late stage when – in Cork – the Craft and Royal Arch Degrees continued to thrive, as it had done throughout the previous seventy years or so. One significant factor emerges, however, and that is: during the late-18th century, when 'Modern' Masonry in Bristol was on the verge of collapse, that which remained (being of the altogether more enthusiastic 'Antient' and, therefore, Irish persuasion) was in total accord with the Masonic practice of Munster.

A Masonically important fact to consider, in this regard, is that several latter-day Bristolians of Cork-Huguenot ancestry (comprising, in the main, junior branches of the Daltera and Bonbonous families) had earlier helped to hold the Bristol Craft together during the 1750s – and were to prosper for several generations in the city, as Shipbrokers and Traders. Some, in due course, were to become members of Bristol's ancient Society of Merchant Venturers; the equivalent of Cork's old Committee of Merchants! Interestingly, members from the senior branches of those same Huguenot families, would appear to have survived in Cork well into the 19th century – somewhat longer, as it happens, than their junior kinsmen in Bristol.

Due to the poor economic state of affairs (arising, largely, out of the war with France) the Lodge of Hospitality was one of those Masonic assemblies in a very sad state during the late 1790s and, in fact, virtually came to an end. Bearing in mind its association with the Chapter of Charity, it did not work at all for seven years at around this time, and it is an indication of the abysmal administration of the so-called 'Modern' Grand Lodge in London that the Warrant was not withdrawn. Indeed, as already indicated, Masonry of the 'Modern' variety – of which 'Hospitality' and 'Charity' formed a part – was at a particularly low ebb in Bristol at this point and had, as previously stated, all but ceased to exist. One striking and extraordinary exception to this state of affairs, however, was the very vibrant Lodge No. 162 of the 'Antient' (and, therefore, Irish-style) Grand Lodge of England. This was, in effect, a Lodge of Irish Masons meeting and working at the Mulberry Tree Tavern in Broad Street where they received a constant stream of Hibernian visitors during this very interesting period of our country's history. Members of Lodge No. 162 (later known as 'Jerusalem' Lodge) were to become the eventual founders of today's Royal Clarence Lodge (formed as the 'Mariners') – and it was, without doubt, the dominant Masonic assembly in Bristol at that time. It was quite clearly a veritable haven for any duly qualified traveller from the shores of county Cork! Not surprisingly, perhaps, the majority of these fraternal visitors were from Lodges in Munster, and there is evidence of Masonic Knights Templar from Ireland – and very erudite Royal Arch Companions – having visited this energetic Bristol-Irish Lodge in the last decade of the 18th century. Furthermore, being an 'Antient' Grand Lodge assembly – which strictly followed the Irish mode of practice – it is quite evident that each of the different Degrees was worked in Bristol under the Craft Warrant of Lodge No. 162.

With particular regard to Royal Arch practice in Lodge No. 162, we have a first rate record from the Minutes of successive days (covering both 12th and 13th August 1795) indicating that an undisputed Irish form of ceremony took place – all in the presence of visitors from Munster who, significantly, assisted in the Ritual. In this particular regard, the future Irish Masonic historian, Robert Millikin of Lodge No. 212 (I.C.), was actually thanked from the Chair for helping to 'raise' Bro William Symmons and Bro William Gibson 'to the Sublime degree of Holy Royal Arch mason.' Once again, that fascinating admixture of phraseology, which we use in a different context within our Lodges and Chapters of today.

In the 'Antient' Lodge and Chapter under review – which was dominated, as previously indicated, by resident Irishmen in Bristol – the title of the Excellent Companion occupying the Chair in those date was that of High Priest. This rank represented the supreme ruler of an Irish Royal Arch Chapter well into the 19th century when, in 1829, the Grand R.A. Chapter of Ireland ostensibly demoted the Office in favour of today's Excellent King which is the equivalent of First Principal in an English Chapter; with the High Priest and the Chief Scribe representing the Second and Third Principals, respectively.

Additionally, in the Chapter working within 'Antient' Lodge No. 162 in Bristol, during the 1790s, were the traditionally-Irish ranks of Royal Arch Captain and the 'First, Second and Third' Grand Masters; with the High Priest, as previously stated, presiding over all. It may be safely assumed that the Royal Arch Captain was guardian of the senior and most important White Veil – with separate (and junior) Captains of the Scarlet, Purple and Blue Veils clearly implied thereby.

The ceremony of Passing the Veils has always comprised an integral part of Irish Royal Arch practice, although such takes place within the main Tabernacle or Temple, rather than in the separate Veils Room which, incidentally, was not introduced into Bristol until as late as

1899. Prior to that time, this particular part of the Veils ceremony was not worked, as such, but merely explained verbally – with the somewhat surprising statement, contained with the Bristol Ritual of those days, that “from want of room we are obliged to omit them- - -!” One can but wonder how much less space would have been available in the old 18th century quayside Taverns.

A further and equally startling anomaly in this regard is that, at the time of introducing the full Veils Ceremony in 1899, only the first three Veils were decreed by the reforming Grand Superintendent of the day. In fact, this remarkable state of affairs continued for the next thirty years, the fourth, and most important, White Veil not being brought in to the great scheme of things until 1929! Sadly, during the earlier period in which, quite clearly, inadequate research had been undertaken by the senior Companions concerned, there would appear to have been a general deficiency of knowledge in Bristolian Royal Arch circles until well into the 20th century.

Bristolians were by no means the only ones against whom this charge might be levied, and it is of interest to quote A.E. Waite in his *New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* which was published in 1921. The Royal Arch Degree in England, he declared with characteristic candour, has suffered ‘in the hands of successive generations of muddled revisers’ until as practised ‘it had lost all logic - - - and that spirit which is the life of the ceremony.’

Waite also castigates its “amazing citation of the *Universal Prayer* by Alexander Pope” during the course of the Royal Arch Lectures. Finally, he goes on to conclude that, by lumping the Royal Arch together with the Craft Degrees – as per the current *Book of Constitutions* – the reconciling formulators of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1813, simply displayed their obvious “*incompetence to deal with matters of symbolism.*” Strong words, indeed, from an erudite exponent of the more mystical school of esoteric Masonic research.

Companions, if this has been somewhat longer than originally intended – then I do apologise. However, I make no such apology for the major Hibernian theme. In view of Bristol’s strong dissimilarities with everywhere else in our native Constitution – and our fascinating commonality with the Masonic practice of County Cork in particular – you could have hardly have expected less !

Most Excellent – Excellent Companions – Companions – I thank you all most kindly.

Section III

Past BMS Papers and Other Papers

Origin of the Ceremony Known as “Passing the Veils” as Practised in the Bristol Province: Personal Recollections.

by

**Sir Ernest Henry Cook P.A.G.Soj., Eng., Prov. G. Supt.
(November 1932)**

The Ceremony of “Passing the Veils” is constantly alluded to among Royal Arch Masons, and is stated to have been extensively used in or about the early days of the 19th Century, but no account of what this Ceremony was, nor any records can be found in the Minutes of the older Chapters.

The Ceremony is now (October 1932), and has been since 1899, an essential and interesting part of the Exaltation of a Candidate, as worked in the Province of Bristol. The initiation or resuscitation was due to the enthusiasm of the P.Z.’s. of the Beaufort Chapter, No. 103, in 1899. Unfortunately, with the exception of myself, all those Companions have now passed away. As the Ceremony is unique, and so little is known about it, I have been induced to prepare this short account of the function as it is now practised in Bristol.

I was exalted in the Beaufort Chapter in September, 1890. At that time Royal Arch Masonry was not very popular in Bristol. There were only three Chapters, and neither had many members, and it was only due to the great enthusiasm of three prominent Royal Arch Masons of that time, who decided that the slackness that had hitherto prevailed in the Province should cease, and a fresh and determined effort be made to arouse interest in the Degree. Those Companions were William Johnson Cullimore, Henry Fleetwood and Richard Henry George Farran Lambert, all P.Z.’s of the Beaufort Chapter.

But before 1890 things were much worse. Very little interest was taken and meetings had frequently to be abandoned because there were not sufficient members present to fill the chairs. This also happened sometimes after 1890, but a gradual improvement took place, and has continued to the present day (October 1932), when it is quite common to have over 100 Companions present at Chapter.

The progress was hindered by the long illness of the Grand Superintendent, M. Ex. Comp. W.J. Cullimore (1910-1920), but the other Companions made up for this by extra work. At that period the Chapters were opened in a different way to what they are to-day. The three Principals and the P.Z.’s. alone opened the Chapter, and the other Companions were not admitted until the part of the Ceremony where the Z. addresses the Prin. Soj.

There were no Veils, but the Prin. Soj. and Assistants were asked to retire, as at present, “and put the Candidate through the first portion of the Ceremony known as ‘Passing the Veils’.” The Prin. Soj. and Companions then retired to the Ante-room, and the work was done almost exactly as at present, but without Veils.

The origin of the introduction of the Veils in Bristol is as follows:- The allusion to the “Passing of the Veils,” and “three Veils suspended of the colours of blue, purple, and crimson,” etc., etc., induced certain Companions to ask particulars of the Ceremony, and, after one Meeting of the Beaufort Chapter, the matter was discussed at great length. It

transpired that no-one – not even the oldest Companion – could tell us anything about them. As several of these had been exalted 40 years previously, it may be confidently stated that, although referred to, the Veils were not in use in the middle of the 19th Century.

As a result I was asked to take the point up and investigate. In the first place I wrote to the Grand Chapter and received from Sir Edward Letchworth, who was then the Grand Scribe E., the statement that he knew nothing about the matter and could not tell me any Chapter in England where the Ceremony was in use. This reply caused much surprise, but it made us more determined to work the matter out.

We learned that the Veils were in use in some Chapters in Ireland, and some in Scotland. I also found references in some books, e.g., “The Text Book of Freemasonry,” etc. The Ex. Companions of the Beaufort Chapter were very enthusiastic and we determined to install the Veils.

Shortly after this decision was arrived at I induced M. Ex. Comp. Cullimore to go to Ireland with me. We made many enquiries, but could find no Chapters meeting during the time of our stay, where the Veils were used. We got, however, some information from Companions which was of some little assistance. On the whole, however, the journey was disappointing and M. Ex. Comp. Cullimore lost heart. This, however, was not the case with others of the older members, particularly Ex. Comp. Edmund Cook, Ex. Comp. H. Fleetwood, and many of the younger men.

The amount of reliable information being so scanty, there was nothing for it but to go forward alone. The first difficulty was as to colour. None of the Masonic furnishers could give any help. They knew nothing about Veils, and it was finally decided that the best thing to do was to imitate as closely as possible the colours of the Apron and Sash.

After some trouble the Veils were made for us by Messrs. Jolly, of College Green. The poles and cords and supports were arranged by Ex. Comp. E.J. Vowles and the necessary work carried out in the workshops of Messrs. W.G. Vowles and Sons. The final arrangements were that the three Veils were suspended across the Ante-room adjoining the Lodge room (which was used as a Chapter or Lodge room as required), at about equal distances from each other. The ends of the rods rested upon the sides of the Gallery. Thus the room was divided into four equal portions. The Companions sat around the sides; the Prin. Soj’s desk was near the door of the Chapter; the Candidate, Director of Ceremonies and Janitor were at the opposite end. The Veils were entirely closed at first; each one being drawn fully back after the Candidate had passed it.

The necessary Ritual was compounded of what had been in use in the Province for many years (though without the actual Veils), and what could be found in a few books and old Arch Rituals.

Of course, before entering upon so important an alteration we made full enquiries from our superiors in the Province as well as Grand Chapter. At that time the late Comp. W.A.F. Powell was Grand Superintendent and Ex. Comp. G.W. Pierrepont Harris was Prov. Grand S.E. The Grand Superintendent readily gave his permission and encouraged us to proceed. We then approached Grand Chapter, and Ex. Comp. Cullimore and myself had an interview with the Grand Scribe E. – Sir Edward Letchworth, and discussed the whole question. He confirmed his letter in which he stated that, so far as he knew, this particular portion of the

Ceremony was not then in use in England, but as our proposal was merely to resuscitate a disused portion of the original Ceremony, he thought no possible objection could be taken to it. He also expressed the opinion that our investigation would prove interesting to the majority of Royal Arch Masons, and hoped we would inform him when we had completed our work. Thus encouraged, we proceeded with our task, as previously stated.

The Rt. Wor. Prov. Grand Master, W.A.F. Powell, died in 1906, and was succeeded by Rt. Wor. Bro. J.R. Bramble, who in turn was succeeded in 1909 by Rt. Wor. Bro. G.A. Gibbs (afterwards Lord Wraxall). Bro Gibbs was not then a Royal Arch Mason and his Deputy, Wor. Bro. G.W. Pierrepont Harris, was appointed Grand Superintendent. M. Ex. Comp. Harris died in March, 1910, and the position was offered to me, as the Prov. Grand Master had just appointed me as his Deputy. But I did not think that I could spare sufficient time from my other occupations to do the work of D.P.G.M. and Grand Superintendent efficiently. I consequently asked the Grand S.E. if he would kindly ask the M. Ex. First Grand Principal to appoint Ex. Comp. Cullimore. This was accordingly done and Ex. Comp. Cullimore was installed in 1910.

Immediately after this he appointed a Special Committee consisting of Ex. Companions A.C. Powell. J.C. Gilmore. W.K. Thomas. J. Littleton, and Wor. Comp. J. Gard, to stabilise the whole Ritual and the procedure of "Passing the Veils." This is still in use. Their work was completed on June 20th 1910.

Unfortunately Ex. Comp. Cullimore's health broke down completely in 1914, and I was left in charge of the Province until 1920, when the position of Grand Superintendent was again offered to me, and I accepted it.

Although the provision of the Veils was, in the first instance, the work of the P.Z's. of the Beaufort Chapter, the impressiveness of the Ceremony greatly pleased the Companions, and shortly afterwards every Chapter in the Province adopted it as part of the Ceremony of Exaltation.

Towards the end of 1929 several influential Companions, after careful consideration, came to the conclusion that the addition of a fourth Veil (White) would add to the beauty of the Ceremony, and a formal application was made to me, through the Prov. Grand S.E., Ex. Comp. T. Goulding, to permit such a Veil to be placed in the Ante-room.

Before giving this permission it became necessary to examine the whole question, and this examination is the real cause of the preparation of this Paper. The further one enquired into it, the greater became the difficulty caused by the absence of any reliable information, but, so far as circumstances would permit, the difficulties have been overcome.

In order that a complete view of the subject may be obtained, and also in order that those who have more leisure and greater opportunities for research may be assisted, I think it advisable to place on record exactly what has been done.

In the first place it was necessary to find if the condition of things as they existed in Sir Edward Letchworth's time prevailed at the present time. The Grand S.E. was accordingly written to and asked if he could give me any direct information, or tell me where it could be obtained. In reply, the following letter from the Assistant Grand Librarian, Ex Comp. F.A.M. Taylor, was received:-

THE GRAND LODGE LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

Freemasons' Hall.
Great Queen St.,
London, W.C. 2.
23rd August 1932

Ex. Comp. T. Goulding,
Prov. Grand Scribe E., Bristol.

Dear Sir and Ex. Comp.,

Your letter of 22nd inst. To the Grand Scribe E. has been handed to me, and in reply I am to state: The ceremony of the Veils is now obsolete in England, but still continued in most of the countries which work the Royal Arch (notably in U.S.A.). The three captains of veils symbolically are represented by the colours scarlet, purple, and blue (being the colours of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd veils) and the titles of the other officers, where such a custom still prevails, are different to those in England. The Veils were doubtless a part of the early ceremony of the Arch degree and the working of the same was discontinued I believe at the Union in 1817.

I am unable to give you the name of any distinguished Companion who has made a study of the Veils, they are only casually mentioned in many works on Royal Arch Masonry. I enclose an extract from *A Lexicon of Freemasonry*, by Mackey and Peck, which may prove useful.

“THE VEILS of the tabernacle were of four colours, blue, purple, scarlet and white or fine linen. These colours have been adopted as the symbolic colours of masonry. White is the emblem of innocence, and is found in the gloves and apron; blue is the emblem of universal friendship, and is appropriated to the symbolic degrees; scarlet is the emblem of zeal and fervency, and is appropriated to the Royal Arch, purple which is the union of blue and scarlet, is thence the emblem of unity and concord, and has been adopted as the colour of the intermediate degrees between the symbolic and royal Arch. The Jews, according to Josephus gave to these veils an astronomical signification and supposed them to represent the four elements. Fine white linen was a symbol of the earth, because it was made out of flax, a production of the earth; the blue as the colour of the sky, was a symbol of the air, the purple of the sea, because it derived its colour from the murex, a shell fish that inhabits the sea; and scarlet was the natural symbol of fire.”

“VEILS, Masters of the, - Three officers of a Royal Arch Chapter, who, being armed with a drawn sword, and bearing a banner of the appropriate colour, are stationed at the blue, purple, and scarlet veils. The White Veil is guarded by the Royal Arch Captain.”

Yours faithfully and fraternally,

F.A.M. Taylor
Asst Librarian.

It will thus be seen that, so far as Grand Chapter is concerned, the present conditions are exactly the same as in Sir Edward Letchworth's time (1902).

It was next necessary to ascertain if the Ceremony was worked elsewhere in England. Accordingly letters were sent to the 43 other Masonic Provinces in England asking for such information. In every case the reply received was that no Chapter was working the Ceremony. In some instances it was said that there were traditions that such a Ceremony had been worked, but that it had been abandoned many years ago.

Information reached me that application to Scotland and Ireland might be of advantage in helping the investigation. The Grand Chapter of Ireland and the Grand Chapter of Scotland very courteously sent copies of their Official Rituals, including the Ceremony of “Passing the Veils.” These Rituals have been carefully examined, and, as would be probably imagined, agree in many particulars but differ in many others.

In both cases the Ceremonies are elaborate, complete, and full of symbolism. The “Passing the Veils” constitutes a very important part of the whole of the working and is calculated to make a lasting impression upon the Candidate.

The points of resemblance are mainly as follows:-

The Veils are stretched right across the Chapter Room, but are held back at the sides, except when the Candidate is passing through them. In both cases the White Veil is placed in front of the three Principals, and shields them from view until the proper moment.

An appropriate ritual, somewhat similar to our own and to each other, is used, but in both Scotland and Ireland the Candidate for the R.A. degree **must** be a Mark Master Mason.

In Scotland the Veils are continuous across the Chamber. In Ireland they are slightly opened in the middle, leaving a clear view of the Council Chamber, but not of the Principals, who are inside it, screened from view by the White Veil.

It will be seen from the examination of these two rituals, that both in Scotland and Ireland there are four Veils in use – Blue, Purple, Crimson and White.

Finally, as many books as could be conveniently consulted were examined, and, whenever possible, extracts made of any sentences relating to the Veils.

Although I have examined several books, I am painfully conscious that there are probably many others, as well as numerous documents, that it was impossible to consult. If at any future time any Companion is desirous of completing this history, his research would probably reveal points of great interest entirely unknown to me. Again, in order that unnecessary work may be saved, I Append a list of the books consulted, and give extracts from them.

It must be remembered that the crucial point to decide was whether three or four Veils were in use. The particular words used would probably vary from one Chapter to another, but the number of the Veils would probably remain constant.

In the first place reference must be made to the passages in Holy Writ referring to the Tabernacle. The passages occur in Exodus Chapters xxvi., xxvii., xxviii., xxxv., xxxvi., and xxxviii. It will be seen that here distinctly four Veils are mentioned, and therefore it might be said that we ought to have four also. But a fundamental difficulty occurs, because it is uncertain as to how far our R.A. Ceremony and furniture are exact reproductions of the Tabernacle. It is true that we are told that we “stand before a representation of the Grand Sanhedrin of the ancient Jews,” but it may be urged that an exact reproduction, especially as regards the Veils, was never intended by those who originally drafted the Ritual of the R.A. Degree.

The results obtained from other books were as follows:-

1. *Gould's History of Freemasonry* (1893 Edition).
No reference whatever to Veils.
2. *The Secret Societies of all Ages and Countries* by C.W. Heckethorn (New Edition 1897).
This book gives a long and precise account of the passing of the Veils. It is introduced as follows:-
“In some Chapters the Ceremony called ‘Passing the Veils’ is omitted, but to make the account of the Royal Arch mystery complete I append it here.”
3. *Freemasonry in Bristol* by Bros A.C. Powell and J. Littleton, 1910.
No reference to Veils.
4. *A New Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry* by A.E. Waite.
No reference to Veils.
5. *The Text Book of Freemasonry* published in 1870.
This is an irregular and unauthorised publication, purporting to give all the Ceremonies in the Craft and Royal Arch Degrees.
There is a section devoted to “Passing the Veils,” which is introduced as follows:-
“This Ceremony is sometimes dispensed with.”
A description of the Ceremony is given, and reference made to three Veils, but no mention whatever is made of a fourth.
6. *The Perfect Ceremonies of the Royal Arch Degree*, Lewis, 1907.
This book contains the fullest account that I have been able to find of the Ceremony of “Passing the Veils.”
The Ceremony is said to have followed the ‘restoration to light,’ It is introduced as follows:-
“Note – There was formerly a Ceremony here of three Veils, guarded by the three Sojourners, called ‘Passing the Veils,’ which is yet given in America and is not entirely abandoned in this country.”
Details are then given as to the way the Candidate is allowed to pass the Veils. These details resemble those given in other books, but only *three* Veils are mentioned.
It is stated that the Veils are intended to represent the obstructions on the road to Jerusalem.
7. *The Mysteries of Freemasonry*, John Fellows M.A.
This is a well-known irregular publication, of about the latter half of the last century. It gives, when describing the Ceremonies of the Royal Arch, a description of the “Passing the Veils,” which it is said are *four* in number, of the colours Blue, Purple, Red, and White, and are emblematical of the Equinoxes and Solstices, allegorically denominated “Gates of Heaven.”
No definite details or Rituals are given, but an enormous amount of speculation as to the allegory and symbolism.

It will be noted from the foregoing extracts, that the statements are most indefinite and contradictory. They therefore afford very little help in our endeavour to arrive at the old working. Practically the only reliable conclusion we can draw is that there was, in connection with the Royal Arch Degree, a Ceremony in which differently coloured Veils were used, and that this arrangement was derived from the furnishing of the Tabernacle, as described in Exodus xxvi. and xxvii.

But it must not be forgotten that out of the books mentioned, those containing any reference to the "Passing of the Veils" are entirely unauthorised, and have no official sanction whatever. Moreover, the authors of these publications were either Masons who had betrayed their trust, or "Cowans" who have pieced together scraps of information obtained from unworthy Brethren.

Summing up the results of this enquiry, I find that, whilst there is a strong tradition, amounting almost to being universal, that a Ceremony known as "Passing the Veils" was widely used in English Royal Arch Chapters, there is now not a single Chapter in any English Province making use of it, except in Bristol. Moreover, there are no authentic records as to how the ceremony was worked or what was the exact Ritual and furniture employed. In many respects the scanty references, which are quoted above, are similar. This would seem to indicate a common origin, and to prove that the Ceremony was very widely used.

The question that gave rise to this enquiry was, as to whether I, as Grand Superintendent of the Province, would sanction the use of a fourth Veil of White being used in the Ante-room. After careful consideration, and weighing the conflicting statements which are now before me, I have come to the conclusion that this addition may be allowed, provided the White Veil is placed in the position shewn on the plan prepared by Ex. Comp. W.S. Skinner, viz.:- just before the door leading from the Ante-room into the Chapter Room, and covering the new Folding Doors which are to be placed there.

The main reasons that have induced this conclusion are as follows:-

1. That there is no information as to what was in use in early Chapters, and that, as Bristol had to make its own arrangements, it may quite as rightly allow four Veils as three.
2. That the description in Exodus is so definite and far exceeds in importance any other reference to be obtained elsewhere.

Ernest Henry Cook, P.A.G. Soj., Eng.,
Provincial Grand Superintendent

THE LODGE MEETING AT THE RUMMER TAVERN

(The Old Minute Book of the Lodge at the Rummer)

by

A.C. Powell
(18th March 1924)

A notable addition to the archives of the Province has been made during the past year by the recovery of the earliest Minute Book of the Lodge constituted in 1735 and first meting at the Rummer Tavern in High Street. It is older by nearly twenty years than the next oldest record of Bristol Masonry, and so carries back our information of the local proceedings in the Craft for an appreciable time.

The book has been procured through the good offices of Bro N.A. Badham of Tewkesbury, who is a member of the Coteswold Preceptory of Cheltenham. Its former owner prized the volume because it contained the name of an ancestor of his in a list of the members of the Lodge at Tewkesbury – probably the one meeting at the Swan, which was constituted in 1738 and erased in 1754. The connection with Tewkesbury is not stated, but possibly it arose through a Bro Richard Grevile, who is mentioned as belonging to that Lodge. A Bro Richard Grevile, of Tewkesbury, visited on several occasions the Lodge in Bristol, where a Bro Giles Grevile was a prominent member.

We were told the owner did not wish to sell the book, and would not take less than £25 for it. As you all know, this Society generously purchased it and presented it to the Province. Our archives are thus considerably enriched.

The Minutes cover the period from 1735 until the beginning of 1750, with the exception of about three years, when the Lodge appears to have ceased from working. The Rummer was mentioned so long ago as 1241 under the name 'Green Lettis,' and is thus nearly 700 years old. It has also been known as the 'Abyndon,' 'Jones's' and the 'New Inn,' and is stated to have been situate in High Street and Venny Lane.

One evening in 1741 it is recorded that: 'the lodge did not meet as usual, Bro. Ovens (the landlord) being declared a bankrupt.' It was then removed to the White Lyon in Broad Street, where it remained for about a year, then 'for diverse weighty reasons' it was taken to the Bush Tavern. At the meeting on December 27th 1749 it was agreed: 'that a general summons be sent to each member to assent or dissent from the lodge's longer continuance,' but no reason is given. Several blank pages follow, so doubtless it was decided to discontinue it. The second Minute Book, dated 1755, shows that it was revived, the Lodge being held at the Fountain Inn in High Street. It continued to work up to 1761, but was officially erased four years earlier.

The chief interest in the old Minute Book, in my opinion, lies in the indications it may contain of the Masonic customs prevalent in its time.

Before examining the contents, I will give briefly as account of the peculiar position of the Craft in the eighteenth century in this country, although it is well known to most of my hearers.

The Grand Lodge was established in 1717, and was followed about 1725 by a Grand Lodge in Ireland, and later on by one in Scotland. The members of the English Grand Lodge became greatly alarmed at the publication of books purporting to expose the secrets of the Order, and, in consequence, caused serious alterations to be made in the character of the Masonry practised under its jurisdiction. A few years later an Irish Brother of great ability, named Laurence Dermott, came to live in England, and mainly through his influence, a new Grand Lodge was formed about 1751 in opposition to the older one of 1717. This Grand Lodge claimed to observe the antient customs of the Craft, and its adherents were usually known as "Antient Masons," while those belonging to the earlier organisation were called "Moderns." Antients and Moderns would not even recognise one another as Masons and anyone wishing to change from one Constitution to the other had to submit to "remaking." The Antients received recognition from the Irish and Scottish Grand Lodges, while the Moderns were unable to visit any Lodge under the jurisdiction of either of the others. Laurence Dermott says the Antients knew all the secrets of the Moderns, but that a Modern Mason did not possess the necessary information to gain admittance to an Antient Lodge. Eventually, as you all know, the two Grand Lodges were united in 1813, but in the eighteenth century a very bitter feeling prevailed between them.

Considerable differences existed between the two systems, and these caused long and delicate negotiations before they could be settled. Concessions had to be made by both sides, but on essential points, I should say, chiefly by the Moderns. Although it was decided that all Lodges should work in conformity with the recommendations of the Lodge of Reconciliation, which was formed just after the Union, we have no records of what was settled upon. As is of course well known in this Province, contrary claims notwithstanding, there is no official ritual ordered by the United Grand Lodge of England.

Several Antient Lodges existed at various times in Bristol during the latter half of the eighteenth century, but none lasted long. The only survivor of that jurisdiction in our Province is the Royal Clarence Lodge, formerly the Mariners' Lodge; but that was not founded until 1807.

It is evident from the records of the Modern Lodges in Bristol that they differed in practice in many particulars from others belonging to that Constitution. My belief is that Bristol Masons did not accept the alterations determined upon by Grand Lodge rather before 1730, and that they kept steadfastly to their old customs during the long years of storm and difficulty prior to the Union. Indeed, I hold that they have transmitted them as nearly as possible pure and unsullied to us.

The book commences with a copy of the By-laws of the Lodge, which was signed by the various members at the time and by others as they were admitted. These By-laws occupy eight pages and are consequently rather lengthy. It was ordered that they should: 'be read the first Tuesday in every month immediately after the lodge is opened and at every making of a new Brother.' The meetings at first took place on the first and third Tuesdays in each month, but the day was afterwards changed.

It was ordered:

'that twice in every year (to wit) on St. John the Baptist's day and St. John the Evangelist's day shall be chosen by way of balloting all officers of this lodge as the Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, Treasurer, Secretary, Tyler, and any other

officer or attendant that may be thought proper for the benefit of the lodge, and that eight days notice be given to each member of this lodge by the Tyler of the same before such days of election at which time such officers shall be chosen separately and such member or members who shall be candidate or candidates for either of the said places and shall have a two thirds majority of the ballot shall be deemed fairly elected.'

The method of the first election recorded is interesting. Each member wrote the name of the Brother he would choose for office 'upon a scroll of paper,' which was placed with the others in the balloting box and 'drawn' by the Secretary. For the position of Master, one candidate, Standen by name, received four votes, two three votes each and one two votes. The two Brethren who tied for second place were 'ballotted for who should oppose Bro Standen.' After a third ballot, 'Bro. Standen was declared duly elected Master and took his seat accordingly.' In the same way three ballots had to be taken before the Senior Warden could be selected, but the other officers gave less trouble.

From the fact that a little later it was decided: 'that no absent brothers' ballot be received,' it would appear that at first a member could send his voting paper without coming to the Lodge. At the same time it was agreed:

'that in case there shall happen to be an equality of votes upon the ballott for the election of any officer or members of this lodge the Master for the time being shall have the casting vote upon such election and all other cases with respect to this lodge.'

Instead of half-yearly elections, the officers were afterwards chosen annually in June; but the Brethren still continued to celebrate the festival of St. John in winter as well as that of St. John in harvest.

There is nothing said of any special ceremony of installation of the Master, such as we know today, but, on the other hand, there may have been one. In one case a list of new officers is given and it is stated: 'all were Install'd accordingly.' Only those who had served as Wardens seem to have been chosen as Master.

The keeping of St. John's Festivals was generally observed in Bristol, while it was little practised by Modern Lodges elsewhere.

Only once the method of balloting by means of a 'scroll of paper' is mentioned; but there is no reason to suppose it was ever discontinued in the Lodge. It is what is usually done in these days outside our Province, and we are exceptional in using marbles for the purpose. Indeed the Grand Secretary has lately declared that the custom followed by, I believe, most of the Lodges in Bristol in proposing a brother for election as Master is: 'irregular' and contrary to Rule 130 of the *Book of Constitutions*. That rule orders that: 'every lodge shall annually on the day named in its by-laws for that purpose proceed to elect its Master by ballot 'from among those members who have served for a full year as Warden,' the ballot being: 'declared in favour of the member thus qualified who obtains the largest number of votes of the brethren present and voting.' The word "ballot" is not limited in the *Book of Constitutions* to voting by papers, for it is also used in the directions for electing a Candidate for Initiation or a joining member, when three black balls are said to exclude him.

I think the Grand Secretary must have had in mind, not the *Book of Constitutions*, but one of the "Decisions by the Board of General Purposes 1917-1923," which are printed at the end of

the *Masonic Year-book*. In answer to the enquiry whether Brethren may be nominated by proposition in open Lodge for the office of Master and Treasurer, the Board said: 'No; in each case the election must be by free ballot of the members. Any open proposition of a particular brother is calculated unduly to influence those entitled to vote.' The idea is that each member shall be quite free to vote for any qualified Brother he chooses and that the ballot shall be strictly secret.

In the Bristol plan only the one Brother nominated can be voted for or against, or, in case a response is made to the WM's enquiry and a second candidate for the chair proposed, only those two. Then again a proposal made, as it usually is, by a Past Master of high standing in the Lodge prejudiced the result in favour of his nominee, besides showing how he and probably all the other principal members of the Lodge intended to vote.

I think there is much to be said for our method, inasmuch as the members look for guidance to their Past Masters on all other questions, and are glad to do so when they choose their new ruler. It is of greatest importance that the many necessary qualifications of a Brother for the Chair shall be thoroughly considered by the Committee of the Lodge, (however it may be composed), and I cannot believe it less needful that the whole body of members should be informed that the candidate they vote for has the approbation of the Committee.

We naturally regret giving up a practice, which, as far as I know, has always been a satisfactory one in Bristol, but we must of course bow loyally to the interpretation of the law of the Craft made by the Board of General Purposes, when we are instructed by the Provincial authorities. Still, I do hope that while making it quite clear to every member that he may vote for any one of the qualified Brethren he may choose, (and I think he should be furnished with a full list of them), some means may be found to preserve the custom of discussing the merits of a candidate for the Chair by the committee of the Lodge and of openly making known the name of the Brother approved by the committee. I cannot believe that in any Lodge the members are not able to ascertain the wishes of their seniors in this matter, and if so, there must be some means of information. Surely "open proposition," although disapproved of by the Board, is preferable to secret manoeuvre.

Steps must at all events be taken to tell the members when a Brother next in order for election does not wish to go on to the Chair. I presume it would not be irregular to announce the fact upon the list of eligible candidates. I suppose every right-minded Mason appreciates the value of the idea that (under ordinary circumstances) a new Master should each year occupy the chair – as a link in a chain – and that he himself would only wish to be chosen for the office when his turn came. I venture therefore to say, that in practically every case, every eligible Brother, save the one approved by the Committee, might honestly declare that he was not prepared to accept the office of Master. If out of the number of Installed Masters and those who have served as Warden, all except one, do not wish to be elected, the free choice and meticulous secrecy become somewhat difficult to obtain.

In my own limited experience in London, I know I have once or twice had to ask the Secretary, when he brought round the papers, for whom I ought to vote. I was discussing the question with a friend, of wide Masonic knowledge, who was (at least at first) disinclined to think well of our method, but at least acknowledged that the plan followed generally was most satisfactory.

On the score of old Bristol practice, however, I am afraid we have, as we have seen, the custom of the Rummer Lodge against our present plan of choosing a Master.

It will have been noticed that the decision of the Board of General Purposes related not only to the election of the Master, but also of the Treasurer. In most Lodges the office of Treasurer is little account, since the Secretary carries out the financial as well as the general business; but in Bristol it possesses special importance and honour, and much depends upon the selection made.

The election of officers was not the only business transacted upon St. John's day, for a "public dinner" was then held. Certain members were appointed by the Master as Stewards 'to assist and do their best services to lay out the sums allowed and balloted for to the best advantage.' The amount of money voted varied from time to time, and probably depended upon the state of the friends of the Lodge ranging between two guineas and six pounds five shillings. A visiting Brother paid five shillings, while any expenditure beyond what was agreed upon was shared among the members present. Evidently only those on good standing were permitted to come to the dinner, for it was ordered (16/12/1737) that the Stewards 'do go to the members in arrears to know their positive answer if they design to attend the lodge that they may be at no loss what to provide.' From other entries it is clear that it was one of the duties of the Stewards to try to collect outstanding quarterages. Usually the elections took place after dinner, but on one occasion the Minutes say that:

'the Rt W^pfull Master is Desired to intimate in his summons against ye sd. 24th June that each Bro be at ye Rummer by Nine o'clock in the forenoon in order to choose the proper officers of ye Day in order to prevent ye Breaking of Company after Dinner to the Dissatisfaction of Visiting Brothers.'

Sometimes one or more ceremonies were performed in the morning, doubtless to allow the newly initiated to take part in the festival. Once, when St. John's day fell upon a Sunday, the members met to elect the officers and to raise a Candidate, deferring the dinner until a few days later. The members of the Lodge were requested to: 'cloath themselves at their own expense,' doubtless with the intention of leaving the clothing owned by the Lodge for the use of visitors. On one occasion the landlord was away from home and the cupboard locked so that the Lodge could not be clothed. He was fined 2/-.

On June 24th 1738 the festival was honoured by the presence of Dr Desaguliers, the Deputy Grand Master, who also attended the meeting of the Lodge a fortnight later with six Brethren 'of the Bath Lodge,' when three Candidates were raised. Dr Desaguliers came again to Bristol on November 10th in the same year (1738) with H.R.H. the Prince and Princess of Wales. Frederick, Prince of Wales, the father of George III, was the first member of the Royal family to join the Craft. He was given a great public reception, and was entertained to dinner and a ball at the Merchants' hall, and was presented with the freedom of the city and of the Society of Merchant Venturers. The evening concluded with a display of fireworks by Bro Desaguliers, who was one of the most notable scientific men of his day.

About four years ago a letter was written from America by one who described herself as a Bristol girl to the Merchant Venturers, saying she had seen in the shop of eminent antique dealers in New York a small two-handled silver cup bearing the hall-mark of the period and the arms of the Prince of Wales and those of the Society. It was doubtless presented as a memento of H.R.H.'s visit, but whether by him or the Society is not clear. The dealers offered it for what they claimed to be the moderate price of 2500 dollars, and would not take

less, saying they would have no difficulty in getting more for it in the States. Their suggestion was declined.

In connection with the Lodge's usual Festival, a Masonic service was held at St. John's Church on December 28th 1747, the 27th happening to fall upon a Sunday. The sermon was preached by the Rev John Price, who took his text from the 133rd Psalm: "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in unity." Bro Price had visited the Lodge on several occasions, and shortly afterwards joined it. Doubtless he was the Rev John Price who was one of the Founders and first Junior Warden of the Lodge of Hospitality in 1769. He was probably the clergyman who was appointed Vicar of St. James' in 1753, and, according to Barrett, had been "removed from the Temple." It was agreed: "that a guinea be presented to our Bro. Price for his excellent sermon preached before this Society together with the thanks of this lodge for the same." On the suggestion of the WM, Bro Price agreed to have it published. It appeared under the title of *The Advantages of Unity Considered*.

Care was taken to ascertain the character of any Candidate proposed for Initiation, and only if it appeared to be "fair and unblemished" after a month's enquiry was he allowed to be balloted for. If one "No" against him was given he could not be admitted.

It was ordered:

"that an Entered Apprentice shall not be passed a Fellow Craft under the space of two months from his admission into this lodge, and not then except duly qualified and when he shall be so admitted a Fellow Craft he shall show his submission to the lodge by paying two shillings into the hands of the Treasurer over and above one shilling to the Tyler of the lodge. And that a Fellow Craft shall not be raised Master under the space of three months after his being made a Fellow Craft and not then unless he can do the work of a fellow Craft and when he shall be so raised Master he shall likewise show his submission to the lodge by paying five shillings into the hands of the said treasurer over and above the sum of one shilling to the Tyler of the lodge."

A candidate was always balloted before being advanced to a higher degree.

The initiation fee was three guineas, but seems afterwards to have been altered to two, one of which had to be deposited at the time of proposition. On one occasion attention was called to the fact that at some time previously Bro Mills (the landlord of the tavern), and another member had proposed two persons, who had not come to be initiated. It was stated to be the opinion of the Lodge:

"that the said two brothers be accountable to this lodge for the fines due by the rules unless the said two gentlemen appear to be made within six months, but this indulgence not be made a precedent."

Six months later the two brethren asked to be allowed to provide the dinner on St. John's day in consideration of the fines levied on them and this was done.

Quarterages were eight shillings for three months. Payment was made when there was a full Lodge of 1/- for each member for the expenses of the night, but rather more in proportion (at the discretion of the members) when only few were present. After paying the Tyler, the remaining money remained in the hands of the Treasurer:

"to be applied for or towards a certain sum to be remitted annually to the Grand Lodge and for such other else or elses as shall be directed by this lodge."

It is notable that a country Lodge should at that period contribute to the Grand Lodge with regularity. The annual amount was one guinea annually "by way of charity." When the date of meeting was changed in 1736 a notification was sent to Grand Lodge. There evidently was a close connection with headquarters in London.

"A motion being made by ye Right Worshipfull Master Bro. Geo. Adams that a proper letter should be sent to Bro Revis, The Garnd Secretary, desireing him to send to this Lodge the Minutes of the Quarterly Communications from Xmas last and all other Minutes for the time to come. Ordered the same be prepared and sent accordingly."

One rule which was unusual in the 18th century, we are happily able to omit from our by-laws today. A Brother coming to the Lodge in an inebriated condition or swearing in Lodge hours was subject to a forfeit of one shilling. It is only fair to say there are very few of such cases recorded in the Rummer Lodge. On one occasion a member was fined a shilling for being drunk, and he was also fined eight shillings for swearing, he must have made himself very objectionable. Another record is curious:

"The Rt Wpfull Master being disguised in liquor Bro Hale was desired to take the Chair, which he accordingly did, and His Worship being disguised as aforesaid hath forfeited the sum of one shilling which the Treasurer hath debited him with accordingly."

I do not think we should judge the habits of those times too harshly, or by our present standards of opinion, but I do consider it stands to the credit of the Brethren who were determined to purge the Craft from such evils.

On another page a number of the members have expressed their detestation at the immoral conduct of one of their number, and peremptorily expelled him from the Lodge. They appended their names, and declared:

"that if any member of this lodge shall hereafter refuse to sign this Order, unless he shall give good and substantial reasons to the contrary to be allowed by the majority of the lodge then assembled, such a refusal shall be sufficient cause for expulsion and the person so refusing shall be expelled."

One rule which ordered the junior member to tyle the Lodge, in the absence of the Tyler, is reminiscent of an old custom that the junior member should always keep the door.

Three Minutes in the year 1740 are of particular interest from the fact that they refer to Scots Masters. In July it was:

"Ordered & agreed that Bro Farndon & Bro. Watts & any other member of this lodge that are already Master Masons may be made Scotch Masters next lodge night . . ."

In the following month it was decided that for the purpose of making the Master Masons "Scotch Masters" the Brethren should meet at 5 o'clock on the next regular night, but the ceremony did not take place for three months.

No other mention of "Scotch Masters" occurs in the Minute Book nor in any other Bristol record. Indeed very few instances are known elsewhere. In Pine's Engraved List of 1734 Lodge No. 115 is described as "Scots Masons' Lodge, Devil, Temple Bar, 2nd & 4th Munday." This Lodge meeting at the Devil's Tavern is not believed by some to have been

composed exclusively of Brethren from the North of the Tweed, but is thought to have interested itself to some special form of Masonic work.

In Bath Scots Masonry is mentioned as having been worked on one occasion in 1735 and once in 1746; in the Lodge of Antiquity (now No. 2) in London, in 1740; and in Salisbury in 1746. There is also a record of something similar in Paris (in 1737). Thus we find these references to Scottish Masonry, seven in all, occur within the period of about twelve years. What kind of Masonry it was, we do not know, and various suggestions have been made about it. It is evident from our Bristol record that it was conferred freely upon Master Masons, much in the same way as the Mark Degree is given in a Scottish Craft Lodge at the present day, and at a time outside the regular Lodge hours.

Next month we are to have the pleasure of a visit from Bro Heron Lepper, who is SW of the Q.C. Lodge, and deeply engaged in the study of the history of the Craft in Ireland.

I do not wish to forestall anything he may have to say, but I should like to refer to the marked similarity between the Masonic practice in Bristol and that in Ireland. I do not believe that Bristol obtained any of its methods and customs from Ireland, and see no reason for thinking Ireland is indebted to Bristol for any. I think rather that both derive theirs from the general form of Masonry existing, let us say, in 1724 and that little change has been made up to the present time.

Bro Lepper has recently sent a copy of some extracts he has taken from the Minutes of the Shamrock Lodge, No. 27, of Cork, and I mention these now because the Brethren named were members of the Lodge we are dealing with tonight. On May 15th 1751:

“Bros. Jos. Daltyera and James Bonbonous of Bristol came to visit the lodge, who being examin’d by the Secretary & Bro. Sarsfield, and they making a good report of them, they were allow’d to be admitted.”

In the following year Bro Daltera was invited to dinner on St. John’s day in Summer. Other Bristol Brethren were also received about this time, and some thirty years later a member of our Sea Captain’s Lodge. This last occasion is particularly noticeable because at that period very bitter feelings prevailed between the Antients and Moderns. Bro Lepper points out that from other Minutes it is clear that the examination was a strict one, since some visitors failed to pass it and were excluded. We also find a brother from Cork visiting the Bristol Lodge.

These extracts are important because they show that Bristol Masons belonging to a Modern Lodge were able to satisfy the tests in an Irish Lodge, and that therefore their customs could have differed but slightly from those observed in Cork. It would thus seem both Bristol and Irish Brethren had retained the old working prevalent in 1724. Possibly the reason that our Bristol ritual survived the time of Union of the Modern and Antient Grand Lodges in 1813 is no doubt to be found in the fact that the variations between the local Lodges under the two rival Constitutions were really slight, and capable of adjustment among themselves.

**THE MYSTICAL AVALONIAN LABOURS
OF A ROSICRUCIAN BRISTOL FREEMASON:
Rt. Revd. Frater Frederick Bligh Bond; FRIB; OSB (1864-1945)**

by

**C.W. Wallis-Newport PPrDepDC, PM 187 & No.1 (I.C.)
(29th March 2001)**

It was one evening four or five years ago when invited back to Manor Hall – in company with our Senior Vice President [Dr. J.A. Bennett] – that I first referred to the connection between Glastonbury Abbey and a one-time Past Master of The Saint Vincent Lodge, the mystically-inclined ecclesiastical Architect-cum-Archaeologist: Frederick Bligh Bond.

Having evidently confused him with Arthur Bulleid – and in a rare moment of dogmatism for you, Brother President [Dr M.J. Crossley Evans] – you more or less insisted that Bligh Bond had been the person responsible for discovering the prehistoric Lake Village near the hamlet of Godney in 1892. It was equally clear that you had the bit between your teeth that night, and having had my gentle attempt at correction firmly rejected and with no particular desire to spoil the conviviality of the occasion, I let the matter drop.

Imagine my surprise therefore when, upon your approach to the Chair of this Society, it was you, yourself, who, with no further reference to Bulleid, I might add, suggested that I might put together this paper during your year as President. Meanwhile, a colleague of yours at the University of Bristol, Sarah Whittingham, had written an excellent account of Bligh Bond's connection with the new Medical School at the time of its incorporation into University College in 1893, and other architectural commissions in and around Bristol during the same period.

Needless to say, I was delighted to have received the call, and what follows, Brother President, is an attempt to comply with your request in this regard. May I say, incidentally, present company most singularly, and severally, excepted, there is little doubt in my mind that, from the standpoint of fraternal involvement of the more esoteric variety, the subject with whom we deal tonight was arguably the most interesting of Christian Freemasons to emerge from The Saint Vincent Lodge No.1404, or indeed from any other Bristol Lodge, either before or since the time in question.

Some of you may have observed my qualifying use of the term “Bristol” Lodge. Now as it happens, the early part of Bligh Bond's membership of the Craft, here in Park Street, coincided with the declining years of an equally fascinating Irish-born non-Bristol Freemason (not *always* a contraction in terms!) in the nearby suburb of Totterdown. I refer, of course, to another source of great interest to both Brother Gilbert and myself; namely, a one-time Colour Sergeant in the Corps of Royal Sappers and Miners (later to become Major) Bro Francis George Irwin, whose mysterious home comprised part of the then-Brislington Crescent, situated above the River Avon, more or less opposite Angers Road. In fact, at the time of Irwin's death on 26th July 1893, the young Bro F. Bligh Bond was Junior Warden of his Lodge – and I would rather like to think that their paths may have crossed at some time, whether fraternally or otherwise!

Meanwhile, however, our story must begin in that most charming of Wiltshire market towns, Marlborough, where, within the leafy precincts of the old Royal Free Grammar School, little Frederick first drew breath on the 30th June 1864. He was in fact born in the Master's house, the son of the Revd Frederick Hookey Bond, an Anglican clergyman and school teacher, who was Headmaster of the old Marlborough Grammar School, subsequently known as King Edward's School.

Due to the proposed reduction of the school's hitherto Classical syllabus, coupled to a rumoured merger with the nearby Marlborough College, the Bond family in 1876 moved to the city of Bath where the father took up a teaching post at a small private school, known as Bath College, at which his then twelve year old son Frederick (there were eleven children in all!) received the last few years of his formal education.

Whereas one of the younger brothers, Reginald, went up to Oxford, Frederick does not appear to have received much in the way of what might today be described as Higher Education. However, having apparently undergone a course of study in London, he qualified as an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects at a relatively youthful age before setting up in practice in Bristol whilst still in his early twenties. Thereafter, whilst only five months beyond his twenty-fifth birthday, he was initiated into the Antient Free and Accepted Masonry of this old western seaport on 28th November 1889.

Brother President, apropos his proposer into The Saint Vincent Lodge, a contradiction exists between information provided by an erstwhile Secretary of Lodge No.1404 and your good self. The former has declared for a certain WBro Hood Daniel whereas, based on your own scrutiny of the Minutes on my behalf, you tend to favour WBro A. Clifford S. Paul! Beyond all doubt whatsoever, however, is the fact that WBro James Roger Bramble – then the Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Bristol – supported his application for membership, as Secunder.

The latter aspect is of particular interest, since at the time of RWBro Bramble's Installation at Provincial Grand Master on 19th June 1906, when the occasion was presided over, interestingly, by the Earl of Cork and Orrery as the P.G.M. of Somerset – Bro Bramble was also President of the Somerset Archaeological Society at around the time when Bligh Bond had been appointed by the Society to supervise the soon-to-be controversial excavation of Glastonbury Abbey. Whether J.R. Bramble had any influence in the appointment or not is something upon which one can but speculate in the circumstances. Having passed away at Weston-super-Mare on 3rd February 1908, however, he was to be spared much of the painful ramifications which were to emerge in due course.

Reverting to the time of Bro Bligh Bond's Initiation in 1889, at the age of twenty-five, he then lived at the delightfully named "Fern Hollow" in Stoke Bishop. The Masonic records at that time also declare his office address to have been 36 Corn Street, in the city.

Unusually, for the Bristol Craft of those days, The Saint Vincent Lodge into which he had been received (formed only seventeen years earlier) was one which, for its membership, sought to acquire those of a largely superior educational and professional background. Spearheaded by the ubiquitous James Roger Bramble, who was known regularly to ride into Freemasons' Hall from Wrington on horseback, the Founding Brethren of Lodge No. 1404 (acting with that true Masonic principle of equality for which the Craft is so well known) went on to formulate what were (even in those days of High Victorian snobbery) arguably

the most exquisitely elitist and fraternally offensive “Qualifications for Admission” known to man. Being unlike anything that had happened previously in Bristol where, hitherto, the Masonic Order had been based largely upon the small business and artisan communities of the city, the particular Rule in question (being original By-law No. 6) represented “exclusivity” in the very highest degree.

To this end, membership of The Saint Vincent Lodge was initially confined to:

‘Members of the University of Oxford, or of Cambridge; of the Learned professions, Church, Law or Physic; of the Public School; or Gentlemen holding Her Majesty’s Commission.’

Described on a previous occasion, by you Brother President, as upholding the “Ethos of the Universities” one can but wonder why, in this figuratively “rough” and “unpolished” educational state, with little experience of higher study or Varsity Life, Frederick Bligh Bond appeared to be such an eminently suitable Candidate. However, be that as it may.

Out of this somewhat strange ethos of parochial and national navel-gazing, there grew, almost inevitably, the formation of many esoteric Societies and exotic pursuits, some of which were purely escapist in nature; others rather more hazardous perhaps. The practice of Spiritualism, of which more later, and indeed the eventual expansion of modern Freemasonry, are but two examples which spring immediately to mind. The Oxford Movement within Church circles, also has an element to answer for during this great period of self-delusion.

With particular regard to Bond’s involvement with the Lodge in Bristol, it is of significance, at least for his daughter, that her birth was to more or less coincide with her father’s rather rapid ascent to the Chair as Worshipful Master of Lodge No. 1404 and in order to celebrate these twin achievements, one familial and the other purely Masonic, this worthy son of an Anglican clergyman and school teacher named his infant: Mary Theodora “St. Vincent” Bligh Bond’ as distinctive a nomenclature as one might expect to find anywhere in the Christian world!

Bligh Bond’s arrival upon the Masonic scene also coincided with a time, particularly in the 1890s, when promotion to the Chair, as Master, was often achieved in under six years. This may appear to be an impressive rate of progress compared to certain Lodges of more recent years. It seems to me, however, that we are already returning to a similar situation here in Bristol, due to the current dearth of aspiring Candidates for our all-too-many existing Craft lodges meeting in this stately and superb edifice!

To quote from a letter you were kind enough to send me some little time ago, Brother President, our subject’s year as Worshipful Master of your otherwise highly distinguished Lodge of “Saint Vincent” was particularly undistinguished through the twelve months in question. He was, it would seem, absent from his first meeting as Master; there was no ceremony at his second meeting and, whilst he presided over a First Degree ceremony on 26th February 1896, he was again absent from the meeting which followed. He presided over another Initiation ceremony at the April meeting – an indeed conducted a Raising in May – to find the June meeting cancelled in entirety. Thereafter, he had the temerity to ask the Secretary to preside over the meeting of 24th September that year, when one of the Brethren was passed to the Second Degree (presumably by the worthy Lodge Secretary!)

His subsequent attendances at Lodge were spasmodic to say the least, although he did turn up on various occasions between 1896 and 1899 to propose for membership of Lodge 1404 a quartet of Candidates; comprising a Civil Engineer, an Insurance Secretary; a Surveyor, and a Mining Engineer. All of these, one would suspect Bligh Bond had had occasion to meet during the course of his professional engagement as an architect and amateur archaeologist.

One notable gesture of fraternal goodwill on the part of Bro Bligh Bond, did however occur in 1897 when, to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of Lodge No. 1404, he gifted a Black Letter Bible to the Saint Vincent Brethren in apparent perpetuity. This item, one of the last edition to be printed in England, having miraculously escaped the Second World War destruction of Freemasons' Hall in 1940, it transpired that, during the actual course of continuing hostilities, it was proposed, somewhat paradoxically, that the gift (in apparent perpetuity!) be returned to WBro Bligh Bond "so that he might utilise it to assist in such war purposes as he might think fit." Whether this was a somewhat belated means of shedding Freemasons' Hall of bad vibrations or not must at this distance be left to the imagination!

Reverting to his earlier non-masonic career, as a young man Bligh Bond was clearly the "high flying" local architect of his day – having undertaken several important commissions for the rapidly expanding University College in Bristol, whilst still in his mid-twenties. I recall being told some years ago, by a much valued friend of yours Brother President – the late Dr Basil Cottle F.S.A. (1917–1994) that it was Bligh Bond who, when only twenty-eight years of age, designed (in the then-fashionable Gothic style) the new Medical School building, which is now the Department of Geography. Although built in those distant days of 1892, Dr Cottle described the building as "the most spacious and pleasant of all the College buildings" and one in which "medicine at last found itself with the space it needed."

In addition on the professional front, a number of quite different buildings were designed by Bligh Bond in and around Bristol, including at least half-a-dozen Board Schools in such Parishes as Bedminster, St. Werburgh, St. Philip's, St. George and a recently-demolished elementary school at Greenbank. Most of the latter designs were created in a Tudor-Gothic style, which proved popular with the architect until a change of heart took place during the early part of the 20th century, when he became an exponent of a new style of design. As a result, several splendid exemplifications of early Edwardian architecture may now be found in the outlying locations of Avonmouth and Shirehampton. For example, today's residents of the latter village may not be aware of the fact but Shirehampton Library, being originally the Community Hall, together with what was known as the Engineering School of the General Post Office, came off the drawing board of Bro Frederick Bligh Bond!

His excursions into restoration on behalf of the Diocese of Bath and Wells resulted in the undertaking of important work on a variety of Somerset churches, including St. John the Baptist at Glastonbury, St. John the Evangelist at Highbridge, St. John's at Chilcompton and St. Mary Magdalene at Stowell. It was of this latter church, whose local historian is Lt. Colonel Eric Wilson VC, that Nicholas Pevsner wrote: "There was not a touch of the 20th century" to be detected; surely a tribute to the restorative work supervised by Bligh Bond in 1913. It was, in fact, due to his involvement with outlying churches in Somerset that he became particularly adept in the repair or complete replacement of Roodscreens and Roodlofts, many of which were torn down and destroyed at the time of the Reformation. Collaborating with Dom Bede Camm, he produced in due course a two-volume joint publication on the subject in which he was a pre-eminent expert.

Meanwhile, we must return to his domestic life in Bristol during the last decade of the 19th century. As to where or precisely when he married Mary Louise Mills has not been established with certainty' it is thought, however, to have taken place in about 1894 at a time when he would have been the thirty year old Senior Warden of Lodge No. 1404, meeting here in Park Street. It has already been mentioned that his only daughter, Mary Theodora "St. Vincent" Bligh Bond, was born in the following year. By 1898, after only some four years of marriage, Bond would appear to have left his wife, from whom he also took away the infant child. Not surprisingly, the mother took proceedings against him for cruelty on the grounds of having removed their daughter against her will. It would not be the last time that Bligh Bond was obliged to appear at the High Court. Upon this particular occasion, he was granted legal separation with the proviso that custody was shared on a regular basis. This proved less than satisfactory, with constant bickering between the two parents, continuing for over twenty years, during which Bond himself remained in a constant state of distress and anxiety as a result of his acrimonious domestic situation.

Whether justified or not, Mrs Bond maintained a sustained outpouring of verbal attacks against her husband, slandering his name not only among her own friends but also to Bond's family. Inflammatory letters reached one of Bligh Bond's brothers in India, Major General Sir Francis Bond, which led to an estrangement between the brothers which lasted almost a quarter of a century.

One local clergyman who supported Bligh Bond's wife throughout the entire matter and took the view that Bond had effectively deserted her and her daughter and left them without money was the Vicar of Redland and Westbury-upon-Trym, the Revd H.J. Wilkins. He was to prove a stern opponent of Bond in the ecclesiastical field likewise.

Whist less than enthusiastic on the Masonic front during the earlier years of his domestic difficulties (he was, in fact, "Excluded in Arrears" from The Saint Vincent Lodge in 1914) Bligh Bond became increasingly involved with what was to become the major obsession in his life; namely the excavation of the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey on behalf of the Somerset Archaeological Society between late 1908 and 1923 during which period also, due to a change in the organisation of Diocesan administration in 1913, he was to lose a much valued appointment as Honorary Architect to Bath and Wells. To make matters worse, he was, incidentally, replaced by a long-time adversary whom, he claimed, had frequently undermined his professional advice to the Bishop of that time, namely, Dr George Wyndham Kennion, a fellow Freemason. Even more interestingly, upon the latter's retirement as the Bishop of Bath and Wells in 1921, he was replaced by another Mason and member of Bligh Bond's old Lodge of "Saint Vincent", the Rt Revd Brother J. Basil Wynne Wilson, who remained at Wells until 1937. The apparently non-masonic Dean of Wells throughout much of the period referred to, indeed from 1911 to 1933, was Joseph Armitage Robinson who constantly attacked Bligh Bond's *modus operandi* during his excavation work at Glastonbury Abbey.

In this particular regard, Bligh Bond was a firm believer in the Spiritus Mundi, or universal mind, which it was thought, not dissimilar to Jung's theory at a later stage, could be tapped into, thereby breaking the barriers of time and space. In a quite extraordinary publication in 1918, entitled, *The Gate of Remembrance* Bond reveals how, prior to the commencement of work at the Abbey in his capacity as Director of Excavations, he sought the guidance of a long-dead Monk of Glastonbury, called Johannes Bryant (1497-1533), with whose spirit he communicated by means of Automatic Writing through the Medium of one Captain John

Bartlett (operating under the alias of “John Alleyne”) and who possessed this quite remarkable faculty of communication.

Working together at various times, from 1909 through to 1918, there were in addition to the Glastonbury observations – outlined in Bligh Bond’s celebrated *The Gate of Remembrance* – there was an equally impressive, though now largely overlooked, series of Automatic Writing sessions undertaken between the two men and described as “a Forecast of the Great War and of Social Revolution with the coming of the New Race.” A second publication concerned with the latter subject emerged in 1919 entitled *The Hill of Vision*.

Other publications included: *The Company of Avalon* in 1924; *The Mystery of Glaston and her Immortal Tradition* in 1939; *The Secret of Immortality*, *The Cabala in the Coptic Gnostic Books*, and, most intriguing of all, *The Glastonbury Scripts – or how the Grail appeared to Brother Mathias of Eirenn* which was on sale for one shilling in 1924.

It was, however, Bligh Bond’s “spirit involvement” at Glastonbury Abbey, and concern mainly with the excavation and discovery of the Edgar Chapel, that was to lead to his downfall and final dismissal from the archaeological scene in 1922, a blow from which, he himself admitted, he never fully recovered.

His friend and collaborator in the realm of Automatic Writing, carried out incidentally in Tyndalls’ Park, Bristol, was Capt Bartlett, and is well worthy of mention at this stage. The son of the one-time Rector of Rowberrow in North Somerset, the Revd J.B. Bartlett, “John Alleyne” – to revert to his pseudonym – was a retired officer in the R.M.L.I. who also served in the Norfolk Regiment for a time during the World War I. Described in his Obituary on 21st April 1933 as a “Glastonbury Explorer, Poet and Artist” he was the husband of Maude Wingate – alias Carlyon de Lyle – a local musician of some talent, who composed a delightful Suite for Piano named after Bligh Bond’s mystical publication entitled *The Gate of Remembrance*. Having had the pleasure of hearing it performed by my own musician daughter, Caroline, I found it a somewhat moving and sensitive piece, and an outline of its seven sub-sections is shown hereunder:

1. Johannes goes a-fishing
2. The Boat Song
3. The Waters of Meare
4. Evensong
5. The Myriad Voices of the Rain
6. The Cloisters
7. Vae Mihi.

(Incidentally, for anyone who is sufficiently interested, it may be possible on some future occasion to obtain a cassette of this unusual recording or perhaps, by arrangement, listen to it in live performance.)

A number of interesting influences would appear to emerge from the musical score, and I quote my daughter’s recently written observations in this regard as follows:

The Gate of Remembrance by Carlyon de Lyle

This “Miniature Suite for Pianoforte” consists of seven pieces. Throughout, the composer draws upon many musical influences, particularly the piano music of Ravel, Liszt and Mendelssohn.

There is a strong religious vein running through the suite, which is in keeping with the inspiration for the piece, the town of Glastonbury, once a religious centre of great importance. The hymn-like nature of certain pieces reflects the fact that some of the music was composed within the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey.

The first piece, *Johannes goes a-fishing*, opens meditatively and is followed by a lilting 6/8 section, reminiscent of the Gondola pieces from Mendelssohn’s *Songs without Words*.

The second piece, *The Boat Song*, continues the gondola theme, whilst the figuration in the G major “*piu mosso*” section is rather Schumannesque.

The Waters of the Meare contains a plaintive melody, which appears alternately in the left and right hands. Here, the influence of John Ireland is evident. The piece brilliantly suggests the cascade of water and Ravel and Liszt can also be heard in the piano figuration and the harmonies.

Evensong follows. Its full chords and crashing left-hand octaves suggest the sound of the organ – Cesar Franck’s Prelude, Chorale and Fugue must have been uppermost in the mind of the composer when she wrote this.

The Myriad of Voices of the Rain is another evocative depiction of water where, again, the influences of Ravel and Liszt are apparent.

The sixth piece, *In the Cloisters*, has a bell-like quality. This time, it is Grieg who springs to mind – this could have come from his *Lyric Pieces*. The religious theme returns once more in the choral middle section.

The suite concludes with *Vae Mihi* and the mood is one of celebration and finally serenity. Once again, the piano works of Mendelssohn are in evidence.

Caroline Wallis-Newport
7th June 1999.

Having since discussed the above observations with my daughter, she was anxious not to give the impression that the music was totally “unoriginal.” For example, she went on to explain that, in his earlier piano pieces, Edward Elgar himself was described as “Schumannesque” with no sign of the individual grandeur which was to emerge later. In addition to Schumann, apparently, there is also evidence of Brahms, Weber and Wagner in the great man’s compositions. Many of the most distinguished composers of the past, therefore, have been influenced by their predecessors.

We now return to the Masonic involvement of Frederick Bligh Bond. Despite the obvious disenchantment with his Mother Lodge (for what particular reasons one can but guess, but they may have been connected to his domestic situation), he did in fact, whilst actively engaged at Glastonbury, become a joining member of the local Pilgrim Lodge No. 772 in 1912. Whilst there is no record of his eventual departure from the Lodge (it is far from improbable that he was excluded) he is known to have given at least one lecture, entitled: ‘The Lost Mysteries of Masonry recovered from the Greek Scriptures.’ Despite his earlier

lack of involvement with his Mother Lodge, he had in fact delivered a lecture to the Brethren of Saint Vincent not many months before his “Exclusion in Arrears” on 22nd May 1913. Entitled ‘Evidences of a Masonic Secret Tradition discovered in Glastonbury Abbey,’ it is almost certain that it contained similar sensational revelations to the one given at Glastonbury. Quite clearly, it was intended to convey essentially the same message.

Based on the ancient science of Gematria, comprising a Cabalistic system, associating numbers with letters from the original Greek and Hebrew scriptures, his general thesis was that, not only were the great mediæval ecclesiastical buildings divinely inspired but all were constructed to the unerring principles of numerical perfection and Sacred Geometry. Bligh Bond published two further books in this field in collaboration with the Vicar of St. Austell, the Revd Thomas Simcox Lea; one entitled *Gematria, a Preliminary Investigation of the Cabala* and *The Apostolic Gnosis*, all of which, coupled with his separate publications dealing with Automatic Writing, merely added to the hostility which was now being directed at Bligh Bond from every conceivable quarter, from both within the Church and the archaeological world.

Meanwhile, during this sustained period of conflict in his life, he would appear to have made an effort (albeit temporary) to re-introduce himself into the Masonic Craft towards the end, and immediately after, the First World War. For example, at a time when an increasing number of senior clergymen had become members of his old Bristol Lodge No. 1404 (he was ever a man to meet problems head on!), he became a re-joining member of The Saint Vincent Lodge at some stage during 1917, having presumably settled the outstanding account which led to his exclusion some three years earlier. Now, with regard to the Bristol Masonic Society, there is no evidence that he ever became a member after its formation in the very same year. Perhaps he found the 1917 Life Membership of 7 shillings and 6 pence an unacceptable drain on his resources! However, our records for 7th March 1919 indicate that he delivered a Lecture entitled ‘Masonic Landmarks in the Bible’ in which he gave a description, yet again, of the mystical properties of numbers and geometrical form which the Secretary of those days described as “a newly-devised system” affording a key to a more accurate interpretation of the Bible, the ancient Arts, Philosophies and Masonry, such being illustrated by the visible and invisible surfaces and points of the Cube and Square.

Thereafter, it would appear that the speaker furnished many notable examples of the system’s application to the explanation of (to quote) ‘names and symbolic descriptions in both the Old and New Testaments – and to the form of old churches and monolithic structures in this and other lands.’ There is, however, a possible indication as to the nature of reception given to Bligh Bond’s contribution that evening in the Minutes of the Committee of 23rd October 1920 which reported on his willingness to present “another paper” at some future meeting. Somewhat ominously, or so it would appear, the following resolution was passed: namely, that “the present session is already complete” and the Secretary was asked to write to him accordingly.

Around the time in question, there is a record in the annals of the Somerset Masters’ Lodge, No. 3746, which confirms that he conducted the Brethren and their ladies around the Abbey Grounds at Glastonbury during the Summer Meeting in June 1920. The Lodge *Transactions* that year declare, also, that he delivered a lecture upon the same occasion, the title of which, though not disclosed in full, would be relatively easy to surmise!

Excavations among the Abbey ruins having continued with difficulty until about 1921, the hostility of the Diocesan Hierarchy towards Bligh Bond reached a fever pitch over the next two years. Despite his temporary re-association with senior Masonic members of the Clergy in Bristol, it is quite apparent that he received no particular favours from that direction. Indeed, following his formal suspension from all future work at Glastonbury, to which town, incidentally, he had permanently moved from Bristol in the meantime, he finally took passage for the United States of America in 1926. He was to spend ten years across the Atlantic where, continuing in the profoundly religious and devoutly Christian manner which had remained with him throughout, he put his architectural skill to use by building, mostly with his own hands, the Church of Christ on the Mount in upstate New York. Having previously become a Benedictine devotee, and described as the Right Reverend Monsignor Frederick Bligh Bond, O.S.B., he quite clearly achieved a period of peace and tranquillity in America which had eluded him in his Mother Country. With regard to his adopted Church on the Mount, a rather moving account of it appeared in a local New York newspaper in 1973 whereby the Reporter recorded:

‘As I stood there, my speechless and spellbound state melted into something more than a feeling of perfect peace. It seemed this was a structure built to shelter the one spot on earth where all lines converge, all points intersect and, that, therefore, to simply stand there in the middle of it was to become fully integrated, at rest, and to actually experience, for a moment, Eternity.’

Brother Frederick Bligh Bond had after all, perhaps, found his true spiritual home – somewhat distantly removed from his beloved Vale of Avalon where, many years earlier, he had unveiled the ancient wattle foundations of the first Christian Chapel (controversially described as in Zodiacal form) in the grounds of Glastonbury Abbey.

Albeit retrospectively, it is now perhaps time to refer to an earlier and important stage of Frederick Bligh Bond’s esoteric interests and activities. It is quite evident, from all that has gone before, that Craft Masonry in England as such failed to provide him with the spiritual and intellectual stimulation he so actively sought during his early to middle years. In 1909 Dr George Norman, a future President of the Society, was a leading member of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia which is an independent body of Christian Freemasons constituted in London on 1st June 1867. Formed to encourage the field of philosophy and scholarship, in its widest sense, members were, and still are, encouraged to read original papers or extracts from the works of others, and to join in any discussion which might ensue. The *raison d’être* of this Society is to inculcate the virtue of study and, to quote from its now famous edict, to encourage “working out the great problems of life, and understanding the Wisdom, Art and Literature of the Ancient World.” Its object, therefore, is to bring its members a few steps “nearer to wisdom and understanding of the true nature of reality.” A pretty tall order, I think you will agree, Brethren.

Having been accepted as an hitherto unassociated founding member of the newly-formed Robert Fludd College at Bath on 29th November 1909, Bligh Bond became the first Bristol Freemason to be received into the Rosicrucian Society following the demise of the original 1869 so-called Bristol College (which met, intriguingly, at Weston-super-Mare!) of that indefatigable Irishman by-now Captain (later to become Major) Francis George Irwin which, sadly, fell into abeyance some five years later.

The consecration of Robert Fludd College in 1909 was carried out in the presence of the M.W. Supreme Magus, the M.W. Frater Dr. William Wynn Westcott, the Coroner for North

London, together with a number of other senior members of the Society. Of the twenty-five founder members, no fewer than twenty (as in the case of Bligh Bond) were Zelator-Aspirants; most of whom would appear to have been recruits of Dr Norman, the founding Celebrant, from either Bath or the surrounding areas of Somerset and Wiltshire. As stated, Bligh Bond was the only recognisable Bristol Mason among the collective body which, incidentally, contained no fewer than three clergymen and an equal number of medical men. Among the former were the Revd High Effingham Tilney Bassett; the Revd Henry Lowrey Barnwell, the Vicar Glastonbury; and the Revd Victor Christian Albert Fitzhugh.

Not unexpectedly, on the first meeting following the consecration, on 22nd April 1910, Frater F. Bligh Bond VII Grade read a Paper on the 'Power and Numbers as exemplified in the Magic Squares.' At the following meeting on 21st June, W. Frater Charles Curd presented a Paper entitled, 'Natural Religion (Phallic)' and thereafter Frater J. Purcell Quinton spoke of the 'Mystery of Jachin and Boaz.'

Further papers followed such as: 'The Egyptian Doctrine of the Future Life;' 'The Lily, the Rose and the Cross;' 'The Kabalah' – not, surprisingly, by Bond but by Charles Curd; and most topically, on 1st October 1915, the Supreme Magus himself delivered a Paper entitled 'Angels and the Angels of Mons.'

Meanwhile, on 23rd October 1911, Bligh Bond, having rapidly progressed to the Second Order of the Society in two years, became the first member of the College to be elected to the Chair of the College following its consecration in November 1909. In this latter regard, Dr George Norman, by this time Junior Substitute Magus of the Society, served two years as Celebrant in order to consolidate this very important early period in the life of Robert Fludd College.

It would appear from the foregoing that Bligh Bond had, at last, found a suitable channel for his various mystical and esoteric pursuits. For example, at a time when he continued to be involved with automatic writing and Glastonbury Abbey, our by this time V.W. Frater gave a paper to the College entitled 'Studies in the Christian Kabalah.' However, it has to be said that, whilst he had joined Metropolitan College in London meanwhile, his attendances at Bath thereafter were far from frequent; and it may come as no surprise to discover that the very first Candidate of 1909, and the first elected Celebrant in 1911, was "Erased" for "Non-Payment" in 1922!

Robert Fludd College, on the other hand, had continued to prosper, with the assistance of a very enthusiastic group of aspirants from South Wales, the first of which was yet another clergyman, the Revd Enoch Thomas Davies of Penarth, who was received into the Society, as it happens, under Bligh Bond's stewardship on 29th April 1912. The second of many further Welsh candidates was a Frater Roberts, a member of the Institute of Civil Engineers, and a Master Mason of Glamorgan Lodge No. 36. His address was given as Queen Street, Cardiff.

Other than the lukewarm involvement of Bligh Bond, very few, if any, other Bristol Masons became members during the first ten years or so. However, shortly thereafter an interesting link was forged with the Society in which we find ourselves tonight. Already well known for his distinguished connections in Bath, Dr George Norman's arrival on to the Bristol Masonic scene heralded the start of a "Golden Era" in the affairs of the Bristol Masonic Society. During this period, which followed the First World War, and coincided with the

consequential Great Economic Depression, no fewer than five of the six Presidents between 1929 and 1934 were members of Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, through Robert Fludd College at Bath. Indeed, if backdated to 1927, it could be said that six out of eight such Presidents fell into that particular category. Collectively, such were an amalgam of academics and medical men, three of whom were members of Bligh Bond's old Mother Lodge of Saint Vincent, and included a man whose name is particularly well known to our Brother President, namely, Professor W.W. Jervis, Doctor of Science; Barrister-at-Law and Professor of Geography at the University of Bristol who, upon his installation as President of this Society in 1931, insisted upon wearing his academic gown in No. 1 Lodge Room for the occasion! However, there was far more to this man, since he served as an Officer in the Devonshire Regiment and the Ghurka Rifles in the First World War and was Lt. Colonel in the Home Guard twenty years later. The connection with the Ghurka Rifles is interesting, since it would appear that he was initiated into the "Northern Star" Lodge No. 1463 (E.C.) whilst in India in 1915.

In addition to Professor Jervis, the other Presidents of this Society associated with Robert Fludd College at Bath are also of interest in the light of their Rosicrucian involvement. They are as follows:

1927 – Lionel Vibert – Born 1872 in St. Petersburg, where his father was the Professor of English at the University. A Cambridge man, he was initiated into Royal Alfred Lodge, Jersey, in 1892 aged 20. Thereafter, he went into the Indian Civil Service for twenty-five years, being the past District Grand Warden of Madras before returning to settle in Bath. He was the first Rosicrucian member of the Bristol Masonic Society, whose President he became in 1927, to reach the Chair, also, of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076. He was particularly interested in the Masonic connection with Ireland; in fact, unusually for a non-Irish Mason, he was made an Honorary Associate Member of the Lodge of Research CC (I.C.) Dublin, in 1928.

He died on 7th December 1938, precisely one calendar month after another distinguished Past Master of Quatuor Coronati and President of the B.M.S.; namely Dr George Norman, whose separate details are shown hereunder. Being both resident in Bath, it is perhaps no coincidence that Vibert and Norman passed through each of the aforementioned Chairs within a few short years of each other!

1929 – Dr W.H.A. Elliott – a member of the Saint Vincent Lodge, No. 1404, whose Master he became in 1934. He served as a Lt. in the Royal Army Medical Corps, presumably during the First World War. On 11th May 1926, he presented an interesting paper to both Robert Fludd College and the Bristol Masonic Society entitled 'Theories concerning the source of symbolic significance of the Gold used in King Solomon's Temple.'

1930 – Dr George Norman – born a Devonian in 1848, he trained as a medical man and, for a while, was a ship's doctor in the British Merchant Service. Having set up a medical practice in Brock Street, Bath, he was initiated in Royal Cumberland Lodge, in the same city, in 1889. Often confused with a somewhat earlier Provincial Grand Master of Gloucestershire, of the same name, he was in fact the Provincial Grand Master of Mark Master Masons of Somerset; and a well-known Mark Lodge, meeting at Yatton, is named after him.

He reached very high Office, as indicated, in Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia and, quite amazingly, was eighty-two years of age when he took the Chair of the Bristol Masonic

Society! He died on 7th November 1938, just two days short of his ninetieth birthday and one month before his fellow-Bath resident and fellow-Past Master of Quatuor Coronati Lodge and President of this Society Lionel Vibert.

1931 – Professor W.W. Jervis – Professor of Geography at the University of Bristol, and to whom earlier reference has been made. Elected to the Chair of Bristol Masonic Society in 1931, he was for a brief twelve month period also the Grand Superintendent of the Camp of Baldwyn, namely, between 1959 and 1960.

1933 – Major A. Gorham – whose local Lodge was the Lodge of Friendship and Unity No. 1271 at Bradford-on-Avon. He was a Major in the Indian Army. He joined Robert Fludd College at Bath, as a Joining Member from Pymander College (S.R.I.A.) of Rawalpindi, whilst serving in the Army. He was to become a very active Secretary of Robert Fludd College, whereon different occasions, he presented excellent Papers on the “Ogham Stones of Ireland” and one relating to the “Masons” Marks of India. He would appear to have been of Irish ancestry.

1934 – Dr. H.C. Bristowe – yet another Dr of Medicine and Rosicrucian member of Robert Fludd College at Bath. Having apparently studied in London, he lived and practised medicine at Wrington and, having been initiated in Benevolent Lodge No. 446 at Wells, he thereafter joined, and became Master of the Lodge of Agriculture, No. 1119, at Yatton in 1905. Thereafter, he became a joining member of The Saint Vincent Lodge No. 1404 in 1932, following which he became a member of the Camp of Baldwyn, no less; an achievement for a Wiltshire-Somerset Mason which is unlikely to be repeated in the somewhat Masonically-conservative Bristolian world we happen to be living in at present!

Of a scholarly and highly esoteric disposition, he produced in 1932 a paper entitled: ‘The Influence of Ancient Egypt on Modern Civilisation’ followed in 1934 by a mystifying study entitled ‘A physical basis for the UNSEEN!’

From the mid-1930s until some fifty years thereafter, there were but two further members of the Bristol Craft who became members of Robert Fludd College at Bath. They happen to be two future Provincial Grand Masters of Bristol, namely, RWBro George Tryon of Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality and RWBro Francis John Hector of The Saint Vincent Lodge No. 1404. It has been said of both that neither were of a particularly esoteric disposition and, whilst, this could be believed of Brother Tryon, being a Chartered Accountant, one wonders about the gynaecologically challenged surgeon, Bro Hector, since the latter would appear to have been a somewhat sensitive observer of the Glastonbury scene and who once composed an interesting piece of poetry entitled ‘Avalon.’ Sadly, whilst viewing the distant past, he makes no reference to St. Patrick or St. Bridget, or indeed Beckery of the Irish tradition in Avalon, it is none the worse for that; and we must be grateful to Frater “Manus Manum Lavat” (for such was his Rosicrucian Pseudonym) once of Robert Fludd College.

Dwelling in the land which an ancient Historian once called “the Holyest Erthe in Englande,” its power to affect the lives of Glastonbury’s devotees would be difficult to overstate. For example, before the recent publication of Patrick Benham’s splendid little book *The Avalonians*, it was not possible for many to realise the extent to which the mystic concept of this region gripped the imagination during the first quarter of the 20th century. Such luminaries as George Bernard Shaw, T.E. Lawrence, Fiona Macleod, A.E. Waite, Annie Besant and Wellesley Tudor Pole have all been drawn into the Avalonian tradition – to lesser

or greater extent – and together with the composer Rutland Boughton, Miss Violet Firth (otherwise known as Dion Fortune), Alice Buckton *et al* during this period . . . And one cannot but help but conclude that part of this revival of interest, at least, obtained an energetic kick-start from the mystic involvement of the strange but highly compelling Frederick Bligh Bond in the old Abbey ruins.

On the question of his reputation, Bond's somewhat exotic *modus operandi* would not, perhaps, cause such a stir in the Glastonbury of today, where, only last week, I bumped into an ostensible Scot dressed in a kilt, and complete Highland regalia, whilst wearing a Viking helmet with a full set of horns!

Our subject, therefore, has to be judged by the somewhat staid and measured conventions of his own day – the implications of which he must surely have been fully aware at the time.

With regard to his domestic situation, earlier in life, the public airing of his difficulties was rather more in keeping with the present day than that of 100 years ago. Had he lived in Vienna at the time in question, he could have been forgiven for having headed off to the consulting rooms of Sigmund Freud! Ever the maverick soul, and of an undoubted prickly disposition, one is left with the feeling that he was possibly more sinned against than otherwise, and an American biographer (William W. Kenawell) has even gone to far as to suggest that his constant battle with orthodox opinion, in both the academic and ecclesiastical field, may have stemmed from a feeling of inferiority at not having had the opportunity to study at University as his father, an Oxford man, and several of his brothers had in fact done. It is perhaps precisely that fact that made him such an interesting and vibrant personality – who can say? However, in a moment of mischief on my part, it does occur to me that the infamous original by-law No. 6 of his Mother Lodge, No. 1404, may well have a great deal to answer for!

Whilst always disappointed at what he considered to have been unfair treatment in terms of his Abbey excavations, his final years, upon returning from America, were relatively tranquil. After the somewhat fraught years of her earlier life, his daughter Theodora “St. Vincent,” who was herself of a highly psychic disposition remained close to him throughout. By way of interest, she was a close friend of Sir John Mills’ sister Annette – of “Muffin the Mule” fame – and according to an acquaintance of mine who lives in Bligh Bond’s onetime dwelling on the Shepton Mallet road out of Glastonbury, the spirit of his daughter (not of Bligh Bond himself) is constantly present within!

Whilst staying at Dolgellau in North Wales, Frederick Bligh Bond died of a heart attack at the local Cottage Hospital on 8th March 1945, aged eighty-one years. Sadly, little was made of the fact at the time. However, shortly thereafter, a correspondent to the editor of *The Times* signing himself “a friend of Glastonbury” suggested the provision of a permanent memorial to Mr Frederick Bligh Bond F.R.I.B.A. in view of his many Avalonian exertions.

The letter continues:

‘The most suitable place would be Glastonbury, where he did such brilliant excavations, and with which his name will ever be associated. The beautiful Parish Church of St. Johns, Glastonbury, contains no fewer than five fine oak Screens of his designing (one a brilliant restoration). Something dedicated to his memory therefore would be most fitting.’

The writer then invites contributions for such a purpose to the Vicar: the Revd Lionel S. Lewis. One suspects that it may well have been Lewis – always a stalwart supporter of Bligh Bond during his greatest difficulties, who was in fact the “friend of Glastonbury” who made the appeal through *The Times*.

Sadly, to the best of my knowledge, no such memorial to the life of Frederick Bligh Bond was ever erected – although, in the great scheme of things, it is never ever too late!

ROGUES, THIEVES AND VAGABONDS:

A Gallery of Masonic Ne'er-Do-Wells

by

WBro R.A. Gilbert

(29th October 2002)

When I began this paper I thought, for a fleeting moment, of some Masonic gatherings where I would need simply to hold up a large mirror to the Brethren, so that they could see rogues a-plenty. But, of course, that would never do for the Bristol Masonic Society and you must put up with what follows.

We are all aware, or should be aware, that Freemasons are supposed to be good men seeking to be better, and yet we also know, either from bitter experience or simply from regularly reading the reports of the *Quarterly Communications*, that some Masons are bad men becoming worse. It has, alas, always been so and human nature being what it is, I suppose that it always will be so. We can, however, learn from the sins of others – even if it be nothing more than discovering better ways of hiding our delight when Masonic idols prove to have feet of clay.

But I do not intend to produce nothing more than a catalogue of the misdeeds of sinful Freemasons. What you will receive is a sort of *Rake's Progress* of Masonic wickedness, progressing from breaches of the rules laid down in the *Book of Constitutions* to high crimes and misdemeanours that have taken their perpetrators to the gallows. Nor shall I attempt to include every Masonic wrong-doer, or we should be here for many days simply running through the roll-call. At which point comes my first aside.

Over the past twenty years or so, Freemasonry has attempted to improve its image and to respond to negative criticism. We made much of our practice of expelling Brethren who had been found guilty of criminal offences and who had received custodial sentences. But then we suffered an onrush of compassion and decided that we should not bruise the feelings of either the guilty Masons or their innocent fellows: we now allow them to resign from the Craft so that no record of their evil-doing shall sully the reports that we receive from Grand Lodge. In so doing we preserve our image of godliness before the world, but at the price of depriving innocent Masons of their pleasure in reading the only entertaining part of the records of the *Quarterly Communications*.

And now to business. You may find that my terms are harsh when applied to all of my motley crew – after all, a “rogue” is strictly “a dishonest, unprincipled person; a rascal;” a thief is just that; and a vagabond is one who leads “an unsettled, irregular or disreputable life; good-for-nothing, rascally [and] worthless.” But as Freemasons, every one of them can at least be said to have acted in an irregular way.

First of all to crimes against the Craft. My first rogue was guilty of rebelling against the rules, and since ‘rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft’ (I Samuel 15:23) we are entitled to see him as wicked indeed. He was WBro Ernest Callard, of Old Bond Street in London, who in 1915 had fallen foul of Sir Edward Letchworth, the Grand Secretary. In a fit of righteous xenophobia Bro Callard had put forward a Resolution to Grand Lodge that ‘Germans should

be barred from English Freemasonry for twenty years as a protest against their brutality in Belgium;’ but instead of waiting for his Resolution to be passed, he and other members of Royal Warrant Holders’ Lodge, No. 2789, promptly excluded ‘a Brother of German birth’ from the Lodge. With equal promptitude the Grand Master’s Council ordered his restoration and, when this was refused, suspended the Lodge. Bro Callard then unofficially, and illicitly, circulated his Resolution within the Craft. When called before the Board of General Purposes to justify himself, Bro Callard refused to discuss the matter while a ‘Brother of German birth’ (a Bro Goldstein, who was a member of the Board) was present. He was then himself suspended from membership of the Craft for contumacy, which he said was ‘a miserable and Anti-English proceeding.’ As is the way with the self-righteous he then made a great noise, and wrote to Sir Dighton Probyn, Equerry to King George V, seeking to appeal to the King to intervene on his behalf. Neither Equerry nor King was a Mason and Callard was enraged to discover that his letter had been passed on to the Grand Secretary – who told Probyn that Callard’s mind was unbalanced, as it surely was. In response Bro Callard sent printed copies of the entire correspondence to all members of the Board, with the inevitable result that he buried himself even deeper in a dunghill of his own making. He had clearly forgotten that at his Initiation he had been taught to be cautious.

Less heinous is evading taxation, or rather neglecting to pay one’s dues. Only obstinacy can account for those Brethren who allow this practice to lead to their exclusion from Lodges, Chapters or other Masonic units. And if this be so, then there are many stiff-necked, obstinate Brethren – among them Bro Frederick Bligh Bond, of Saint Vincent Lodge, who failed to pay what was due to the Lodge and suffered accordingly. Some years earlier, in 1912, Bond also left the Robert Fludd College of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia under a similar cloud. His cavalier attitude to Masonic etiquette – and to Masonic finance – was nothing new. In June 1894 he had visited Tyndall Lodge, at Chipping Sodbury, and was proposed as a joining member. At the Installation Festival of the Lodge, in the November following, he was duly elected. But Bond, who was not present, never attended any further meetings and failed to pay his subscription. In the S.R.I.A. members are required to take a Latin motto; natural justice would require that of Frederick Bligh Bond to be *Persona non grata*!

More eminent than Bligh Bond, but equally guilty of Non Payment of Dues, was Bro Oscar Wilde, who was initiated into Apollo Lodge, No. 357, at Oxford on 23rd February 1875. For some years he was an enthusiastic Mason, being perfected in Apollo Rose-Croix Chapter (1877) and advanced in the University Mark Lodge (1878), but enthusiasm waned and Wilde drifted away unpaid. In a sense, he merely anticipated the inevitable, for his later notoriety would have ensured his expulsion from his Craft Lodge – as it did from the Ancient and Accepted Rite.

The Minute Book of the Supreme Council records on 9th July 1895: ‘The erasure from the Golden Book of the name of Oscar Wilde who has been sentenced to a term of imprisonment with hard labour.’ Crime had always resulted in expulsion from the Ancient & Accepted Rite, and the Supreme Council took care to ensure that all of its Chapters were circulated when they took such action. One such case, for which copies of the circular survive, was that of Richard Montagu Townsend, of Liverpool Chapter, No. 19, who in November 1880 was ‘deprived of all Masonic Rights and Privileges under the Jurisdiction of the Supreme Council’ because of he had been ‘adjudged guilty of a charge of Misappropriation’ for which he had been sentenced to five years’ imprisonment.

The erasure of Wilde's name probably reflected the deviant nature of his crime (homosexuality between consenting adults was then illegal) as mere adulterers usually managed to evade masonic punishment. Thus, in 1882, the Revd Alfred James Harman Cummings of Truro, who had 'deserted his wife and family and went off with another person's wife,' was advised not to come to London to receive the 30° until the Supreme Council had investigated the matter. They discovered that his Chapter (Cornwall No. 61) had excluded him not for immoral conduct but 'for failure to pay his dues.' This led to an even more heinous sin: not on the part of Bro Cummings, but on that of the Recorder of another Chapter which had accepted him as a joining member without obtaining a clearance certificate. There are some things that a Freemason simply should not do.

Regular Freemasonry was not alone in glossing over sexual misbehaviour. In a complex scandal far worse than that surrounding Oscar Wilde, the Co-Masonic Order chose to gloss over both homosexual offences and paedophilia. Co-Masonry had arisen in France in 1893 with the founding of *La Grande Loge Symbolique Écossaise de France "Le Droit Humain,"* which admitted both men and women to membership. It was introduced into Great Britain in 1902 and was taken up with enthusiasm within the Theosophical Society – especially by its most famous member, Annie Besant. After she became head of the Order, in 1907, Mrs Besant further promoted Co-Masonry in conjunction with Theosophy. One of her converts was James Ingall Wedgwood who, by 1912, had become Very Illustrious Secretary of the Supreme Council of the British Federation of Co-Masonry.

Four years later, on 23rd February 1916, Wedgwood was consecrated as a Bishop of the Old Catholic Church, the name changing in 1918 to the Liberal Catholic Church – which became the ecclesiastical arm of the Theosophical Society, as Co-Masonry was its Masonic arm. Wedgwood immediately sailed for Australia, where his first Episcopal act, on 22nd July 1916, was to consecrate as Bishop his fellow theosophist and cleric, the Revd Charles Webster Leadbeater, whom he had initiated into Co-Masonry during a visit to Sydney the previous year. In very short order Leadbeater was elevated to the 33° and appointed Administrator General of the Universal Co-Masonic Order in Australia. Nor was a taste for exotic ceremonial the only peculiarity that Wedgwood and Leadbeater shared: they both had a sexual preference for their own sex.

This had caused problems for Leadbeater ten years before. In 1906 he had been accused of molesting adolescent boys placed in his care by fellow theosophists, but despite his evident guilt there had been no prosecution and he had quietly left the Society. Annie Besant subsequently reinstated him and by 1916 he was a shining star of Theosophy. But the star rapidly became tarnished. From 1917 onwards allegations of sexual misconduct continued to circulate against both Leadbeater and Wedgwood. In 1922 Wedgwood resigned from Co-Masonry and other theosophical bodies when one of his partners confessed to homosexual licence, adding that 'Wedgwood absolutely declines to give up the practice.' Leadbeater was no more discreet but none of his activities with young boys was proven in court, and he continued in high Masonic and ecclesiastical office, even though prominent members of the Theosophical Society publicly stated that their society 'is now completely dominated by the deluded, impure and poisonous ideas of an acknowledged sex pervert.' Unlike Wedgwood he remained active in Co-Masonry, worrying somewhat hypocritically at the numbers of people being elevated to the 33° – even though he was happy to raise one of his pupils to the Degree 'in the cloakroom of a Masonic temple when he discovered that he required an assistant of that Degree for the ceremony he was about to perform.' He died in 1934, unrepentant, unregenerate and neither unfrocked nor expelled from his Masonic Order. We, of course, do

not have such people in our Lodges and even if we did, we would not let them remain. Or would we?

One of the most prominent collectors of Masonic artefacts, books and engravings was Bro Alexander Meyrick Broadley, who was initiated in St. Mary's Lodge, No. 707, at Bridport in 1869. He was then a twenty-two year old barrister and about to travel to India to become a Magistrate. After four years in India he moved to Tunis, where he set up in practice. He left Tunis in 1893 to return to England and his Dorset home, where he died a bachelor in 1916. On the surface an honourable if unexceptionable career, but we shall look beneath that surface.

Broadley was an odd and cantankerous man (he was noted for his uncouth habits in Dorset – such as urinating from his carriage when the need took him, and he took umbrage at Walter Spencer the bookseller, when he became too fat to squeeze between the piles of books crammed into Spencer's shop). He was also an enthusiastic Freemason, active in many Degrees and holding high office within them (for example, in 1879 he was appointed Deputy District Grand Master for Malta). But there was within him a vicious streak. In 1872 the Government of Bengal was petitioned by a number of Indians who complained of Broadley's conduct at Behar: he was alleged to be using forced labour, to be taking bribes, to imprison people falsely, and to be generally debauched. The subsequent investigation found initially in Broadley's favour on most points, but these findings were reversed in part by the Government, which took a decidedly dim view of his activities – especially his close association with one Gujadhur Pershad, a man suspected (with justice) of 'unnatural offences.' Broadley was transferred twice and then removed from the list of Civil Servants from 7th December 1872. At this point he removed himself to Tunis, only to be suspected of too great an interest in young boys. But as there was no hint of financial impropriety in his life he was left alone to further his Masonic career. It may be noted, however, that despite an impressive record as a Masonic researcher, Broadley was never associated in any way with Quatuor Coronati Lodge. Perhaps I delude myself, but I like to think that Q.C. Lodge had members who were both shrewd and honourable.

At this point we should move from "breeches" to "breaches" and consider Masonic traitors, those who have breached their Obligations over secrecy. It would be quite improper to refer to living Freemasons who appear to be oath-breakers, so I shall say nothing about the authors of *The Hiram Key*. Instead I will go back nearly 300 years to Samuel Prichard and his *Masonry Dissected*, which was published in 1730. He claimed to be a disaffected Mason but we know nothing of his affiliation if, indeed, he truly was a Freemason. But at the very least he inspired a train of subsequent renegades (or possibly liars – virtually every author of a Masonic "exposure" has *claimed* to be a Mason, even if he was not). The most infamous, and unfortunate, of these was William Morgan of Batavia, in upper New York State.

Morgan was probably never initiated into Freemasonry but became proficient in the ceremonies through reading exposures. He was nonetheless accepted into Lodges in New York State in the early 1820s and was exalted into Royal Arch Masonry in Western Star Chapter No. 35 (NY) on 31st May 1825. Over the following twelve months he conceived and set in motion a plan to publish the rituals of the Craft and other Degrees. His supposed justification – that as he had never taken the Obligation he couldn't break it – is vitiated by the fact that he *had* taken an Obligation in the Royal Arch. But even as an oath-breaker, Morgan's subsequent fate cannot be justified. The Freemasons of northern New York attempted to subvert publication of their rituals by buying off Morgan and his publisher, and

when this came to nothing they resorted to kidnap. For five days in September 1826 Morgan was held prisoner in an old Powder magazine at Fort Niagara. What happened to him subsequently is unknown. Anti-masons claimed then, as they do now, that Morgan was murdered and thrown into Lake Ontario, although his body was never found. Against this Masonic apologists argue that he was bribed to quit the country and ended his days on the Cayman Islands in the West Indies. Neither party has ever provided convincing evidence for their points of view, but Morgan's disappearance damaged Masonry in the United States for many years: the political Anti-masonic Party was short-lived, but Anti-masonry as a creed has thrived on the "Morgan Murder" – we live with its barbs to this day.

Perhaps this punishment is deserved, for those who kidnapped him were certainly rogues as well as fools, and if they *did* kill him then they deserved more than the brief imprisonment that they received for the lesser crime. Publishing Masonic secrets certainly renders us 'wilfully perjured individual[s], void of all moral worth,' but it does not merit death. Nor does possessing delusions of grandeur and inventing a religion possessed of ceremonies filched from Freemasonry.

And so to Joseph Smith, Freemason, fantasist, polygamist, and founder of the Mormon sect. Smith's lost-race novel, *The Book of Mormon*, and the Church that he named after it were both thrust upon the world in 1830. At this point he took up the role of vagabond and began seven years of wandering. Eventually, in 1838, Smith and his colleagues arrived at Commerce, Illinois. The town was renamed Nauvoo and Joseph Smith began his despotic rule. In 1842 Nauvoo Lodge was consecrated, with Smith acting as Chaplain even though he was not initiated until *after* the Consecration.

Within five months 256 Candidates had been initiated in Nauvoo Lodge, two other Lodges were established and the neighbouring "real" Masons were becoming nervous. They demanded that the Grand Lodge of Illinois mount an investigation into the irregularities and all the Mormon Lodges were struck from the roll of the Grand Lodge. Despite this the Mormon Lodges continued to work, but Smith had also announced his "revelation" that polygamy was part of divine law, and public anger at this led to his arrest. While in gaol he was shot and killed by an enraged mob on 27th June 1844, hardly a Masonic martyr but yet undeserving such a fate.

Also in gaol, but as a visitor, was an earlier namesake of Smith the Mormon: Captain George Smith. This Smith was the subject of an inquiry at Grand Lodge held on 19th November 1783. Captain Smith and Thomas Brooke were charged with the offence of 'making masons in a clandestine manner in the King's Bench Prison.' This they freely admitted, arguing that as several Masons were imprisoned there, they sought to instruct them, and raise some to the Third Degree. Such a course of action was, they claimed, quite proper because Smith was then Master of Royal Military Lodge No. 371. The Lodge met at Woolwich, but they 'adjourned with their Constitution ... to the King's Bench Prison ... being one of those itinerant lodges which move with the Regiment, the Master of which, wherever he is, having the Constitution of the lodge, was by Captain Smith judged to have a right to hold a lodge, make masons etc.' Bro Brookes had attended meetings 'not thinking it any harm.' The two Brethren were neither suspended nor expelled, but Grand Lodge immediately resolved that it is 'inconsistent with the principles of Masonry, that any Free Mason's Lodge can be held for the purpose of making, passing or raising masons in any Prison or Place of confinement.' It is also clear that vengeance upon Captain Smith was being arranged. On 11th February 1784 the Royal Military Lodge was erased from the list of Lodges, and on 2nd February 1785, Captain

John George Smith, late Provincial Grand Master for the County of Kent, having been charged with uttering an Instrument purporting to be a certificate of the Grand Lodge, recommending two distressed Brethren; and he not appearing, or in any manner exculpating himself, though personally summoned to appear for that purpose, was duly expelled the Society. Thus was injustice duly done.

And keeping to the roguery of the illicit making of Masons, let us turn from a Smith to a Lewis – not the son of a Freemason, but Harvey Spencer Lewis, the creator of the pseudo-Rosicrucian organisation, the *Ancient Mystical Order Rosae Crucis*. Lewis was born in New Jersey in 1883 and during his early life worked as a journalist in New York. He became interested in psychical research and in 1913 sought to join the non-masonic *Societas Rosicruciana in America*. Correspondence between Lewis and officers of the SRIAm shows clearly that they were suspicious of his motives. They mistrusted Lewis and believed (correctly) that he wished to trade on their good name, steal ideas and set up his own Rosicrucian Order. Then Lewis attempted to enter Freemasonry, but in 1919 the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of New York was warned by Masonic members of SRIAm to be wary of Lewis. He had been initiated in Normal Lodge No. 523 (G.L.N.Y.) and passed to the Degree of Fellow Craft but after this warning he was ‘estopped from taking his Master Mason degree’ He moved to California and sought to continue his Masonic progress, but the bad odour in which he was held by the Grand Lodge of New York had preceded him and he never received his Third Degree.

It was not simply his desire to set up yet another esoteric Order, but the fact that it was a purely commercial venture that was effectively a fraud. After a failed launch of A.M.O.R.C. in New York in 1915 – appropriately on 1st April – Lewis restarted his Order with a marvellous charter, claiming great antiquity and a high lineage, that he had issued to himself. It was a short-lived affair, for after gathering in its complement of fools the New York Temple was raided by the police on 17th June 1918 and the Order collapsed again.

A succession of failed attempts to relaunch A.M.O.R.C. followed, until 1925 when it was established at Tampa in Florida. Here the Order grew and with it Lewis’s wealth – for unlike true Rosicrucian Orders, in which spiritual teaching is given freely, advancement in A.M.O.R.C. came at a heavy price. But internal dissension and court cases from unhappy members (all of which Lewis lost) ended his Florida venture and success came to him only in 1928 when his tawdry Egyptian Temple was set up at San Jose in California. A.M.O.R.C. then went from strength to strength, but of recent years the Order has been rent by schisms, assailed by the tax authorities in France and embarrassed by the wholesale publication of highly damaging private correspondence. This, however, is not the reason for Harvey Spencer Lewis being classed as a Masonic rogue, thief and vagabond. Nor is it Lewis’s milking of money from his gullible members. His Masonic crime was to offer spurious Masonic Initiation, and for this reason A.M.O.R.C. has been a proscribed body for English Freemasons since 1929. It has been a useful proscription for it has certainly saved money for gullible Masons.

Among other Masons with a penchant for esoteric Orders is one of a decidedly criminal bent: Aleister Crowley. Better known as a con-man, pervert, adulterer, slanderer, drug-addict and *soi-disant* magician, Crowley was also a Freemason, although unsurprisingly not of the regular variety. His involvement with Masonry began in 1900 at Mexico City, where he was ‘pushed rapidly through’ all the Degrees of the Ancient & Accepted Rite up to the 33°, but as this was done under a minuscule and irregular Supreme Council, presided over by Don Jesus

Medina, it signified nothing. Subsequently, in 1904, Crowley was initiated at Paris in Anglo-Saxon Lodge No. 343, under the obedience of the unrecognised (by U.G.L.E.) Grande Loge de France. Crowley remained a member of the Lodge until 1908 when he returned to London to carry on his magical and sexual perversions.

In 1910 he was accepted enthusiastically into the Rite of Memphis and Misraim by John Yarker, who accepted his Mexican credentials at face value. But the Craft eluded him, and although he claimed to have sat in many English Lodges, he was shown the door at Freemasons' Hall. This had as much to do with his unsavoury reputation as with his irregularity, and it is ironic that after Yarker's death, in 1913, Crowley's battles with the Co-Masons for control over the Rite of Memphis and Misraim centred around his objection to Co-Masonry as irregular – especially because the one Co-Mason who attended meetings of the Rite was James Ingall Wedgwood, not yet a bishop but certainly a fellow pervert.

But even if Crowley had managed to gain acceptance in English Lodges he would have been utterly rejected after 1915. That was the year in which, standing under the Statue of Liberty, he 'renounced for ever all allegiance to every alien tyrant' and swore 'to fight to the last drop of my blood to liberate the men and women of Ireland.' After the Easter Rising by Irish terrorists in 1916, this speech identified Crowley as a traitor – a label emphasised by his writing anti-British articles for the American pro-German magazines *The Fatherland* and *The International*. His bizarre sexual antics, coupled (as it were) with his treachery places Crowley high on the list of Masonic rogues.

Should we, however, define a traitor as one who ends up on the losing side? During the American rebellion of 1776-1783, one prominent Freemason changed sides. Benedict Arnold, a native of Connecticut, entered the rebellion on the side of the colonists, fought bravely and rose to the rank of Major-General. But in 1780 he placed loyalty over treachery and tried to surrender West Point to the Crown. In this venture he failed but he fought on against the rebels until 1781 when he left for London, where he died in 1801. Where and in what Lodge he was initiated is unknown, but he became a joining member of Hiram Lodge No. 1 at New Haven, and was a visitor to Solomon's Lodge No. 1 at Poughkeepsie in New York State. On 16th May 1781 the members of Solomon's Lodge decided that 'the name of Benedict Arnold be obliterated from the minutes of this lodge; a Traitor.' Here, the blue commemorative plaque on the site of his home in Gloucester Place records him, rightly, as a "patriot" who fought against his country's enemies. To American Freemasons he is a vile and perjured wretch, but to us he is a hero.

Which brings me to another aside. Now suppose that the rebellion had failed and that England had retained her American colonies. The rebel leaders, if they had failed to escape to France, would have been captured and probably executed. We would then have seen the Minute Book of Fredericksburg Lodge, Virginia, with the name of the rebel-in-chief, George Washington struck out and labelled "Traitor." It is a remarkable fact that American Freemasons are still unable to see Washington in a true light.

Before we proceed to the worst of all crimes – murder – we should retrace our steps and consider the lesser evils of theft, fraud and other financial misdeeds, for this species of villainy has been the undoing of all too many errant Masons. And still it goes on. Owing to the diligence of my Masonic friends I can lay before you two current examples involving Freemasons, one of theft and the other of malpractice. Those concerned are sad, mean-minded and rather pathetic figures, but they are undoubted rogues and what distinguishes

them is that newspaper reports of their wrong-doings make much of their Masonic connections.

First is the case of George Twite, ‘a former leading Norfolk freemason [who] was jailed [on 31st May 2002] for stealing pension money from an 83-year-old woman he had befriended.’ It seems inconceivable that a man who was, at the time of his arrest, ‘Worshipful Master of the masons’ Ceres Lodge in Swaffham’ could stoop so low, but stoop he did and received six weeks imprisonment for his pains.

While this sentence was being served, a Mason on the other side of the country, in Devon, was waiting to learn his fate. On Friday September 13th, the people of Devon learned – courtesy of the front page of the *Western Morning News* – that Philip Jolyon Huxtable, a Barnstaple solicitor, had been struck off by the Law Society. A disciplinary tribunal of the Society ‘was told [that Huxtable] faced compensation claims totalling more than £1 million for overcharging his clients.’ ‘The solicitor,’ added the news report, ‘is now being investigated by the Fraud Squad.’ Now while it is true that the newspaper reports have not – yet – brought up Bro Huxtable’s Masonic connections, they surely will, for he was no Masonic minnow. In the *Devon Year Book 2000/2001* he appears in a full-page colour photograph, dressed in his regalia as 2nd Assistant Provincial Grand Master for Devon, to which office he was appointed in April 2001. In fairness to the now disgraced Bro Huxtable it must be noted that he resigned from all Masonic membership as soon as his misdeeds first surfaced. Other dubious Masons have been less ready to admit the deed.

Some have even gloried in their actions. One such was Matthew McBlain Thomson, a Scots Mason who was initiated in 1872 into an irregular Lodge, Glasgow Melrose St. John. By dint of his deviousness – and laxity on the part of all too many Lodge officers – he managed to gain acceptance in a number of other Scottish Lodges, eventually, in 1894 and after an eight year sojourn in the U.S.A., becoming Master of Lodge Bonnie Doon No. 565 at Patna, near Ayr. Four years later he returned to America bearing a spurious “Charter” permitting him to confer a variety of additional Degrees ‘upon any worthy mason.’ In 1900 he began to confer these Degrees by way of sale, continuing the practice even after condemnation by the Grand Lodge of Idaho. To avoid future problems Thomson created, in 1907, a “Grand Lodge of Inter-Montana” allegedly under the authority of an irregular Supreme Council of Louisiana. Thus armed with awesome authority he spent the next decade developing a form of pyramid selling of Masonic Degrees, including those of the Craft, Mark, Knights Templar, Ancient & Accepted Rite and the Red Cross of Constantine. All were utterly worthless, but thousands of innocent would-be Masons were persuaded to part with their money in the firm belief that only the Grand Lodge of Inter-Montana was truly regular: for a variety of specious reasons all of the other Grand Lodges in the U.S.A. were claimed to be irregular in on way or another.

Of course, the bubble had to burst and in 1919 it did so. The US Post Office began a three-year investigation into Thomson’s mail fraud (which is what it was). In 1922 Thomson and two of his associates, Dominic Bergera and Thomas Perrot, were charged on ten counts of conspiring to violate, and of violating the United States mail fraud statutes and regulations. After a ten-day trial, all three were found guilty, and all were sentenced to two years imprisonment and fines of \$5,000 each. Only Thomson’s age, he was sixty-eight years old at the time, stopped him receiving a far longer term.

Nothing of a like kind has been practised since, but Thomson was neither the first nor the last Freemason to create forged Charters, nor was he alone in engaging in fraud. The most notorious was the Revd Dr William Dodd, the “macaroni parson” who was appointed Grand Chaplain within a month of his Initiation in St. Alban's Lodge, No. 29, in April 1775. Dodd was very much a society cleric, but he was a negligent parson who lived beyond his means; indulged in riotous living; and who tried, by way of bribery, to add the fashionable church of St. George's, Hanover Square, to his multiple livings. In this last he was unsuccessful and for his pains he was struck off the list of royal chaplains. To contemporary satirists he was known as “Dr Simony.”

In 1776 Dodd delivered an Oration from the steps of the new Freemasons' Hall, which was subsequently widely published. A year later another address by Dodd received even more publicity, which was only to be expected as it was delivered from the steps of the scaffold at Tyburn. It was on his own behalf for he was about to be hanged. The cause of Dr Dodd's misfortune was his forgery of a bond for £4,200 in the name of his patron, the Earl of Chesterfield. The forgery was uncovered, Dodd was tried and found guilty, and despite numerous petitions in his favour – including one from Dr Johnson – Dodd was executed on 27th June 1777. At the time the then Bishop of Bristol, Thomas Newton, expressed surprise that Dodd had been executed for forgery. When asked why, the Bishop replied: “He has been hanged for the least of his crimes.”

Grand Lodge also acted with instant propriety. As soon as Dodd was found guilty and languishing in gaol, he was stripped of his rank, expelled from the Craft, and all reference to his name was expunged from the Supplement to the 1767 *Book of Constitutions* (most copies have his name scratched out, *à la* Arnold). But given Dodd's known character, one must wonder how such a venal man could have been initiated, let alone that he should have attained high office in Grand Lodge. To suggest that there have been other, more recent examples of such oversight would be quite improper so I shall not do so.

One Masonic fraudster, or, more correctly, Freemason guilty of fraud, who comes to mind is Albert F. Calvert, a prolific Masonic author and, like Broadley, a noted collector of Masonic memorabilia. Among Calvert's more shady dealings was the promotion of mining companies, a catalogue of which was published by *The Mining News* in 1914 – with the disquieting conclusion that of the fourteen companies with which he had been connected, not ‘a single concern ... has paid a dividend – in fact we have not found one that has even made a distributive profit.’ On this occasion Calvert avoided prosecution, but nine years later retribution caught up with him. In April 1923 he was found guilty of swindling the Grand Duchess Alexandrovna of Russia to the tune of £10,000, which he extracted from her in exchange for worthless shares. Somehow he avoided imprisonment and continued with his career in the Craft.

At this point it is time to move from the minnows of crime to the Tritons. Let us now consider the acts of three Masonic murderers. Most recent is Kenneth Noye, infamous for the murder of Stephen Cameron on the M25 – for which he was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2000. Noye was a career criminal who had been previously sentenced to fourteen years imprisonment for handling gold bullion stolen in the Brinks-Mat robbery. He was also a member of Hammersmith Lodge, No. 2090, which he had joined in 1977 – the year in which he received a suspended sentence for handling stolen goods and unlawful possession of a shotgun. He is, you will be relieved to know, no longer a member of the Craft.

My other two murderers left Freemasonry at the end of a rope. The first, Frederick Henry Seddon, was initiated in 1900 in Stanley Lodge, No. 1325, at Liverpool. Settled in London Seddon was among the petitioners for a new Lodge, Stephens Lodge, No. 3089, which was duly consecrated in 1905, but resigned his membership within a year. Seddon's next notable Masonic appearance was in 1912, before Bro Mr Justice Thomas Townsend Bucknill, at his trial for the murder of Eliza Mary Barrow. Forensic evidence at the trial was provided by Bro Willcox and Bro Webster. There was, however, no partiality. Seddon was found guilty and sentenced to death. But before the sentence was passed Seddon protested his innocence and stated: "I declare before the Great Architect of the Universe I am not guilty." Mr. Justice Bucknill, who was Provincial Grand Master for Surrey, then said: "We both belong to the same Brotherhood, and though that can have no influence with me this is painful beyond words to have to say what I am saying, but our brotherhood does not encourage crime, it condemns it." He was then sentenced to death, and on 18th April 1912 he was hanged at Pentonville Prison.

And while Seddon was resigning from his Lodge, a Bro Herbert Rouse Armstrong was joining Loyal Hay Lodge, No. 2382, at Hay on Wye where he had joined a fellow Mason, Bro Cleese, in practice as a solicitor. In a coincidence without any significance, Armstrong became Master of his Lodge in 1912, while Seddon was quitting the Craft for good. Armstrong's Masonic career progressed steadily until 1921 when two events curtailed it. First was the death of his wife, and then Armstrong's botched attempt to poison a fellow member of his Lodge, a Bro Martin, who had joined a rival practice in Hay. Mrs Armstrong was exhumed, found to have been poisoned with arsenic and Armstrong was charged with her murder. Given Armstrong's local standing, and his many Masonic friends and colleagues, it was widely believed locally that he would be acquitted. Not so. Forensic evidence was given by four Brethren, others bore various witness. The trial was long – for many years it held the record as the longest murder trial in England – and eventually Armstrong was found guilty. He was denied the dishonour of being the first Freemason to be hanged for murder but he did manage to be the first English solicitor so to suffer.

Here I must draw my catalogue of Masonic wickedness to an end, but not without one last and lighter touch. An undoubted rogue, but one guilty of no criminal offence, was Bro. Gabriel Jogand Pagès, alias 'Leo Taxil.' Taxil was a radical, anti-clerical journalist in Paris during the late 19th century. He had been a member of the Lodge 'Temple of Friends of French Honour' under the Grand Orient of France, but was expelled in 1881, his scandalous publications being deemed to have brought dishonour upon the Craft.

Taxil determined to take his revenge upon Freemasonry through a carefully planned assault upon the Roman Catholic Church. He first professed to have reformed and to have been converted to the Catholic faith, and then began to publish anti-masonic works in support of the Church's anti-masonic stance. The hierarchy was delighted. Here was a reformed atheist and ex-mason helping to overthrow the devil's chosen instrument. Inevitably Taxil gained a huge, sympathetic and increasingly excited audience, but what he fed them was a diet of fantasy: tales of a Satanic branch of Freemasonry – the Palladian Rite – that included women, carried out gross and debauched ceremonies, committed murder and consorted with devils. The Church seemed collectively to take leave of its senses and to believe the stories of devils attending Masonic meetings (including a soirée at which a demon in the form of a crocodile obligingly played the piano for the Masons and their friends). Taxil's former Masonic colleagues became increasingly enraged and frustrated – until 1897 when Taxil admitted in public that the whole affair had been a hoax. There had been no devils, no murders, no

women and no Palladian Rite; he had fooled Masons and churchmen alike and washed his hands of both institutions.

And there was, after all, no harm done, save to the dignity and pomposity of both hierarchies. If only it were so. What Taxil did was perhaps more damaging to Freemasonry than any act of wickedness by an individual criminal Freemason, for the Church refused to believe that it was all fantasy and continues to believe in a Satanic sub-stratum to the Craft – as do the fundamentalist bigots who still assail us with Taxil's lies as if they were truth. So, a final touch but not a lighter one after all. Which should not surprise us, for human nature being what it is there will always be rogues, thieves and vagabonds, both Masonic and profane.

All that I can now do is to urge you to live up to the moral code of Freemasonry – and to close in the pious hope that I have, at least and for an hour or so, kept you out of mischief.

Introduction to the Following Paper

On Thursday 4th October 1990 Dr. Dennis Henry Fox M.B.E. was installed as the new Provincial Grand Master in and over the Province of Bristol, at a special meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge in the Victoria Rooms. At this time members of Grand Lodge made it known that they expected the Bristol ritual to be modified to reflect the recent changes to the traditional penalties in the three Craft Degrees, and that retention of the Bristol working in its traditional form would not be tolerated. A number of senior Masons in the Province voiced their anger and disappointment with the ruling and Grand Lodge was made aware of their feelings on the matter.

On 16th January 1992 Dr Crossley Evans was installed into the Chair of King Solomon as Master of the Old Greshamian Lodge (No. 5769) at Great Queen Street. In early March, in the customary manner, a copy of the Summons for the next meeting of the Lodge was sent to the Grand Secretary's office. The Summons announced that the Worshipful Master would deliver a lecture on "The Origins and Progress of Bristol Masonry" at the meeting at Great Queen Street on 9th April 1992. Fearing that the lecture would deal with the vexed and sensitive subject of the recent revisions to the Bristol ritual, the Grand Secretary, Commander Michael Higham R.N., wrote to the Lodge Secretary, Bro Sam Mayoh, prohibiting the WM from delivering his lecture until its contents had been seen and approved by him. As the lecture was only partly written at the time, Commander Higham's injunction acted as a spur to the bewildered WM to complete his labours and ensure that his lecture was approved in time for its delivery.

THE ORIGINS AND VALUES OF BRISTOL MASONRY

by

Dr M. J. Crossley Evans

**Read by M.J.C.E. (as WM) at the Meeting of the Old Greshamian Lodge No. 5769 on
Thursday 9th April 1992 at Freemasons' Hall, Great Queen Street.**

Bristol Masonry has had an important, though indirect, role in the history of the Old Greshamian Lodge through one of our most enthusiastic founders, William Foster Bushell¹ Headmaster of Birkenhead School, who was one of Howson's first members of staff in the early years of this century.² His interest in the Craft was inspired by his long family association with Masonry, firstly through his father, a housemaster at Harrow, and principally by his grandfather, William Done Bushell (1808-1883), a prosperous turpentine distiller and oil and colour merchant of St. Philip's, Bristol, who was initiated into Masonry in Bristol in 1838 and served as a popular and active D.P.G.M. of the Province before leaving for Cardiff in 1847.

The purpose of my lecture is not to look at the differences between Bristol workings and *Emulation* or at the development of the Royal Arch Degree in Bristol, from the first recorded mention of the Degree anywhere in Britain to the present time. Both would individually require much more time than I have been given to speak this evening.

Instead I have taken upon myself the tasks of briefly describing both the origins of Masonry in Bristol and its progress in the 18th and 19th centuries, and I have attempted to illustrate something of the principles of Masonry from the rich and varied history of Masonry in Bristol.

Bristol was a county in its own right from 1373 until the government reorganisation of 1974. Henry VIII turned the town into a city in 1542, by elevating the recently dissolved Augustinian Abbey into a Bishopric.

From the time of the Conqueror, Bristol had been an important port and the centre of trade with the south of Ireland. It was from here that John Cabot sailed and discovered Newfoundland in 1497, and from here that the Africa Company's monopoly of the slave trade was first challenged and later surpassed by Bristol merchants in the years between 1698 and 1750. It was also from Bristol that Brunel chose to launch his memorable ironclad ship, the *S.S. Great Britain*, almost a century later.

During the late 17th and early 18th centuries Bristol was the second city in the kingdom. Its wealth was admired and envied; its merchants prosperous and enterprising; its artisans noted for the quality and variety of their manufactures: Bristol Blue Glass at Bristol and Nailsea; shipbuilding, weaving, earthenware, clay pipe and stoneware manufacture, and many others. It was then widely believed that the city's extensive trade in fabrics owed much to the enterprising mediæval Bristol merchant Edmund Blanket who gave his name to lengths of woollen cloth and whose tomb is to be found in the nave of St. Stephen's Church.

The first records of speculative Masonry in this prosperous and cosmopolitan city date from the mid-1720s, when like Pallas Athene, who sprang fully formed from the head of her father Zeus, Masonry first appears publicly and fully formed. There is no doubt that it was in existence prior to the formation of United Grand Lodge in 1717. There is no definite proof of its earlier activities here, as there is in Chester. We are told that Bristol Masons went to help build Christ Church Cathedral in Dublin in the 12th century. Some recent work has been done on the building trades in Bristol during the 14th century, based on the account books of the Constables of Bristol Castle. They show clear evidence of the division of the workmen into three orders. For example, payments in 1294/5 are made to two classes of masons, probably the masters and fellow crafts, who were paid 4d and 3 1/2d a day respectively. There are also payments made to a further class which probably consisted of labourers, who received 2d a day. More work needs to be undertaken on such sources. After years of neglect some progress is being made.

Some writers believe that a Masonic Lodge was in operation in the mid to late 15th century during the erection of St. Mary Redcliffe, but the evidence presented is more equivocal than its supporters wish to believe. Other writers tell us that the master of the craft guild had to be confirmed by the mayor. What we do know for certain is that the Bristol Apprentice Book between 1542 and 1552 lists a number of young men bound to Bristol masons. For example, Thomas Christopher of Youghall, Co. Cork, was apprenticed to Thomas Welshe, mason, for eight years, at the end of which he was to receive 20/- and one tool of every kind for the said craft. Welshe had numerous apprentices, some of whom were apprentices for seven rather than eight years, and received 1d a week. All apprentices boarded with their master. Some operative masons during this period are certainly called freemasons in contemporary documents.

Until 1570 the masons in Bristol were joined together to form a corporation of masons, carpenters and tilers. The mayor and common council dissolved the joint company and required each company to revert to its former constitution. Various secondary sources speak of an operative masons' lodge in Bristol in the 17th century. As yet I have been unable to trace the primary sources for this statement. In the absence of written record, we cannot chronicle this key period of Masonic development. Suffice it to say that the number of Lodges which existed in Bristol at the beginning of the 18th century indicates that the numbers of Masons at the end of the 17th century in Bristol were probably little more than a handful. Without Lodge lists we cannot say what the ratio of operative to speculative Masons was in the early 18th century.

Before looking at the numbers of the people involved in Masonry in the 18th century I want to consider, briefly, the early meeting places of Bristol Masons. It is perhaps worth recording that in the 1750s most Lodges were held twice a month with dinners on the two feast days of St. John, St. John the Baptist on 24th June, and St. John the Evangelist on 27th December. Prior to the foundation of the first Masonic Hall in 1812 all Lodges celebrated the feasts and held their Lodges in rooms over taverns. There were considerable problems in this system: noise; finding rooms of sufficient size; having unsympathetic landlords – a case frequently overcome by initiating them into the Craft; and the easy availability of beer and spirits. That the latter was a major problem we know, because so many of the early account books record fines for Brethren disordered with drink, the frequent forfeit being a shilling on the second offence, and exclusion and reporting to Grand Lodge on the third. In the Sea Captains' Lodge drunkenness was coupled with choice language and phraseology, imbibed from a life at sea and corrected by a series of fines. The use of taverns as the main meeting places for Lodges

causes the Masonic historian numerous problems. Through death of the licensee, the removal of the landlord and an assortment of other reasons, Lodges frequently changed their meeting places, and as the Lodge was known by the name of the tavern in which it met, frequent changes result in difficulties in establishing the historic continuity of Lodges.

It is difficult to gauge the strength of Bristol Masonry. It is possible that a number of Lodges continued to function in Bristol after 1724 which were not recognised by Grand Lodge, and between the 1750s and 1813 the picture was further obscured by the advent of the Ancient or Atholl Lodges which sprang from the Irish rather than the English Constitution. In the 1720s it is unlikely that the number of Bristol Masons exceeded 100, and in 1766 the estimated strength of the order in the city has been put at between 150 and 200.³ Many Lodges appear on first sight to be of short duration, being erased only a few years after they had received their warrants from Grand Lodge. Erasure, however, did not mean that the Lodge ceased to work, only that it had failed to pay the required dues to Grand Lodge. There are a number of cases of Lodges continuing to work for some years following erasure.

The size of Lodges varied one from another and over time. The Lodge which met at the Nag's Head, Wine Street, between 1757 and 1769 had a WM, a PM, two Wardens, a Secretary and seven Brethren in 1759, a total of twelve, the same strength as the Jehosaphat Lodge No. 451 in 1786. The Jerusalem Lodge No. 162 had thirty-five members in 1820.

The growth in the Craft was by no means constant. There was a Renaissance in the 1780s under the Provincial Grand Master, Thomas Dunckerley, when the number of Modern Lodges rose to six. Unfortunately the French Revolution, the generally unsettled state of the times and the effects of Pitt's Secret Societies' Act (although not directed at the Craft), had a noticeable and detrimental effect on membership. By 1796 there were four Modern Lodges and between 1799 and 1806 only two. Circumstances improved slightly in the years before the union of 1813, and the numbers attending Provincial Grand Lodge increased from fifty-eight in 1808 to almost 100 in 1811. At the Union there were four Modern and two Ancient Lodges. Problems of finance in the Province, principally related to Freemasons' Hall in the 1820s and 1830s, led to further decline and in the mid-1830s only four Lodges remained from the time of the Union. Of these, two were flourishing, one was functioning and one, the Moira, had only between four and five members and they had not met together for over twelve months. The situation gradually changed in the 1850s and later in the 1860s under the Rt. Hon. the Earl of Limerick (1841-1896), who was Provincial Grand Master between 1867 and 1889. The increase in membership was reinforced by the purchase of the present Masonic Hall in 1872, which allowed for greater numbers, greater security, and a position more central to the changing geographical heart of the city. From the four Craft Lodges that existed in 1850, the number had grown to eight by 1875 and to thirteen by 1914. There are now some thirty-three Lodges with 2,095 members within the Province.

Having given a brief view of the history of Masonry in Bristol, I now wish to proceed to the main part of my paper, which sets out to describe more fully the history of Bristol Masonry in a series of vignettes and to illustrate the grand principles upon which our Order is founded, by giving examples of Bristol Masonry in practice.

The Bristol Evening Times & Echo for Sunday 28th July 1919 gave details of a service held in the Cathedral the previous afternoon which commemorated the Peace of Versailles and those Brethren who had been killed during the Great War. Continuing the traditions of at least two centuries the Brethren appeared in full regalia and carried the banners of their Lodges. The

service was conducted by the Dean,⁴ who preached on Exodus xxxii, 29: "Moses said consecrate yourselves today unto the Lord." The Dean⁴ stated that the Spirit that animated Masonry was the spirit of friendship and brotherly co-operation. "Worldwide as our order was, it cut athwart barriers of race and creed in its breadth and tolerance; it included men different in rank, education and wealth as men on an equality. Man was accepted for his manhood if he be free and upright, and of good report." This teaching resulted in the ideal of Masonry, the formation of a worldwide league of Brethren, intent on achieving the will of God in life. "Half the bitterness and strife and war in the world came from suspicion bred of want of knowledge. Party distrusted party, church distrusted church, class distrusted class, labour capital and capital labour, not because the object of distrust was worthy of suspicion, but because the opposing fractions and separate camps had no mutual and personal knowledge one of another. Divided by barriers of creed and caste, training and interest, we glowered at one another. It was just those barriers that Masonry toiled to break down, each lodge based on equality, goodwill, social contact, working to weld mankind into a league of sympathy and service."

The history of Bristol Masonry is filled with numerous examples of the truth of the Dean's sermon and shows an all-embracing brotherhood. Where men were found to be "just and of good report," they were welcomed into its assemblies, irrespective of nationality, religion, politics, colour or physical attributes. In looking at this we must remember that the 18th and 19th centuries were generally ones where intolerant views were held by the majority of the population on most or all the subjects outlined above. It may be that Bristol as a port had the benefit of having a more cosmopolitan citizenry than many provincial cities, but this can only have been relative.

The Lodge which met at The Fountain Tavern in the 1740s set an example in shedding narrow insularism by celebrating in 1759 and 1760 the birthday of "Our Royal Brother the King of Prussia," Frederick the Great (1712-1786), who had been initiated secretly in Brunswick in August 1738 and founded the Court Lodge at Rheinsberg in 1739.

There are numerous examples of foreigners being initiated into Bristol Masonry. The Beaufort Lodge records a Portuguese gentleman receiving all three Degrees in the 1790s, and in 1816 at least three Spaniards were initiated in different Lodges in the Province. All of them would have been Roman Catholics. In 1783 a Hessian was initiated in Royal Sussex. These are by no means rare examples, and when in 1855 Brother Henri Vully de Candole, a French master at the Grammar School, became WM of the same Lodge, the Minutes noted that "the election of a foreigner in the present instance proved that a freemason knew no country."

Another striking instance of the universality of Masonry is provided in the records of Royal Sussex Lodge in 1782, where one of the Brethren, a Brother Franks, was a negro. It is worth noting that this is a quarter of a century before the abolition of the slave trade and half a century before the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, and even the free negroes were regarded as being less than equal. When a Brother Daniel referred to the colour of Brother Franks's skin, the former voluntarily paid a 1/- fine without the direction of the Master of the Lodge.

Amongst many Roman Catholic members in the 18th century three are particularly noteworthy: Bartholomew Ruspini (1728-1813), who was surgeon-dentist in practice in Bath and the Hotwells in Bristol before moving to London. He was initiated in the Lodge held at

the Bush Tavern in 1762. He later founded the Royal Masonic Institution for Girls and was made a Knight of the Order of the Golden Spur by the Pope for his kindness to Italian refugees. The German, Frederick Charles Husenbeth (1765-1848), was made a Mason in Germany in the 1780s and came to Bristol in 1787, where he became a pork butcher. He was thrice Deputy Provincial Grand Master and did much to preserve the order during the difficult days of the early 19th century. His son was a Roman Catholic priest who was largely financially supported by his father.⁵ When Brother Husenbeth was violently attacked in the Catholic press, notably *The Tablet* in 1845, for his defence of Freemasonry against its detractors, it was a fellow Bristol Mason, a Roman Catholic priest, who sprang to his defence. Father Francis Xavier Donato (c.1790-1873) joined the Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality in 1827 on his arrival in Bristol from Naples, which he had left during the persecutions of King Ferdinand against those with liberal sympathies. During his thirty years in Bristol he was an active Freemason and when he returned to Naples in 1856 a Lodge of emergency decided to present him with a silver snuff box without any Masonic insignia, as a token of their esteem. They decided not to have any Masonic inscription because “the possession of anything of that nature would probably get Brother Donato into trouble when he arrived in Italy.”

The Jewish Community in Bristol was never large. However, members of the Hebrew congregation became involved in Masonry in Bristol from the early 19th century onwards. At a Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting in August 1843, the D.P.G.M., Brother Husenbeth, commented:

‘in strong terms upon the tyrannical conduct of the Emperor of Russia, whose persecution of the Jews had at length led to their exclusion from the benefits of Masonry, and that, only on account of their religion, and reprobated this departure from the principles on which our order is founded.’

In 1854 the Royal Clarence Lodge contributed at the start of the Crimean War to a collection that was being made for the relief of the starving Jews in the Russian Empire. One of the most prominent Masons in Bristol in the middle of the 19th century was Brother Henry Simmons (1828/9-1904), a native of Posen in Prussia, who was President of the Hebrew Congregation between 1884 and 1890, and 1891 and 1895. He took a prominent role in the initiation of a number of Danish and German sea captains when he acted as interpreter during the ceremonies. Simmons was a hat manufacturer in St. James Barton, like Brother David Nyman, a former President of the Bath Hebrew Congregation, who died in the 1870s. Another leading Jewish Freemason of this period was Brother John Braham (1800-1864), an oculist of St. Augustine’s Parade, who invented patent spectacles, exhibited in the Great Exhibition and served as Treasurer of the Hebrew Congregation from 1856 to 1860.

While Freemasonry welcomed men from all religious backgrounds, those with nebulous Deist views were rigorously excluded and we have the salutary case of a gentleman who was balloted for and accepted as a Candidate for Initiation in Royal Clarence in 1840. Upon closer examination it was found that he rejected the veracity of the Sacred Record. As a result the Brethren rescinded their former acceptance of him as an Initiate.

Amongst the more extraordinary figures in Bristol Masonry in the late 18th century, mention must be made of Brother Patrick O’Brien (or Cotter) (1760-1806), a Roman Catholic, who came to Bristol in fair time to be viewed by the curious as the so-called Bristol Giant. In 1779 at the age of nineteen he came to Bristol, where the papers advertised that: ‘the surprising Irish giant measuring some 8' high could be viewed at the home of Mr Safford,

Watchmaker of Clare Street.’ In due course Brother O’Brien, who after grew a further 3", died at the early age of thirty-six at the Bristol Hotwell in 1806. His membership of the Knights Templar was recorded on his coffin plate. O’Brien’s Masonic Brethren attended his funeral and no doubt assisted in the very elaborate precautions which were taken to protect his last resting place from the hands of the impious surgeons, who were eager to bring his cadaver to their tables in order to take a closer look at this phenomenon of nature. His body eluded such study until more recent times.

Having briefly considered the variation in religious creeds, nationalities, colours and physical size of the Bristol Brethren, it only remains for me to look at the occupations followed by Bristol Masons in the 18th and 19th centuries, and their political affiliations. The regulations of the Jerusalem Lodge No.162 survive from 1789. They stipulate that all Initiates were to be: ‘of mature age, upright in body and limbs, free from bondage, have the senses of a man, and be endowed with an estate, office, trade, occupation, or some visible ways of acquiring an honest and reputable livelihood, as becomes the members of this most Antient and Honourable Fraternity.’

Throughout the period the gentry remained aloof from the Craft, although one or two men who had made fortunes in trade or inherited them and lived in comfortable mansions on the outskirts of the city were active in Masonry. They included Alderman Gabriel Goldney (1766-1837) of Goldney House, Clifton, whose Masonic cornelian seal dating from the 1810s is preserved in the University.⁶ As there were few men of great wealth in the Craft so there were few who were actively involved in the political and civic government of the city prior to the middle of the 19th century. They will be dealt with further on in my paper.

The leading men in the Craft were drawn from the rising middle classes. The ministers of the Established Church were prominent from the middle of the 18th century onwards. The Revd John Price, Vicar of Temple (1755-1766), who is called in Bishop Secker’s Diocese Book ‘a worthy man and said to be an extraordinary good reader of prayers’ took the first Masonic service of which we have a record at St. John-on-the-Wall, Broad Street, in 1747, when the local newspapers note that he preached on the text from Psalm cxxxiii: ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in Unity.’ Mr Price was a founder and the first Junior Warden of the Lodge of Hospitality. Amongst the other occupations followed by Masons at this time I shall list only a few: gun maker, mathematical instrument maker, surgeon-dentist, surgeon, optician, wine merchant, architect, builder, a member of the Royal Academy, banker, doctor of medicine, solicitor and organist. To this number should be added a wide range of shop keepers, who were drawn from every condition and occupation. Seamen were commonly enrolled and initiated, and one of the early Lodges was called the Sea Captains’ Lodge. At a later date, the Canynges Lodge No. 1388, consecrated in 1872, and the Whitson Lodge No. 2943, consecrated in 1902, were formed for Brethren who were absent from Bristol until Saturday, and were largely designed for the convenience of commercial travellers. The Saint Vincent Lodge No. 1404, consecrated in 1872, had a predominance of professional men – solicitors, doctors, school masters – and from 1876 onwards many of the staff of University College, Bristol.

Our Order, by its very nature, has never looked kindly upon arbitrary government and tyranny, and it was only natural that its high ideals should find favour with many of the leading figures in the 18th century Enlightenment in Britain and in Europe. For many educated people their belief in brotherly love and equality on the level was shaken when they looked to France during the Revolution and saw the sworn ideals of our Order in the hands

and on the tongues of cunning, ruthless and godless men. With the terror these beliefs were bespattered with the blood of innocent men, women, children and those who had dedicated their lives to the service of God. Turning with revulsion from the disorder and chaos of France in the late 1780s and 1790s, Freemasonry found itself damned in the eyes of many from its association with some of the early leaders of the Revolution. The result was a gradual change in the political sympathies of the membership.

During the Napoleonic wars when Freemasonry began to recover from the association with Revolution, the Craft in Bristol, like many other organisations such as the powerful Society of Merchant Venturers, began to draw much of its support from people who were politically Tory. This was not to the exclusion of the Whigs, but there were few exceptions. In spite of the political allegiance of many of the Brethren they attempted to maintain scrupulous equality in the matter of politics.

In January 1812, Sir Samuel Romilly (1757-1818), a lawyer with Radical sympathies, was adopted as Whig candidate for Bristol in the House of Commons, and on 2nd April he visited Bristol for a public dinner in the Assembly Rooms. Brother William Smith, a recent Initiate into the Moira Lodge of Honour, and a staunch Tory, determined that Sir Samuel and his friends should not enjoy the occasion in peace. Twelve days later Brother Smith faced disciplinary proceedings in his Lodge. He was accused of trying to disturb the meeting by raising and heading 'a mob of disorderly persons, consisting of the lowest order of society' with the result 'that he degraded himself as a gentleman and particularly as a mason in resorting to common pothouses with this class of man as their chief and leader particularly in a public house called The Cornish Mount in Marsh Street where, in the kitchen, the common receptacle of the most noxious women and other disreputable persons, he elevated himself upon the table and greeted them in the highest panegyric language.' He 'afterwards ignominiously suffered himself to be carried about the streets upon a window shutter as a triumphant close to his disgraceful conduct.' Smith was suspended from membership of his Lodge and afterwards allowed to resign.

No clearer view of the attitudes of the majority of the Craft can be demonstrated than by looking at the actions of many of the Brethren during the Bristol Riots of 1831. These were occasioned by the resistance of the Recorder of Bristol, Sir Charles Wetherell, K.C. (1770-1846), to the Whig demands for the reform of the House of Commons. The appearance of Sir Charles in Bristol for the assizes occasioned a popular outcry, principally from the disenfranchised lower-middle and lowest ranks of society. Sensing the coming storm, 200 special constables⁷ were sworn in, of whom, as Latimer, the Bristol historian, notes, the majority were: 'young men and zealous anti-reformers.' The Brethren showed their zeal for the forces of law and order by enrolling themselves and their sons as special constables. The majority of the members of Beaufort Lodge were so engaged, and thus cancelled their meeting during the emergency. Amongst the Lewises who acted as special constables was W.A.F. Powell (1814-1906), then a youth of seventeen, who was later initiated in Moira Lodge in 1843, served as a Tory city councillor for over twenty years, and was Provincial Grand Master between 1889 and 1906. The task of the constables was by no means easy. They were often without the support of troops and were confronted by a violent, volatile and hostile mob. Subjected to showers of missiles, the constables attempted corrective measures, but they were hopelessly outnumbered, and many of them were attacked, disarmed and mercilessly beaten by the mob. One was even found in the Floating Harbour. The three days of disorder saw the triumph of the worst elements of society, the looting and burning of

private houses, the prisons, the Custom House, the Mansion House and the Bishop's Palace. It was a salutary reminder of the excesses of the French Revolution.

Alderman Gabriel Goldney (1766-1837), twice sheriff, and mayor in 1827/8, was for many years an active Tory city councillor. However, with this exception there was an absence of Freemasons on the corporation during the 1820s. Following the Municipal Reform Act of 1835 many leading Masons became more involved in the political life of the city by serving on the council and countering the influence of the Whigs and Radicals. If we take the Royal Sussex Lodge as an example, in 1842 there were four Tory councillors amongst the Brethren. They included two successive D.P.G.M.s, Richard Smith (1773-1843) and William Done Bushell (1808-1883), who served as Deputy Provincial Grand Masters from 1830 to 1843 and 1845 to 1847 respectively. All four were members of the Established Church. In contrast an Initiate into the Lodge in 1840, Arthur Hare Palmer (1806-1868), who was Provincial Grand Secretary between 1845 and 1849, served as a Whig councillor and was a Unitarian. All of these councillors were active in the Province during the Provincial Grand Mastership of Colonel Hugh Duncan Bailey (1777-1866) successively Whig M.P. for Rye and Tory M.P. from Honiton, thus shewing that whatever their political allegiance, in the Lodge-room they 'met on the level and parted on the square.'

Before looking at individual aspects of the Craft in Bristol I want to consider one of the principal objects of our Order, charity. Examples of charity occur in the very earliest of our surviving account books, which date from the 1750s, onwards. They present us only with a partial view of the scale and nature of Masonic charity and need to be augmented by the newspaper accounts which occur regularly until the close of the 19th century.

Those of you who are familiar with the works of Dickens will recall in *Nicholas Nickleby* the benefit nights, which were held at regular intervals in theatres by the strolling players to augment their irregular incomes. Benefit nights to help poor and distressed Masons were a regular feature of Masonic life in the city throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The form that they took can be seen by their titles and descriptions in the papers:

'By particular desire of the Most Noble and Ancient Society of Free and Accepted Masons For the Benefit of Mr Buck at the New Theatre in King Street on Wednesday 13th August 1766 A Concert of Music' – between the parts of which a tragedy called "Cato" with dancing, and a prologue on Masonry by Mr Buck. At the end of the play 'a humerous interlude called "The Sailor's Distress: or The Inhumanity of a Wapping Landlady" with Mr Buck in the part of the Wapping landlady.'

On March 27th 1773 the paper announced:

'By Particular Desire of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, Brother L'Estrange's Night at the Cooper's Hall, King Street' will consist of 'a concert of music. Between the several parts of the concert will be presented Gratis a Comedy called "Rule a wife and have a wife, also a Masonic Prologue in Proper Clothing by Brother L'Estrange.'

In 1821 a Mr Norris, a fishmonger, and his wife on their way home from visiting friends on a particularly dark night fell into the Cumberland Basin and were drowned. They left behind them four orphans, aged between ten years and fourteen months. Norris was a Freemason and his children were promptly taken under the protection of the Craft, who organised a benefit for them entitled 'Where to Find a Friend' which was held in the Theatre Royal owing to the

assistance of the manager, the Shakespearian actor Macready. The benefit raised £220 for them and public support was so great that people were turned away from the theatre. The eldest boy was subsequently sent to the Masonic School for Boys.

During the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars there were numerous cases of Masonic charity involving French Masons. Members of the Jehosaphat Lodge No. 451 assisted French Masons who fled to Bristol during the Revolution, probably Royalists and Girondists. In 1809 Royal Clarence Lodge No. 68 voted 3/- to each Freemason amongst the French prisoners of war who were confined in Stapleton prison.

Royal Sussex Lodge recounts payments to the widows of soldiers killed abroad, and to the destitute families of those men who were serving with the army, or pressed in the navy, or imprisoned in France. The Lodge also gave financial assistance to members of the Grand Orient in Paris who were numbered amongst the French prisoners of war.

One of the most moving accounts of Masonic chivalry that I have encountered occurs in the annals of Bristol Masonry. On 11th November 1813 Brother Thomas Guthrie, the master of the brig "Friends' Increase," came to the Royal York Lodge, of which he was a member. He stated that his ship and crew of six, carrying a cargo of oil, wine, almonds and pumice stone from Messina in Sicily to Bristol, had been attacked by a French privateer. The captain, who was armed with a letter of marque, preyed on any English vessels which were weaker than his own. It was a highly lucrative occupation and it is estimated that during the twenty-two years of the Napoleonic Wars, the English lost 10,871 ships worth £100 million to privateers, and in two months of 1807 alone the Breton privateer Surcouf took prizes worth £291,250. Captain Guthrie and his valuable cargo were captured by the French privateer Captain Pierre Cugneau of "The Comet," who, upon realising that Guthrie was a Brother Mason, released him, his crew, the ship and the cargo unharmed. The conditions of their release were that 'Brother Guthrie in exchange for himself should immediately on his return to England obtain a certificate to be sent from the Transport Board to the French Government specifying that John Morreau a French prisoner of war be considered as released; he having recently made his escape from the vessel by which he was captured on his voyage and that the ship and cargo, worth about £8,000 together, with the remainder of the crew should be released and restored with the vessel,' three of the seamen being exchanged for named French prisoners, and the remaining three mariners were to be exchanged for 'three French mariners who shall be masons and prisoners of war.' A special meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge was called where the sworn statement of the master and mate were read and a memorial was drawn up and sent to the M.W.G.M., H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex asking if he would use his influence with the government to achieve the terms given by Captain Cugneau to Captain Guthrie. The named French men were found in prison and together with three other Masons left England free men.

Many interesting examples of a Masonic charity to fellow Masons can be found in the pages of the surviving Lodge records. In 1846 Bro W.B. Regan of the York Lodge, Pennsylvania No. 3, applied for relief, having been shipwrecked on the south coast and 'being desirous to return to his native land,' the Brethren responded by giving him £5 for his passage home. Likewise Brother Julius Lowe of Copenhagen found himself penniless in Bristol and applied for relief so that he could return home to Altona in Germany.

The charity of the Bristol Brethren was never exclusive or inward-looking. For example, in December 1809 at the Royal York Lodge the Brethren voted to make the following annual donations:

4 guineas to the Bristol Infirmary

3 guineas to the Strangers' Friend Society

2 guineas to the Magdalene Institution for the reform of fallen women

1 guinea to the Religious Tract Society.

The following January they voted 10 guineas to the Auxiliary Bible Society. In all of these they actively promoted the spiritual and moral welfare of their fellow citizens, Mason and non-mason alike. In 1847 the Provincial Grand Lodge started a fund to help those who were suffering distress during the potato famine in Ireland and raised some £120.

One of the problems of administering charity which continually beset Lodges in the 18th and 19th centuries was proving that an individual who asked for alms was genuinely both a Mason and in need. For example, there were several impostors disguised as Turks who claimed they were made prisoner at the great siege of Gibraltar and who successfully imposed on Lodges in Bristol and Bath between 1786 and 1793. Following the Union in 1813 at least two Orange men attempted to pass themselves off as Brethren in Bristol.

I shall now consider some of the other aspects of the Craft in Bristol. One of the most interesting features of the history of Masonry in Bristol is the active role its members and Lodges played in the civic life of the city. The first recorded account took place in 1789 when the stone at the north-east corner of St. Paul's, Portland Square was laid with full Masonic ceremonial on the birthday of H.R.H. The Duke of York. The P.G.M. Thomas Dunckerley (1724-1795) held a P.G.L. at 9 am and the Brethren marched from Merchant Taylors' Hall in full regalia behind a band to the church. He placed coins and medals under the north-east corner stone and the P.G.M. fixed the plate stone with three strokes of his hiram. It was estimated that some 50,000 people witnessed the ceremony. Afterwards the Brethren marched to St. James's, heard the P.G. Chaplain, the Revd Dr Joseph Atwell Small (1748-1814), later a chaplain in ordinary to the King, preach a sermon, and listened to a Masonic hymn composed by the P.G.M. to celebrate the recovery of George III from his first attack of madness. The day was completed by a splendid dinner at Merchant Taylors' Hall and the presentation of the handsome sum of 20 guineas to a distressed Masonic widow.

Various Bristol Lodges celebrated the 50th anniversary of the reign of George III in 1809. At the celebrations to mark the coronation of George IV (1820), 300 Brethren attended the P.G.L. in the White Lion Tavern, Broad Street, and joined with the civic procession which marched to the Cathedral. The Brethren marched in full regalia with their Lodge banners unfurled. Similar displays took place to celebrate the coronations of William IV (1830) and Victoria (1837) and the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria (1887). Numerous stone-laying ceremonies took place in the 19th century: the Guildhall (1843), Horfield Barracks (1845), the Civic Cross on College Green (1850), the last stone in the north-east corner of Redcliffe Church (1861) the new nave of the Cathedral (1868), the restored Lady Chapel at St. Mary Redcliffe (1872) and the Victoria Monument on College Green (1888). In all cases the Brethren appeared in full regalia and in most of them the presiding member of the Craft used corn, wine and oil in the ceremony.

Masonic funerals were a regular feature of Masonic life in Bristol. Prior to the beginning of this century there were many Brethren who were accorded these honours by their individual Lodges, or indeed by the Province. Typical of the announcements which appeared in the

Bristol papers is the following on 1st January 1773: 'This week died Mr Murch, Mason of this city, and Thursday evening he was interr'd at St. Mary Redcliffe Church, and being one of the Brethren of Freemasons, he was attended to the grave by a considerable number of the Society dress'd in their proper habiliments.' *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* for 18th August 1767 recorded that on 'Wednesday was interr'd at St. James's, Mr William Jones Bates, of the Parish of SS. Philip and Jacob, a man of general knowledge and universal good character, and Master of the Freemasons' Lodge held in the Bull Tavern. In Respect to the Memory of their Brother, the Members of that antient and honourable Society in this city, attended him to the grave, dressed in their proper ensigns of office, forming such a procession, as was scarce ever seen before.' *The Bristol Journal* of the same date states that: 'a procession so august, venerable, grand and respectable, hath not been seen for many years: it afforded an edifying proof of that brotherly affection with which that order hath ever been distinguished.'

The last solemn rites performed at night, illuminated by guttering torches as the body was lowered to its final resting place, must have been an impressive and moving moment, the last farewell in this world before 'the Trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised.' Not all ceremonies, however, were ones which allowed peaceful and reflective contemplation on our mortality. In November 1792 Brother John Hopkins, the landlord of the Shakespeare Tavern, Prince Street, was buried at St. James's by torch light with full Masonic honours. A crowd estimated at 30,000 gathered and an unruly few attacked the 200 Brethren who were present. They seized many of the Lodge banners, jewels and aprons and the body was finally interred in considerable haste during the fighting that ensued.

The funeral of the P.G.M. William Goldwyer (1753-1820) was in marked contrast. A popular apothecary, surgeon and oculist, his death was occasioned by being struck by a thief whom he surprised in the act of pilfering goods from a burning house. The D.P.G.M. held a Lodge over his body 'in pursuance of the ancient usages of the fraternity' and placed upon his breast a metal plate giving his name and Masonic rank. The P.G.M.s regalia was placed upon a cushion on the coffin. The bells of his parish church St. Nicholas were rung doubly muffled, and after the burial, a peal of fifty-eight, corresponding to his age. At the service the music included Mozart's anthem 'His body is buried in peace, but his name liveth evermore.' The officers of P.G.L. wore white crepe scarfs, officers of Lodges had their jewels covered with a white crepe bow, and every Brother wore white gloves and carried a small bunch of flowers.

In Masonry, heraldry follows the rules obeyed by episcopacy with the arms of the P.G.M. impaling those of the Order; a Bishop's coat of arms (shifting to the sinister) is impaled with those of his see, and a husband's arms (remaining on the dexter) are impaled with those of his wife. Brother Goldwyer's arms were painted on a funerary hatchment which hung for twelve months outside Freemasons' Hall in Bridge Street.

Brother Goldwyer's successor, Richard Smith (1773-1843), died of apoplexy at the Institution, now the Masonic Hall. At his funeral the Brethren wore full black with white cravats and gloves, black pendant hat bands, and three black crape rosettes on their aprons. We can imagine the funeral procession looked much as those attended by young Oliver Twist and Noah Claypole when in the employment of Mr Sowerberry. The Masonic Hall was likewise graced for twelve months with a hatchment bearing the arms of both the deceased Brother and the Craft impaled.

As the 19th century progressed these customs continued and a number of Lodges honoured Brethren in death in a similar manner to the Beaufort Lodge, who erected an appropriate stone monument over the last resting place of the Father of their Lodge.

A striking feature of Bristol Masonry is the degree of solidarity of the Masters of the Lodges in the Province. The “Masters in the Corner” are present, whenever possible, at every Lodge meeting in the Province during their year of office, and at the beginning of each evening’s work it is customary for the D.C. to present to the WM each of the Masters of the other Lodges in the Province who are present.

From the earliest times Bristol Lodges met together to consult. For example in 1773 a Lodge of Emergency was summoned consisting of all the Masters, P.M.s and Wardens of the other four Lodges in Bristol to see if the Brethren would agree to forming a new Lodge. This bond was strengthened by the creation of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Bristol in 1786 and the opening of the first Freemasons’ Hall in Broad Quay in 1812, where all but one Craft Lodge met under the same roof. From this time onwards it became customary for any member of the Province to cease to be regarded as a “visitor” in the usual sense of the word. “Visiting Brethren” refers to those who come to Bristol from outside the Province. The Masters of other Lodges are *pro forma* always invited to all Installations and Masonic functions in the Province. Much of this custom was developed over a period of almost two hundred years since the early 1800s when deputations between Lodges in the Province first became common.

Formal Masonic contacts outside Bristol begin with the recognition of the Nag’s Head Lodge in Wine Street by Grand Lodge in 1724; it was believed that this Lodge had been working since “time immemorial.” Amongst all provincial Lodges, this was second in seniority to the Queen’s Head Lodge in Bath. It was erased in 1736.

I shall not treat the troubled question of Modern Masons versus Antient or Atholl Masons in Bristol, but suffice it to say that Bristol workings owe much to the close contact of the city with the Kingdom of Ireland. It is noteworthy that in 1747, before the division between Antients and Moderns, when the Rt. Hon. The Viscount Kingsland, sometime G.M. of Ireland, arrived in Bristol the Brethren met him in their regalia at the Bush Tavern, Corn Street, and marched with him to the New Theatre at Jacob’s Well to watch *Love for Love*.

The first Masonic visit outside the Province for which I have found a reference is in December 1784, when Brethren representing the six Bristol Lodges determined to travel to Bath in ‘a string of chaises’ to attend divine service at the Abbey and then celebrate St. John the Evangelist’s Day by dining with the P.G.M. The twenty Brethren from Bristol represented a sixth of the total number who were present, the others being drawn from Somerset and probably Wiltshire. Two other visits to Bath are noteworthy. The first on 24th March 1817 was for the installation of the P.G.M. for Somerset, when 1,000 Brethren drawn from twenty-nine Lodges as far away as Dorset attended service at the Abbey to hear preach, the P.G. Chaplain for Bristol, the Revd. William Embury Edwards (1760-c.1820). After the proceedings dinner for 500 in the Kingston Rooms was followed by a musical entertainment. In the visit of 1819 the Lodges of Bristol attended the dedication of Freemasons’ Hall in Bath by the M.W.G.M., H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex in the presence of the M.W.G.M. of Ireland, His Grace the Duke of Leinster.

In 1843 the D.P.G.M. with sixty Brethren left Bristol on the Usk Steam Packet to take the three-hour journey to Newport, Monmouthshire, where they assisted in the dedication of the Silurian Lodge.

Lodges began to have outings together of a non-masonic nature from the middle of the 19th century onwards. In 1837 the Brethren of Royal Clarence No. 68 celebrated the birthday of their patron William IV by having a day trip to Portishead aboard the Lady Rodney steamer. Visits in the 1850s included Longleat, Wells, Glastonbury, Tintern and Chepstow. The Royal Sussex Lodge of Hospitality sent a deputation to the laying of the foundation stone of the east pier at Sidmouth in 1837, met various Somerset Lodges for a picnic at Glastonbury in 1856, visited Stonehenge in 1858 and received a Masonic visitation from Dublin.

Before drawing the strands of my paper together I wish to conclude by saying a few words about the ladies. Since the close of the 18th century the ladies have taken a part in the social side of Bristol Masonry. In 1792 the Jerusalem Lodge No. 162 celebrated one of the festivals held on St. John the Baptist's Day with what was called 'an entertainment for the fair sex' which was in the form of a public dinner at which not only the wives, but "the ladies" and friends of members were welcomed. The opening of the second Masonic Hall in Bridge Street in 1818 was celebrated by a performance of *The Creation* by Brother Franz-Josef Haydn with the Brethren acting as soloists and instrumentalists. This performance took place before the mayor, the sheriffs, and two hundred ladies and gentlemen. The success of the occasion was such that the P.G.L. decided to hold such an event annually. On this and on subsequent occasions such as the Masonic ball in the Victoria Rooms in 1856 the Brethren wore full regalia and evening dress and the room was hung with Lodge banners.

Brethren, I hope that I have been able to show something of the richness and interest of the history of Masonry in Bristol and the valuable part the Craft has played in the life of the city. I also hope that I have been able to illustrate some of the many applications of the high principles of our ancient and noble Order. I thank you, Brethren all, for the kind way in which you have received my paper.

Notes

1. W.F. Bushell (1885-1974) Headmaster of Solihull School 1920-1927, Rector of Michaelhouse, Natal, 1927-1930, Headmaster of Birkenhead School 1930-1946. The Lodge was founded in 1939.
2. George William Saul Howson (1860-1919), Headmaster of Gresham's School, Holt, Norfolk, 1900-1919.
3. Bryan Little in his introduction to *Sketchley's Bristol Directory* 1775, reprinted in 1971, puts the population of Bristol at this time at over 35,440.
4. The Very Revd. St. John Basil Wynne Wilson (1868-1946), Chaplain of The Saint Vincent Lodge, No. 1404, later Bishop of Bath and Wells.
5. This son rose to a high position in the Roman Catholic Church in East Anglia.
6. This was stolen from Goldney Hall in the mid-1920s. He was a Common Councillor from 1822 to 1829, Alderman from 1829 to 1835, Councillor for Clifton 1835 to 1837, Sheriff 1822 to 1823 and 1825 to 1826, and Mayor 1827 to 1828. His Lodge is not known.
7. Amongst their number was Isambard kingdom Brunel (1806-1859).

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Key

B.R.S.

The Bristol Record Society

T.B. & G.A.S.

*The Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire
Archaeological Society*

I am indebted to:

Dr D.H. Fox, M.B.E., P.G.M. for Bristol;

Mr G.C. Boon, B.A., F.S.A., editor of *The Transactions of the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*;

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Miss E. Ralph, M.A., F.S.A., Archivist of the City of Bristol from 1937-1971;

Mr L. Haugh, Provincial Grand Librarian and Archivist to the Province of Bristol, for the loan of a number of books which have been invaluable to me.

Section IV

Bristol Masonic Miscellanea

A PROVINCIAL LETTER – March 1942

The following letter has been preserved in the archives of St. Stephen Lodge (No. 3145). It has been brought to light by WBro David Connor and is reproduced here by permission.

It seems that a copy was sent to every member of the Province of Bristol in March 1942. It evokes the atmosphere of the Second World War when, after the destruction of Park Street in the bombing of Bristol in November 1940, alternative arrangements had to be made for Lodges to continue to meet.

PROVINCE OF BRISTOL.

20 Richmond Hill,
Clifton, Bristol,
March 1942.

Dear Sir and Brother,

You are doubtless aware that an arrangement has been made with the Committee of the Constitution Club, St Stephen Street, to rent accommodation for Masonic Meetings upon their premises. It will be a great advantage that these can be held in the centre of the city. I think it will be of interest and service to you if I describe what has been arranged.

The Lodge-room, which is at the top of the building, has been fitted up with the various necessary furniture, etc., some purchased and some kindly given or lent. The lavatories and cloak-rooms are situated in the basement, and Brethren should leave their hats and cases there. Refreshments will be served in the dining-room (on the first floor), which will also be used as a place for assembling before a meeting. A convenient committee-room adjoins. Access can be made to other floors by means of stairs or the lift (LIMITED to carry not more than SEVEN PERSONS at a time). Brethren "must not enter upon or use any other part of the building other than those the subject of this agreement," (such as the smoking-rooms, bar or billiards-room). Those who are not Installed Masters are requested to remain in the Lodge-room while the ceremony of the Installation of the Master is being carried out (in the committee-room).

I hope that our new temporary Masonic home will prove both convenient and pleasant to all.

Owing to the facts that the premises are licensed, that the business of the club has to be carried on, and that the police have made regulations, certain restrictions have been laid down and must be strictly observed. In practice these should not, however, interfere with the amenities of the Brethren.

It has therefore been agreed that

- (1) "The Tenants will take the necessary steps to provide that in no circumstances shall any Member of a Masonic Lodge be supplied with alcoholic refreshments from the resources of the Club, and also that any member of a Mason's Lodge, who is a Member of the Constitutional Club shall not treat to such alcoholic refreshments any other Member of a Mason's Lodge who is not a Member of the said Club."
- (2) That Brethren "do not sing or play music in the said dining-room or committee-room," but no objection has been expressed against the usual hymns and incidental music in the Lodge-room.
- (3) Brethren must "park their cars in proper parking places or garages, so that no obstruction may be caused in St Stephen Street or other streets in the proximity of the said Club."
- (4) The premises must be vacated by 9.30 p.m.

The Provincial Grand master suggests that the National Anthem shall be sung at the close of meetings, as is done in Grand Lodge.

Yours faithfully and fraternally,

W.G. HARVEY, P.A.G.D.C.,
Provincial Grand Secretary.

A POEM by Francis John HECTOR

This poem, written by Hector while he was a medical student, shows something of his romantic and historical interests which would not have been easily discerned by those who knew him later in life.

AVALON by Francis John Hector

There is a valley near the western sea,
Where dwells the spirit of the ancient days,
And half concealed in mystery profound,
Is told the tale of men and deeds, that now
Are but a fading memory; yet here
In this enchanted vale, 'twould seem a spell
Falls o'er the senses, making present things
Appear as shadows, while the distant past
Unfolds its vivid pageantry. Sublime,
Majestic, on the higher ground, which once
Was circled round about by lake and marsh,
The noble ruins of the Abbey Church
Stand, where a Celtic treasure city dealt
In trade with many nations, so that men
Stood on the Tor, that crowned the isle, and saw,
Till Carthage fell, the ships of Tarshish ply
Along the Channel for the Mendip lead.
Here came St. Joseph with the Holy Grail,
And built with mud and wattle the first church
Upon this place of ruined loveliness.

Tread softly then, for though the azure sky
Serves as a roof, and though the lofty nave
With smooth green sward is carpeted,
Yet 'tis still a shrine most holy. Yonder
Was the grave where slept the chivalrous Arthur
With his beauteous Queen, till the first Edward
Moved to a splendid tomb the mighty dust
Behind the Altar, upon which did glow
The precious sapphire that St David gave
To Avalon. Thus does the fancy see
Once more the wondrous glory of the fane,
The rich adornment, and the rare design
Of pointed arch with Norman moulding: hear
Again the temple ring with swelling chant,
As slow procession moves up through the aisle.

Now in the place he loved come many thoughts
Of Arthur. How that here in Avalon
Was forged Excalibur, and how it chanced
That on Wirrail, where grew the holy thorn,
The great king rested with Sir Gawaine, when
Appeared the glorious vision, whence he took
His sacred badge. How, when his last brave fight
Was done, they brought him back to Avalon
To die. So in this hallowed spot revealed
The romance, joy and pain of Britain's heart:
And passing out along the road, on which
Was borne the corse of lovely Guinevere,
With Lancelot following, is left behind
The deep mysterious calm of Avalon,
Its legends, splendours, charm and history.

Francis J. Hector

Reprinted from *Nonesuch* Volume VI, No. 25, June 1919, pp. 198-9.

Bristol Masonic Society's Donations to Charity 1990 - 2005

mainly from the sales of Christmas Carol Service Programmes

1990	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	250.00	
	C.R.U.S.E.	400.00	
	Bristol Research and Care of the Elderly	<u>350.00</u>	£1,000.00
1991	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	890.00	
	Warwick Provincial Charity	150.00	
	Director of Music, St Mary Redcliffe	<u>400.00</u>	£1,440.00
1992	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	1000.00	
	Bristol Cathedral	<u>250.00</u>	£1,250.00
1993	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	900.00	
	Disabled Christian Fellowship	<u>200.00</u>	£1,100.00
1994	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	450.00	
	New Masonic Samaritan Fund	450.00	
	Bristol Migraine Association	<u>450.00</u>	£1,350.00
1995	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	500.00	
	Manor House Frenchay	500.00	
	South West Children's Hospice	250.00	
	Cancer and Leukaemia in Childhood	<u>250.00</u>	£1,500.00
1996	Vascular Surgery Research, Frenchay	1134.00	
	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	<u>566.00</u>	£1,700.00
1997	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	700.00	
	St Luke's Home	350.00	
	Joanne O'Riordan Fund	200.00	
	Vascular Surgery Research, Frenchay	<u>150.00</u>	£1,400.00
1998	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	550.00	
	British Heart Foundation	550.00	
	National Meningitis Trust	<u>550.00</u>	£1,650.00
1999	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	470.00	
	British Heart Foundation	470.00	
	Bristol research and Care of the Elderly	470.00	
	Vascular Surgery research, Frenchay *	<u>1643.00</u>	£3,053.00
2000	Dr Graham's Homes, Kalimpong, W. Bengal	425.00	
	Heswall Disabled Children's Holiday Fund	400.00	
	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	400.00	
	Vascular Surgery Research, Frenchay	<u>250.00</u>	£1,475.00
2001	St Peter's Hospice, Bristol	450.00	
	Bristol Cathedral Sheet Music Fund	450.00	
	Bristol Masonic Charitable Trust	<u>450.00</u>	£1,350.00
2002	Children's Hospital South West	675.00	
	St Dunstan's	338.00	
	Elmfield School for Deaf Children	<u>337.00</u>	£1,350.00
2003	Jessie May Trust	500.00	
	Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys	400.00	
	National Eye Research Centre	400.00	£1,300.00
2004	Dr Graham's Homes, Kalimpong, W. Bengal	417.00	
	Underprivileged Children's Charity	417.00	
	St Peter's Hospice, Bristol	<u>416.00</u>	£1,250.00
			£22,168.00

*separately raised in memory of WBro N. Evans PPrGStB(Glos).

Bristol Masonic Society

2005-2006

PRESIDENT

A.R.Baker, MA MD FRCS, Pr G Chap. P.M. 1404

VICE PRESIDENT

T.O.Langmaid, PAGDC, P.M. 5239

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS

2005

Thursday 30th September
6.45 pm.

INSTALLATION MEETING
“Ernst and Falk - Gotthold Ephraim Lessing”
Masonic Tolerance
Presidential Address with the assistance of MJCE and AJR

Monday 24th October
7.00 pm

AC Steger MS FRCS
“Why I am not a Mason”

Sunday 11th December BMS Carol Service
3.00 pm. St. Mary Redcliffe

2006

Tuesday 24th January
7.00 pm.

Charles Wallis-Newport
(Prestonian Lecturer 2001)
“Examples of Masonic Chivalry in the Field of Human Conflict”

Thursday 30th March
7.00 pm.

GWH Reed
“Experiences beyond The Craft”

Monday 8th May
7.00 pm.

AB Jenkins
“Freemasonry and the Spiritual Quest”

Tue 30th May
7.00 pm.

RA Gilbert BA
(Prestonian Lecturer 1997)
“Whither or Wither”
A vitriolic view of our rise and demise.

Saturday 8th July

SUMMER OUTING to Tewkesbury Abbey

Thur 29th September
6.45 pm.

INSTALLATION MEETING
and Presidential Address

The meetings are open to all Master Masons

All meetings are held at Freemason's Hall, Park Street, Bristol BS1 5NH unless stated otherwise.

Brethren requiring a meal after any meeting must **on each occasion**
contact the Hon. Treasurer **at least one week in advance.**

Dress informal

No Regalia