



Ashton News

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NEWSLETTER of ASHTON LODGE No 218 of the UNITED GRAND LODGE OF QUEENSLAND

Large numbers in attendance for the Gathering of the Clans

All the work of two years, along with the uneasiness of wondering about the success or otherwise of organising such an important meeting came to fruition on 13 April 2002 when fourteen Scottish Craft Lodges combined under the leadership of Stanley Lodge to bring about one of the most successful "Gathering of the Clans"

Peter Kennedy WM of Stanley Lodge said: "In hosting this auspicious meeting we have set a two-fold objective - to make the event a highly memorable one for all in attendance and to assist the Freemason's Leukaemia Foundation Appeal to the greatest extent possible".

"Thus we meet to enjoy that special bond of friendship which unites us as Freemasons and, at the same time to practice that essential Masonic virtue - Charity. With our ladies by our side to share the enjoyment of the occasion, we can

ask for little more as Freemasons".

This was achieved in full.

It was a most sincere and well presented ceremony and a sum of \$5,000 was raised for the Leukaemia Foundation.

The ceremony was witnessed by 336 brethren who signed the attendance book and over 500 at the festive board, including 147 ladies and quite a number of visitors

In a letter from the

secretary of Stanley Lodge, Wor Bro John Irwin expressed heartfelt thanks to the Ashton brethren who contributed so generously with their time, their labour and their finances to its success.

John went on to say, "Without your help and the help of other Lodges in the area, we would not have achieved the success we did, and it goes without saying that the loyalty and bondage

between Scottish Lodges in this area is at an extremely high level".

"To those participating in the Ceremony and those acting as stewards at the Festive Board, many thanks for a job well done".

"Your team of volunteers who came down to prepare and dismantle the Lodge Room and Festive Board area, worked very hard and deserve our sincere thanks".

Our Installation Night

That time of the year has rolled around again and this time as in the last few years, the Installation night will be on the first Saturday in July.

Master-elect Jim Robertson has opted to once again engage the services of H.I.K.E. as caterers at the festive board.

By engaging this voluntary organisation, all their profits

from the evening go out to helping children with hearing impairments.

At the festive board there will be a major raffle on offer and the prize will be a microwave oven kindly donated by member Bro Ricky Beecroft as well as numerous other minor prizes.

This year we will be hosting a bus load of brethren from the

Sandgate Masonic Home who are coming to support and pay homage to Jim in his new office.

Stanley Lodge have signified their willingness to again act as Stewards for the night and for that we thank them.

All that is needed is a good attendance from Ashton members and partners.

Will you be there?

Opening up Freemasonry via the Internet

(Reprinted from BBC News Online May 2000)

A website in Wales run for freemasons has won the approval of the Grand Lodge with its efforts to unravel the perceived mysteries of the organisation.

The site has latched on to the idea of "emasonry" to inform the general public over the internet of what freemasonry is about.

The Freemasons Lodge of Enterprise website has been given the Charter Mark of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Webmaster Nava Navaratnarajah said it was a further step in breaking down old-fashioned stereotyped images of the freemasons.

Freemasons were under pressure two years ago in to "name names" about members within the police and judiciary.

'Secret societies'

The Lodge Grand Secretary, Commander Michael Higham, refused to do so at the time.

Home Secretary Jack Straw introduced a move for members of the police and judiciary to make a voluntary declaration.

Mr Straw said mem-

bership of "secret societies" could "raise suspicions".

But Mr Navaratnarajah said his website was a means of overcoming such suspicions.

"Over the past 20-30 years, perceptions have been changing," he told BBC News Online Wales.

"We are trying to change the image Mr Joe Public has that we are some kind of secret society. It is far from it."

Mr Navaratnarajah who was Worshipful Master last year said he had worked closely with other lodge members to give as much information as possible.

"It is only the rituals that we like to keep secret," he said.

'Small minority'

"As far as what freemasonry does and is about, that information is all publicly available.

"This is what we are trying to promote through the website.

"There was a small minority that did not want things published and we have been careful about what is acceptable information to give out.

"We have given out more than others and hopefully, it will educate and inform people."

Pleasingly for Mr Navratnarajah, the website's guest book features only complimentary messages.

"We have had no negative reaction at all," he said.

Book-Fest a success

The two day book sale held on the premises of the Vulture Street Masonic Centre South Brisbane, in April was successful in raising \$4500 for the Leukaemia Foundation.

This will be added to the target figure of \$40,000 promised on behalf of the South Brisbane Fund-raising Committee.

The donation of books for the sale was close to overwhelming and thanks must go to all those kind donors.

The tables just groaned with books of all sizes, categories and interests

It was touching to hear of one person arriving with \$50 just wanting to purchase some books that he could donate to the Mount Ollivett Hospice.

Once again it was the unselfishness of certain people, amongst whom were Ashton members Tom Blackwell, Ted Lowe and Len Norman who gave their all to assist in the promotion and organising of the Book-Fest.

Thanks must go to Bro Viv Bylund who donated \$100 to register his support of the Book-Fest.

Viv is a long-time member of Ashton and has been a resident of Heron Island for many years.

It is most gratifying to know that we have a member who still has the interest of his mother lodge close to his heart.

50 YEARS TOGETHER

Two members of the Lodge had big reasons to celebrate over the last couple of months.

Both had the great pleasure of celebrating their Golden Wedding anniversaries.

Tom and Margaret Blackwell were married in April 1952 and Ossie and Vera Ehm in May the same year.

Both brothers are long time members of Ashton, with Ossie already in receipt of his fifty year jewel and Tom only a few years away.

Their regular attendance to the meetings surely must reflect on the support that they received from their partners.

For that we thank Vera and Margaret and offer our sincere congratulations.

May you have many more years together.

Congratulations in order to three Ashton families

It is with great pleasure that we learnt of additions to three families of our members.

Bro Alan Cochrane and his wife Amanda who already have a daughter now have a son who they named William Oliver, born on 27th September last, and he is now at the happy crawling stage.

Alan was recently our Junior Deacon but rightly feels an obligation to his larger family, also he has just recently established his own Land Surveying business.

Alan has reluctantly put his active participation in Freemasonry aside for the moment, but still retains membership of his Mother

Lodge in Scotland.

Bro Michael Gallagher and his wife Gail have a son, Ethan Michael, born on 16th April.

Michael is our present Senior Deacon and because of his commitment to his new family, has put aside his advancement within the Lodge for the present but still hopes to attend meetings when possible.

Bro Ian Pieper and his wife Louise who have recently returned from the United Kingdom are expecting their first youngster this month (June).

Ian explained that one of the reasons for coming home sooner than expected was that they wanted their child to be born in Australia.

We understand that all is well in the three families concerned, and wish them every future happiness and success.

Proud Night

The June meeting will be a proud moment for our Chaplin Wor Bro Ted Ross, as his son Lochlin will be the candidate for Initiation on this night.

Lochlin has waited a few years before taking this step and we hope that he will enjoy his new association amongst us as well as we know that his father does.



The very last thing that a fly sees

Overseas visitors at April Lodge meeting

The April meeting was more than just an initiation to our newest member Ian Hill.

Ian was not surprised that his uncle Wor Bro Alan Hill of United Services Lodge No 3124 from the Province of East Kent in England was present to see the ceremony, but unbeknown to him, a cousin of Ian and a freemason, living in England, on hearing about the forthcoming Initiation, arranged with a friend to make the big trip out here just to witness the ceremony.

The links with the Craft are strong with Ian, as his late father Bro David Hill and his grandfather the late Wor Bro Leonard Hill were also members of the United Services Lodge.

Ian's cousin by marriage, Bro Paul Beach along with a friend, Wor Bro Chris Brown IPM, both members of Manor of Chatham Lodge in the Province of East Kent, having heard of Ian's intention from Paul's father-in-law Alan, made hurried plans to pay a five day surprise visit to Brisbane.

Despite difficulties in obtaining flights, they achieved their aim, aided in their subterfuge by Wor Bro Ted Ross and Bro Eric Armstrong, who were Ian's proposer and seconder.

At the Festive Board, Paul and Chris expressed thanks to members of Ashton for the kindness they had received and their pleasure at having been able to attend.

A fraternal visit to the General

A visit to General Glasgow Lodge by our Master John Gray and supported by members of Ashton, proved to be something of a unique occasion.

The Lodge had no degree work to perform for the evening so it was an early entrance to the Festive Board.

After the brethren of General Glasgow had toasted the visitors with a resounding Scottish welcome, they produced their indoor bowling mat together with those round black bowling instruments.

The lodge has had this mat for several years, and usually does not have enough visitors to form an opposing team to throw out the challenge.

Members of Ashton took up the offer, but unfortunately they did not bring their bowlers with them, as proved by the number of wrong biases thrown down.

The outcome became very predictable early in the game with the General's team winning in a decisive manner.

SECRETS?.... *WHAT SECRETS*

From an article written by Canon Richard Tydeman and published in *Freemasonry Today* (Issue 20) "The Independent Voice of Freemasonry"

Every Freemason has solemnly sworn never to reveal any of the secrets or mysteries of masonry - but what exactly do we mean by that?

There is no doubt that in medieval times the secrets of the operative masons were very practical indeed. They included the methods of proving uprights and horizontals, the knowledge of tools and their uses, and perhaps the most important, the ability to make an angle of ninety degrees to ensure that a stone was square. These secrets took a considerable time to learn and involved a long apprenticeship followed by years as a Craftsman before eventually perhaps becoming a Master of the Art.

Only in that way could the true Mystery, or Mastery of an operative mason be preserved and passed on to future generations.

But, of course, then, as now, there were unscrupulous cowboy builders - they called them Cowans in those days - who would offer to build or repair a structure without possessing the genuine knowledge. Such men would sometimes en-

deavour to infiltrate lodges of operative masons and try to obtain the secrets the easy way, without being worthily recommended and properly prepared. It was to prevent such conduct that passwords and tokens were entrusted to genuine masons so that they could identify themselves if, for instance, they moved to another town and sought work there.

These words and tokens were not, in themselves, the "secrets" of masonry, rather, they acted as guards to those secrets.

However, we are not all operative, but free and accepted or speculative masons. So what are the secrets that we pledge ourselves to keep inviolate? Words, signs, and tokens? Yes, of course, but these are a mere detail; they are only the guards to our privileges.

The true secret of modern Freemasonry cannot be defined in such simple terms. In fact, the real secret of Freemasonry cannot be described at all; it is something that can only be learnt by experience, by humility and patience.

Well now, our critics would say, if that is true, what is the point of going on talking about secrecy? Now that the words and signs, in fact the whole ritual, can be studied

in practically any public library or bookshop, what is there left to keep secret about?

There is no easy answer to this, but I would say it can be summed up under the one word "Trust".

Masons trust each other because they share the same obligation. I was once approached by a newspaper reporter, a lady journalist, who wanted to ask me some questions: "Is it true", she enquired, "that masons do such-and-such? And do they really say this-and-that?", and so on. I thought a minute and then said, "Well, before I go on, if I now tell you something in strict confidence, would you be prepared to keep it to yourself and not publish it?" "Oh, of course", said the lady, "if it's in confidence".

"Now, you really mean that?" I persisted. "You believe that if one gives one's word, one should keep it?" "Oh yes", she replied. "Well", I said, "if you can understand that then you will understand why I can't tell you anything".

It is really as a test of trustworthiness that we obligate our candidates to secrecy. If they keep this promise about little things, then we know we can have confidence in them about greater things. To quote from the Bible: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much".

When I was made a Boy Scout, many years ago, we went through a bit of ritual that I remember to this day:

Question: Do you know what your Honour means?

Answer: Yes, it means that I can be trusted.

This was followed by the obligation: "On my Honour I promise to do my best to do my duty to God and the King (that was George V of course) to help other people at all times and to obey the Scout Law".

It seems to me that there is very little difference between that and the promise of a Freemason; it is just another way of putting the need for confidence and trust.

Books have been written, usually by non-masons, quoting so-called "confidential material" which they claim to have learnt from former members of masonic lodges.

To rely on such information would be like judging the British Constitution on evidence supplied by Burgess and Maclean. It is only traitors and perjurers who will break their vow of silence, and such men are not to be trusted.

The privilege of being accepted as a member of a masonic lodge is offered to worthy men, and we trust, to worthy men alone; only in this way the trust we place in each other can be intensified and enlarged.