

Speech Templum Fidelis Lodge No. 746, Jan 18th 2014

Visit to Scottish Lodges

In Feb. of 2010, my wife, Mary, and I traveled to Scotland with a small group of Masons from Hamilton. V. W. Bro. Roy Cumming of Hamilton was the organizer, himself being Scottish and knowing his way around. Brother Peter Scarr was also on that trip with a handful of others. Unfortunately, since that time, as some of you may know, Peter has been suspended by our Grand Lodge for remarks unbecoming a Mason that he made in the ante room of a Lodge in York District concerning another's religion.

Nonetheless this small group visited lodges from Glasgow to Edinburgh during the two weeks they were there. AS we had traveled to England first to visit with family, I joined up with them in Edinburgh for four days and had the opportunity to visit three Masonic Lodges in Edinburgh with them as well as attend the Quarterly Communication of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. What follows is a description of some of those events with a bit of the history of early Scottish freemasonry.

We are all familiar with the fact that organized Masonry seemed to develop from the point of 1717 when the first Grand Lodge was formed in London England. In three years we will celebrate the 300th anniversary of that date. Four Lodges were involved. At that time there were 23 Lodges already in existence in Scotland.

I think many of us would consider Scotland as a seat of Masonry enveloped in a lot of history and conjecture from the stories in print that we have heard of the Knights Templar, Rosslyn Chapel, The Sinclairs, (*Guysborough, Nova Scotia, 1398*) which have come to light over the last three decades or so.

The Hiram Key(*Knight and Lomas*) which was published in 1997 is one of those books that was widely read by Masons and made to sound quite believable. At the time I thought of it as the bible of Masonry.

While I only visited in Edinburgh for four days, the rest of the group visited many more Lodges throughout Scotland such as Mother Kilwinning No. 0 in Kilwinning near Glasgow during their two weeks. But our four days were quite hectic.

Let me just explain a wee bit about Mother Kilwinning. It has quite a history. Not a lot of original documentation was available and as a result when the GL of Scotland was formed in 1736 it named the Lodge of Edinburgh as the premier Lodge. This quite upset the Kilwinning brethren and they withdrew from the GL. In the interim that followed they Chartered numerous Lodges that bear its name. Finally in 1806 they were persuaded to rejoin the GL stable if they would agree to the concession of being granted the honorary number of '0' on the list of Lodges to which number they proudly add to the name of Kilwinning, "Mother Lodge of Scotland".¹ Perhaps some of you have the famous Kilwinning penny.

Together, on a Tuesday, we visited the lodge rooms of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning No. 2 in Edinburgh(Warranted by Mother Lodge Kilwinning in 1677). It was difficult to locate and after asking two or three strangers, we found it... just steps off the Royal Mile midway through an arch and to the right. No nomenclature visible. The building on St. John St. is also the home of the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland and the Royal Order of Scotland....This lodge room also had an old hand pump organ(situated where our JW would sit) that would require two people to operate..one to hand pump the air and one to play the keys. It still works. Had M. W. Bro. Daniels been there, he and I could have had a great time together playing, pumping and singing..... By what I've read this lodge apparently never closes.... that is, "The work stands adjourned until our next regular meeting, etc". In this lodge both wardens sit in the west (southwest and northwest). There are many paintings about the Lodge room and hanging on the wall is one of Robbie Burns. There is also a large painting of Wm St Clair of Roslin inscribed that he was initiated a Mason in the Lodge Canongate Kilwinning 2nd of June 1736 and later became the first Grand Master of the GL of Scotland.

Later that Tuesday afternoon, while there, the Royal Order of Scotland had their meeting and had I known I could have gone as it was being held just prior to the lodge meeting we were attending at 7:30 pm at Lodge Roman Eagle CLX (Founded Feb 7th, 1785) just steps away from the entrance to Edinburgh Castle at 2 Johnston Terrace. They were celebrating their 225th year in existence and their evening was a ceremony of re-

¹ Freemasonry Today- summer 2000 by Mathew Scanlan

dedication. An interesting feature of Lodge Roman Eagle was that for their first nine years in existence they spoke **Latin** and the work was done only in Latin.

The banquet, or the Harmony as it is known in Scotland, which followed is always a highlight with good food, much to drink (at least at the top table where I was sat) and many toasts and responses.

There was a regalia shop (Victoria Regalia) on the street level of the same premise, which if you visit the area you will find with ease, but the door leading to the upstairs lodge room is difficult to distinguish from the street. Lodges in Scotland are allowed to select their own regalia which can be any colour and there was quite an array but Grand Lodge officers of the Grand Lodge of Scotland are consistent in green and gold. When they visit their own lodge they wear a Master Mason's apron in their own Lodge colours and are always addressed as brother. Apparently no one is ever addressed by the rank they may hold.

On Wednesday, we toured the well preserved Rosslyn Chapel which, at that time, was still covered with scaffolding for restoration purposes. In the evening we visited Scotia Regia Lodge No. 1345, near Leith, not far from the docks where our brethren from Hamilton exemplified work of the Second Degree. This was very well received by the Scottish brethren and once again the meeting was followed by a sumptuous banquet with one brother in particular reciting, by memory, the long Robbie Burns Poem, "Tam O Shanter –a tale", with actions as it involves his mare and done in very heavy Scottish brogue. The whole thing was difficult to follow. When I arrived home I checked it out in the book of Robbie Burns poems that I have. The poem is several pages long and written such that, for myself, it was difficult to read and to understand. This brother recited it totally from memory. Addressing the Haggis would be something similar.

I did have the opportunity to attend the Grand Lodge of Scotland on my last day there, which was a Thursday, and met once again The Grand Master Mason, Bro. Charles Iain Robert Wolridge Gordon of Esslemont and PGM Sir Archibald Orr-Ewing whom I had the pleasure of sitting beside in the East near the Grand Master and both of whom I had met in Paris on previous occasions. Our Grand Lodge (our GM and GS specifically)

visited the Grand Loge Nationale Francais for their annual communication near the end of November or first part of December for many years. I found out the first time that I met Bro. Gordon that he had spent some summers in Ontario south of London and I was surprised that he would know Tillsonburg or Woodstock. He was studying something to do with field Husbandry as his family owns large plots of land in Scotland.

Sir Archie, as he is called , as of July 2009 ,had become the new Deputy Grand Master and Governor of the Royal Order of Scotland having taken over from Lord Elgin who has suffered a couple of health problems, in addition to general aging. Past Potentate of Mocha Temple, Bro. Jack Cumming from Bruce District is a close friend of Lord Elgin and I had an opportunity to meet Lord Elgin myself in a Lodge in St Thomas (St. Davids) which was the first time he had ever attended a Lodge in Ontario. On this occasion, as he had several times in the past, he came to check the Elgin Regiment situated there and I think Bro. Don Cosens talked him into attending The Lodge and then invited me as well.

Again, later on the same day, I had the pleasure of sitting with Sir Archie Orr-Ewing at the head banquet table in a restaurant on Princes street after attending the research **Lodge Sir Robert Moray No. 1641** which had as its WM, Robert L.D. Cooper, renowned Scottish author. Some of you may have met him when he attended Heritage Lodge on one occasion. Cooper had given an historical talk at the GL communication earlier that afternoon. He is a well respected academic Historian and Curator of the Grand Lodge of Scotland Library and Museum.

I shouldn't say but, as brilliant as he is, opening and closing the Lodge were not his forte.

Sir Archie and I did have a chance to chat and even though his upper Scottish accent might be intimidating he is quite a down to earth person.

At the same banquet table was the author David Stevenson (The Origins of Freemasonry) who had given the lecture earlier that afternoon in the Research Lodge on one aspect of the history of Scottish Masonry. The Five of us were at the head table and I felt quite honoured to be among them. To the question when and where was Freemasonry created,

he answers , “in Scotland around 1600 and if anyone can be claimed as its founder that man was William Schaw, master of works and general warden of the Masons.²

In 1583 Schaw was appointed Master of Works to King James the sixth. He was trying to centralize the Mason trade and place it under his own authority as Grand Warden. Those first statutes were published in 1598 and revised the following year. Unfortunately three years later Schaw passed away and the King had moved to England to become James the Sixth of England and Scotland.

Stevenson is not a Mason and much like other Masonic Historians prefers to not be so as to keep a neutral mind.

In an interview in 2005 in the Freemasonry Today Magazine he states that some thirty years ago he was doing research on the civil wars in Scotland for his PhD thesis when he was startled to find some reference to two rebel generals being entered as members of a Lodge in Edinburgh. Some ten years later, when time prevailed, he returned to it and started digging around the invisible world of Freemasonry in seventeenth century Scotland. He says even though it was invisible to us outside historians the Freemasons had written extensively and knew of these records and were just sitting on them.

One of Robert Cooper’s latest books is called the ‘Rosslyn Hoax’ in which he apparently denounces all that we would like to believe about Rosslyn Chapel and its connections to Freemasonry. As I said, we had visited the Rosslyn Chapel just the day before. It was not my first time there. I still find it an intriguing place to visit. As a matter of fact after my first time there I developed a slide show and presentation which I gave in three or four Lodges at the time starting with the Knights Templar connection. I was disappointed to hear of Cooper’s revelations. What seemed like a very good story was blown out of the water by his revelations.

In his book³, he says “A most curious situation therefore exists. Rosslyn Chapel is claimed to be Masonic but no Masonic symbolism is to be found there. Those who have overlooked this fact and have imposed their own interpretation insist it was built for the purpose of hiding something such as:

² Stevenson “The Origins of Freemasonry” Cambridge Press 2005 edition

³ “The Rosslyn Hoax” Robert L.D. Cooper 2007

- The treasure of the Knights templar
- The embalmed head of Jesus Christ
- The 'real' Stone of destiny
- The Ark of the Covenant
- The Nasorean Scrolls
- The Holy Grail

Sean Connery, noted actor, in his new book, '*On Being A Scot*' makes considerable use of **The Rosslyn Hoax?** in his examination of Scots, their character and the country which he clearly loves but remains divorced from.

He says, "It then began to puzzle me why there was nothing mentioned about the Templars or Freemasonry in my own well thumbed Rosslyn guidebook. As Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* began to break bestseller records other books appeared to encumber Rosslyn with yet stranger myths. Soon there were even books on *The Da Vinci Code* attempting to decode the undecodable. It all seemed to have started with *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail* in 1982. Despite the unsuccessful outcome of the court case, brought by two of its authors, accusing Dan Brown of plagiarism, it was clearly their book that had set Brown's novel on its way, and the subsequent stampede of tourists to Rosslyn's door.

Then along came **The Rosslyn Hoax?** written by Robert Cooper, the Curator of the Museum and Library of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, the home of Scottish Freemasonry. This scholarly investigation seems to be the most level-headed and thoroughly researched historical analysis so far. Not only does Cooper scatter the myths and legends of

Rosslyn to the winds, he has also finally put to rest all those claims made for Rosslyn on behalf of Freemasonry and the Knights Templar."⁴

Sir Robert Moray Research Lodge No. 1641 meets in Mary's Chapel which is one of the oldest continually acting Lodge rooms in the world housing the Edinburgh Lodge No 1 since 1598 and is situated very near in proximity to the GL of Scotland building which is on George St.. This Lodge has minutes dating back to July 31st 1599—the oldest minutes in the world of an existing working Lodge.

Sir Robert Moray was initiated in 1641 into the Lodge of Edinburgh, held offsite in Newcastle in England, and it was of importance because the Scots consider him the first non-operative person to become a Mason much like Elias Ashmole five years later in England. Both Moray and Ashmole were military leaders and he like Ashmole had recorded the fact of his initiation in his diary.

Moray's Mason mark was the pentacle and he always worked the pentacle into the final letter of his signature. In Stevenson's book he explains that this pentacle had five initials and one of them stood for AGAPE and along with the other four initials brings to mind Faith, Hope and Charity. The message contained in the five initials was along the lines of "Love God and your fellowmen; Know thyself; Be constant; Have faith; Be temperate."

Moray found his philosophy to be compatible with the atmosphere of Masonry and placed a high value on the platonic ideal of friendship while the ideal of brotherhood lay at the heart of the Lodge.

Moray and Ashmole along with Christopher Wren, renowned architect of St. Paul's Cathedral, belonged to the Royal Society. This started a new era in Masonry when non-operatives were allowed to join and the age of enlightenment ensued. Interestingly enough, there was opposition to these new non-operatives in some quarters but by the time the GL of England was formed in 1717 they came to be accepted...thus the word 'accepted' in "Free and Accepted Masons".

But what about the acception Lodge ?

⁴ "On Being a Scot" Sean Connery

Apparently English writer Mathew Scanlan in Freemasonry Today magazine autumn 2001⁵ after research says that perhaps the term Accepted isn't as simple as it sounds. Apparently in London in 1654 the London Company of Freemasons had a Lodge that brought in a number of new Masons, mostly craftsmen, but they were called Accepted. Ashmole's Lodge in Warrington also was an acceptance Lodge. This is confusing and perhaps somewhat speculative. Speaking of speculative, that term didn't begin to be used in Masonry until the mid 1800's. Mother Kilwinning in this same time period accepted non operatives as Initiates. During this 30 year or so period I suspect Masonry began to be more encompassing in terms of who may be initiated.

The brethren who formed the 'Sir Robert Moray Research Lodge' had to wait until the number 1641, following in succession, was available from GL, as a gesture of historical importance to Moray's Initiation date. Much like Templum Fidelis, the Grand Secretary wouldn't allow you to use the number you requested when this Lodge was formed but had to use the next available number.

Legend has it that The Royal Order of Scotland had its beginnings in the 12th century in the Heredom degree, with the Rosy Cross degree originating in 1314 following the [Battle of Bannockburn](#). It is said The Bruce (Robert the Bruce-King of Scots) set up what became the Royal Order of Scotland in Kilwinning Lodge in Ayr. Royal Order came into its own, many years later, around 1741, just after the formation of the **GL of Scotland in 1736**.

To this day the Chair on the right of the Prov. Grand Master at the Royal Order meetings is kept vacant for the hereditary King of Scots-Grand Master of the order with his sash and gown laid thereon.

I mentioned Robbie Burns a couple of times earlier and I suppose no talk about Masonry in Scotland would be complete without a few words of this famous poet considering we are on the verge, once again, of his birthday. He was born in 1759 and was initiated in 1781 into St Davids Lodge. At the time of his death, in 1796, he was the Senior Warden of St Andrew's Lodge in Dumfries. In 1787 he was inaugurated as Poet Laureate of Canongate Kilwinning No 2 in Edinburgh, the hard to find Lodge.

⁵ Freemasonry Today Autumn 2001

Nonetheless a large painting was done of this event by a Stuart Watson which now hangs in the The Museum of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Artistic licence was taken as it has been proven many of the brethren depicted in the painting were not alive at the time. The curious thing about Scottish Freemasonry is that they use the Maul rather than the gavel which is nonexistent in Scottish Lodges. The museum has a collection of mauls one being that used by Bro. Robbie Burns.

My venture to Scotland, in addition to the **fellowship** we enjoyed, provided an opportunity for a great history lesson on the origins of freemasonry. It was like a step back into our Origins. Some of you may have heard of the Kirkwall Scroll ..Well that is a talk for another day. Briefly, Cooper examines it and even though it is said to be like a Knights Templar treasure map he feels that there is overwhelming evidence that it was produced in the latter half of the 18th century and not in the 15th century as claimed. It is 18'6" long and 5'6" wide. Found in Lodge Kirkwall Kilwinning in the Orkney Islands.

In summing up, I would like to use the last paragraph from noted Scottish Masonic Historian David Stevenson's Book, *"The Origins of Freemasonry"* himself not being a Mason and written from his point of view.

"If the strange (to outsiders) rituals of freemasonry seem out of place in the Age of Enlightenment, consisting of superstitious mumbo-jumbo with dark over-tones of necromancy, this was because, at heart, the movement was not an Enlightenment but a Renaissance phenomenon. That the Age of Enlightenment was nonetheless the great age of freemasonry is a seeming paradox indicating that for all the eighteenth century's appeal to reason, many still hankered after elements of mystery, ritual, secrecy, and the quest for hidden truth. They found a framework for indulging such tastes, as well as sociability in organizations and rituals of Scottish Renaissance origin, combined with medieval mythical craft history."

Brethren, that is a mouthful but perhaps explains our fascination with Freemasonry and why we are members.

Thanks for your indulgence.

Allan J. Petrisor

Further Acknowledgements:

“Freemasonry Today” magazine Summer 2000

Autumn 2001

Spring 2005

“Origins of Freemasonry” David Stevenson

MSA bulletin Sept 2013 “Origins of Masonry: the Scottish view”

“The Rosslyn Hoax”, Robert L.D. Cooper

Online link to The UGLE magazine “Freemasonry Today”:
<http://www.freemasonrytoday.com/magazine>