

125th HISTORY ADDRESS GIVEN BY W. BRO. R.W. TISDALE P.D.G.W.

on 4th October 1980

Worshipful Master, Distinguished Guests and Brethren all.

We are here today to celebrate 125 years of Freemasonry in this, the Waitemata Lodge and our first thoughts should be of the founder members for not only were they responsible for starting this lodge but also the commencement of English Freemasonry in the Auckland province.

The Petition was signed by:

Sir Samuel Osborne-Gibbes, P.M. 199 and 843 P.P.G.S.W. Dorset.

James Buchanan, W.M. Ara 348 I.C.

Francis Campbell, S.W. Ara 348 IC

William Mason, British United Lodge, Ipswich.

James S. Baylis, Prince Mason Dublin No.4

William Young, Ara 348 IC

The Petition was sent to the Provincial Grand Lodge of New South Wales asking for dispensation to start this Lodge. The Petition was granted and the first meeting of the Lodge was held on the 6th September 1855 when W. Bro. Buchanan, W. Master of Ara Lodge No. 348 IC installed Sir Samuel Osborne-Gibbes as Master of Waitemata Lodge.

It was not until 3rd December 1856 that we received our Grant Lodge Warrant which carried the number 990. This remained our number until 1863 when we received the following letter from Grand Lodge "That the Grand Lodge having resolved that the number of new Lodges on the Register shall be brought forward in regular succession by filling up those numbers which have become vacant either by the voluntary surrender of Warrants or by erasure of Lodges. I have the honour to inform you that your Lodge which has hitherto been known and distinguished as No.990 will henceforth stand on the Register of Grand Lodge as No. 689 and the latter number you are to refer to in all returns and communications addressed to the Grand Lodge.

By Order Wm. Gray Clark. G. Sec."

In 1903 the Lodge wrote to Grand Lodge asking if the number on our Warrant should be changed to 689 and we received the following reply:

"In answer to your letter of the 20th regarding the Warrant of your Lodge it is in the same condition as all the others that were established before 1863. It is not necessary to have the new number placed on the Warrant but if it is desired the Warrant may be returned for endorsement but as such endorsement is usually made on the back it would not be of service

if the Warrant is to be framed. Moreover the Lodge will be unable to meet in the absence of the Warrant.

E. Letchworth. Grand Sec."

Needless to say the Warrant was never endorsed and still shows the number 990.

It is not my intention to dwell at any length on the early years of the Lodge as these years have been well covered in previously recorded histories, the first of which was written by W. Bro. R.A. McCullough and covered the years 1855 to 1890, and although this was never printed, the original hand-written copy is still in the Lodge records. The 75th Anniversary history was written by W. Bros. Forde, Jenkins and Poile and the Centenary history was brought up to date by W. Bro. W. Hickson assisted by W. Bros. E.E. Horide and R.F. Newton.

Suffice it to say that the early years of the Lodge were on numerous occasions very stormy. We have record that on two occasions peace was only restored after communications from Grand Lodge and the minutes show that several times the Lodge was closed in due form and not in Peace, Love and Harmony. Perhaps these stormy years were to be expected as when we received our Warrant we also had a letter from Grand Lodge stating that a copy of the Book of Constitutions could not be spared for Auckland. One should also remember our strong association and Irish background and perhaps the Irish temperament played a part in these stormy years. It is also possible that the strength of independence that was necessary to become successful pioneers did not always lead to peaceful Lodge meetings. But following truly Masonic teachings these disturbances were always settled in the end and the Brethren concerned once again sat in open Lodge and worked with that love and harmony which should at all times characterise Freemasons.

The population of Auckland during the early years of Waitemata's existence was of an essentially floating nature and this reflected itself to a large extent in the Lodge; many of our early brethren were members of Naval or Merchant ships or served in the regiments of the regular Army based in New Zealand to assist in the early settlement and many took part in the Maori Wars in the area. This led to a fluctuating work load in the Lodge and we note that in the years 1860 to 1867 we admitted 205 members, 81 joining and 124 initiates. This caused as many as 20 emergency meetings to be worked in a year and it was common to work two different degrees at one meeting, many of these meetings not finishing until 11pm. This heavy workload must have been very tiring as we find record of a notice of motion put to the Lodge that no degree be started after 9.30pm.

It was inevitable that as Auckland grew more Lodges would be required and despite the fact that some of the Brethren wished for Waitemata to remain the only English Lodge, the majority supported the Petition for a new Lodge and this being successful, the Prince of Wales Lodge had its first meeting on 28th September 1871. Once again we find records of several stormy years which existed until Grand Lodge wrote and asked that Masonic relationships be re-established between the Brethren concerned. From then on Masonry in the Auckland Province took a new lease of life and on 17th July 1878 our second daughter Lodge, The Eden Lodge, had its first meeting and our Minutes show that we presented our spare Bible to Eden Lodge with our best wishes. This should dispel the rumours of many years standing that they came by it dishonestly.

In the next 10 years or so Waitemata either assisted or signed the Petition for several new Lodges, these being:

The Eden Lodge - 1875

The Star of the North Lodge - 27th September 1876

Remuera Lodge - 28th February 1877

St George Lodge - 3rd November 1877

Northern Light Lodge - 1880

Duke of Albany Lodge - 1884

Franklin Lodge - 1885

Lodge of Harmony - 1885

The first Master of Eden Lodge was W. Bro. Joseph Warner, a P.M. of Waitemata.

The first Master of Remuera Lodge was W. Bro. W. Lodder a P.M. of Waitemata.

The first Master of Duke of Albany Lodge was W. Bro. W. Lodder, a P.M. of Waitemata.

Waitemata was connected with nearly all the English Lodges in the Auckland Province, a sure indication of the firm Masonic roots our early brethren planted back in 1855.

Before we leave those early years let me repeat a passage in the Centennial History :

"It is not necessary to do a pen picture of conditions pertaining at that time in Auckland, with its ill-formed streets, poor lighting, and lack of transport facilities, to visualize the discomfort and self-sacrifice which had to be borne by the brethren in attending the regular meetings. They showed a zeal worthy of the true spirit of the Pioneers. Let us honour them in the first pages of this History by acknowledging our indebtedness to them for their love and loyalty. By their devotion and determination they have established a strong and virile influence on Freemasonry in the Auckland District."

As we entered into 1900 the Lodge settled down and continued to prosper, the Minutes show little of interest and I think the words expressed by our D.G.M. Rt. W. Bro. I.E. Whale at the Centenary Meeting of our daughter Lodge Eden in July 1978 are equally appropriate here. I quote - "Brethren while the History of any Lodge must of necessity faithfully record the events of the Lodge over the years these events are mostly of unusual or disturbing nature to have been entered into the Minutes at all, but let me remind you of the years not mentioned in the History when the Lodge continued to work for the good of Freemasonry and for the people of Auckland." There is no mention of a 50 year celebration, although it was about this time that a Lodge banner was obtained.

The 75th Anniversary Meeting has been fully recorded and was of great interest to many of us as W. Bro. J.B. Parkinson was the Master. Many of us remember W. Bro J.B. as he was commonly called and to many of us middle-aged Masons he was an example of Freemasonry at its best and he was dearly loved by us all. He was most active both in the Lodge and District Grant Lodge and we had many distinguished guests present to help us celebrate his 50 years a Mason in October

9157 and again his 60 years in 1967 when W. Bro. J.B. then aged 90, was one of the last to leave. He died in September 1969 aged 93 years.

In 1944 we celebrated the 50 years of Masonry of W. Bro. C.H. Jenkins, P.D.D.G.M. and a resolution was passed and recorded acknowledging the debt we owe to him for his readiness at all times to place at the disposal of the Lodge, the benefit of his rich experiences and sound judgement and the affection and esteem which the Brethren have for him. W. Bro. Jenkins died in August 1965 at the age of 93 years and his Masonic jewels were presented to the Lodge and are now on display in the Grand Lodge robing room adjoining. It is of interest to note that at present we have two members, Bro. C.T. Cummins and W. Bro. L.J. Warren both of whom have been members for more than 50 years.

On the 6th September 1955, the Lodge celebrated its Centennial, W. Bro. J.V.R. MacLean being the Master. As expected it was a big event in English Freemasonry in Auckland and was very well attended by Masons and distinguished guests from all Constitutions. Full details are recorded in the Centennial History.

During the last 25 years the Lodge has continued in good heart and it is most reassuring and pleasing that our 125th year is proving to be a very busy one with a number of youthful candidates coming forward and the future of the Lodge looks most promising.

In 1964 the Lodge installed its first American, Bro. H.R. Jackson as Master of the Lodge to be followed by a second American, Bro. B.K. McClure and despite repeated requests from these two brothers we were able to continue our English association and not include a toast to the First Lady in our Masonic toast list. W. Bro. Jackson has since died but W. Bro. McClure has continued to be very active in the Lodge and is our present Almoner.

In 1968 W. Bro. R.F. Newton was robed as P.A.G.D.C. by the D.G.M.R.W. Bro. C.L. Schroff. At this time R.W. Bro. Shroff was a very sick man and died a few months later. W. Bro. Newton has been Secretary of the Lodge for 16 years and in 1966 he had become D.G. Secretary. Over the years W. Bro. Newton had dedicated his life to Freemasonry and his death in October 1974 was a tremendous loss to all Freemasons in Auckland, not only to members of the English Constitution but also those of the New Zealand Constitution of which he was a very active member being especially remembered as Secretary of the United Master's Lodge No. 167 which has a large worldwide membership mainly due to his efforts.

In November 1973 the Lodge paid homage to W. Bro. EE Horide on the occasion of his 50 years in Freemasonry. W. Bro. Horide was Master in 1929 and Secretary of both the Lodge and District for a number of years. He was promoted to P.A.G.D.C. in 1955. During the last few years of his life he resided at the Roskill Masonic Village where he died in 1976.

The meeting in May 1976 was another very happy occasion as the D.G.M., Rt W. Bro. I.E. Whale robed W. Bro. K.M. Coyte in his regalia as P.A.G.D.C.

In June last year we initiated Bro. B.A. Coyte and Bro. D.B. Belcher, both of whom are the first third generation members of the Lodge. Their fathers, W. Bros. K.M. Coyte and B.O. Belcher, are both active past masters of the Lodge and they assisted in the ceremony. The evening was enhanced by the presence of V.W. Bro. W. Fortune and his two sons and this helped to make it a very enjoyable family evening.

LODGE MEETING PLACE

For the first three years, with a few exceptions, the meetings were held in the William Denny Hotel on the corner of Queen and Swanson Sts. For the next 23 years the meetings were held in the Masonic Hotel, Princes Street, on the site subsequently occupied by the Grant Hotel.

We then became shareholders with other Lodges who built the Masonic Hall next door to the Masonic Hotel in Princes Street, where the first meeting of the Lodge was held on 12th December 1881.

In 1974 it became obvious that a considerable amount of money would be needed for structural repairs and general refurbishing and, as the parking had become extremely difficult since the building of the Hotel Intercontinental opposite, it was decided by all the Lodges holding shares to sell the building. The last meeting of the Lodge there was held on 21st July 1975. It was with a great deal of sorrow that we left the hall that we had called our home for 94 years.

In June of 1975 we accepted the offer from the Lodge of Harmony to use these Lodge rooms and held our first meeting here in August of that year. We are now very much at home here.

THE BANNER

On 21st December 1903 it was proposed that the Lodge should obtain a banner. Many designs were submitted and finally one was chosen and the banner ordered from London in February 1904 at a cost of 15 pounds. In 1964 it was decided that the old banner needed replacing and a new one was obtained locally at a cost of 121 pounds.

The central design is what is ordinarily called a square shield, and each portion has a local significance. The top half bears a scene typical of the days when the Lodge was formed, as seen in a north-easterly direction from Auckland. There are the distant hills, nearer the "sparkling water" of the Waitemata Harbour from which the Lodge takes its name, and in the foreground a Maori canoe filled with lusty Natives chanting their songs to the rhythm of the paddles under the direction of their leaders who are standing. This is intended to symbolize the unison with which all members of the Lodge should assist the Master and officers so that by united endeavours success may be achieved. The lower half of the shield is quartered, the right side having an azure background representing the sky, with the constellation of stars forming the Southern Cross. The left portion bears the coat of arms of the Gibbes family. The shield is surmounted by the Gibbes crest which is "an arm embowed in armour garnished or, charged with a cross holding in the hand a battleaxe". In the Waitemata Banner the hand is grasping a Maori mere or greenstone axe instead of the English battleaxe. In the left of the shield are placed an ear of corn and a sprig of acacia to the right, and at the top are two emblems which require no explanation. Below the

shield is enscrolled the Lodge motto

TE PAI MARIRE O TE ATUA ME TO MANAAKITANGA O TE AROHA, the translation of which is "The Peace of God and the Blessing of Love".

THE LODGE AND DISTRICT GRAND LODGE

I feel we should not let this occasion pass without reference to the part Waitemata has placed in the forming of D.G. Lodge.

We find recorded in April 1857 that it was proposed by Bro. Solomon that it is desirable that a Provincial Grant master be appointed and a few months later he travelled to Wellington to seek the co-operation of the Pacific Lodge. However his mission was not successful. It was again proposed that a P.G. Master be appointed in 1858 but nothing further happened until 1874 when Pacific Lodge nominated Bro. Sir Donald McLean who was appointed as D.G. Master of North Island of NZ in 1876. He was installed in July 1876 and W. Bro. Graham went to attend the meeting but was weather bound at Nelson and missed the ceremony. Our Minutes record that Waitemata was extremely disappointed that all the D.G. Lodge officers appointed came from the Wellington District and that they would not have the advantages of an Auckland based officer. With this in mind when Sir Donald McLean died a year later they petitioned for a D.G.M. for Auckland and being successful, W. Bro. Graham was installed on 30th November 1877 at high noon at the 400th meeting of Waitemata Lodge. The installation of the D.G. Master for NZ North, G. Lodge of Scotland followed at 3.00pm the same day. W. Bro. Graham had been initiated into Waitemata and was its Master in 1862.

W. Bro. C.C. McMillan followed W. Bro. Graham as D.G.M. In 1897. He had joined Waitemata in 1894 and was a Past Master of Ara Lodge No.348 IC Our records show that he became Master of the Lodge in 1905. This must have been rather unique to have a D.G.M. As the Master of the Lodge. Possibly W. Bro. McMillan decided he would like to have been a Master in an English Lodge or just that he considered the Lodge needed a shake-up as a few years earlier he had granted a dispensation and asked the Lodge to initiate a candidate who was a Lewis being aged 20 years. The Master of the Lodge refused to do this and stated that the dispensation was illegal and that the D.G.M. had exceeded his authority in issuing the same. The Lodge Secretary informed the D.G. Secretary of the Master's actions and in due course received the following reply - "I have laid your letter and all communications before the R.W.D.G.M. who is amazed that there is a person holding the position of Master in an English Lodge so void of understanding as to make such a statement".

He considered this case a good illustration of the Old Proverb "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing" and regrets that so young a Master, being under the age of 30, did not consult and take the advice of the Past masters of the Lodge amongst who are some of the most experienced in the Province. It is the R.W.D.G.M. command that you read this communication to the Brethren in open Lodge assembled and have the same duly recorded in your Minutes".

Rt. W. Bro. McMillan was a staunch member of the Lodge and he donated a generous sum named the McMillan Fund, the interest from which is administered in affording relief to distressed members of the Lodge. He died in Auckland early in 1928.

Our Lodge has also supplied two Deputy District Grand Masters in the persons of W. Bro. W. Lodder and W. Bro. C.H. Jenkins. W. Bro. Lodder was Master of Waitemata Lodge in 1876 and on the foundation of the Auckland District Grand Lodge became its first Senior Warden. Two years later he became Deputy District Grant Master which position he held for 12 years. In 1929 W. Bro. Jenkins was appointed to the position of Deputy District Grand Master, and remained in that office until 1934 when he became District Grand Secretary.

Many other Waitemata Brethren have served the District in various positions over the years, the position of D.G. Secretary being held by several of our Brethren.

ARA 348 IC

The history of the Lodge would not be complete without some brief reference to our close relationship with Ara 348 IC Of the 35 Brethren present at our foundation, 27 were members of Ara Lodge, and their regalia were used by both Lodges for several months. In the early days whenever the necessity arose the Master of Waitemata would occupy the Chair of Ara Lodge and conduct the business and confer Degrees.

I understand that Ara Lodge Minute Book shows that a person who was not accepted as a member of Ara later joined Waitemata and when he was Master of Waitemata he visited Ara and as their Master was absent he occupied the Chair and conducted the Work. (A real Irish story)

We still today have a very close affection for the Ara Lodge and long may it continue.

W. Master, when you asked me to compile this short address of the Lodge history I wasn't sure whether it was because as Lodge Secretary I had access to all the Minute books, or because as a Marine Engineer by profession and currently Chief Engineer of the Bucket Dredge you thought I might be the right person to dig into the records and dredge up some facts. Whatever the reason I thank you for the opportunity for giving this short address on the History of this wonderful old Lodge.

I would like to thank W. Bro. BO Belcher for his invaluable assistance in preparing the final draft.