

# Sesquicentenary Celebrations

Sesquicentenary Celebrations and visit to New Zealand by R. Wor. Bro. David Williamson AGM

**Officers of the Waitemata Lodge, together with members of Ara Lodge No. 348 IC, the Mother Lodge of Waitemata, in period costume in the foyer of the Ara Lodge rooms prior to a re-enactment of the first meeting of Waitemata Lodge on 6th September 1855. The two current Masters of both these Lodges are in the front row. The re-enactment, held on 6th September 2005 was attended by the Assistant Grand Master, R. W. Bro. David Kenneth Williamson, Our District Grand Master, R. W. Bro. Peter Gudsell; the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand, M. W. Bro. David Mace; The Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of New Zealand, Grand Lodge of Ireland, R. W. Bro. Roland Whyte and the District Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of New Zealand North, Grand Lodge of Scotland, Bro. Robert McLeod Russell.**

A very full, and memorable, series of events surrounding the Sesquicentenary Celebrations of the Waitemata Lodge No. 689 were arranged for the visit of R. Wor. Bro. David Williamson Assistant Grand Master in September of this year.

Brother Williamson and his charming wife Margaret arrived in Auckland on Wednesday 31st August and spent Thursday recovering from jet lag before undertaking the somewhat hectic round of events that had been planned for them.

On Friday, R. Wor. Bro. David Williamson joined the District Executive for a working lunch, where he was able to catch up on the happenings in this District Grand Lodge. A very enjoyable meeting with much two way feedback. The luncheon was followed by a rehearsal of the Banner Dedication ceremony scheduled for the following afternoon.

That night, it was an opportunity for English Freemasons and their wives to meet informally with David and Margaret at a cocktail function held at the Eden Lodge rooms. Saturday afternoon saw the meeting of Waitemata Lodge held at the Ellerslie Masonic Centre for the purpose of re-dedicating the original Lodge Banner that had been meticulously refurbished. (The Banner is now permanently on display in the large lodge room at the Ellerslie Centre) R. Wor. Bro. David Williamson had kindly offered to carry out the Dedication Ceremony.

This meeting was well attended by representatives of nine Lodges within our District, with Brethren travelling from Whangarei, Auckland, Opotiki, Hamilton and Wellington to join with the Waitemata Lodge.

Among the Distinguished Guests at this meeting were, M. Wor. Bro. David Mace, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand; R. Wor. Bro. Roland Whyte, Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of New Zealand, Grand Lodge of Ireland and Bro.

Robert McLeod Russell Hon JGW, R.W. District Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of New Zealand North, Grand Lodge of Scotland. All were accompanied by a number of Grand and District Grand Officers of their respective Grand Lodges.

During the ceremony The Secretary read the explanation of the symbolism of the Banner explaining that the Coat of Arms, which is central, is a shield surmounted by the Gibbes Crest, “an arm embowed in armour garnished, or charged, with a cross holding a battle axe.” In the Waitemata coat of arms, the hand grasps a “mere” instead of a battle axe.

The upper half of the Coat of Arms shows Rangitoto Island in the distance with the sparkling waters of the Waitemata Harbour in the foreground and a Maori canoe is shown paddling from right to left. The paddlers are under the direction of leaders who stand, symbolizing the unison with which members of a Lodge should assist the Master and Officers so that by united endeavours success may be achieved.

The lower half of the shield is divided, the right side, azure background representing the sky and a constellation of stars representing the Southern Cross and the left is taken from the Gibbes family Coat of Arms Below the shield is the motto “Te Pai Maririe O te Atua Me To Manaakitanga O te Aroha”, the English translation being: “The Peace of God and the Blessing of Love” To the left of the Coat of Arms is an ear of corn and to the right a sprig of acacia, while above them are two Masonic symbols.

A celebratory dinner was hosted by the Waitemata Lodge that night, at the Auckland Club. The representatives of the Sister Grand Lodges who were at the earlier meeting also attended the dinner accompanied by their wives. W.Bro. Brian Belcher, of the Waitemata Lodge read some of the Lodge’s history and W.Bro. Ian Souster, our Deputy District Grand Master, proposed a toast to the Lodge quoting a number of historical happenings from the 19th and early 20th centuries.

A highlight of the evening was a performance by a ‘Kapa Haka’ group of young people that was particularly appreciated by our guests from England. The Waitemata Lodge made a presentation to R. Wor. Bro. David Williamson of an illustrated book of New Zealand scenes.

Our English guests joined with locals on Sunday morning for a Church Service held in the Edgar Faber Memorial Chapel at the Roskill Masonic Village, after which, R. Wor. Bro. Peter Gudsell and his wife Sylvia spirited R. Wor. Bro. David, and Margaret, Williamson to Waiheke Island for some well deserved R & R, returning Monday afternoon.

With his Royal Arch hat on, M.Ex. Comp. David Williamson Past Third Grand Principal attended the regular Convocation of the Eden Chapter on Monday night, where he was able to witness (dare I say it) an exemplary exaltation ceremony with the Officers using the new, amended, ritual. Congratulations to the First Principal and Officers of this Chapter.

Tuesday 6th September, being the actual date 150 years after the inaugural meeting of Waitemata Lodge, a re-enactment of that first meeting was performed at the Ara Lodge rooms in Airedale Street. Ara having been the sponsoring Lodge in 1855. A very large number of Brethren attended this meeting including the representatives of the Sister Grand Lodges who all enjoyed the re-enactment, not to mention the splendid meal that followed.

The next day Peter and Sylvia Gudsell accompanied David and Margaret to Wellington where it was the turn of our Wellington Brethren to host a dinner at the Royal Wellington Golf Club for our guests. Sadly, this was the end of a visit to this District by a couple who captured the hearts and affections of all who had the privilege of meeting them. From Wellington, R. Wor. Bro. David and Margaret Williamson flew to the South Island to meet with our South Island counterparts and from there to Fiji, and home to England. It is our fervent hope that they get the chance to come back to New Zealand again in the not too distant future. They will be truly welcome.