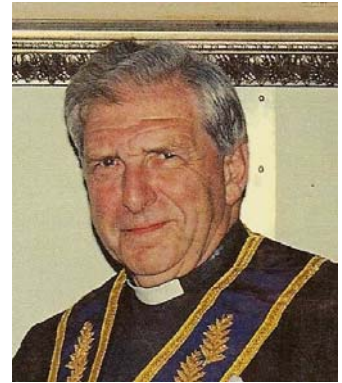




Vale
Neville Barker Cryer
(1924–2013)

by Bro Neil Wynes Morse



When the Revd Neville Barker Cryer (NBC) visited Canberra almost 20 years ago, he was the second Australian Masonic Research Council international lecturer I had encountered. Suffering from the dreaded Australian Masonic ‘cultural cringe’, I thought he would be a heroic figure.

He demonstrated his skill as a speaker at a public lecture and dinner where he delivered his ‘Women and Freemasonry’ presentation. This was part of the 1995 AMRC ‘mini-conference’ in Canberra, organised by Bob Nairn. Somewhere I have a dictation machine tape of his talk and the subsequent questions.

For the rest of the conference he was absent. He had family in Canberra and they were his priority. He wasn’t looking to be ‘lionised’. I was not impressed at the time, but with the benefit of a little maturity I can see that he had ‘the mix’ right.

His ‘Women in Freemasonry’ talk was published in the *Masonic Times* in Rochester, New York, in May 1995 and was widely discussed in the newly-established email lists.

I first was made aware of its spread by Catherine Yronwode, to whom must go much of the glory of making ‘Malecraft’ Masons aware of the ‘hidden 50%’, which is the women's Orders and Co-Masonry.

The AMRC tour book, *A Masonic Panorama*, went on to be the backbone of Lewis Masonic’s *I Just Didn’t Know That* and *Did You Know This, Too?*—although the fact that many of the papers were first published by the Australian Masonic Research Council, and the edited text supplied to the new publisher, was never acknowledged in print!

So the popular series and its successors had their genesis in Australia.

That his books have been very popular proves that there is a market for ‘introductory’ tomes for Freemasons. I was recently told that every month there are 20 books on Masonic topics published in France. However a number of these deal with the esoteric, so would be not welcomed in this jurisdiction.

Nevertheless, NBC also contributed to the scholarly Masonic literature; his *AQC* entries basically fill an A4 page of the electronic ‘Bento’ *AQC* Index. His *Masonic Halls* series was only curtailed by a management change at Lewis Masonic; a decision he regretted, but, as a measure of his character, he declined to push further.

His championing of York Freemasonry, and his tremendous activity with regard to its history, will remain an abiding tribute to both his scholarship and his passion.

I would suggest that his legacy will be as he expressed it in the concluding paragraph of his ‘Women and Freemasonry’ paper:

What is needed is a broader mind, some innovative programmes and the awareness of what speculative Freemasonry sought to achieve at the very outset—to enable those who might otherwise have remained at a perpetual distance to be drawn into regular fellowship. That once referred to sects and political opinions; now it also includes gender.

As he stated, ‘If these pages inform, encourage, entertain and extend the knowledge of our great Craft, I shall be fully rewarded’.

He had a ‘broader mind’ and he informed, encouraged, entertained and extended us. And thus we are the poorer for him leaving us.

Requiescat in Pace