

[Paper delivered to the Manchester Association for Masonic Research (UK) in May 2015, for publication in their Transactions.]

## **“DUE TO ACTIVE SERVICE CONDITIONS . . . ”: SOME AUSTRALIAN MASONIC ACTIVITIES DURING THE WORLD WARS**

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Figure 1. The Installed Master's Jewel for 1914-15 for Corona Lodge No 195 VC, presented to WBro Henderson in 1915, together with the Gallipoli Medal of J N Campbell [my grandfather] and an image of an unknown Australian soldier of WWI.



The Australian experience is that about 10% of freemasons who enlisted in WWI ended up with their name on an honour roll such as this one.

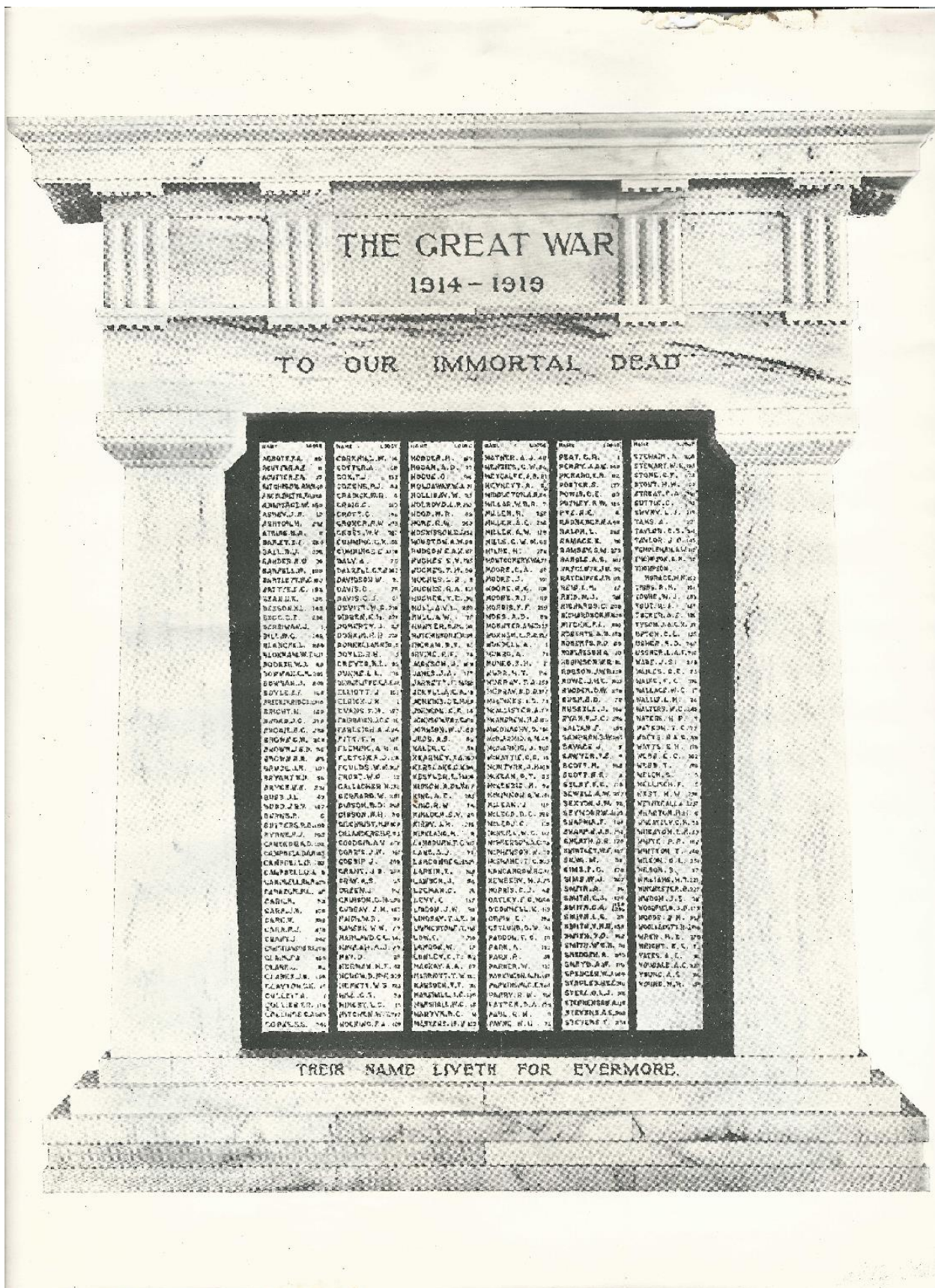


Figure 2. The Honour Roll of the UGLNSW in Sydney

The statistics are similar among the various masonic jurisdictions operating in Australia; in New South Wales 362 brethren died out of 3077 who went overseas; in Victoria 2244 went and, of them, 237 didn't come back – about 12% and 11% respectively. In South Australia, 711 members enlisted and 69 were killed or died of wounds – about 10%. Nine Tasmanians died, from a total enlistment of 151. In Western Australia 94 died and Queensland suffered the loss of 135. There were 25 UGLE masons included in that Queensland total. Although less than the overall Australian average of almost 15% [14.76%], 'keeping score' is not important.

This is a narrative told by documents. The first document is of three and a third foolscap pages and is held in the Australian War Memorial within a file with the title of 'Societies general. Correspondence regarding "Masonic Brothers". Organization of accounts of social gatherings. Indents for hospital and medical comforts and surgical stores'.<sup>1</sup>

It is a report of masonic activities among the members of the Third Australian General Hospital. departure of the Hospital from Australia in May 1915 to just after Anzac Day 1918. A transcript of the entire document is attached as *Appendix I*. According to the major references on the topic,<sup>2</sup> we learn:

3AGH was raised in early 1915 and sailed from Sydney on the RMS Mooltan on 15 May. In 1915 the establishment of a GH was 21 officers, 43 nurses and 77 ORs. It had 520 beds. It arrived in England on 28 June, and almost immediately received orders from the War Office to proceed to the Dardanelles. This was in response from the PDMS MEF Surgeon General Babbie for a hospital of 1,000 beds to be established on the island of Lemnos. In spite of the apparent urgency, 3AGH did not arrive at West Mudros until the beginning of August, and its equipment did not catch up with the staff for another three weeks. Although Babbie's intention had originally been to provide initial wound surgery at Mudros, this was never achieved. The wounded continued to be evacuated directly to Egypt, while Mudros filled up with the thousands of cases of dysentery [mainly paratyphoid and amoebic] which were being evacuated from Anzac. The hospital was expanded to 1,700 beds. The hospital staff did not escape infection, and almost all the doctors were struck down by it at some stage. After the final withdrawal from Anzac on 19 December, the hospital was cleared by the liner Aquitania, and was able to revert to its proper establishment of 1,040 beds. 3AGH returned to Egypt on 20 January 1916, and took over the Egyptian Army Barracks at Abbasia, between Heliopolis and Cairo. Its opening there allowed the closure of 1 and 2 AGH, which were to accompany the four divisions of the AIF preparing to move to the Western Front. The hospital finally left Egypt for England in October 1916. On arrival it took over the Kitchener War Hospital in Brighton, Sussex, and operated from there until its final move to Abbeville in France in April 1917.

The document details four meetings, two on Lemnos and two in France. Information is also given of civilian meetings attended whilst in Egypt and England. The first meeting on Lemnos is described as follows:

A tent pitched upon a rocky hillside within sound of the guns of Gallipoli with all the turmoil of modern warfare surging around. Outside were armed sentries pacing their allotted beat ready to repel intruders should the occasion arise and within, to the dim light of a few hurricane lamps, a gathering of Masons such as had probably never before been known under like circumstances in the history of the Craft.

Whilst in Egypt and France, brethren from 3AGH visited local lodges. These included the Lord Kitchener Lodge [3402 EC], the Lotus Lodge [3296 EC], the Bulwar Lodge of Cairo [1068 EC] and several Greek lodges whilst at Abbasia. A propos of Lord Kitchener Lodge, the report states:

Through the kindness of the WM of Lord Kitchener Lodge a member of this Unit was initiated, Brother A Butler became a MM while in England and has proved himself a worthy Mason in every way.

There's probably a worthwhile little research paper in that sentence alone. In the UK the installations at Lodge St. Cecilia, No. 1636 and Lodge Royal Brunswick, No 732 were attended. Other lodges visited

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<sup>1</sup> The NAA record details are: Series number AWM25, Control symbol 891/1, item barcode 457664.

<sup>2</sup> Likeman, R. *Gallipoli Doctors*; 2010, ISBN: 9780980637335; and the same author's *From the Tropics to the Desert*, 2012, ISBN: 9780980637366 and *Australian Doctors on the Western Front*, 2014, ISBN: 9781925078121.



included Lodge Royal York No 315, Lodge Altingworth No 1821, Lodge Knights of the Road No 3673, and Lodge Stanford No 1947.

The first meeting in France was in stark contrast to that on Lemnos:

Instead of a tent upon a hillside with a few tables, wooden forms and hurricane lamps was a room with snowy table linen, gleaming cutlery and glass, electric light and tables beautifully decorated with flowers, plants and fernery.

The Australian War Memorial does not hold a 'follow-up' document covering the period from late April 1918 until the unit's return to Australia. And the unit's official history does not mention any masonic activity at all. But the brethren of 3AGH saw a benefit in their meetings, saying:

Undoubtedly these gatherings, which unite brethren from all parts of the world, are of valuable assistance to Masons while on active service, affording as they do an opportunity for brothers to know each other and to meet and be relieved for a while from the strain of the days that have past and are to come until their present task is ended.

The next document relates to 4ABGROC, or the Fourth Australian Broad Gauge Railway Operating Company. Six Australian Railway Operating Companies were formed. Three were Broad Gauge units, and the others were Light Railway ROCs, running 60cm 'trams'. They performed three basic functions; the management of railway traffic, the provision of crews for locomotives, and the repair of rolling stock and other items needed to keep a railway in operation.

On 27 November 1918 a group of masons held a masonic 'social' to celebrate the Armistice. And to commemorate the occasion, they produced a brochure [*Appendix II*]. It named all present, and also listed those who had apologised for non-attendance. Military ranks and units, as well as masonic ranks and affiliations, were listed. The brochure explains the background to the meeting as follows:

After being together for nearly two years, and after several unsuccessful attempts, due to active service conditions, the masonic Brethren of the 4th Australian Broad Gauge, Railway Operating Company, A.I.F., met in social evening, somewhere in France, on 27th November, 1918, in the old city of "Dreadful Nights", in which the Company was stationed. They received the right good hand of fellowship from the French brethren, obtaining the use of their little Masonic Hall, showing plainly the scars of war.

The tables were laid down the centre of the hall, and, under the Chairmanship of Worshipful Brother Captain J. M. Bygott, a goodly number of Brethren sat down.

The usual toasts were honoured, as of yore, and in peace, love, and harmony, several enjoyable hours were spent.

The 'Somewhere In France', or 'old City of "Dreadful Nights"' was Dunkerque.



Figure 3. Australian servicemen in uniform and wearing masonic regalia.  
Members of a Wireless Training School, Moore Park, Sydney, 1917.

To my knowledge, these two documents are the only records of Australian soldiers meeting as masons whilst on active service during the Kaiser's War.

In the Second World War we have records relating even more trying conditions.

Sir David Griffin, a 'guest of the Emperor', but a profane, stated that:

In Changi intellectual escape was essential. Each man created for himself a microcosm into which he could crawl and the most contented prisoner was he who could build the most perfect microcosm and disappear most effectively into it. For Freemasons it was their Craft which offered some peace and salvation, and we salute their resolve and courage.<sup>3</sup>

In his magisterial work on Freemasonry in the Far East District of UGLE entitled *The Craft in the East*, the late Bro. Christopher Haffner wrote:

Brethren in Changi Camp, Singapore, had been holding lodges of instruction under dispensation. Large numbers of prisoners were moved out of the camp at the end of 1942 to work on the infamous death railway. No masonic activity amongst these brethren is known to have taken place until 1944 when the railway was completed and the prisoners who were left were concentrated together.

My third document is a scrapbook of Masonic activities on Singapore Island during the Japanese occupation. It was assembled by WBro H J Daley of Lodge Perseverance No. 411 of the NSW jurisdiction. It contains a record of his Masonic reminiscences in Malaya from 1941 to 1945; the notice papers, attendance records, members roll and minutes of what was called 'Lodge P.O.W., No. 00' held at Adam Park; a set of Tracing Boards and Working Tools used by this 'Lodge' during its exemplifications; the attendance book and minutes of the Selarang Masonic Study Group; the minutes of the LoC (Lines of Communication) Masonic Club for its meetings from February to April 1943; a New South Wales ritual typed out whilst in captivity; a list of brethren from that constitution held in Changi; and sundry other relevant documents.

I would like to quote some passages from the document by Bro. Daley, which he entitled "Freemasonry in Malaya 1941 and whilst a Prisoner of War 1942–45".

I went to Malaya with the first contingent of A.I.F. troops and proceeded to Kuala Lumpur, where we arrived on 19 February, 1941. Early in March, a joint invitation from the three lodges in that city, Read (EC), Makepeace (EC) and Tullibardine in the East (SC), was received from members of the A.I.F. to visit the respective lodges. We took advantage of this opportunity and, during my stay of eight months, I attended sixteen meetings, including two Installations. The hospitality extended to our boys exceeded anything I have ever experienced.

Two of our boys, Bros. Wingfield<sup>4</sup> (Vic) and Allen (Qld) were raised in Read and Makepeace Lodges respectively, and I had the privilege of presenting the WT under the N.S.W. constitution on each occasion.

During May of that year [1942], I discussed with Bro. Biggs (Wangaratta Vic) the possibilities of getting members together to form a study group and improve our masonic knowledge, but no suitable meeting place could be found.

Shortly after, a Church of England Chapel was established on the upper floor of a badly bomb-damaged building, the only access being by an outside staircase. The lower floor was used by the Japanese as a canteen for the troops. Padre Andrews (British), although not a mason, agreed to allow us the use of the Chapel and Wor. Bro. George Polain (Canobolas N.S.W.) agreed to occupy the chair.

Our first meeting was held on 8 July, 1942, at which ten brethren were present:— N.S.W. 4; Vic 3; Queensland 1; English 2 (one from Java and one Malaya). It was decided to use the N.S.W. constitution and hold rehearsal meetings every Wednesday with a demonstration of degree work once every four weeks. The lodge was named P.O.W. No. 00.

The members from Adam Park held a further meeting on 12th August, 1943, with Wor. Bro. Polain occupying the Chair.

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<sup>3</sup> Quoted by the unknown author of 'Changi' in the *NSW Freemason* Vol 37:2 for April 2005.

<sup>4</sup> Bro Wingfield was Bro. General Gordon Bennett's driver, and will be mentioned again. It has been said that Bro Bennett made it known that he expected all masons under his command to attend this raising!

Bro. W Lovell (Covenant, NSW) made a freehand drawing, from illustrations in an EC ritual, of the TBs and also made the WT's from cardboard.

The full report is at *Appendix III*. Bros Lovell and Polain also feature later in this narrative.

A book of records was preserved by WBro A G S Hindle of the Masonic group which met in the Clock Tower at Selarang, Changi. It was meant to be presented to Lodge Liberation No 674 VC, a lodge founded by, and for, ex-POWs, on its Consecration. The proposed Foreword is printed at *Appendix IV*.

Bro. Haffner's statement regarding activity on the railway has since been found to be incorrect – there was at least one meeting on the railway.

In late 1942 the Japanese commenced sending 'working parties' to various parts of South East Asia to undertake work mainly relating to infrastructure development. Most of these parties were sourced from the thousands of allied POWs held at the Changi camp in Singapore. Of these, the most remembered today were those sent to build the railway from Burma to Thailand. Each party was given a designation and the men I will talk about were part of 'F' Force. This group, of about 7000 men included some 3660 Australians, was despatched in April 1943.<sup>5</sup> After a march of 20 days, 'F' Force arrived at Shimo (Lower) Songkurai to commence work on the railway.

Some 34.1% of all Australian prisoners of the Japanese died – the highest of all nationalities of POWs. The rate of death of the impressed labour (or *rōmusha*) from all over South East Asia used on the line is unknown – but is believed to be up to 75%. This latter figure comes into perspective when you recall that 60% of the Russians captured by the Germans died.

According to the Australian Official War History, Kami Songkurai was the worst camp on the railway; the facilities were even more primitive than elsewhere, the Korean guards more brutal, the IJA officers even more sadistic and the death rate reflected these conditions, being the highest on the line – 60 per cent for the Australians and 80 per cent for the British.

Among the officers to go with 'F' Force was an Army Chaplain, George Polain, who had earlier attended masonic meetings in Changi.<sup>6</sup> He said:<sup>7</sup>

It was often very trying to conduct a service in a hut with 300 men with the nauseous stench of the awful ulcer cases all around & having often four or six dysentery cases squatting on their bamboo pans around one through the prayers, scripture readings & so on.

Indicative of his masonic involvement is the fact that, on his return from Thailand, WBro. Polain is recorded as having delivered a paper on 'Signs and Symbols' to the Roberts Barracks Masonic Association on 19 February 1944.

Also with the F Force group were numerous Australian brethren, some of whom had attended Changi meetings. Late in 1943 Padre Polain formed a masonic group which he called the 'Kami Sankurai Club'.

The first meeting was held on 13 October 1943 and 14 brethren attended. Of these, nine had been members of the Roberts Hospital group but none of them had attended meetings of the Selarang group. As previously stated, there were 14 brethren in attendance; twelve of them listed as an 'officer' of the 'lodge'. The card lists the attendees, and their 'positions' as:

WM: WBro. G Polain Canobolas Orange  
IPM: Bro. Barton San Souci 442 NSW  
SW: Bro. Hislop Concord 98 NSW  
JW: Bro. Biggs Wangaratta 66 Vic  
Chap: Bro. Thompson Melbourne Temperance 200  
Sec. Bro. Wingfield Balwyn 245 Vic  
DC: Bro. Browne Prince Alfred 94 NSW  
SD: Bro. Lovell Covenant, Bexley NSW  
JD: Bro. Kearton Wisdom 526 Vic  
IG: Bro. Pedvin Capital 612 Canberra ACT

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<sup>5</sup> McCormack, G and Nelson, H: *The Burma-Thailand Railway: memory and history*. Allen & Unwin. Sydney. 1993. This book is essential reading on the topic, particularly for non-Australian readers.

<sup>6</sup> Morse, N W: *The Roberts Hospital POW Masonic Association*. Unpublished paper. This paper outlines the activities of this group from December 1942 to May 1944 in the Changi camp.

<sup>7</sup> George Polain, *Report on the Work of Chaplains with "F" Force*, AWM 54, 554/7/4, Australian War Memorial.

T: Bro. Goulding Monaro 164, Cooma NSW  
Treas: Bro. Hodge Ionic 709 Tungamah Vic

Also attending were Bros. N A Spratt (Ibis 361, Griffith NSW) and Jackson (Seddon 242, Footscray Vic).  
Bro. Lovell said of the meeting:

I was on the Burma railway at a camp called Kami Sankurai, nine miles from the Burma–Thailand border. No words can describe the horror of that place, yet even there amidst death and despair there emerged a Padre Polain who formed a masonic meeting. About a dozen men met when the opportunity arose. It was a very risky business. At our first meeting I made cards to commemorate the meeting. The pencil and paper was somehow supplied by George Polain, a minor miracle in itself under the circumstances. It was the only bit of paper I managed to bring back.<sup>8</sup>

For this it would appear that more than one meeting was held, but with no evidence this must be considered only a supposition. Not long after I received a copy of the commemorative card, I found that the son of Bro. Pedvin was living in a neighbouring suburb. I gave Mr Pedvin a copy of the card and he, in turn, provided me with an extract from his father's diary for 14 October 1943, which reads:<sup>9</sup>

Last night 12 of us attended a Masonic Club Meeting. Padre Pollane gave a most interesting talk on the different degrees up to the 30th Degree.

The meeting was held just outside the cemetery, 'where the Japs did not patrol'.<sup>10</sup>

The card issued to commemorate the meeting is reproduced on the next page. It shows a group of men seated on logs under a tree outside the cemetery fence, with one, perhaps the tyler, leaning against the tree. The business of the meeting, as set out on the card, was a lecture by WBro. Polain entitled 'The Higher Side and Progress in Freemasonry'.

Of the fourteen who were at the meeting at Kami Sankuria, all but two came home.

Bro. Hodge died of beri beri on 8/xii/43 at Kanburi, but has no known burial place.

Bro. Thompson died of beri beri/cerebral oedema on 8/iii/44 at Changi, and was buried in AIF Changi Cemetery.

None of the fourteen is still alive.

Sir David Griffin wrote: "For Freemasons it was their Craft which offered some peace and salvation, and we salute their resolve and courage."<sup>11</sup>

Brethren, in another Masonic Order there is a reference to the Jews rebuilding Jerusalem, with a sword in one hand and a trowel in the other, which concludes with the admonition:

'to defend our country from harm,  
for work or war we either hand should arm.'

May the GAOTU assist us to have the same dedication to the Craft as the brethren whose activities I have outlined, and may the words 'Lest we forget' be with us not only on Remembrance Day, or on Anzac Day, but every day.

**And perhaps a minute's silence is insufficient.**

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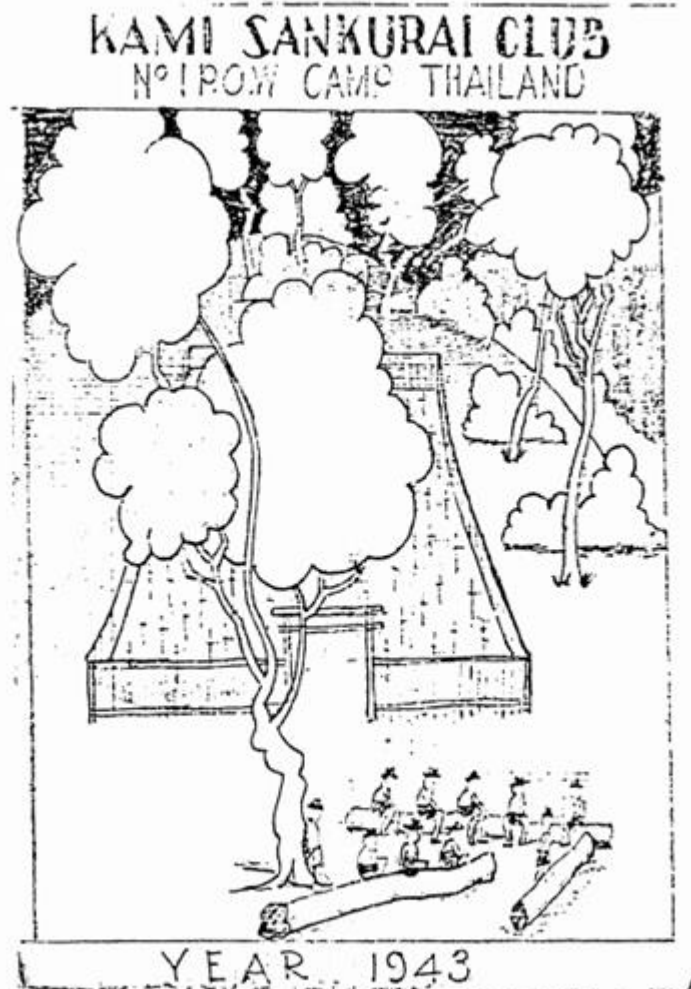
<sup>8</sup> Personal correspondence from the late Bro. Bill Lovell, 1992.

<sup>9</sup> Unpublished diary entry for 14 October 1943 by L J Pedvin, quoted by kind permission of his son, Mr Brian Pedvin.

<sup>10</sup> Personal correspondence from the late Bro. Bill Lovell, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by the unknown author of 'Changi' in the *NSW Freemason* Vol 37:2 for April 2005.

## The Kami Sankurai Card



## INAUGURAL MEETING

: WED 13 OCT. 1943

WM. BRO, G. POLAIN

I.P.M.	Bro Barton	S.D	Bro Lovell
S.W.	Bro. Hislop	J.D.	Bro. Kearton
J.W.	Bro. Biggs	I.G	Bro. Pedvin
CHAP	Bro Thompson	T	Bro. Goulding
Sec	Bro Wingfield	Iread	Bro. Hodges
D.C	Bro Browne		

Business:

A lecture "The Higher Side and Progress of Freemasonry" by Wor Bro. George Polain.

GP plain Carolobas Orange  
McMoulding Monaro 164 Cooma  
NA Pratt Griffith  
~~M. K. Jones~~ 709 Surongah  
H. V. Thompson Melbourne Temperance 200  
W. Lovell Covenant 13 Bexley NSW  
Jackson Leddon 247 Toowoomba Vic  
Rag & Briggs Mengerath 66 Vic  
J. H. Langford Blayney 245 Vic  
W. A. Brown East Sussex 4421 N.S.W.  
L. J. Hedden Capital 612 Canberra  
A. Moore Home Alfred 944 NSW  
C. Stanton Weldon 526 Vic  
A. Phipps Concord 98 N.S.W.



## **Acknowledgements**

These are arranged in geographical order; starting closest to home.

In Canberra, Australia's national capital, I have long enjoyed the support and assistance of the members of the Linford Lodge of Research, especially David Slater, Bob Nairn and Tony Pope. Pound for pound, they are the most knowledgeable, generous, and helpful of colleagues. Ta muchly.

As ever, the staff of the National Library, particularly those in the Petherick Room, provided facilities, advice and kindnesses well beyond their duty statements. Fellow Petherick Readers continue to be sources of both inspiration and encouragement. My comradely thanks to you all.

Bros Malcolm Galloway, Tom Hall, Greg Levenston, Ian Shanley and Ewart Stronach at Discovery LoR have shored up my confidence at critical times; this is essential to me 'being happy, and communicating happiness'. Many thanks.

Bros Robert Taylor, Brian French [since deceased], and Chris Craven in Sydney; Iain Taylor in Melbourne; David Cook in Brisbane; and Keith Knox in Wellington have all generously assisted me. Thank you all.

## **THIRD AUSTRALIAN GENERAL HOSPITAL**

Soon after the 15 May 1915, when the Third Australian General Hospital left Australia for active service abroad, it was found that several Masons were included among the officers and other ranks of the Unit and an endeavour was made to hold a social gathering on board.

The prime movers in this were Bros. L Logan, of No. 161 and Mark No. 8 NSW and J J Fraser of No. 508 EC Singapore whose efforts, for various reasons, met with no success.

The Unit was divided into several parties upon reaching England, sent to various places in the Southern Counties and re-assembled after some nine days at the Rest Camp on Southampton Common; a very beautiful spot on the outskirts of that ancient port.

During the week the Unit was stationed here various members were able to visit a Lodge where they were welcomed most heartily.

Only one visit was possible as the Unit entrained to Devonport, thence by HMT *Simla*, since a victim to submarines, to the Dardanelles and was stationed on Lemnos Island until six weeks after the evacuation of Gallipoli.

As it was the nearest Hospital to the firing line it can be readily understood that hard work and long hours were the portion of its staff for many months.

It was therefore impossible to organize any Masonic gatherings until the work of the Hospital had settled down and the first social meeting of Masonic brethren was held in the Post Office tent of the Third Australian General Hospital on St. Andrew's Day, the 30th November 1915.

Proved Masons to the number of twenty one from various Units on the Island were invited and an enjoyable evening spent.

The organization of this, the initial gathering of Masons under active service conditions, was well carried out by Bros. F Smythe, L Logan, C Stuart and J J Frazer, all, with the exception of the latter, from NSW Lodges. Here must be instanced the absolute necessity for strict examination before admitting strangers to any description of Masonic gathering.

The brethren mentioned above insisted upon this and in addition carried out an examination among themselves running through three degrees. They then passed to the various applicants for admission to the South and found one who, although he belonged to another Order, was not a Mason.

He was not admitted.

On the 29th December 1915 a second gathering was arranged to take place at the Motor Transport Depot.

Thirty four brethren attended and never was the universal spread of Freemasonry more exemplified than upon this occasion.

A tent pitched upon a rocky hillside within sound of the guns of Gallipoli with all the turmoil of modern warfare surging around. Outside were armed sentries pacing their allotted beat ready to repel intruders should the occasion arise and within, to the dim light of a few hurricane lamps, a gathering of Masons such as had probably never before been known under like circumstances in the history of the Craft.

They came from the ends of the earth, these men with one end – to serve, from England, Canada, Scotland, the islands of Barbados, Florida, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Tasmania, India, the Straits Settlements, Mexico, from Egypt and ranks from a General down to Privates were able to relax and spend a few hours free from the strain and horrors of this world war.

A copy of the Menu and Autographs is attached.

The Hospital was next stationed at Abbassieh, Cairo, where it was possible to visit several established Lodges, notably the Lord Kitchener Lodge, the Lotus Lodge, the Bulwar Lodge and several Greek Lodges where, although the visiting brother was unable to understand the language, it was quite easy to follow the working of the various degrees and mightily interesting.

The Lodges in Cairo were doing most excellent work for the Craft and entertained many visitors at their assemblies.

Through the kindness of the WM of Lord Kitchener Lodge a member of this Unit was initiated, Brother A Butler became a MM while in England and has proved himself a worthy Mason in every way.

In October 1916 the Unit returned to England and was stationed for some months at the Kitchener Hospital, Brighton.

Here the resident Masons extended a welcome the memory of which can never be effaced, and the Australian brethren were at once made Honorary Members of their most excellent Club in the Queens Road.

Invitations to visit the many ancient Lodges in Brighton and Hove were given from all sides and many were the enjoyable evenings and days spent in the company of men who were truly brothers to their visitors from overseas.

Special mention must be made of two notable ceremonies that the Australian brethren were fortunate to witness – the Installation ceremonies of Lodge St. Cecilia, No. 1636 and Lodge Royal Brunswick, No 732 which were carried out in a manner worthy of the best traditions of the Craft.

Visits were also made to Lodge Royal York No 315, Lodge Altingworth No 1821, Lodge Knights of the Road No 3673, Lodge Stanford No 1947 and many others at whose meetings the visiting brethren were made to feel as much at home as in their Mother Lodges.

April 1917 saw the Hospital in France and on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1917 the third Masonic gathering on active service was held, but under very different circumstances to those previous.

It was possible to obtain a building and the Dental Operating Hut was cleared of its various impediments and re-furnished for the occasion.

Instead of a tent upon a hillside with a few tables, wooden forms and hurricane lamps was a room with snowy table linen, gleaming cutlery and glass, electric light and tables beautifully decorated with flowers, plants and fernery.

Twenty four brethren, whose Mother Lodges were far apart, gathered for an evening which closed in harmony at 11-0 pm.

Attached is a copy of the Menu with some of the Autographs of the Brothers present.

It may be of interest to note that of the twenty-one brethren present at the first meeting only three were left to carry on the work so ably commenced at the Dardanelles. The rest are scattered far and wide, from Belgium to Palestine, some may have made the greatest sacrifice of all, other wounded and invalided to their homes, while the rest are carrying on wherever they may be.

The fourth gathering held on the eve of Anzac Day, an anniversary that will live forever in the history of Australia and New Zealand, saw an increase in the numbers present.

Twenty seven brethren attended, including for the first time in the précis of these gatherings, a brother from the United States of America.

Brother A B Cole is a prominent member of the Craft in his country and has no less than thirty two degrees to his credit so the meeting was indeed honoured by his presence. The President, Brother L Logan, vacated the chair in favour of Brother A B Cole who conducted the proceedings for the remainder of the evening.

Many ranks were represented ranging from Colonels to Privates and some of the brothers came in for many miles around to this gathering which included an EA Freemason in the person of a member of the Unit, Brother S Porter, who was of valuable assistance in regard to the excellent dinner provided.

Various excellent songs and speeches were rendered and an evening enjoyed which recompensed the President, Secretary and Committee for their work. Attached is a copy of the Menu.

Undoubtedly these gatherings, which unite brethren from all parts of the world, are of valuable assistance to Masons while on active service, affording as they do an opportunity for brothers to know each other and to meet and be relieved for a while from the strain of the days that have past and are to come until their present task is ended.

. . . . . [sgd C. Stuart] . . . . Hon Sec.  
No 93 Lodge St John, Manly, N.S.W.

“What may hap this night give it ear but not tongue.”

A SOCIAL MEETING OF MASONIC BRETHREN ON ACTIVE SERVICE.  
HELD AT MUDROS WEST, LEMNOS, AEGEAN SEA.  
Wednesday, 29th December 1915.  
at 7-0. p.m.

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Chairman	Bro. W. Bond.
Director of Ceremonies	“ J. Gross.
Secretary	“ W. Phillips.
Treasurer	“ S. Bertram.
Tylers	
Bro. G. Weedman	Bro. F. Smythe

Committee  
Bro. D.S. Hall. Bro. C. Stuart. Bro. J. J. Fraser.  
Bro. L. Clarke. Bro. G. Weedman.

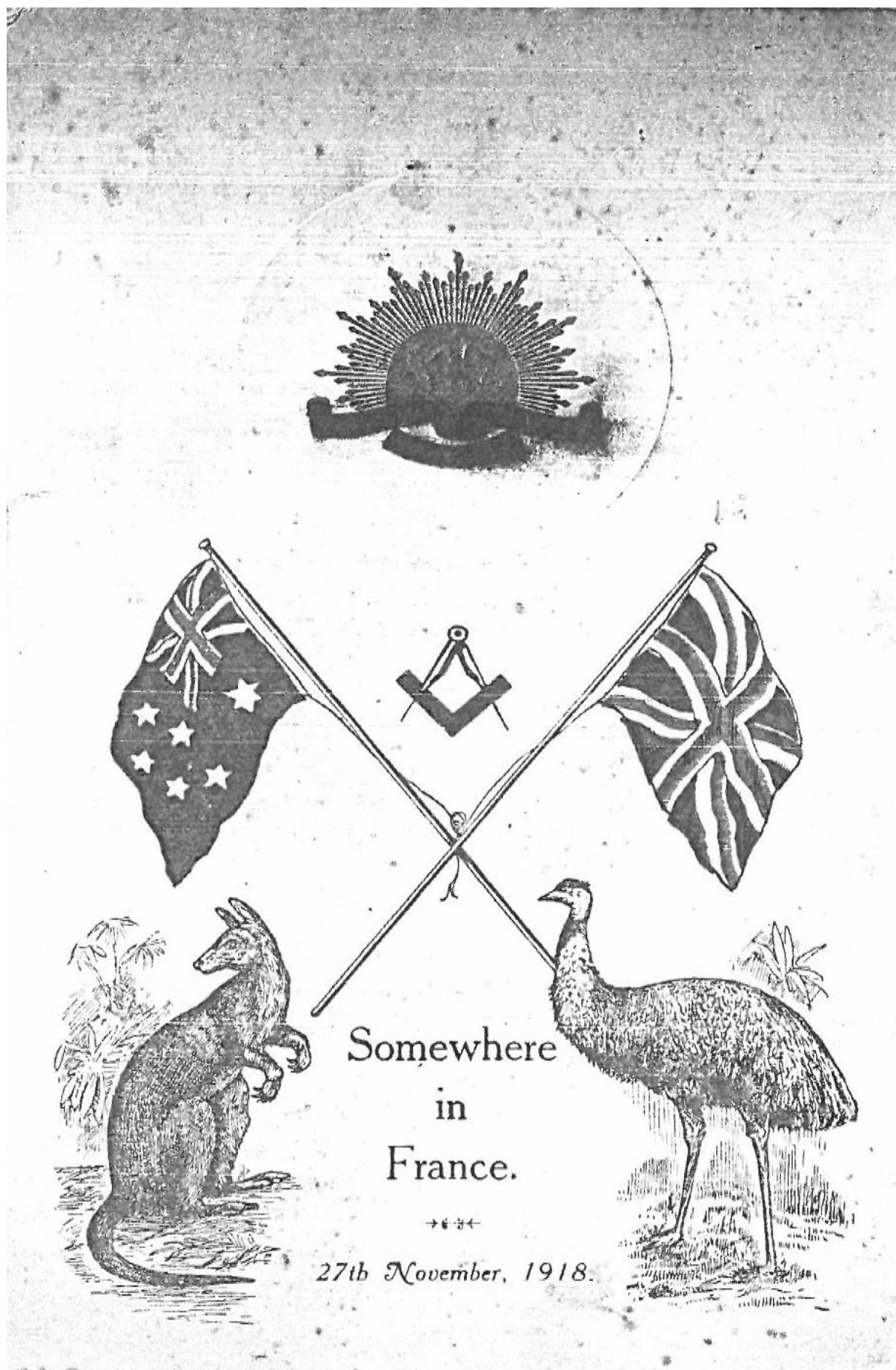
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MENU  
Hors de Oeuvre  
Sardines a la Mode  
Saumon a Lemnos. Pommes Puree.  
Asperges. Sauce Beurre.  
Poulet Fricasse.  
Bouef Roti de veuille Anglais.  
Pommes Sautees. Pumpkin.  
Le Pouding de Saison.  
Compote de fruit a la Creme.  
Fromage. Celeri. Biscuits.  
Desserts  
Cafe Noir. Liquers.

TOASTS

Proposer		Responder
Bro. W Bond.	The King & Craft	
“ J.Gross.	Absent Brethren.	Bro. J.O'Connor
“ W.Bond.	Silent Toast	
“ A.Clarke.	Present Meeting.	“ J.Fraser
“ W.Bond	Lord Kitchener	“ H.Beckett
“ P.Wall	Our Homes	“ S.Bertram
“ W.Phillips	Secretary's Toast	
“ G.Weedman	Tyler's Toast	





After being together for nearly two years, and after several unsuccessful attempts, due to Active Service conditions, the Masonic Brethren of the 4th Australian Broad Gauge, Railway Operating Company, A.I.F., met in Social Evening, Somewhere in France, on 27th November, 1918, in the old city of "Dreadful Nights," in which the Company was stationed. They received the right good hand of fellowship from the French Brethren, obtaining the use of their little Masonic Hall, showing plainly the scars of war.

The tables were laid down the centre of the Hall, and, under the Chairmanship of Worshipful Brother Captain J. M. Bygott, a goodly number of Brethren sat down.

The usual toasts were honoured, as of yore, and in Peace, Love, and Harmony, several enjoyable hours were spent.

*The following Brethren were present—*

**Past Masters.**

**93rd CANADIAN INFANTRY.**

Capt. BYGOTT, J. M., Lodge Clementi 313, G.R.C., Canada.

**4th A.B.C., R.O.C.**

2 W.O. CHALK, R., Lodge Gregory 2139, E.C., Queensland.

Cpl. SKYRING, A.W., Lodge Townsville 1596, E.C., Queensland.

**Wor. Master (elect).**

Cpl. WRIGHT, S. J., Lodge Lord Saltoun 825, S.C., Queensland.

**Master Masons.**

Spr. ALLEN, M. W. R., Lodge Princess Royal 29, S.A.C., South Australia.

2 Cpl. BONNER, E. R., Lodge Concord 10, T.C., Tasmania.

2 Cpl. BENNETTS, A., Lodge Cunduden 91, W.A.C., West Australia.

2 W.O. BARNETT, W., Lodge Ashton 1105, S.C., Queensland.

Sjt. BRIGHTON, E. J. B., Lodge Caledonian 456, S.C., Queensland.

Sjt. GIBSON, C., Lodge Stanley 27, Q.C., Queensland.

2 W.O. GRAY, J. P., Lodge Waratah 170, N.S.W.C., New South Wales.

2 Cpl. GREEN, W. J., Lodge Maryborough 811, S.C., Queensland.

R.Q.M.S. HINDMARSH, R. W., Lodge St. George 1152, S.C., Queensland.

Spr. JUDD, C. E., Lodge Havelock 24, V.C., Victoria.

Spr. JEWELL, J. D., Lodge York 5, W.A.C., West Australia.

Spr. LAWSON, R., Lodge Bundamba 898, S.C., Queensland.

Spr. MORTON, N. B., Lodge Bundamba 898, S.C., Queensland.

Spr. LAMB, W., Lodge Burns St. Mary 505, S.C., Queensland.

Spr. PROUDFOOT, G., Lodge Perth 122, S.C., Scotland.

Cpl. PORTER, W. E., Lodge Toowoomba 38, Q.C., Queensland.

Sjt. ROSS, P. L., Lodge Friendship 17, W.A.C., West Australia.

Lieut. SKYRING, E. H., Lodge Capricornia 3642, E.C.,  
Queensland.  
Sjt. SPARKES, W. P., Lodge Dee 41, Q.C., Queensland.  
Cpl. SNAPE, G., Lodge United Tradesmen 5, Q.C., Queensland.  
Cpl. THOMAS, D. A., Lodge Semaphore 33, S.A.C., South  
Australia.  
2 Cpl. WATSON, A. G., Lodge Maryborough 811, S.C., Queens-  
land.

#### **RAILWAY OPERATING DIVISION, ROYAL ENGINEERS.**

C.Q.M.S. PROBERT, F., Lodge Robert Mitchell 2956, E.C.  
England.  
Spr. PURVES, C., Lodge St. Andrews 199, S.C., Scotland.



*Circumstances prevented the following Brethren of the Com-  
pany from being present, but the hope was expressed that,  
when possible to meet again, they would be with us:—*

Lieut. BURCHELL, R. J., M.C., Lodge Boronia 42, W.A.C.,  
West Australia.  
Cpl. BARNETT, G. T., Lodge Maryborough 811, S.C., Queens-  
land.  
Spr. BLYTH, J., Lodge Northcote 191, V.C., Victoria.  
Spr. BOWIE, W. U., Lodge Greenock Kilwinning 12, S.C.,  
Scotland.  
Spr. FOURRO, J., Lodge Temple 12, Q.C., Queensland.  
2 W.O. FIELD, E. G., Lodge Murray Bridge 44, S.A.C., South  
Australia.  
2 Lieut. GRAY, G.W., Lodge Mestyn 18, S.A.C., South Australia.  
Spr. MOLINEUX, R., Lodge Thomas Jones 2441, E.C., Calcutta.  
2 W.O. NEISH, J., Lodge St. Clair 826, S.C., Queensland.  
Cpl. PRITCHARD, W., Lodge Southern Cross 1321, S.C.,  
Queensland.  
2 Cpl. SAMPSON, A., Lodge Proserpine E.C., Queensland.  
1 Cpl. WARD, V., Lodge Operative 1, T.C., Tasmania.  
2 Cpl. GIBBS, C. S., Lodge Torrensville 58, S.A.C.



## TOASTS.

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*Chairman* :—CAPTAIN J. M. BYGOTT.



The King.

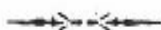
Proposed by THE CHAIRMAN.



The Craft.

Proposed by Cpl. A. W. SKYRING.

Response by BRETHREN.



Our Brethren at Home and Abroad.

Proposed by 2/W.O. R. CHALK.



Our Fallen and Absent Brethren.

Proposed by Sergeant W. P. SPARKES.



Tyler's Toast.

Proposed by 2/W.O. W. BARNETT.



God Save the King.

FREEMASONRY IN MALAYA

1941

AND WHILST A

PRISONER OF WAR

1942-45.

BRO. H J DALEY  
LODGE PERSEVERENCE  
NO. 411 NSW

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FREEMASONRY IN MALAYA

1941

I went to Malaya with the first contingent of AIF troops and proceeded to Kuala Lumpur, where we arrived on 19th February, 1941. Early in March, a joint invitation from the three lodges in that city, Read [EC], Makepeace [EC] and Tullibardine in the East [SC], was received from members of the AIF to visit the respective lodges. We took advantage of this opportunity and, during my stay of eight months, I attended sixteen meetings, including two Installations. The hospitality extended to our boys exceeded anything I have ever experienced. The visiting AIF brethren always exceeded the number of members, sometimes as great as two to one and our representations to be allowed to affiliate or in some way to share the expenses were thankfully declined. The members of these lodges invited our members to their homes and helped to make our stay in Kuala Lumpur very pleasant.

Two of our boys, Bros. Wingfield [Vic] and Allen [Q'land] were raised in Read and Makepiece respectively and I had the privilege of presenting the WT under the NSW constitution on each occasion.

I left Kuala Lumpur in October, 1941, and was able to visit one more lodge in Johore Bahru before war broke out.

I took my apron with me and, in December, 1941, with the rest of my surplus gear, it was sent to the AIF kit store in Singapore which fell into the hands of the Japanese on 15th February, 1942. I understand a number of aprons were destroyed by the Japanese.

1942-45

On 17th February, 1942, the AIF marched into Selerang Barracks, Changi, as prisoners of war and I was one of a party of 3,000 sent as a working party to Adam Park, Singapore on 4th April, 1942.

During May of that year, I discussed with Bro. Biggs [Wangaratta, Vic] the possibilities of getting members together to form a study group and improve our masonic knowledge, but no suitable meeting place could be found.

Shortly after, a Church of England Chapel was established on the upper floor of a badly bomb-damaged building, the only access being by an outside staircase. The lower floor was used by the Japanese as a canteen

for the troops. Padre Andrews [British], although not a mason, agreed to allow us to use of the Chapel and Wor. Bro. Polain [Canobolas, NSW] agreed to occupy the Chair.

Our first meeting was held on 8th July, 1942, at which ten brethren were present, representing the following constitutions:- NSW 4; Vic 3; Q'land 1; English 2 [one from Java and one Malaya]. It was decided to use the NSW constitution and hold rehearsal meetings each Wednesday with a demonstration of degree work once in every four weeks. The lodge was named P.O.W. No. 00.

Wor. Bro. Polain was moved suddenly to another camp and further movements brought to our camp a very close friend of mine, Wor. Bro. J K Ainsworth [Hunters Hill, NSW] who was most anxious to assist the brethren and occupied the Chair.

Bro. A Cale [Prince of Wales, NSW] had a NSW ritual and we copied out the various charges for the members, none of whom had previously held office. After three rehearsals, we gave our first demonstration of degree work on 19th August, 1942. Refreshments in the south consisted of coffee and sandwiches, rice bread and sardines.

All brethren were thoroughly tried and proved before being admitted and the door securely tyled both inside and out. The CO of the Camp, Bro. R F Oakes [Wellesley, NSW] was present and arrangements were made that, in the event of any interruption by the Japs, we would immediately change over to a religious meeting.

Our objects were to assist all those brethren interested to share the work of the lodge and change them round each meeting.

We were able to hold three further meetings - membership was now twenty two - when we were moved to another camp and no suitable meeting could be found for further activities. Wor. Bro. Ainsworth left with a party for Japan on 22nd November, 1942, where he subsequently dies of pneumonia.

My apron was found in the AIF kit store by a friend who recognised it and forwarded it to me in Adam Park. Later I buried it with official AIF records and reclaimed it after two and a half years and brought it home.

When visiting the camp hospital at Adam Park, I discovered the Attendance Book of Lodge Makepeace, Kuala Lumpur, which had, in some way, reached Singapore and was used as an Admission and Discharge book at the hospital.

Our party returned to Changi on 27th December, 1942, and there were approximately 10,000 AIF troops still in camp. Suitable buildings were difficult to find, although in the hospital area [Roberts Barracks] one Association had been formed known as Changi Prisoner of War Masonic Association, under Vic Constitution and they were holding regular meetings in the Chapel in that area. Wor. Bro. F C Stuart, Lodge 39 [Vic] was the President.

Several Groups in Selarang area had formed study groups and were well organised, but not all were able to give any demonstration work due to unsuitability of buildings. The position was now raised as to whether it was constitutional for us to gather and work according to the ritual and a Central Committee of PMs was formed to consider the whole matter and to advise the various groups. We were fully aware that we had no authority and could not initiate any members but, as a MM, I felt sure anything we were able to do, under such conditions, to assist our brethren, taking all precautions to prevent intruders from entering our meetings, would be approved by our G.L. However Rt. Wor. Bro. Wylie, PGD England, P Asst DGM, Eastern Archipelago, who was a POW, agreed to accept full responsibility to report to GL England and charged senior men of each Constitution, which desired to demonstrate degree work, to see that all precautions were taken.

The members from Adam Park held a further meeting on 12th August, 1943, with Wor. Bro. Polain occupying the Chair.

Bro. W Lovell (Covenant, NSW) made a freehand drawing, from illustrations in an EC ritual, of the TBs and also made the WTs from Cardboard. I borrowed a NSW ritual and typed a complete copy in addition to copies for each officer of his work in each degree, so that all could learn their work without interruption.

More parties were sent away and the remaining British troops moved into our area and our activities again came to a standstill.

On 17th June, 1943, with Wor. Bro. Allan Halloran [Prince Alfred NSW] I interviewed Comd AIF troops, Bro. F G Galleghan, and he arranged to make a building available for our use and, at a meeting on 6th July, it was decided to work under NSW constitution.

This Group, known as Selarang Masonic Study Group, held only two further meetings when the hospital was moved into our area, taking over all available buildings.

The Hospital Group obtained the use of a Chapel where some most interesting lectures were given each month and many of our members joined. This Changi Prisoners of War Masonic Association continued its activities until our move to Changi Gaol in May, 1944. Included in the group were brethren from twelve different Constitutions, viz:- English, Irish, Scottish, Netherlandic, South Africa, United States, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, West Australia, Queensland and Tasmania. The membership was over two hundred.

After conference with the Comd British troops [Bro. E B Holmes] and AIF [Bro. F G Galleghan] the Committee agreed that, as we would be closer confinement and under stricter supervision in the Gaol area, we would cease our activities until released.

The war finished on 15th August, 1945, and, although the camp was still under Japanese supervision, we held a Masonic Thanksgiving Service, at which over 300 were present, in an open air Chapel on 28th August, 1945.

During the periods when we could not obtain the use of a building, small groups would assemble in secluded spots to study and learn the work of the Lodge. Not on any occasion during the three and a half years were we interrupted by Japanese guards.

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## **FOREWORD**

It is fitting that this book should be presented to the Lodge of Liberation No. 674 on the register of the UGL of Vict on the night of its Consecration.

It contains the original records of the Masonic gatherings held by the brethren who were interred as Prisoners of War by the Japanese in Malaya during the Second World War. Such meetings were held only under the grave risk of beatings and even of death, and some of the brethren suffered much in consequence.

The Masonic Fraternity gives due honour to those of its members who were determined to maintain their Masonic Fellowship even under such circumstances.

These records, carried with great difficulty out of the days of bondage into the happy days of 'Liberation' could not be delivered into worthier hands than into those of the Foundation Members of the Lodge which bears that inspired name, all of whom are returned Prisoners of War.

Among the signatures are names of gallant men who never came back, but whose names are recorded on the honour roll in the Grand Lodge Above. To their memory this book is gratefully dedicated. Lest we forget.

J J Benjamin

C T F Goy

Chaplains to the Forces  
and Grand Chaplains UGL of V

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This book is a presentation to Lodge Liberation, No 674 on the Register of the United Grand Lodge of Victoria, on the occasion of the Consecration, 14<sup>th</sup> November, 1949.

It contains the record of a small group of Freemasons which met in the 'Clock Tower' at Selarang, Prisoner of War Camp, during the early days of captivity in 1942.

In all Prisoner of War Camps Freemasons contrived to meet, and many interesting records have been preserved. The largest being a complete history of the "Changi Prisoner of War Masonic Association", out of which has come Lodge Liberation with all Foundation Members ex-Prisoners of War.

It is fitting that this record of the Clock Tower group, carried under grave risk through the hazardous experiences of those grim years, by Wor. Bro. A. Hindle, should be presented to Lodge Liberation.

In February 2015, at the after proceedings of a meeting of the Discovery Lodge of Research in Sydney, the then Grand Archivist, Bro Brian French, advised me he held an interesting letter to a Lodge Secretary in early 1916, which he subsequently supplied to me.

The writer, Bro FW Pantlin, had been a Staff Sergeant in the Australian Medical Unit in the Boer War, and was appointed a CSM on his enlistment in the AIF [as a WO2]. At the time of his enlistment he was aged 49 years and eight months. After service in the Dardenelles and Egypt, he was sent home as 'over age and needed for service in Australia'.

The addressee was Bro GEG Boesser, the Secretary of Lodge Emulation No.121, which met at the Masonic Hall in Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Consecrated as Lodge of Emulation 2071 EC in December 1883, it joined the UGL NSW in 1888.

The text follows:

Tel-el-Kelir  
Egypt  
17<sup>th</sup> January 1916

Dear Bro Boesser

Very many thanks for your welcome letter received some time ago. I hope you will forgive me for not replying before, I am quite well although have had some very rough times and many close calls, especially during the first 3 months after landing.

I had the honour of being in the first boat of troops that touched the Gallipoli shore at Anzac, on that never to be forgotten dawn of Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April.

Three of my comrades of the Engineers were shot dead as we scrambled ashore over the stoney beach. We were towed ashore from the warship Londou, and the Turks opened fire just before our boat grounded. There were 96 of us packed in the boat, twenty Engineers, and 76 Infantry of the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion, (West Australians) Two other ships boats (smaller) each with about 50 men in them, were connected to ours in the tow. This made roughly 200 in our party. Two other tows were at the same time landing in similar numbers about 300 yards apart from us, one from the Battle ship Queen, and the other from the Prince of Wales, altogether 600, which formed the covering party. Just as our boat grounded the first Turkish rifle shot was fired. Soon afterwards a regular fusillade of bullets were whistling over our ears.

Our orders were not to fire but use the bayonet only. So jumping out of the boat up to our waist in water, we were having a very hot and very cold time together. As soon as thrown off, bayonets fixed and the Infantry charged the rough scrubby hills which slope from the waters edge. The Turks were intrenched about 100 yards from the water. While the Infantry were driving the Turks from their trenches, the Engineers were busy making a rough road up the hill to enable water and ammunition to be carried to the firing line.

Our troops were coming ashore by now as fast as possible, and strengthening the firing line, while the Turks were also being reinforced. All through Sunday – day and night – the fighting was very fierce. The bombardment by our warships continuous.

The din was awful.

On the next day much the same happened, and in the afternoon we were supplied with our first rations, bully beef and biscuits. We bought 2 days rations ashore – but they were spoiled by salt water. As each day passed our Boys kept the enemy at bay and were fast making their positions more secure by continuous digging – everyone doing his best and not a complaint – even those seriously wounded, were quite happy with a drink of water and a Cigarette.

As time wore on, days to weeks, + weeks to months, the Turks chance of driving our Lads into the sea became a thing of the past, and the system of underground warfare was continued right up till our evacuation. Thank God my health has been very good from the day of landing till the evacuation. I lost a nephew killed during the second week – It was very hard leaving the bones of our Brave Lads behind.

I often think of you all especially on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday, and of the many happy hours I have spent in our Little Lodge. I hope you and all the brethren are quite well and that it will not be very long before we meet again.

So will close with

My Best Wishes

From Yours Sincerely

And Fraternally

*Sgd*

P.S.

My address

Warrant Officer F.W. Pantlin

8<sup>th</sup> Field Coy Engineers

3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Division

Egypt

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Bro Pantlin returned to Australia in 1916 and recommenced his role as a military trainer. He left the Australian Army in the 1930s with the rank of Major. He died in October 1952.

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FINIS