



THE MASONIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

PAPER No. 127

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DATE: 27 March 2006

OUTBACK FREEMASONRY - QUEENSLAND STYLE

To paraphrase the immortal 'Banjo' Paterson, 'the countryfolk have pleasures that the townfolk never know.'

These items are taken from *Masonic Centres of Queensland* by Bro. Wayne L. Budgen published in 2005.

Everyone knows about the *Queenslander*, a timber house or other building erected on stumps to allow circulation of air under the floor to provide ventilation in the hot, humid climate.

Many Masonic buildings have been constructed in this manner.

In some buildings, the stumps were high enough to afford useful space under the floor which could be partly enclosed.

Many of them are still in use.

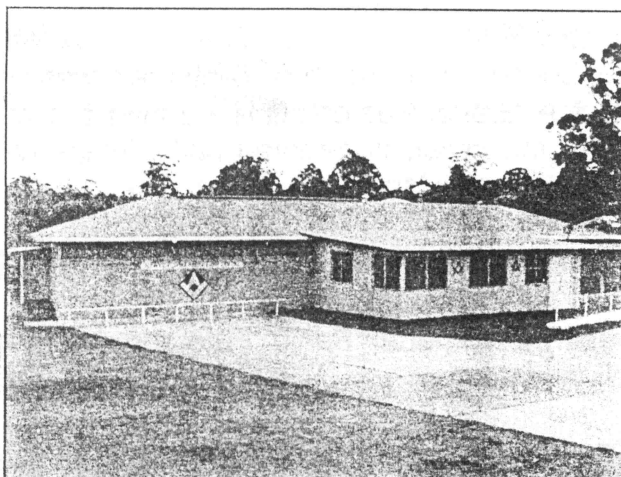
In the old days at Pialba, a coastal town on the southern shore of Hervey Bay, 250 km north of Brisbane, the lodge room and hall used to shake when the horses tethered underneath rubbed against the stumps to relieve themselves from the bites of sandflies and mosquitoes. Just what you need for the Third Degree!

The Masonic Centre
at Pialba.



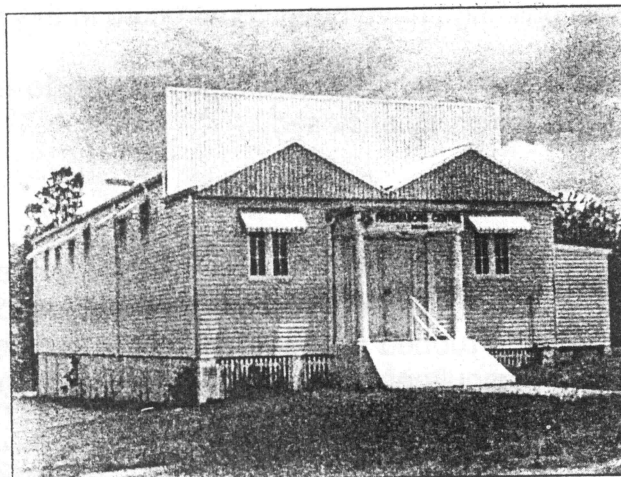
No such problem at Maroochydore, a small coastal town some 90 km north of Brisbane, where, in the 1870's the first lodge meetings were held on the beach with the lodge being marked out on the sand. The members travelled down-river to the beach by the paddle steamer *Iona*. The number of Tylers required is not mentioned but the ancient penalty of the First Degree would, no doubt, have added to the impact.

The Masonic Centre
at Maroochydore.



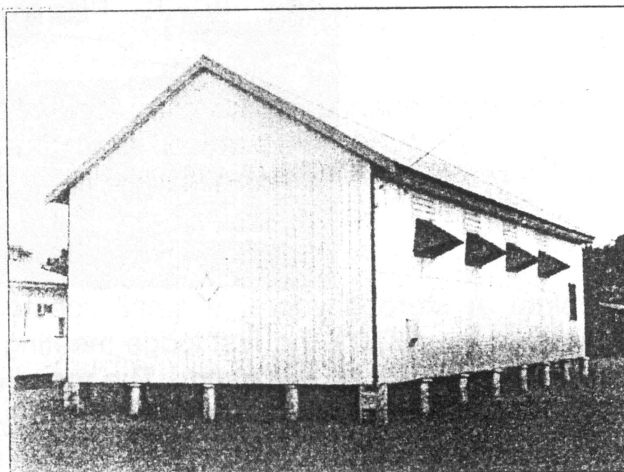
At Bowen, a coastal town 980 km north of Brisbane and 180 km south from Townsville, a stump-capping ceremony was held in 1934 with £149.11.0 being raised for the building project. The ritual, if any, for such a ceremony would be interesting but, if there is nowhere in an all-timber building to set a foundation stone then, necessity becomes the mother of invention.

The Masonic Centre
at Bowen.



The building at Giru, a railway town 45 km south of Townsville, had a ceremony of setting a foundation stone in 1954 for a timber building on stumps but with brick piers at each corner.

The Masonic Centre
at Giru.



They do it tough in the bush. When the lodge at Wallangarra, right on the New South Wales border 20 km north of Tenterfield was consecrated in 1914 in the local church hall, the Grand Master fainted during the ceremony because of the high temperature in the small, iron-roofed hall. There was no summer dress in those days of three-piece woollen suits.

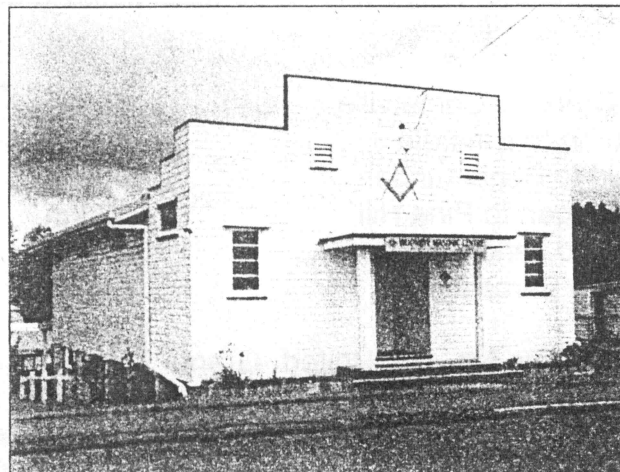
There is always some over-officious person, usually a Grand Lodge officer, who wants to spoil the fun.

In 1974, the Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies caused an uproar in the lodge at Woombye on the northern railway some 90 km north of Brisbane, when he moved the altar from the centre of the pavement to the East.

It was Thomas Gray (1716-1771) who wrote: *Where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.*

The lodge, although on the roll of the United Grand Lodge of Queensland, retained its Scottish working and, guess where the altar is located in a Scottish lodge?

The Masonic Centre
at Woombye.



At the township of Miles, 300 km west of Brisbane, they have so little faith in the sharp practices of the city slickers that the lodge has a number of head of cattle as an investment portfolio instead of money in the bank. It goes without saying that it was a Scottish lodge.

When the Queensland colonial government decided to build a railway line into the interior west of Rockhampton, they enticed a number of British railway construction workers to emigrate. Some of them were Masons.

Queensland is a vast territory, more than twice the size of New South Wales, and its inland Masonic development followed the construction of roads and railways.

Difficult conditions often require special measures. When the construction of the railway line west from Rockhampton had reached Dingo Creek some 147 km away, nine brethren held a meeting on 25 October 1876 at which a decision was taken to establish Comet Lodge under dispensation from the District Grand Lodge of the

English Constitution. Wor. Bro. Robert Ballard, chief engineer of railway construction, was the first Master. Travelling warrants were usually issued to regiments and ships of the line but Comet Lodge No. 1680 E. C., although not issued with a travelling warrant, not only moved its place of meeting, but the brethren built a small prefabricated lodge room which was dismantled, loaded onto railway wagons and transported and re-erected at the next town, following, in a sense, the old operative practice. The Lodge was opened at Dingo Creek in January 1877 and moved camp to Cometville in time for the March 1878 meeting and thence to Emerald for the meeting on the 25 November 1879. The railway and the Lodge proceeded over the Great Dividing Range to Bogantungan on 8 November 1881, thence to Pine Hill and on to Jericho for the 25 August 1885. When the brethren arrived a Balaclava on 7 December 1886, the portable Lodge Room had not arrived in time so the meeting was held in Bro. H.G. Eccles store. The next meeting on 28 December 1886 was held in the old hall at Barcaldine (pronounced bah-kawl-den) where the Lodge remained, the portable hall being replaced in 1901. The Lodge finances were always strained due to purchases, and some losses, on land and foundations at each location.

The movements of the Lodge and its portable building during the construction of the railway were:

Dingo Creek to Cometville	83 km
Cometville to Emerald	40 km
Emerald to Bogantungan	96 km
Bogantungan to Pine Hill	38 km
Pine Hill to Jericho	87 km
Jericho to Barcaldine	83 km

Comet Lodge, now No. 28 United Grand Lodge of Queensland still meets at Barcaldine, 427 km from the location of its first meeting.

It was just as well that no one worried about dispensations and Grand Lodge red tape in those days.

If you travel west from Barcaldine for another 55 km, you will arrive at Longreach which is approximately in the geographical centre of Queensland some 650 km west of Rockhampton and right on the Tropic of Capricorn.

The Masonic Centre
at Barcaldine.

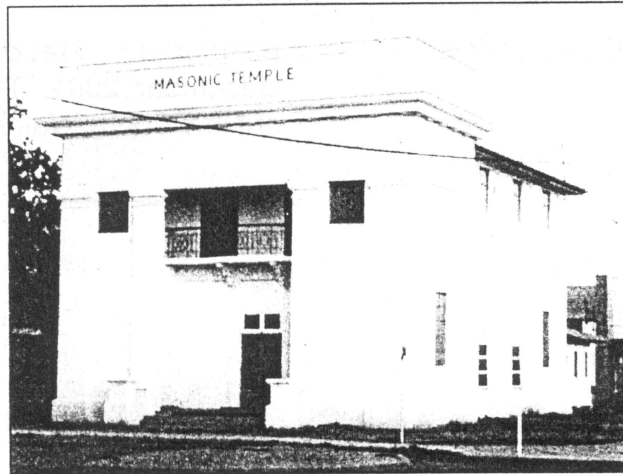


I'll bet you didn't know that the Masonic Hall at Longreach, a substantial two-storey brick building erected in 1929 was taken over as accommodation, during the Second World War, for American servicemen from a B-17 *flying fortress* base located in the town.

The B-17's flew missions during the Battle of the Coral Sea over 200 km away and one flight bombed RAN ships mistaking them for Japanese. No surprises there either.

Can you just imagine a young none-too-bright United States Air Force ground staff Yank trying to explain to his folks in downtown Manhattan exactly where he was serving during 4th to the 8th May 1942 when the Battle of the Coral Sea was being fought?

The Masonic Centre
at Longreach.



The pioneers of Queensland Freemasonry were, of necessity, a resourceful group. Charters Towers Lodge No. 1546 E.C., founded in 1875, furnished the Lodge Room with packing cases upholstered as elegantly as possible. The columns of the three principal officers were cedar table legs turned upside down and drilled to hold the candles.

Travel presented its own difficulties as a group discovered when they left Rockhampton in October 1879 to be present at the inaugural meeting of Peak Downs Lodge at Clermont. The *Peak Downs Telegraph* reported that "after leaving Rockhampton they were detained four days at Emerald on account of rain" . . . Bro. Shaw, the manager of Cobb and Co. Coach Company allowed them to proceed . . . "on the way up they had to walk for several miles, and occasionally to push behind, and to lift the coach out of bog holes."

I am reminded of a conversation I had with an elderly and very sincere Past Master at a Masonic seminar I had conducted at Inverell, 680 km north of Sydney and 75 km from the Queensland border. He said: ' the trouble with you blokes from Grand Lodge is that you don't know anything about Masonic Lodges after the train leaves Redfern!'

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