

## A DAILY ADVANCEMENT . . .

FEBRUARY 2019

### 'GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING'<sup>1</sup>

On 20 May 1936 the Authors' Lodge [3456 EC] held their Annual Festival at Freemasons' Hall London. 'The Guests of Honour were His Excellency, Qui Tai-Chi, the Chinese Ambassador, and Miss Dorothy Sayers, the well-known novelist.' All the ladies present were given 'a silver pencil stamped with the Jubilee Hall Mark' by the WM. The toast to 'The Ladies and Literature' was proposed by WBro J J Munro. 'The purpose of the toast was mainly to pay the tribute of admiration which the Authors' Lodge wished to render to Miss Sayers ... '

#### THE REPLY OF MISS DOROTHY L SAYERS

In her reply, Miss Dorothy L. Sayers first taunted the proposer for having spoken much regarding her and having neglected "The Ladies and Literature", in general, which was the subject of the Toast to which she would address her reply. She must first thank the Master, however, for his charming gift of a pencil, which she might find useful in jotting down a few notes for a novel she might one day write on "The Murder in the Lodge."

It was usual to say, she continued, that one rose with diffidence to reply to a Toast, but in the present case it was real, for her test was to reply for "The Ladies and Literature." Any woman must feel a certain diffidence about speaking for literature, since many people would exclude the mystery story from literature. It has been maintained, indeed, that woman is in herself a mystery-but nobody but man has ever been foolish enough to believe that. There is no mystery about woman, except the eternal mystery of mankind, to which only the Master of all mysteries knows the answer, As a mystery writer, continued Miss Sayers, I ought to be anathema to all Masons, for whereas Masons take great pains to conceal their mysteries, we detective novelists consider that mysteries exist only to be revealed. We do indeed make a great parade of secrecy, but all men and women are our initiates. We openly display sword and cord and implements of mortality, and no Tyler sits before the door of our lodge. Your method is more economical, since you have made one set of mysteries last for centuries, whereas we have to invent new ones at the rate of about a dozen a week. I hope I may speak for all women present. I am, as I daresay many of us are, the daughter of a Mason and married to one, so let me here and now say that, if in alluding to your ancient and honourable mystery, I should say anything amiss, it is without intention to offend.

The word *mystery* has yet another meaning, one which originated, I believe, in a confusion between two Latin words, and yet one which everyone in this room would acknowledge equally in respect to Masonry and to literature. It means the mystery of the Craft. Here we may find some common ground to stand on. In every craft, however humble, a man or woman must begin as an apprentice and work faithfully until he or she is worthy to be admitted Past Master. Moreover, every craft has its history, and its honourable traditions, of which those who practice it are proud, even

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<sup>1</sup> I Timothy: 4.13.

though the craft itself may be a small and unimportant one. Of the traditions of literature I need say nothing – it goes back to the beginnings of history, and without it history could never have existed. Of the craft of detection I will say, with all seriousness, and with no disrespect, that it goes back as far as King Solomon, whose judgment on an intricate problem of detective psychology is a part of history. I do not think anyone can well practice his craft who has no respect for it; nor can any craft be respectable unless it is seriously produced in conformity with tradition.

Here I come to a point, at which I may say how much honour I feel, speaking for myself and my fellow craftsmen, that your Lodge should have chosen a detective story writer to reply to the Toast of Literature. It is proof that you, who live by and for tradition, are ready to admit our claim to be, at any rate, a small part of literature, and sharers in its history and traditions. We live in an age that despises tradition, and nothing is to my mind, more alarming than the present tendency to despise craftsmanship and to cast learning into contempt.

We have seen men of real learning driven like mad dogs from one of the great nations in Europe, and forced to seek shelter in England, because there is no respect for their learning to protect them from a barbarous hatred of their race. We saw this, and we think it a shameful sight. I do not know what has happened to Masons in that country. Perhaps they are permitted to practice their mystery on condition that they admit the Temple to have been founded, not by Solomon, but by Odin and Thor. Perhaps they may be Masons so long as they are not Free Masons! I say; I do not know: but, I say this; that where there is contempt for learning, no one is safe and no one can be free. Continuing, Miss Sayers said, that even in the mystery story there is only a most frivolous gargoyle upon the Temple of Literature, still it is of the Temple, and that stone that supports it must be as truly squared and firmly set as though it were the keystone or corner-stone-else the mason is no honest craftsman. In our branch of the craft, as in the whole craft of letters, men and women walk side by side without jealousy or difference; and it is always a mark of a nation settled and at peace, that it includes both men and women of letters. The coupling of women and literature together, then, in the same toast is seen to be nothing adventitious, for they cannot flourish together except in times of peace and national good order. The peace and stability of one nation affects, and in these days depends upon, the peace of all, so that any toast which couples the names of women and literature is, in fact, a wish for peace of the whole world. In the name of all women, in the name of letters and learning, in the name of peace, I thank you all, and since I have drifted into a rather serious vein, let me leave with you two reflections – one from the wisdom of Jesus, the Son of Sirach:

“Timber girt and bound into a building shall  
not be loosed with shaking.”

And one from the Wisdom of Solomon:

“But what shall be the use of each vessel of either sort?  
The craftsman himself is the judge.”

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Taken from the Authors' Lodge *Transactions* [Vol VII, pp 176-179] published in 1945.

## *A DAILY ADVANCEMENT . . .*

April 2019

### READING MASONS AND MASONS WHO DO NOT READ

By Albert G Mackey [Source: *The Master Mason* 1924]

I suppose there are more Masons who are ignorant of all the principles of freemasonry than there are men of any other class who are chargeable with the like ignorance of their own profession. There is not a watchmaker who does not know something about the elements of horology, nor is there a blacksmith who is altogether unacquainted with the properties of red-hot iron. Ascending to the higher walks of science, we would be much astonished to meet with a lawyer who was ignorant of the elements of jurisprudence, or a physician who had never read a treatise on pathology, or a clergyman who knew nothing whatever of theology. Nevertheless, nothing is more common than to encounter Freemasons who are in utter darkness as to everything that relates to Freemasonry. They are ignorant of its history - they know not whether it is a mushroom production of today, or whether it goes back to remote ages for its origin. They have no comprehension of the esoteric meaning of its symbols or its ceremonies, and are hardly at home in its modes of recognition. And yet nothing is more common than to find such socialists in the possession of high degrees and sometimes honored with elevated affairs in the Order, present at the meetings of lodges and chapters, intermeddling with the proceedings, taking an active part in all discussions and pertinaciously maintaining heterodox opinions in opposition to the judgment of brethren of far greater knowledge.

Why, it may well be asked, should such things be? Why, in Masonry alone, should there be so much ignorance and so much presumption? If I ask a cobbler to make me a pair of boots, he tells me that he only mends and patches, and that he has not learned the higher branches of his craft, and then he honestly declines the offered job. If I request a watchmaker to construct a mainspring for my chronometer, he answers that he cannot do it, that he has never learned how to make mainsprings, which belongs to a higher branch of the business, but that if I will bring him a spring ready made, he will insert it in my timepiece, because that he knows how to do. If I go to an artist with an order to paint me a historical picture, he will tell me that it is beyond his capacity, that he has never studied nor practiced the computation of details, but has confined himself to the painting of portraits. Were he dishonest and presumptuous he would take my order and instead of a picture give me a daub. It is the Freemason alone who wants this modesty. He is too apt to think that the obligation not only makes him a Mason, but a learned Mason at the same time. He too often imagines that the mystical ceremonies which induct him into the Order are all that are necessary to make him cognizant of its principles. There are some Christian sects who believe that the water of baptism at once washes away all sin, past and prospective. So there are some Masons who think that the mere act of initiation is at once followed by an influx of all

Masonic knowledge. They need no further study or research. All that they require to know has already been received by a sort of intuitive process.

The great body of Masons may be divided into three classes. The first consists of those who made their application for initiation not from a desire for knowledge, but from some accidental motive, not always honorable. Such men have been led to seek reception either because it was likely, in their opinion, to facilitate their business operations, or to advance their political prospects, or in some other way to personally benefit them. In the commencement of a war, hundreds flock to the lodges in the hope of obtaining the "mystic sign," which will be of service in the hour of danger. Their object having been attained, or having failed to attain it, these men become indifferent and, in time, fall into the rank of the non-affiliates. Of such Masons there is no hope. They are dead trees having no promise of fruit. Let them pass as utterly worthless, and incapable of improvement.

There is a second class consisting of men who are the moral and Masonic antipodes of the first. These make their application for admission, being prompted, as the ritual requires, "by a favorable opinion conceived of the Institution, and a desire of knowledge." As soon as they are initiated, they see in the ceremonies through which they have passed a philosophical meaning worthy of the trouble of inquiry. They devote themselves to this inquiry. They obtain Masonic books, they read Masonic periodicals, and they converse with well-informed brethren. They make themselves acquainted with the history of the Association. They investigate its origin and its ultimate design. They explore the hidden sense of its symbols and they acquire the interpretation. Such Masons are always useful and honorable members of the Order, and very frequently they become its shining lights. Their lamp burns for the enlightenment of others, and to them the Institution is indebted for whatever of an elevated position it has attained. For them, this article is not written.

But between these two classes, just described, there is an intermediate one; not as bad as the first, but far below the second, which, unfortunately, comprises the body of the Fraternity.

This third class consists of Masons who joined the Society with unobjectionable motives, and with, perhaps the best intentions. But they have failed to carry these intentions into effect.

They have made a grievous mistake. They have supposed that initiation was all that was requisite to make them Masons, and that any further study was entirely unnecessary. Hence, they never read a Masonic book. Bring to their notice the productions of the most celebrated Masonic authors, and their remark is that they have no time to read—the claims of business are overwhelming. Show them a Masonic journal of recognized reputation, and ask them to subscribe. Their answer is that they cannot afford it, the times are hard and money is scarce.

And yet, there is no want of Masonic ambition in many of these men. But their ambition is not in the right direction. They have no thirst for knowledge, but they

have a very great thirst for office or for degrees. They cannot afford money or time for the purchase or perusal of Masonic books, but they have enough of both to expend on the acquisition of Masonic degrees.

It is astonishing with what avidity some Masons who do not understand the simplest rudiments of their art, and who have utterly failed to comprehend the scope and meaning of primary, symbolic Masonry, grasp at the empty honors of the high degrees. The Master Mason who knows very little, if anything, of the Apprentice's degree longs to be a Knight Templar. He knows nothing, and never expects to know anything, of the history of Templarism, or how and why these old crusaders became incorporated with the Masonic brotherhood. The height of his ambition is to wear the Templar cross upon his breast. If he has entered the Scottish Rite, the Lodge of Perfection will not content him, although it supplies material for months of study. He would fain rise higher in the scale of rank, and if by persevering efforts he can attain the summit of the Rite and be invested with the Thirty-third degree, little cares he for any knowledge of the organization of the Rite or the sublime lessons that it teaches. He has reached the height of his ambition and is permitted to wear the double-headed eagle.

Such Masons are distinguished not by the amount of knowledge that they possess, but by the number of the jewels that they wear. They will give fifty dollars for a decoration, but not fifty cents for a book.

These men do great injury to Masonry. They have been called its drones. But they are more than that. They are the wasps, the deadly enemy of the industrious bees. They set a bad example to the younger Masons - they discourage the growth of Masonic literature - they drive intellectual men, who would be willing to cultivate Masonic science, into other fields of labor - they depress the energies of our writers - and they debase the character of Speculative Masonry as a branch of mental and moral philosophy. When outsiders see men holding high rank and office in the Order who are almost as ignorant as themselves of the principles of Freemasonry, and who, if asked, would say they looked upon it only as a social institution, these outsiders very naturally conclude that there cannot be anything of great value in a system whose highest positions are held by men who profess to have no knowledge of its higher development.

It must not be supposed that every Mason is expected to be a learned Mason, or that every man who is initiated is required to devote himself to the study of Masonic science and literature. Such an expectation would be foolish and unreasonable. All men are not equally competent to grasp and retain the same amount of knowledge. Order, says Pope-Order is heaven's first law and this confess, some are, and must be, greater than the rest, richer, wiser.

All that I contend for is that when a candidate enters the fold of Masonry he should feel that there is something in it better than its mere grips and signs, and that he should endeavor with all his ability to attain some knowledge of that better thing. He should not seek advancement to higher degrees until he knew something of the lower,

nor grasp at office, unless he had previously fulfilled with some reputation for Masonic knowledge, the duties of a private station. I once knew a brother whose greed for office led him to pass through all the grades from Warden of his lodge to Grand Master of the jurisdiction, and who during that whole period had never read a Masonic book nor attempted to comprehend the meaning of a single symbol. For the year of his Mastership he always found it convenient to have an excuse for absence from the lodge on the nights when degrees were to be conferred. Yet, by his personal and social influences, he had succeeded in elevating himself in rank above all those who were above him in Masonic knowledge. They were really far above him, for they all knew something, and he knew nothing. Had he remained in the background, none could have complained. But, being where he was, and seeking himself the position, he had no right to be ignorant. It was his presumption that constituted his offense.

A more striking example is the following: A few years ago while editing a Masonic periodical; I received a letter from the Grand Lecturer of a certain Grand Lodge who had been a subscriber, but who desired to discontinue his subscription. In assigning his reason, he said (a copy of the letter is now before me), "although the work contains much valuable information, I shall have no time to read, as I shall devote the whole of the present year to teaching." I cannot but imagine what a teacher such a man must have been, and what pupils he must have instructed.

This article is longer than I intended it to be. But I feel the importance of the subject. There are in the United States more than four hundred thousand affiliated Masons. How many of these are readers? One-half - or even one-tenth? If only one-fourth of the men who are in the Order would read a little about it, and not depend for all they know of it on their visits to their lodges, they would entertain more elevated notions of its character. Through their sympathy scholars would be encouraged to discuss its principles and to give to the public the results of their thoughts, and good Masonic magazines would enjoy a prosperous existence.

Now, because there are so few Masons that read, Masonic books hardly do more than pay the publishers the expense of printing, while the authors get nothing; and Masonic journals are being year after year carried off into the literary Academia, where the corpses of defunct periodicals are deposited; and, worst of all, Masonry endures depressing blows.

The Mason, who reads, however little, is it only the pages of the monthly magazine to which he subscribes, will entertain higher views of the Institution and enjoy new delights in the possession of these views. The Masons who do not read will know nothing of the interior beauties of Speculative Masonry, but will be content to suppose it to be something like Odd Fellowship, or the Order of the Knights of Pythias - only, perhaps, a little older. Such a Mason must be an indifferent one. He has laid no foundation for zeal.

If this indifference, instead of being checked, becomes more widely spread, the result is too apparent. Freemasonry must step down from the elevated position which she has been struggling, through the efforts of her scholars, to maintain, and our lodges,

instead of becoming resorts for speculative and philosophical thought, will deteriorate into social clubs or mere benefit societies. With so many rivals in that field, her struggle for a prosperous life will be a hard one.

The ultimate success of Masonry depends on the intelligence of her disciples.

***A DAILY ADVANCEMENT ...***

***LINFORD LODGE OF RESEARCH***

October 2019

**ON THE WRITING OF LODGE HISTORIES:  
A VERY PERSONAL INTRODUCTION**

This paper was presented to the Research Lodge of New South Wales at its meeting in August 1995. It was published in Vol. 14, No. 9 of that Lodge's *Proceedings*.

This paper is essentially a personal account of the considerations which have influenced me in the writing of lodge histories. I think that it only reasonable, therefore, that I should introduce it by saying something of my experience, limited though it may be, and my qualifications in this area.

My entry into the realms of lodge history writing was in the preparation of a history of the first fifty years of the work of Lodge Commonwealth of Australia No 633 NSWC, the third lodge to be established in the Australian Capital Territory. It covered the period from 1929 to 1979 and was subsequently published by the Lodge for issue to the members and to candidates as they came along. The second effort was a study of the story of the Bungendore Lodge of Australia, No. 2103 EC and later No 137 NSWC, which met from 1885 to 1890 in the little town of Bungendore on the Kings Highway some 26 kilometres on the coast side of Queanbeyan. This study is to be published shortly. The third piece of work of this kind was a review of the very limited material available on a self-constituted lodge, the lodge of St John No. 1, which operated briefly on Norfolk Island from about 1799 to 1808 and almost certainly transferred to Van Diemen's Land following the evacuation of the Island in the early 1800s but ceased to be active about 1822. This resulted in a paper delivered to the Victorian Lodge of Research in April 1995 and which was published in the Transactions of that Lodge in June 1995. The fourth endeavour in this area has been the paper, delivered to the Canberra and District Historical Society in July 1995, relating the story of the history of Freemasonry in the Queanbeyan-Canberra district over the period from 1877 to 1939. This entailed examination of the records of what is now Lodge Queanbeyan St Andrew No. 56 NSWC, including those of Lodge St Andrew No 616 SC; Lodge Canberra No. 465 NSWC; Lodge Capitol No 612 NSWC and Lodge Commonwealth of Australia No. 633 NSWC. This paper will be published in the proceedings of that Society.

So much for my personal experience. Apart from these works, I am qualified academically in the discipline; my Bachelor of Arts includes a major in history and my speciality in a post-graduate Bachelor of Letters was also history. The requirements of the latter included the study of the theory of historical interpretation and the preparation of a sub-thesis. This then is a summary of my personal background and qualifications for the writing of a lodge history and, perhaps, justification for talking to you about it this evening. It will be for you to judge whether the outcome matches the qualifications and experience I have outlined. I should add that while, during this talk, I will be drawing primarily on my own experience, I shall also be making reference to two well-known lodge histories, namely Henley's History of Lodge Australia Social Mother and the Phillips and Fleming History of Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia.

#### WRITING THE HISTORY OF A LODGE

The writing of a Lodge history is, I suggest, not a task to be undertaken lightly. Most of us have read what are called lodge histories which are, in effect, little more than summaries of the lodge minutes. Often they are accompanied by, say, lists of foundation members, of Masters of the lodge, maybe reviews of the careers of what are judged to have been the most outstanding characters of the lodge, perhaps a discussion of lodge finances and sometimes on trends in membership totals. In some cases, the history of the lodge may be set in the context of changes in Grand Lodge organisation, policies and administrative procedures. Rarely are the wider influences on the Lodge's development discussed. Usually the compiler of this sort of history is not a trained historian.

Now I do not dismiss this type of historical account out of hand. It has its place, it has its value. It is useful to have in one source a summary of the principal events associated with the development of the lodge. But I would contend that it is not so much history but rather the basic material for the writing of history.

It has been said that 'the historian's greatest challenge is to recreate and interpret from surviving evidence the customs, ideals and motives of the people of a past age'. If it is accepted that this is a reasonable statement of the historian's task, then the type of lodge history I have just described is clearly inadequate. To meet the challenge, I suggest that there is a series of decisions to be made on aspects of the task ahead, for example:

- What is the objective of the project?
- What is the evidence available and what is its value?
- What should be the approach to interpretation?

Each of these needs to be considered separately and in relation to each other, for there is a clear inter-relationship between them.

### Objective

The type of lodge history to which I have been referring is basically directed towards providing brethren of the particular lodge, in summary form, with an account of the happenings of the past. Usually it doesn't seek to explain or comment upon events but rather to simply record them. Its scope, depth, and hence its value, are limited. For the historian, or even the more sophisticated reader, it may be useful in directing attention to matters he wishes to explore further. But more often than not he would prefer to go back to the original records, partly to satisfy himself of the accuracy of the summary and, more likely, to make certain that there is no omission of references to matters of significance.

The historian would usually have a wider interest. He would wish to view lodge happenings in a broader context. This may, for instance, be in relation to decisions taken in the Grand Lodge or perhaps in relation to changes in the organisation of lodges in the area or District in which the lodge is the subject of the history is operating, such as the formation, amalgamation or closure of lodges. It may, and having regard to their influence on the development of the lodge, often should, relate to such factors as economic conditions, social and cultural standards, and even legislation. The historian would, in these circumstances, be likely to have as his objective writing for an audience not only of the lodge, but also a wider one of seeking to understand the dynamics of a lodge's development in the economic, social, cultural and political environment in which it exists.

Let me give you some examples. Most researchers - I am conscious of the fact that I am now talking to members of a Lodge of Research - will have read, or at least thumbed through, Phillips and Fleming's history of Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia. It is of particular interest because of the antiquity of the lodge, which dates from 1824, and deals with events not experienced by the great majority of lodges in this jurisdiction. The approach adopted by the authors is to work through the records year by year and to summarised points seen as salient. There are, it is true, brief references to important events such as the formation of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales in 1877 and to some of the happenings immediately prior to the formation of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales when some of the members of the Lodge were involved, but there is minimum discussion of them. On the other hand - and this may have

been due to the facts of the recent past were uppermost in the minds of the writers - there are several references to the effects upon the Lodge of the economic depression when it was at its worst in 1931 to 1933.

The Leinster Marine Lodge of Australia history is to be contrasted with W. Henley's History of Lodge Australian Social Mother. No. 1, United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, 1820 to 1920. Henley, while having some regard for chronological order, frequently departs from the lodge minutes as a source of his information, looks at other sources and discusses in some detail particular items which he thinks worthy of attention. For example, he talks in one chapter of the effort to form a Grand Lodge of Australia in 1847; he follows this with another summarising events surrounding the formation of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the part played by members of his Lodge in them; in the next, he describes Masonic public ceremonies over the period from 1820 to 180; and then introduces a chapter dealing with interesting events occurring on various occasions over the years from 1820 to 1918. At no time does he allow himself to be constrained by the order of happenings as they occurred. The result is an interesting historical account which keeps the roles of members of his Lodge well in the forefront and has as much emphasis on subject matter as on chronological order. Henley's objective is fairly clearly to attract a Masonic readership, without in any way detracting from its historical accuracy. He makes little or no attempt to put his history in any wider colonial setting.

Amongst the lodges in Districts 102 and 102A of this Jurisdiction, on which most of my historical interests have been centred, there are four that have published histories. The History of Lodge of Truth, No. 26, U.G.L. of N.S.W. Braidwood, deals with the working of the Lodge over the period from March 1860 to October 1960. There are two fifty-year histories, namely, Lodge Capitol. No. 612, U.G.L. of N.S.W. The First Fifty Years. 1927-1977 and Lodge Commonwealth of Australia. No. 633, U.G.L. N.S.W. The First Fifty Years. 1929 to 1979; there is the twenty-one year account of The Working History of Lodge Ethos. No. 963, U.G.L. of N.S.W. 1964-1985. Twenty First Anniversary. All of these, except for that of Lodge Commonwealth of Australia, include as a central feature summary records of lodge minutes. All have supplementary notes concerning the origins of the Lodge and all pay tribute to the particular contributions of outstanding members. In each case the objective has been to provide for the Lodge a basic record of its progress. With the history of Lodge Commonwealth of Australia, the treatment differs from that of each of the other Lodges and I shall be referring to that later.

There are two other pieces of writing on the history of the Craft in Districts 102 and 102A which I mention again with some diffidence because of their authorship. One is the history of the Bungendore Lodge of Australia, the other is the history of Freemasonry in the Queanbeyan Canberra area from 1877 to 1939. With each, the context is wider.

In the case of the history of the Bungendore Lodge of Australia, there are two important features which demand a wider context, one Masonic, the other economic and local. The period in which the Lodge was operating, 1885 to 1890, was a time when the Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Provincial Grand Lodges of England and Scotland were manoeuvring towards the formation of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and this is also a matter to which I shall be returning. As to the economic factor, the 1885 to 1890 period was a time when the railway was being extended through Bungendore to Queanbeyan and Bungendore was, at the time of the formation of the Lodge, temporarily a railway construction camp. When the railway workers moved on, they dried up as a source of recruitment for the Lodge - effectively the Lodge lost a future. Reference to the economic history of the town is therefore vital to an understanding of the Lodge's history. This particular piece of writing was done for my own edification and the audience was therefore just one person, and that in his role as an historian of sorts and not solely as a Mason.

With the history of Freemasonry in the Queanbeyan-Canberra area, the paper was for presentation to a non-Masonic audience which had a considerable knowledge of the history of the region but had less interest on the Masonic aspects. It was designed therefore to relate to the two aspects. Much of the paper was devoted to the history of Lodge St Andrew, the Queanbeyan Lodge originally formed under the Scottish Constitution but was later to become beholden to the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, and the facts set down in the paper would fit equally into a history of the Lodge itself. However, the surrounds to them were broader and encompassed facts relating to the establishment of Canberra, which had special interest to the audience. The paper itself did, of course, cover matters related to the consecration of the three Lodges established in Canberra prior to 1939 but again these were fitted into the context of the growth of the capital. In other words, because of the audience, a broader approach to the history of the Craft in the area was required, that is, the objective was different than with a history written for consumption by a local Masonic readership - it was wider.

The important point I am making is that, when a lodge history is being written, the nature of the readership or the audience must always be

carefully considered. This is, of course, nothing new. It is something which any researcher presenting his product must always do. But it is a point worth emphasising.

### The material of a History

Amongst the Bulletins published by the Masonic Service Association of the United States there is one devoted to Lodge history. This includes a summary of a paper presented by Bros B F Mandelbaum and L F Vanatta to the Oklahoma Lodge of Research on the subject, 'Preparation of a Lodge History'. Because it is precisely on the topic on which I am addressing the Lodge this evening, I quote to you portion of the Bulletins:

'The most fundamental, and first start on compilation of a history is to go through the minutes of the Lodge, write a brief or long page for each year and in this manner cover the month to month business and activities of the Lodge. But even in this sort of compilation we need to know and plan what to look for.

Let us, therefore, itemize, with some discussion, the several aspects that make up the Lodge history.

1. PICTURES: Strangely enough, it is possible to find old ones if time is taken to look. They may be in old newspaper files in photographers' studios. If possible, pictures of the first temple building (even if rented) and subsequent temples would be of interest; as will a few of the more prominent members especially Grand Lodge Officers. Though not a picture, if an imprint of the Lodge Seal is available it should be included especially when the Lodge was chartered under another jurisdiction.

2. DATES: When the Lodge was issued a dispensation, how was it obtained and when was it chartered. The dates of its first meeting Under Dispensation and after Charter and other firsts. When the Lodge moved to other temples, or built their own should be of importance, as well as when the first degrees were conferred.

3. PEOPLE: At the start, Masons who were the charter members; who were they? Where did they come from? Who among them were most active? Some of the more prominent members should be noted for their civic or business activity as well as Masonic offices.

While we are writing a history of a Lodge it is made up of people and therefore we will find names all through the history. Probably a list of Worshipful Masters and Secretaries should be included, and any long time officers, such as a Tyler, who served many years.

4. FINANCIAL: What were the first dues? What changes were made

over the years? How was the temple financed and if on borrowed money, when and how was it paid off? Were there any gifts or bequests to the Lodge and for what were they used?

5. CHARITY: We are a fraternal organization and any assistance to our members should not be openly published, except as perhaps an amount used for such purposes each year. Many Lodges, however, contribute much to our Grand Lodge Homes, to civic uses, hospitals and other charities.

6. SPECIAL MEETINGS: Some Lodges have annual picnics, social functions, special events, 50 year presentations and other activities.

7. OTHER MASONIC BODIES: We are seeking further Masonic education and affiliate with other bodies, the York and Scottish Rite and others. We also sponsor and assist DeMolay, Rainbow and Job's Daughters. Such activity, where it affects the Lodge or Lodge members, is a part of our history.

8. OLD-TIMERS: The best source of events and happenings in the Lodges is the older members who might remember items of interest, or may be able to elaborate on the items in the Lodge minutes that are briefed by the Secretary. Because these are memory items, they should be checked in some manner with other members or other sources for exactness. Thus use of a tape recorder to interview old-timers is useful, just getting them to reminisce about events in the Lodge while the recorder is on, and some questions are asked.

These are merely eight items, and there are others not listed, which might help a member in preparing a history of his Lodge. While some would not consider writing a history, perhaps they could, using an outline, prepare sufficient information from Lodge records for another Brother to compile the information into a history.'

Allowing for the American slant in the presentation, the items listed, and similar ones, constitute the basic building blocks for a lodge history.

There are, however, a few observations which might be made on what has been said.

In the first place, there is the need to know and plan what to look for. This is, of course, quite essential. On the one hand it harks back to the matter of objective, which has already been discussed. Unless the objective is clearly in mind, it is all too easy to accumulate a mass of material which is irrelevant or to omit information which may be of value. But it is also important to have some idea of the interpretation to be placed on the evidence. This suggests that, before the work is undertaken to bring

together the evidence as a preliminary to the writing, there should be at least a cursory review of it with the purpose of determining how it might be interpreted. The proposed action need not at this stage be the one ultimately decided upon but it is valuable in providing an initial framework upon which to base a selection process. It will never be possible to include in an historical account all the available evidence and selection is essential but the criteria on which the process is based must never be so fixed that alternative interpretations are excluded. Indeed, interpretation is an evolving thing which presents itself as the evidence unfolds. The historian must therefore always be flexible in his approach, but especially so in the early stages of his work.

Then there is the matter of the lodge minutes, which the MSA Bulletin says are 'the most fundamental and first start on the compilation of a lodge history'. It is difficult to disagree with this assessment, for they provide the basic record of the happenings within the lodge. There are, however, limits to their value. They are usually stereotyped in form. They are the secretary's recollection and understanding of the proceedings and to that extent are selective. Rarely do they reflect inter-personal relationships and often a phrase such as 'following discussion' obscures strongly held views or deep disagreement. They must, therefore, be treated with a certain reservation and, where possible, confirmed from other sources. The absence of lodge minutes forces the historian to engage in speculation and leaves uncertainty, as I found in my studies of the Lodge St John of Norfolk Island. In that particular case, I endeavoured to emphasise the speculative nature of my work by use of the title 'The First Stationary Lodge in Australia?' hoping that the question mark would warn the reader that he/she and I were entering the field of speculation. Lodge minutes are basically business records. They are not usually intended to be historical source documents. For instance, they rarely include the information necessary for the discussion of an item such as a talk by an Official Lecturer. The talk may be controversial, provocative or even suggestive, yet the minutes will, for the most part, simply record the presentation of the talk, often with some commendatory comment to say that it was 'interesting' or 'suggestive'. But what was said might influence, say, the conduct of the lodge or the treatment of candidates, matters of interest to the historian. Then there is the festive board which is almost completely ignored in the lodge records. Yet the festive board, particularly when following installation ceremonies, is often the venue where there is an exchange of ideas between Masters of lodges on the objectives of the Craft and the administration of lodges - done either in the course of

proposing or responding to toasts or in private conversations - but there is no record of this in the minutes. It would, of course, be expecting too much to have included in the minutes notes of private conversations but it would be valuable to have some record of the points made during the more important speeches. As it is, the historian can do little more than wonder. Then there are fora outside the formal lodge meetings for the conduct of matters affecting the lodge, for example, the building and maintenance of the meeting place of the lodge, more especially when undertaken jointly with another lodge. The lodge records should include at least a summary of the proceedings of the body concerned as the lodge historian must be made aware of this and supplement the records of the lodge as necessary.

A lodge is a social institution and, in his history, the historian should be able to reflect social relations within the lodge itself and those with the outside community. It would probably be difficult to describe the former but there should be information available on the latter. Regarding this, it is probably true to say that the most significant of these are conducted jointly by lodges, for example, through schemes for the establishment of homes for the aged, for the organisation of functions the proceeds of which are donated to charities, in the provision of sustenance for the less fortunate, and there is often no record of this in the minutes. Again the historian is at a disadvantage in giving due weight to this in his history. As a personal view, and speaking in my historian role, I believe there is insufficient recognition in the Grand Lodge of the need to preserve the historical records of the Craft. It is not sufficient to rely upon the lodge minutes. As I have already said, these have glaring gaps. I suggest that the appointment of an Official Historian is desirable and that the Master of each lodge should be required to report annually on the happenings within his lodge. Only then will there be a systematic approach to the recording of the history of Freemasonry in this jurisdiction. This is an arrangement which is to be found in most American States and is a precedent which is worthy of consideration here. The official lodge historical statements would go a long way towards remedying the lack of information in the lodge minutes.

There are, of course, other standard lodge records which are of considerable value to the historian. The dues book is always of particular use as it provides information regarding the individual members of the lodge, their periods of membership and the rates of lodge dues. Many lodges provide in their notice papers lists of members which may be used to supplement the dues book information. The presence books are of

interest in showing the attendance of members and visitors. These books give indication of relationships with other lodges.

My own experience has been that most lodges tend not to retain correspondence for lengthy periods of time. This is due partly to the difficulty of storage and partly to the fact that most correspondence deteriorates or is accidentally destroyed over time. It would undoubtedly be a tremendous advantage to the historian to have available all past correspondence - although the task of working through, say, fifty or one hundred years of correspondence would be awesome - but it is a resource that is rarely available. Even where the amount of correspondence retained is substantial, a certain amount of culling will undoubtedly have been undertaken and the person doing the culling would have made selections for retention that do not necessarily coincide with the historian's view of what is historically valuable.

There are sometimes sources outside the lodge records which may be of use in filling gaps in the basic material needed for the preparation of a lodge history. Grand Lodge journals may be of considerable value as they often contain descriptions of notable events, such as consecrations of lodges or dedications of lodge rooms which are relevant to the historian's work. Let me give an example from my own work in the Bungendore Lodge of Australia. The *Freemason's Chronicle* of Friday 1 May 1885 reported on the 'Consecration and Opening of a New Lodge and Installation of first Officers of the Bungendore Lodge of Australia, E.C., U.D.'. This was especially valued for the purposes of writing the history of the Lodge. It not only described the ceremony, gave the names of the principal participants, listed the foundation officers of the Lodge and even referred to the suppliers of the various items of lodge furniture, but gave a resume of the speech by the Deputy District Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of England at the banquet following the meeting. This last-mentioned was especially interesting as it indicated the depth of feeling in the District Grand Lodge regarding the locally formed Grand Lodge of New South Wales and of the loyalty expected of the new Lodge. I quote from the report where it refers to the speech of the Deputy:

Allusion was made to the schismatical body of New South Wales, who were constantly alluding in their remarks, and publishing in their Organ, that our revered District Grand Master was the cause of their non-recognition - this had pained him exceedingly as it was by their own acts that they had placed themselves outside the pale of legitimate Freemasonry. He exhorted all to be true and faithful to the Constitution to which they had sworn fealty as no man or

Mason can sever his oath without perjuring himself. This sort of reference is, of course, invaluable to the historian. The annual reports of the Proceedings of the Grand Lodge can also be helpful in their occasional references to the particular lodge whose history is being written. In the older volumes of the reports on the Proceedings of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales there are tables which provide membership details, including totals of initiations, affiliations, deaths, resignations and exclusions, of individual lodges which can fill in gaps in membership statistics where, say, a dues book is missing. Non-Masonic sources are rarely of value in the compilation of the history of a particular lodge. This is no doubt due to the fact that the affairs of an individual lodge often have no wide community interest. Exceptions may be found in the newspapers of the early years of Australian settlement when the range of domestic news was limited. Thus Henley, in the chapter in his History of Australian Social Mother Lodge dealing with public ceremonies and events involving members of the Lodge, draws on the press for reports on such events. Similarly, I have found in early numbers of the Hobart Town Gazette references to Masonic activity which may, or may not, relate to the Lodge of St John No. 1, formerly of Norfolk Island. In more recent times, references to the activities of an individual lodge are more likely to appear in the country press than in papers published in the larger centres.

#### Interpreting Lodge Records

The Masonic Service Association Bulletin to which I have already referred stresses the need for the lodge historian to organise his material into logical segments. It suggests that selection of those segments will depend on the age of the lodge. Older lodges can usually be divided into fifty or twenty-five year segments. Younger lodges will probably wish to use ten year segments or possibly yearly, the choice being dictated by the interests of the author(s). It points to a number of exceptions to this approach. In the case of an old lodge in Pennsylvania, the author used varying lengths of time for each segment, but identified the major inventions which were patented in those years. The outcome was fascinating and an interesting point of reference. A lodge in South Carolina prepared a history which was tied to the growth of the county, emphasising the contributions made by the lodge members in the development of the county government and economic growth. Other lodge histories have been tied to the expansions of railways, the oil fields, industry and other social factors affecting the lodge.

I must say that selecting ten, twenty-five or fifty year time segments as a framework for the compilation of a lodge history does not attract me in the least. I believe it is too constricting. Take, for instance, a period affected by an event such a war, which, however horrific it may be, is usually of relatively limited duration. The First World War lasted four years and the Second almost six. During those periods most lodges were affected in various ways - members enlisted, were killed or wounded, were engaged in essential services and were prevented from engaging fully in their Masonic activities, lodges were contributing to patriotic funds, formal dress was abolished, festive boards were limited. These were periods when Freemasonry became subject to restrictions of one kind or another, almost unprecedented in their impact. A history would need to bring this out but if the time segment were, say, twenty-five or fifty years, then the importance of the war-time happenings could tend to be diminished. My own view is that the historian should attempt to seek out what may be loosely termed 'natural' time intervals. Thus, in the case of the history of Lodge Commonwealth of Australia, covering the period from 1929 to 1979, the fifty years were broken down into segments dealing with - the beginnings; the first year of working; through economic depression to prosperity, 1930-31 to 1938-39; years of war, 1939 to 1945; growth and stability, 1946 to 1959; the 1960s, a period of decline; and the 1970s, the decline continues. These were supplemented by particular segments dealing with meeting places, Masonic education, fraternal relations, charities, and the Lodge and the future. This sort of division of the material made for a logical presentation based partly on time-segments of different lengths and partly on matters of generally wider interest.

What I have been speaking about is probably more of presentation than of interpretation. So I now turn specifically to the matter of interpretation. Recently I have been reading - 're-reading', I suppose would be a more accurate term - EH Carr's booklet on 'What is History?' . Two passages from his writings struck me most forcibly. Let me quote them to you:

“My answer ... to the question, 'What is History?' is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past.” (p. 30)

and

“The facts are like fishing about in a vast and sometimes inaccessible ocean; and what the historian catches will depend, partly on chance, but mainly on what part of the ocean he chooses

to fish in and what tackle he chooses to use - these two factors being, of course, determined by the kind of fish he wants to catch. By and large, the historian will get the kind of facts he wants.” (p. 23)

Getting the ‘kind of facts he wants’ is central to the historian’s approach to his task. With the facts at his disposal, he aims to interpret the actions, ideals and motives of a past age.

The selection of the facts to form the basis for the writing of his history is influenced by two factors - his own training and background and by his conception of the historical trends. These two factors may be inter-related. To illustrate, I return to my own practical experience. When preparing my paper for the Canberra and District Historical Society on the history of Freemasonry in the Queanbeyan-Canberra area, I began with a first draft which, upon reading as a whole, I found, somewhat to my surprise, gave more emphasis than I thought to the economic, political and administrative influences on lodge development. Without being aware of it, I had, as one who had been trained as an economist and who came to an interest in history subsequently, been unconsciously interpreting lodge history in terms of economic and related happenings. What was missing was a balance of these factors with others, and, in particular, sociological ones. Yet I had been well aware that a Masonic lodge is a social institution and is subject to wide sociological and cultural influences in the same way as, say, schooling and churches. Clearly, my initial conception of the historical trends influencing lodge development was too limited. I suppose that, in the modern jargon, I was experiencing a form of tunnel vision.

My own experience demonstrates the problem which the personality of the historian raises in the selection and interpretation of the facts on which written history, including lodge history, is based. In the case of my history of the Craft in the Queanbeyan-Canberra area, the social factors were also important. It is one thing to know, and to give recognition to, the facts that Lodge St Andrew of Queanbeyan and Lodge Canberra were composed of men who were a reasonable cross-section of the range of men in the community from which they drew their memberships, that the men of Lodge Capitol were mostly from the construction industry and that those of Lodge Commonwealth of Australia were almost solely from the professional and clerical groups, but it is another to know how they coalesced and whether their conduct was affected by their community or professional status, whether their social life was influenced by their Masonic connections or vice versa. Had I the time to revise my paper, I

should have done so but the opportunity did not present itself. Instead, I confessed my concerns to the Society and suggested that the social aspects of the history of the Craft in the Queanbeyan-Canberra area over the 1877 to 1939 period might be for another time, another place. I hope that in due course someone will take up the suggestion.

I use this occasion to give you another example of the importance of the background and personality of the historian on historical interpretation, although it is related to a topic different from that upon which I have been talking to you this evening. As workers in the field of Masonic history, you will all be aware of the traditional view that speculative Freemasonry was originally wholly of English growth although there are weighty authorities who believe that English Freemasonry did in fact derive a great deal from the Scottish system. This view is one that has been espoused especially by English Masonic historians who have been giving an English interpretation of the evidence. Last year, in a paper delivered to the Quatuor Coronati Lodge by a Scottish historian, Professor David Stevenson, a non-Mason, the alternative view was put that Freemasonry came into existence in Scotland around the year 1600 and that some of its central features first found in eighteenth-century England and others subsequently added were expanded into the movement which spread round the world and became a highly important cultural and social force. Acceptance of this view would, of course, be really turning what now passes for Masonic history on its head. To those of us of a sceptical turn of mind the question might be asked: to what extent are the competing theories reflecting the personalities and backgrounds of the proponents?

## Conclusion

Let me conclude by attempting to bring together some of the thoughts that I have put before you.

Firstly, the lodge historian must always be aware of the objective of his writing. Basically, this reduces to a matter of whether his main purpose is to inform or to interpret. If it is the former, the principal requirement is to ensure that the account of the facts is accurate and comprehensive. If it is the latter, then there are decisions to be made on the range of evidence to be sought, that is, whether the evidence is to be restricted to what is of direct Masonic import or whether it is to go beyond this and take in factors such as the social, cultural, political and administrative influences. Secondly, and this is associated both with the objective of the project and the interpretation to be given, the relevant evidence must be sought.

There is much of this that will be common to all lodge histories, whatever the objectives and whatever the interpretation to be given, for example; the recorded facts as set out in the minute books of the lodge, matters such as the principal officers of the lodge, the careers and contributions of particular individuals, membership trends, financial issues, charitable efforts and special events. The sources for this sort of material will vary and some items will need to be cross-checked from one source to another and, from time to time, it will be desirable to go beyond strictly lodge sources. Depending on both the objective of the history and any interpretation to be given, it will sometimes be necessary to look for material in local archives, in the archives and records of Grand Lodge, in journals and newspapers and the like. If the interpretation is to be wide, the evidence might include evidence relevant to the development of the lodge as a social institution, for example, cultural change, economic factors and the impact of war.

Thirdly, both the selection and the interpretation of the facts for a lodge history are heavily dependent upon the personality and the background of the historian. The historian must be aware of this and take steps to minimise the effects.

Finally, to any lodge historian, or to any would-be historian, I would counsel: Do not despair if, after your work comes under critical appraisal, there are those who would dispute what you have written. This is merely part of the process in the manufacture of history.