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## **FREEMASONRY IN FOREIGN PARTS**

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This paper recounts the experiences of an individual Freemason in making Masonic contacts overseas. The word "foreign" is used in the sense of covering all countries other than Australia; i.e., it includes English-speaking countries such as Great Britain, Canada and the USA. The experiences cover a period of nearly 30 years and my accounts of them rely, to a large extent on memory, so, while I believe them to be correct, memory can play some funny tricks at times, as I'm sure you will agree.

### **Canada**

In 1976, my family and I travelled to Canada where we lived for over 18 months, mainly in the national capital, Ottawa, whilst I undertook the duties of Australian Exchange Officer with the Office of the Auditor-General of Canada. During my period in Ottawa, the Counsellor at the Australian High Commission there was Bro. Jim Donovan (now, alas, deceased) who was a member of Lodge Commonwealth of Australia which meets in Canberra. Jim had affiliated with an Ottawa lodge (whose name, unfortunately, I have forgotten) and I visited this lodge several times in his company, and we both went together to at least one other lodge in Ottawa and also attended the dedication of a new Masonic centre on the outskirts of Ottawa by the Grand Master.

Ottawa lodges come within the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario. The other nine provinces, with the possible exception of Newfoundland, have their own Grand Lodges, such as the Grand Lodge of Quebec, the Grand Lodge of Prince Edward Island, etc. That the Grand Lodge in Ontario is called the GL of Canada comes about because of certain circumstances in Canadian history. The ritual worked in Ontario is quite similar to those worked in Australia and their customs such as dress, regalia, etc. are also close to ours; some differences I did note were that the WM was addressed as "Worshipful Sir" rather than "Worshipful Master" (Past Masters were, however, addressed as "Worshipful Bro.") and on ordinary meeting nights there was no formal South, merely an informal 'get together' for a cup of coffee and a doughnut with no toasts, although Jim and I were asked to comment on differences in Masonic practices between Canada and Australia. One thing that was done that I found rather attractive was that, immediately after the lodge was opened, the WM asked all visitors to rise, introduce themselves, state their lodge name and number, where it met, and inform the brethren of any points of interest about themselves; for instance, I was able to tell them the reason why I was in Canada. (This practice probably came about because of the absence of a visitors' toast in the afterproceedings.)

At one lodge meeting I attended, there was an initiation ceremony which had a more than usual interest for me as the candidate was a French-Canadian, one André Leduc. Until the mid-1970's not many French-Canadians, who are for the most part devout Roman Catholics, had sought to join Freemasonry, but in (I think) 1974 the Church's attitude to our Order became more relaxed and, in consequence, there had then been a virtual tidal wave of French-Canadians joining the Craft. However, André Leduc was to be the first of that ethnic group to join this lodge which met in the western part of Ottawa (most French-Canadians in the national capital lived in the eastern suburbs, where I was also living). After the ceremony the WM made the comment: "Now at last, we have our own Bro. André!" which drew much good-natured laughter. (In Montréal, there once lived a famous holy man known as Bro. André who had built a beautiful Roman Catholic oratory in the large park on the heights of Mont Royal overlooking the city, where it was reputed that a number of miraculous cures had taken place.)

### **United States of America**

While I was in Canada, I spent 2 weeks in New York having a look at the United Nations audit, in which the Canadian Auditor-General was involved (there had been some preliminary discussions about the Australian Auditor-General taking over from the Canadian Auditor-General when the latter's term of appointment ended; in the event, however, for various reasons this proposal came to nothing). My

family stayed back in Ottawa (the kids were all at school), which gave me more opportunity to make Masonic contacts in the evening after work than would have been the case if they had been with me.

So I found the main Masonic centre in New York City in the 'phone book and rang the number, and was answered by the building caretaker. He told me just to come along that evening and bring my papers. In the foyer of the building, he said, I would find a notice board near the elevators listing all the lodges meeting that night with the degrees they were working. "Just pick one out, take the elevator to that room, show them your papers and you'll be OK", he concluded. And, thus, after work I grabbed a light meal, picked up my regalia, MM's and NSW GL travelling certificates, etc. and walked from my hotel on East 40th Street to the Masonic centre on West 23rd Street. It was an imposing building over 20 stories high and in the foyer was the notice board, as the caretaker had said. Many lodges were meeting that night, but one was Lodge Pacific and it was working a 3rd degree. Now, as you all know, both Australia and USA border the Pacific Ocean, so I took the name of this lodge as a good omen and, without further hesitation, went to the 12th floor (where it was meeting), introduced myself and showed my papers to a PM. After a minute or so, he said "Where's your dues card?" I pleaded ignorance about this, and he explained it was a card that showed that a visiting Mason was currently financial. I said we didn't have such things in Australia, and he then told me to wait while they had an *ad hoc* PMs' meeting to decide whether I would be admitted to the lodge. After 5 minutes or so, he returned saying "Sorry, Brother, but without a dues card we can't let you in."

Very disappointed and more than a little upset by all this, I was walking towards the elevators when another man ran after me, saying: "Wait, Brother, I'm not a member of this lodge, I'm a member of Lodge Garibaldi (an Italian-speaking lodge) but I'm the Tyler here, and what you should do is, next day, go and show your papers to the Grand Secretary whose office is in this building, and he'll give you a letter which will enable you to visit any lodge you like."

On the next day, I went to lunch half an hour early, visited the Grand Secretary's office and showed him my papers. He was a very pleasant gentleman whose name was (I think) Wendell Walker and, as my Italian friend had said, in no time I had the 'magic' piece of paper which would gain me admittance anywhere. So, that night, off I went to West 23rd Street again and found a lodge which was working a degree on a 'live' candidate (it was a 1st this time). Unfortunately I've forgotten the name of the lodge and the names of the various brethren I met there, but I received the warmest welcome possible (in marked contrast to the previous evening). When I recounted my earlier experiences to my new friends, without mentioning the name of the lodge concerned, they were amazed and said that they would have admitted me even without the Grand Secretary's *passe-partout*. They guessed correctly the name of the lodge which had refused me admission, so apparently this lodge had a somewhat unsavoury reputation in this respect.

The degree work was carried out in accordance with the Webb ritual which is commonly used in American lodges and is quite different to the various rituals used in the Australian constitutions; it was, however, well done. The regular Junior Deacon of the lodge was absent, so this office was filled by a Right Worshipful Brother (a PSGW) and his performance was a highly polished one, even though he had taken the job on a moment's notice. I can't remember the details of the ritual variations, but do recall that the lodge was opened in the 3rd degree, in which the lodge business was conducted, and then went down to the 1st degree for the initiation ceremony; and at the conclusion of the proceedings, all the brethren (including me, of course, but I didn't sing) stood and, with hands on hearts, gave a spirited rendition of the "Star-Spangled Banner".

After the lodge closed, there was no South whatsoever, although I believe the candidate was taken by his sponsors for a celebratory meal somewhere. However, a number of the brethren, including the WM, invited me to accompany them to the Masonic Club, located in the Masonic centre; here we remained for some 3 hours, with much conversation, story-telling and, of course, a fair amount of drinking (but I had no hangover the next day!). I was not allowed to put my hand in my pocket all night, and it was a most enjoyable and convivial occasion. The acting JD was an Englishman by birth, but had emigrated to USA before WW2, become an American citizen and served in the American army during the war. The colonel of his unit was Ralph Hodges who later became a 4-star general and, at one time, commanded all American forces in Europe in the post-war period. On one occasion, the aforesaid JD who was already a Freemason, had gone briefly AWOL from his camp to visit a lodge in the

neighbouring town and, of course, who should he see also visiting this lodge but none other than his colonel. Next day, he was summoned to the colonel's office and went with fear and trembling, expecting a 'rocket' and a "confined to barracks" punishment for being AWOL. However, Col. Hodges merely enquired about his Masonic history and, when the interview ended, said: "That'll be all, Sergeant". "But, Sir", said my friend, "I'm only a corporal". "No", replied Hodges, "as from now, you're a Top Sergeant", which doubled his pay!

The acting JD also told us about him being present on a great occasion during the war when, in the huge main lodge room in the New York Masonic centre, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had occupied the Chair and initiated his 4 sons, who were all in American naval or army uniforms.

Another brother, in telling of his war experiences, said that, at the outbreak of the war in Europe when USA was still neutral, he had crossed over to Canada and enlisted in that famous Canadian unit, Princess Patricia's Regiment (Princess Patricia was the daughter of the Duke of Connaught, Queen Victoria's youngest son, who had been Governor-General of Canada, and the Princess was so popular there that she was appointed honorary colonel of one of the oldest regiments, which then adopted her name as its title). The brother was proud that he had risen to the rank of sergeant in the regiment - "Not bad for a Jew boy from Brooklyn, eh!", he said to me.

When we were about to depart for our homes, they asked me how I was going back to my hotel. I said that, as I'd walked to the Masonic centre earlier, I supposed I'd walk back again. They were horrified at this, saying that the Masonic centre was located in a very dangerous area and that one of them (the WM, I think) would drive me to the hotel. Which he did, and so ended, I suppose, one of the highlights of my Masonic career.

As I hadn't seen an American rendition of the 3rd degree, several nights later I went again to New York Masonic centre where I found a lodge working this degree (name also forgotten). Again I received a very warm welcome, and was looked after by a PM who had served in the American army in Australia during WW2, and had spent some time in Melbourne, the city of my birth; so we were able to reminisce about places we both knew in Melbourne. The brother was also connected in some way with the theatrical profession and had made contact with many famous people in the Australian theatre while in Melbourne, a number of whom I had seen perform, and this was another area in which we had a common interest. The 3rd degree was carried out in a very dramatic fashion, even more violent and threatening to the candidate than in a Scottish 3rd; my 'Melbourne' friend put his thespian abilities to good use in playing the part of the 3rd conspirator; and, though I was quite impressed, I was glad I'd done my 3rd degree in the comparative peace and quiet of an Australian ceremony.

Some aspects of the American Masonic practices, at least in the New York lodges I had visited, were very contrary to those observed in Australia; for instance, smoking was permitted in the lodge room, even during the ceremonies (ash-trays and smoker's stands were placed all around the room); and there was quite a deal of loud conversation during the performance of the ritual. The language of the American ritual was much more modern than ours; I showed a brother an Australian ritual I was carrying with me and, after reading some of it, his comment was: "How quaint!" Incidentally, the American ritual book appeared to consist of initial letters only, followed by dots indicating the missing letters, so learning ritual there must present some difficulties and, I would imagine, there must be a tendency for the wording to be corrupted over time.

After the ceremony in this lodge, while there was no formal South, at least we did all sit down together and have a coffee and a sandwich or a doughnut in the cafe attached to the Masonic Club.

About a year before I was in New York for the UN audit, my family and I had made a holiday trip to the eastern United States in the course of which we visited Washington, DC. While there I was able to inspect the magnificent George Washington Memorial Masonic Temple at Alexandria, Va., a few miles from the federal capital. This is a tall, imposing building more than 7 stories high and surmounted by a huge tower, which can be seen for miles around. There are many lodge rooms, of varying size, in the building, and some are dedicated for the ceremonies of particular degrees, such as the Royal Arch, Rose Croix, etc. One was set aside for the Order of the Mystic Shrine ("the Shriners"), an order that is, strictly, non-Masonic, but which only 32nd degree or Knight Templar Masons can join. This organisation is noted for its charitable works, and it has established many hospitals in the USA. There is also a room set up as it would have been for a lodge meeting in George Washington's day, and some

of Washington's Masonic regalia is on display there. Around the rear wall of a large auditorium in the building are plaques bearing the names of all US Presidents who had been Freemasons; there were 13 at the time of my visit, from Washington to Gerald Ford; I don't know whether any later Presidents have been in the Craft.

### **The Netherlands**

In 1989, after I had retired from my main Public Service job, my wife and I went on a 9-months' overseas jaunt, mainly to the United Kingdom and the European Continent, and I was able to make a number of Masonic contacts in the various countries we visited. In this respect, I was greatly assisted by the book compiled by Wor. Bro. Kent Henderson of Victoria, *Masonic World Guide*.

The first city in Europe where we stayed for several days was Amsterdam. Although this is the largest and most important city of the Netherlands, it is not the capital, which is, of course, The Hague, situated some 50km to the south-west of Amsterdam; and the grand lodge - known as the Grand East of the Netherlands - is domiciled there. However, with the aid of Kent Henderson's book, I was able to locate the main Masonic centre in Amsterdam. This was 3 or 4 km out of the city centre, on the same tramline on which our accommodation was - another 2 or 3 km further out. The Masonic centre was a fairly modest (for a city the size of Amsterdam) 2-story building; I found an open door, and then a brother preparing a banquet room for an evening meal, with some female assistance. He spoke good English and, after I satisfied him of my Masonic credentials, was able to show me around. The ground floor consisted of two large lodge rooms, a smaller room which appeared to be a rehearsal room, and two banquet rooms. I wasn't taken upstairs, but I assumed the second floor contained offices, store-rooms and, perhaps, a caretaker's residence. The lodge rooms were set up in the 'continental' style, that is, with both wardens' chairs in the West.

According to Henderson, nine Craft lodges met in this building and these would comprise most of the Amsterdam lodges (in all, there were 148 lodges in the Netherlands). In addition to the Craft lodges, I presume a number of other Masonic orders would also meet in the building. I didn't visit a lodge in Amsterdam, mainly because time did not permit but, with memories of my New York experience, I was also conscious of possible problems if I hadn't contacted the grand body first.

### **Norway**

I found the offices of the Grand Lodge of Norway at Nedre Vollgate 19, Oslo (the address given by Henderson) and went up to the first floor, where I found the general office, occupied by a number of elderly and middle-aged gentlemen. Having previously heard that "all Norwegians speak English", I was amazed that none of these men did so. Fortunately, a young man had come into the office just behind me (I think he was enquiring about membership) and he could speak English, and so was able to translate for me. At my request, I was then taken up to the next level to meet the Grand Secretary, and he also spoke good English.

After examining my papers, the Grand Secretary took me on a tour of the lodge rooms. Now, Norway, as well as other Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Iceland and, to some extent, Finland), operate on the Swedish Masonic system in which there are 11 degrees: the first three being equivalent to our Craft degrees and are conferred in 'St. John's lodges', the next three degrees are known as Scots Degrees and are conferred in 'St. Andrew's lodges' (the 6th degree is considered as equivalent to our Royal Arch degree), the 7th to the 10th degrees are conferred in the Grand Lodge itself or in Provincial Grand Lodges (known as Stewart Lodges or Chapters) - these are, to some extent, similar to our 'higher' degrees, e. g. 18th degree and above, Knights Templar, etc. The 11th degree (Knight Commander of the Red Cross) is, in fact, a civil order of knighthood, but conferred on eminent Freemasons only. The Swedish Rite is very much Christian-based.

The various lodge rooms were designed for the presentation of the different degrees but, as my papers only referred to my membership of the Craft, the Grand Secretary only showed me those appropriate to the first three degrees: there was a large Grand Lodge room which, however, I could not enter as it was set up for the 9th Degree (in the adjoining banquet room, the table settings had napkins with red crosses, so I surmised aloud that the 9th Degree could be equivalent to the Knights Templar Order, of which I was a member, but the Grand Secretary made no response to this observation!); I was

shown a smaller room in which St. John's lodges worked the 1st and 2nd degrees, and a third room which was reserved for the Master Mason's degree; this room was completely draped in black and had representations of the 'emblems of mortality' in white on the walls. As well as the various lodge and banquet rooms, there were large reception areas, with imposing portraits of Grand Masters and WMs of both 'blue' (St. John's) lodges and 'red' (St. Andrew's) lodges on the walls - some Grand Masters had been kings of Sweden, including Karl Johan (in English, Charles XIV John of Sweden and Norway) who had been one of Napoleon's marshals, Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, before he was elected Crown Prince of Sweden in 1810 (the then king, Charles XIII, was childless). Sweden was a member of the coalition opposing the French emperor and, in 1814, she declared war on Denmark (which supported Napoleon) and the Swedish army under Bernadotte defeated the Danes, with the result that Norway, which had been ruled by the king of Denmark, now became an independent state under the Swedish crown; Bernadotte had become a Freemason in France in the early revolutionary period, and as King Karl Johan he is still highly regarded by the Norwegians today.

I was most impressed by both the exterior and the interior of the Oslo building. The Grand Secretary told me that it had been used as the German Wehrmacht HQ during the war when Freemasonry was, of course, suppressed. He also told me I would be very welcome to attend a St John's lodge meeting but, unfortunately, there were no such meetings during the short period I was in Oslo.

## **Denmark**

The brethren I met in the Grand Lodge offices in Copenhagen were very proud of their building, saying that it is, apart from the GL building in London, the largest Masonic building in Europe. (When, some years later, I saw the Grand Lodge premises in Stockholm, I realised this statement was not completely accurate; however, the Stockholm building had originally been a palace belonging to a family of the Swedish nobility, so the Danes may have meant that their building was the largest Masonic structure built for that purpose.) Among others, I met the Deputy Grand Secretary (Bro. Rasmussen) and the brother in charge of the impressive Masonic museum, who showed me around the various lodge rooms. My general impression was that the accommodation and facilities were better than those at Oslo. The foyers and passageways were adorned by portraits of Grand Masters, most of whom had been Kings of Denmark.

Until the accession of the present Queen's father, Frederick IX, the Grand Master had always been the reigning king, but when Frederick was 18 he went to his father, King Christian X, saying that, now he was old enough, he wanted to become a Mason. The king, however, replied that the young man was not yet mature enough and that he should wait a few more years; Frederick must have taken offence at his father's words, as he made no further approach about Freemasonry. When Christian X died, senior Grand Lodge officers went to the new king, saying that they expected that, in accordance with Danish tradition, he would now become a Mason and, in due course, Grand Master. Frederick's response was that, when he wanted to be made a Mason previously, he wasn't allowed to be and, as he had many Roman Catholic subjects, he didn't believe he should join and head an order of which they, in accordance with the then rules of their church, could not be members. (Note: Although he may have been mistaken in his attitude to his son, Christian X is much admired in Denmark for staying with his people after the Nazi invasion in WW2, whereas other European royalty, such as the Dutch and the Norwegian monarchs, went to Great Britain, and because, when Hitler ordered all Danish Jews in 1942 to wear yellow stars, the King on the day after this proclamation walked around the streets of Copenhagen wearing a yellow star himself.)

In the Copenhagen GL offices, there was also a brother whose job it was to maintain a comprehensive collection of postage stamps with a Masonic connection from all round the world. The only Australian stamps in the collection were those bearing the portraits of Sir Joseph Cook and Lord Bruce, Australian Prime Ministers who had been Freemasons. He asked me if I knew of any other Australian stamps in this category. I said I doubted whether there would be others!

## **France**

Paris was experiencing a very hot May in 1989 when I took the *Métro* to the inner suburb of Neuilly-sur-Seine, just across *la route périphérique* (ring road) from the city proper, and found the Boulevard

Bineau where the French regular grand lodge, *la Grande Loge Nationale Française (GLNF)*, then had its headquarters - it has since moved to premises in the inner city - in a large 3-story mansion in a surrounding garden. I was taken to see the private secretary of the Deputy Grand Master, Administration (in effect, the Grand Secretary) who was a charming middle-aged woman who spoke good English. She apologised to me for “the state of chaos” they were in (I hadn’t noticed!) as their Grand Master, M. Jean Mons, had just died.

After I expressed my sympathy, she called up one of her off-siders, a much younger woman, to show me around the various lodge rooms, asking me to come back to see her again before I left the building. There were 4 or 5 lodge rooms of varying sizes - interesting, but not much different than you’d see in Australia. When I returned to the older lady, she introduced me to her ‘boss’, the Deputy GM, Yves Tréstournel (from his name, I would assume his ancestry is Breton) who was very friendly and welcoming, with a considerable interest in Australia. Madame asked me whether I would like to visit a lodge while I was in Paris, and said that it just so happened that one of their 2 English-speaking lodges was meeting that evening. “Come along at 6pm, and you’ll find the the lodge members having a pre-meeting drink in the bar on the 1st floor”, she said.

Having ‘squared off’ with my wife, telling her we’d have a late dinner somewhere after the meeting, about 9pm (which is not really late by Parisian standards), I put on my business suit, grabbed my regalia and headed back to the GLNF building. In the bar were a half-dozen or so brethren (the number increased rapidly shortly after) and I received a warm welcome from them. Now, although this was an English-speaking lodge (it had a double-barrelled name, *Loge Britannique-Fidelity*, so it was obviously an amalgamation of two older lodges), about a third of its members were Frenchmen, the remainder being Englishmen working in Paris, either in business or at the British Embassy, etc., and some perhaps had retired there. All the French members spoke excellent English, of course, and probably had British connexions - in business or, maybe, had English wives. While the English members were friendly enough, I had a slight feeling that some of them regarded me as a brash colonial; on the other hand, the warmth shown me by the French members was palpable.

One of the brethren I met there has made a lasting impression on me; he was a Frenchman, Paul Saguin, in his late 60’s who had a wealth of funny stories (he even told me an “Australian” joke in a fair representation of the ‘ozzie’ accent). I had put on my Melbourne Cricket Club tie for my visit to the Paris lodge, which is blue with white and red stripes, so I told him I was wearing the French national colours in honour of the occasion. He laughed and said I needn’t have bothered as François Mitterand (at that time, the French President) wouldn’t be with us that evening (as a point of interest, the President’s brother, Jacques Mitterand, was the head of the irregular Grand Orient of France, so it is likely François was also a member of the irregular body).

As the subject of cricket had come up, Paul Saguin told me with some pride that he was probably the only Frenchman ever to become a member of the famous Marylebone Cricket Club. He had done most of his secondary education at an English ‘public’ school (probably Eton or Harrow - I don’t know why, perhaps his mother was English, or his father may have had significant business interests in Great Britain and wanted his son to develop useful contacts for later in life), and had acquired a taste for cricket there, becoming a successful off-spin bowler with school 1st XI which won the championship in the inter-school competition. Many of his team-mates had been invited to train with the Middlesex County Cricket Club, with a view to their playing with the County 2nd XI and eventually, if good enough, with the 1sts; but Paul had not been so invited. When he enquired about the reason for this, he was told that the chairman of selectors had made the comment: “Oh, we can’t have a ‘Frog’ playing with the County!”

Paul, understandably incensed at this, then wrote a letter to the chairman expressing his disappointment at the treatment accorded him, and received an apologetic reply which included an offer to put the young Frenchman up for membership of the MCC by way of recompence. Paul told me he still made use of his MCC membership and often went over to London in the cricket season to watch test matches at Lord’s.

During the 2nd World War, he had served in the Free French Airforce and had spent some time in Egypt. The US Army Airforce had established a palatial officers’ club in Cairo, the facilities of which were also made available to allied airforce officers. Paul told me that, on one occasion he had gone into

the club with one of his comrades and they had met up with 2 RNZAF officers, one of whom was a Maori. After a few drinks, the 4 of them were leaving the club when 2 American officers were about to enter. Seeing the Maori, one of the Americans, in a southern drawl, said: "Hey, nigger, when are you going to start to fight?" The Maori officer immediately replied: "Right now!" and laid the American out with a beautiful right cross to the jaw. (At this period in American history, black Americans were not allowed to serve in fighting units, but were confined to transport units, base duties, etc.)

After several drinks at the bar, and before the lodge opened, I was called aside by 2 or 3 of the senior English members and put through 'my paces' in the three Craft degrees and the installed master's secrets; they even examined the signature in my passport to compare it with that on my MM's certificate! Having passed this examination without much difficulty, I was permitted to enter the lodge before the opening. The work of the evening was a 1st degree, the candidate being (I think) a young Frenchman. The ceremony was almost exactly the same as ours, the only difference being that the 'mode of preparation' charge was omitted; some of the charges were given by French members and their renditions were faultless (better than some of our brethren would do).

At the conclusion of the degree ceremony, the Worshipful Master (an Englishman) announced the death of the Grand Master, and advised that all Freemasons were invited to attend the requiem mass for him at St. François de Sales Church the following Wednesday. No South was held in the Masonic centre, but most of the brethren went off to have dinner together at a Paris restaurant. I was invited to join them, but pleaded the necessity to return to my wife (on her own in an hotel in a strange city) as an excuse. I was told to bring her with me, but this was not really practicable (in the event, we went on our own to a cous-cous restaurant (Moroccan) near our hotel when I got back from the lodge meeting).

Thus ended another memorable occasion in my Masonic career.

## **England**

Every Australian Freemason who is visiting England for the first time should endeavour to join a tour of the headquarters of the United Grand Lodge of England in Great Queen Street, London (not far from Australia House). Although I had been in London in 1957 as a young man and a fairly new Freemason, it wasn't until I was back there in 1989 that I gained that experience.

As we all know, the English Grand Lodge is the premier grand lodge in the world, and its Great Queen St. premises reflect that fact; the various lodge rooms in their size, costly furnishings and impressive decorations are magnificent, and the Masonic museum in the building is, without doubt, the finest I've ever seen. The brother conducting the tour I was on was very well-informed and his presentation was always interesting. There are no supper rooms in the UGL building, these are located next door in what are known as the Connaught Rooms, but we were not shown them.

Two points of interest that remain strongly in my memory from the tour are: the Masonic jewels and other regalia, exhibited in the museum, made by French prisoners in England, who were captured in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars; these brought to mind similar artifacts made by Australian POWs, who were Masons, in Changi in the 2nd World War; and information previously unknown to me concerning the present Queen's father, King George VI. As most would know, George VI was a very keen Freemason, and as Duke of York had occupied to the position of Junior Grand Warden and was expecting to be installed as Grand Master when his great-uncle, the Duke of Connaught, who was very old, retired from that position. However, when his brother, Edward VIII (also a Freemason), abdicated late in 1936, senior GL officers went to the new King, saying: "Sire, now that you are our King, in accordance with British tradition in this matter, you can never be Grand Master but, of course, if you wish you could be the Patron of the Craft".

George VI was very disappointed about this situation, but asked if he could be made a Past Grand Master. The GL officials readily agreeing to this compromise, in this capacity the King subsequently installed the next three Grand Masters: his youngest living brother, the Duke of Kent (the father of the present Grand Master) in 1937; when the latter was killed in the War, the King's brother-in-law, the Earl of Harewood, in 1942; and when he died in 1947, the Duke of Devonshire. (The last-mentioned GM died in 1956 in interesting circumstances; in that year, my father and mother, who were on a long overseas trip, had rented a cottage in a small Sussex village, near which the Duke of Devonshire had his 'stately home'. On one Sunday morning, the Duke had read the 1st lesson in the little village

church, which was that well-known passage from Ecclesiastes, and later that day while chopping some firewood, he had a massive heart attack and died.)

During our time in Great Britain in 1989, we stayed for a considerable period with close friends who had a large house in the village of Shinfield, near Reading in Berkshire. It was my habit to go for an early morning walk and, in this way, I got to know an elderly Scotsman who was also living in Shinfield, 'Jock' Robertson, and his dog 'Whisky'. Now Jock was a Freemason, and he showed me the Masonic centre in Berkshire where his lodge met; this centre consisted of a number of lodge rooms, administrative offices and a retirement village (at this time, I don't think this type of development had yet occurred in Australia although, of course, they are now quite common). I couldn't visit Jock's lodge as it was then summer, and English lodges usually don't meet in the hot months. However, before we left the UK to return to the Continent, Jock told me a cousin of his belonged to a lodge whose installation meeting was held in September, and suggested we both go along to this meeting,

The lodge's name was 'Ferneberga' and it met at Farnborough in Hampshire, a town which has a large RAF establishment nearby and is famous for its annual air show. The installation was a very pleasant affair, and Jock's cousin, Bro. Geoff. Andrew was invested as Junior Deacon; I was not called on to speak, but was able to extend fraternal greetings from both my Australian lodges. The installation banquet was held in the Masonic club within the temple complex, and was an enjoyable repast.

### **Austria**

In 1989, the Grand Lodge of Austria's address was Rauhensteingasse 3, Vienna (different from that shown in Kent Henderson's book) in the old part of the city, near St. Stephen's Cathedral and Mozart's Viennese lodgings. The building was, I judged, an 18th century construction, so it was probably there in Mozart's lifetime (although I doubt whether the Grand Lodge would have been located there then - but the name 'Rauhenstein' means 'rough stone' which is quite appropriate for Masonic premises!); it had massive oak doors fronting the street, and very high ceilings. I was taken up to meet the Assistant Grand Secretary (Bro. Rudolf Hirsch) who didn't speak much English but, fortunately, there was a visiting brother with him, who was from New Zealand but born in Vienna, and who was able to translate for us.

There is an English-speaking lodge meeting in Vienna (there is a French-speaking lodge also) - Lodge Sarastro (named after the 'high priest' character in Mozart's 'Masonic' opera, 'The Magic Flute', who was supposedly based on the Austrian Grand Master of the time, Ignacz Born), and the Asst.GS rang the WM of this lodge to come and show me around the building. Wor.Bro. Hakim was an Austrian (but, of course, spoke very good English), and he had left his work to perform this service for me; I was most impressed! The lodge rooms were generally very small; the Grand Lodge room was only as big as the main lodge room in the Canberra Masonic Centre, but it was in the attic of the building and the exposed beams gave the room a rather impressive appearance. I noticed that, in the main foyer of the building, there were notice boards giving details (including photographs) of all candidates for initiation throughout Austria; W.Bro. Hakim told me that those details are circulated to all Masonic centres in the country, so that all Masons were in a position to raise objections to a candidate if they wished. I commented that this seemed very thorough, and he said: "Well, we want to make sure we don't admit any ex-Nazis!".

### **Italy**

As I'm sure most of you know, Freemasonry in Italy has had a chequered history in recent years - the Grand Lodge there has been recognised by other grand bodies, then recognition has been withdrawn, and then restored again - mainly as a result of the activities of the irregular lodge, P2. But in 1989, the Italian Grand Lodge was in full communication with the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory.

I had great difficulty finding the premises of the Grand Lodge (official name: the Grand Orient of Italy) in Rome. Henderson's address was out-of-date but, fortunately, the telephone no. given by him hadn't changed. I was put through to a young lady who spoke good English and gave me the new address, saying that when I arrived at the entrance, I should push the button there and speak into a grill, and the gate would be opened by remote control.



The street in which the GL premises were ran along the edge of a large park (the Gianicolo) on the west bank of the Tiber and south of the Vatican. I walked up and down the street several times before I found the gate with a button and a speaking grill, but the gate was opened at my request and I found myself in a garden with a path leading up to an imposing villa. The young lady I had spoken to on the telephone met me and took me into a large reception room containing beautiful, ornate 18th century furniture. An elderly, well-dressed gentleman entered, and through our interpreter (the young lady) asked for my papers. He took these away to a side table in the room and perused them carefully; he then walked back and embraced me, kissing me 3 times on the cheeks. Thus he accepted me as a brother Mason!

The gentleman's name was Alfredo Diamede and he was the Deputy Grand Secretary of the Grand Orient of Italy; he didn't speak any English but we were able to converse quite well through our fair interpreter (she spoke English with an American accent, so I thought she may have been born in USA, but she said no, she was Italian but had had an American teacher). The Dep.GS said that there were no lodge rooms in the building which was used for purely administrative purposes; lodges met elsewhere in Rome in various buildings which were not identified with any Masonic symbols (Freemasonry is very secretive in Italy because of the ongoing hostility of certain elements in the general population); he said he could arrange for me to go to a lodge meeting if I wished, but unfortunately my arrangements did not permit this. He then showed me the magnificent library in the building, containing thousands of volumes, of which he was justly proud. The books were mainly on Masonic subjects, of course, but he said they were obliged to include anti-Masonic tomes as well as those favourable to the Fraternity.

Before I left the building, the Dep. GS gave me a year's set of the most impressive monthly magazines, called *Hiram*, which the Grand Orient publishes. Though these were all in Italian, with my sketchy knowledge of Latin (from my schooldays) and somewhat better competency in French I was able to make out much of the material. One of the magazines gave a comprehensive report on an international Masonic conference recently held in Rome; this included a speech by the Pro Grand Master of the UGL of England and Wales, Lord Cornwallis, in which he described the problems being experienced by the Craft in its relations with the Anglican Church. This drew the response from the Italian Grand Master that, while he sympathised with his English brethren, if Lord Cornwallis wanted to see how church authorities could really be difficult, he should come to Italy and deal with the Vatican.

### **Scotland**

While we have been in Scotland on several occasions in recent years (we have friends in Forfar), we have never gone into Edinburgh, so I have not been able to make contact with the Grand Lodge there and have not visited any lodge. However, in 1995, when we were travelling around the 'Burns country' (Ayrshire and Dumfries), we found ourselves in Tarbolton and were able to inspect the lodge room where the St. James Lodge, of which Robert Burns was a member, met. The room has been kept much as it was when 'Rabbie' was alive.

### **Ireland**

In 1995 we also spent some time in Ireland, visiting Dublin among other places. While walking around the area in Dublin near Leinster House where the Dail (the Irish Parliament) sits, I found myself in Molesworth Street where the headquarters of the Grand Lodge of Ireland are located. I was shown round the building by a friendly brother; like some of the GL premises on the Continent and the Washington Memorial building in the USA, it had lodge rooms dedicated to particular degrees. As well as a large room for Grand Lodge communications, there were rooms for the Mark, Royal Arch, Knights Templar (in effect, a chapel) and Rose Croix degrees. I was informed that no less than 80 Masonic organisations (lodges, chapters, etc.) met in the building each month. I was impressed with what I saw and heard on the tour.

## Sweden

Triennial international conferences of Grand Masters of the Masonic Order of the Temple are held in different countries where the Order (or equivalent institution) has a presence. In 1997, the conference was held in Stockholm, and I was one of a fairly large group of knights templar from the Great Priory of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory who journeyed there to support our Grand Master (Most Eminent Knight Donald H. Gunner GCT). My wife and I had a very pleasant 5 days in the Swedish capital, including our attendance at the events associated with the conference during the week-end on which it was held - a cocktail party, an exemplification of the 9th degree of the Swedish rite (for knights templar only, of course - the ladies went on a boat cruise to Drottningholm Palace where the Royal Family live), a banquet on the Saturday evening, and a church service on the Sunday morning.

The Swedish Freemasons were very welcoming and friendly, and their organisation of the conference could not be faulted. The degree exemplification was interesting, spectacular and well-done but, you will understand, I can't go into details about it. However, the church service was a great occasion as it was graced by the presence of the King of Sweden, Carl XVI Gustav, and Queen Silvia. From 1809 until the accession of the present King in 1973, the Kings of Sweden had always been Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of Sweden. However, either because of the precedent set by Frederick IX of Denmark (see above), or because of his age (he was in his 20's when he succeeded), Carl Gustav decided that he wouldn't be GM and 2 of his uncles, the Dukes of Halland and of Sudermanland, were in turn Grand Masters. The present GM, however, is not related to the Royal Family. Carl Gustav is, I think, a Freemason and is known as the High Protector of the Order.

The church service was held in the Grand Lodge building; as mentioned above under 'Denmark', this was originally a palace owned by a family of the Swedish nobility, and was built in 1660; Kent Henderson describes it as "probably the most magnificent Masonic structure in the world" and I wouldn't dispute that opinion. The service was conducted by the Archbishop (emeritus) of Stockholm, who is a Freemason, and after he had concluded his sermon (which had a strong Masonic flavour) he said: "Now, let us all listen to some Mozart", and the Grand Lodge choir, many of whose members are professional singers with the Swedish National Opera, then gave a beautiful rendition of the 'Chorus of Priests' from 'The Magic Flute'. Those who know that opera will understand what I mean when I say that, seeing the King and Queen sitting there, in Chairs of State and holding hands, at the front of the nave in the centre of the aisle, reminded me of the hero and heroine of the opera, Prince Tamino and Princess Pamina.. Thus concluded another major highlight of my Masonic experience, and this seems a good point at which to end the story of my Masonic peregrinations overseas.

## Conclusion

I have been very fortunate to have travelled so widely as I have done in recent years. Except for the minor 'hiccup' in New York, everywhere I have made Masonic contacts I have been received with genuine warmth and friendship, which has demonstrated to me the true 'universality of the Craft' and that the grand Masonic principle of Brotherly Love is flourishing widely and as well as it should be. Of course, there are a number of other countries which I have visited where, for various reasons, I have been unable to establish Masonic contacts, for instance, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Greece, Turkey, New Zealand, Israel, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Belgium and Zimbabwe, and I regret this. I am also disappointed that I have only been able to attend about 10 actual lodge meetings abroad, but when visiting other countries, one is often not long enough in one place to be there when a Masonic meeting is being held.

Finally, I would encourage any brother who is travelling overseas to make some Masonic contacts there, if this is at all possible. I'm sure that those who do so will be richly rewarded in terms of great and very happy experiences. Of course, you need to take as a minimum your Master Mason's certificate, a Travelling Certificate obtained from your Grand Lodge and some addresses and telephone numbers (also obtainable from Grand Lodge).