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## A Century of Masonic Research

by Bro Neil Wynes Morse

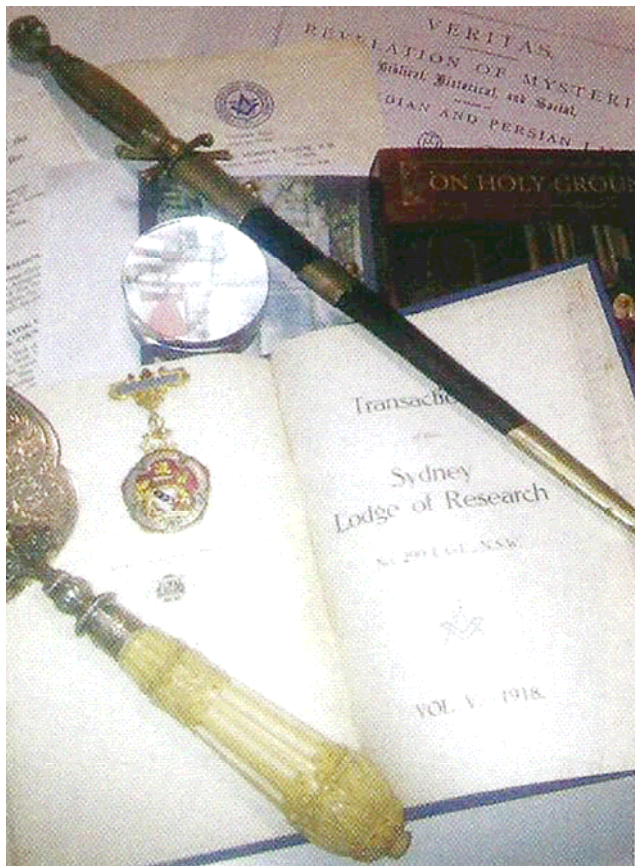
### Introduction

When I first canvassed the idea of a survey of the century of Masonic research in this jurisdiction, Bro Greg said I was to spend no more than one minute per year. But so that Tessa will have some of the evening left, I worked on devoting 15 seconds to each year, and 16 to leap years.

I have decided to cherry-pick some of the highlights and lowlights of the hundred years. A longer consideration of the topic will be released during the year.

### Sydney Lodge of Research No 290

Let's start with a highlight, in fact the first highlight, the foundation of the Sydney Lodge of Research. In 1913 the Grand Master, Dr C U Carruthers, had several circulars distributed promoting the creation of a lodge of research. Meetings were held to discuss the matter and organise a petition. The petition, containing 62 names, was signed off on 15 January by the sponsoring lodge, Lodge Oxford No 85, and the first signature to appear is that of the Grand Master.



The title of the lodge was originally written in as '*Lodge of Research*' by Bro Scott-Young, who did most of the legwork, and was to be the foundation Senior Warden. But at some stage DGM Hungerford added '*The Sydney*' to the place on the petition for the name of the lodge. The Board gave its approval,

subject to certain provisions being . . . that the initiation fee should not be less than £26/5/-, that every member must be a member of another Lodge in NSW, and, if not, such member's subscription due to the Lodge to be not less than £5/5/- per annum.

To put the fees in perspective, the average weekly wage then was £1/16/6. GM Carruthers endorsed the Board's decision on 3 March 1914 and the lodge was inaugurated and dedicated on 20 March 1914.

The objects of the lodge, as set out in the by-laws, were to be 'the study of Freemasonry, particularly its History, Symbols, and Legends, and the dissemination of knowledge by the reading, discussion, and publication of papers dealing therewith'.

The by-laws of the lodge reflected the provisions set by the Board and remained in force for the life of the lodge. At the end of the lodge's time, average weekly earnings were just under £16/10/-.

In his *Address to the Lodge* on the occasion of his Installation as the first Master, RWBro J C Heighway stated:

In a Lodge of this nature it appears to me that we require three classes of members:

Those who can teach.

Those who can criticize justly.

Those who can listen and learn.

Some brethren may be fortunate enough to belong to each class, some to two, but every brother should be able to listen and learn . . . each class is necessary for the welfare of the Lodge.

Bro Heighway also probably let slip one of the principal reasons for the creation of the lodge. He said:

I have heard that a doubt has been expressed as to the utility of such a Lodge as this. Might I say in reply that I think our Grand Lodge, in not having a Lodge for the study of Masonic subjects and for the enlightenment of the Craft, has lagged behind our sister Grand Lodges.

This I take to be an indirect reference to the Lodge of Research in Victoria which had commenced operations in 1912. At least that's what some members of that lodge believe to be the case: 'lodge envy'!

One tradition was instituted from Day One. At the festive board, there was to be no toast to the newly installed WM; instead the toast was to the Sydney Lodge of Research.

In what was to become another tradition, on his last night the second Master, Bro Scott-Young, gave a retrospect of the work of the lodge in its first two years. He also mentioned the creation of a correspondence circle and the printing of the lodge's *Proceedings*. I have to state here that the Victorian Lodge of Research did not start publishing until 1918!



*Now for a lowlight . . .*

In 1956 the Master of the Sydney Lodge of Research wrote:

A justification of existence of a Lodge of Research is good reading in Transactions, which attracts Elder Brethren of the Craft, mature of mind and deeply experienced in F. M., and to counsel us and take office; and junior brethren of F.M. to join us in search of wider knowledge than ritual and ceremonial provide.

On 12 December 1956 the Grand Master advised Grand Lodge:

It is with regret that I have to report to Grand Lodge that I have temporarily withdrawn the Warrant of the Sydney Lodge of Research, No. 290, on the recommendation of the Board of General Purposes owing to the unsatisfactory state of affairs of the Lodge. I have requested the Board to make full inquiries into all matters connected with the administration of the Lodge in terms of Regulation 82 of the Book of Constitutions.

The quotation and the Grand Master's report are linked, as the Master's comments were written in a letter he addressed to the Grand Secretary asking that the Board of General Purposes investigate the state of affairs in the lodge, which he believed were 'such that it should not be permitted to continue to function under the present Charter'.

From another source I have been able to establish that the letter was drafted by the Grand Secretary! The last Worshipful Master stated 'Every move I made was under his direction and instruction'. It is a cause for thought what the reaction of the members would have been had they known of the source of the document.

As it was, an investigation of sorts was carried out by the Board, and the Grand Master was advised to maintain the suspension of the lodge.

However, it would appear that no formal report was ever presented, and this became a matter of annoyance to a number of the previous members. It was seen as a mark of Cain by some, a stain on their character for having been associated with a lodge that had its warrant withdrawn.

## **Newcastle**

I am advised by experts in this building that the 'NSW' in the Grand Lodge's title doesn't really mean Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong, but it is important in my story to relate that in 1957 the Newcastle Masonic Study Circle had its origin.

Recognising the need for a panel of speakers to supplement the lectures being given by Grand Lodge lecturers, a scheme was finalised in July of that year under the title of Speakers Panel. Grand Lodge sanction was not received for such a panel, however, approval being given for another venture, a study circle. It was a small step to form the projected speakers panel into a Masonic Study Circle in October 1957 under the auspices of the Masters' and Wardens' Association. The object of the circle is to research various Masonic subjects, prepare the material into papers, which after editing by a select panel, are published for the education of the brethren.

Its considerable contribution to the advancements of the local brethren continues still.

## Canberra

Around 1963 Sir Edwin Hicks and Bob Linford wanted to form a lodge of research in the Australian Capital Territory. As Bob told it, the stench surrounding 290 was still very evident and the Grand Secretariat was not at all favourable towards having a lodge of research formed anywhere, particularly in that hotbed of stirrers, the national capital.

So it was that a cunning plan was conjured up and the *Canberra Lodge of Research and Instruction* commenced operations in 1964, under a licence from Grand Master Beer as a Lodge of Instruction. The lodge still continues to inform, educate, and sometimes entertain local brethren as the *Linford Lodge of Research*. This year marks its jubilee.

## An attempted revival

Based on the public record, I should now speak about the creation of the New South Wales Lodge of Research, constituted in 1968, but there was a very interesting, but eventually fruitless, attempt to revive 290 in 1963–64. The Committee of Masonic Education directed the Study Sub-Committee, in 1962, to consider the desirability of reviving the lodge.

The Chairman of that sub-committee, VWBro Alec Bagot, investigated the matter and was of the view that the lodge could be revived and the Installation held in March 1963. Several legal questions had to be resolved, but the amount of support of the Grand Secretary and the Grand Master augured well for the future.

A number of meetings of interested brethren were held over the following months, but as 1962 closed, the pace of progress had slowed. Twelve months later a petition had been circulated and presented to the Grand Secretary, but something had changed.

Because of the death of the Grand Secretary, there was a hiatus. And when an appointment was made, the new Grand Secretary had no interest in the reopening of 290. He wanted it to fade into history, and if a lodge of research was to be formed, it should be a new body.

## New South Wales Lodge of Research No 971

Harry Kellerman was the Chairman of the Committee of Masonic Education at the time of the abortive attempt to revive 290 in 1963. He, with Bagot as his nominator, joined the Master' and Past Masters' Lodge in Christchurch. At the same time, Nock Walker and Olly Cummins also joined. These three were to play an important role in the foundation of the New South Wales Lodge of Research 971 and subsequent Masonic research in the jurisdiction.

We are now almost in the realm of 'living memory'. Although none of the founder members of the first iteration of 971 are still alive, some of us remember with fondness Harry Kellerman, Andy 'Walker the Talker' and Ollie Cummins. For years Ollie was the Local Secretary for the Quatuor Coronati Correspondence Circle.

And talking of QC, I reckon that this jurisdiction has been punching above its weight when it comes to papers published in *AQC*. Starting with W R Day in 1925 with the first major paper on the Kirkwall Scroll, through Bernard Caillard and Alan Sharp, both appearing in volume 100, with Alan as the winner of the Spencer Prize; Bob Linford's major work on Masonic independence in New South Wales, which was the last piece of his published, and that *after* the stroke which cut short his illustrious career. Since then their example has been followed, and will continue.



Since the formation 22 years ago of the Australian Masonic Research Council, this jurisdiction has figured prominently. Harry Kellerman was the first from here to be a Kellerman Lecturer; since then two of the biennial Conferences have been hosted here, at Parramatta in 1994 and Queanbeyan in 2008. For the record, the Kellerman Lecturers from this jurisdiction have been Harry Kellerman, Brian Burton, Bob Linford, Arthur Astin, Neil Morse, Andy Walker, David Slater, Bob Nairn, Geoff Ludowyk, Bob James and Phillip Purcell. And soon another name will join that list.

For various reasons the New South Wales Lodge of Research ran out of puff in the early 'naughties'. A rescue package which would have involved amalgamation with the University Lodge failed, and the lamp of knowledge flickered ominously. But the joining of the resources of Journeymen Online with those of 971 meant that the jurisdiction still has a warranted lodge of research, now under the title of the *Discovery Lodge of Research*.



### **In retrospect**

It has been said that Masonic researchers are dangerous, difficult, but desirable. I'd like to think so. Lodges of research are likewise, but more so.

But, as Bro Heighway said at the Installation in 1914:

I am sure that we will bear in mind the possibilities and probabilities of the future and endeavour to blaze a track free from all dogmatical ideas, but with a clear and earnest wish that as we start may our successors [as we pass out of this sphere of usefulness] continue, that they may look back on the founders of the Lodge as those who have handed down something to revere and cherish, something which must not be brushed aside to meet the caprice of the moment.

Then, commenting on the three classes that I quoted earlier, he said:

Those who are working quietly in the sphere of research will be encouraged and aided to renewed effort by those who sit to listen and learn. There is a traditional place for every Brother in this Lodge. . . it will be a tradition of the Lodge that each class will be encouraged.

To that sentiment I can only say: So mote it be!

***Please charge your glasses, rise and join me in the toast: To Masonic research.***

I must acknowledge the considerable assistance of Bro Brian French, the Grand Archivist; the ever-helpful Bro Christopher Williams, the Grand Librarian, and his staff; Bros Phillip Carter and Ian King of the Newcastle Masonic Study Circle, and you, the attendees of Discovery's functions. Without you . . .