

The history of the first 100 years of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076



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The sponsoring or 'Mother' lodge of Quatuor Coronati Lodge did not forget its protege, even after fifty years, and at the very next meeting after Songhurst's installation a formal *Memorial of Congratulation* was received along with a request that Moira Lodge might elect Songhurst as an honorary member. At the same time the Leeds Installed Masters Association had published a booklet by H. Poole and F. R. Worts on *The Yorkshire Old Charges of Masons* and asked that they might dedicate it to Quatuor Coronati Lodge as an acknowledgment of the status of the lodge in the field of masonic research.

There were, at this time and for several years afterwards, comments both inside and outside the lodge that interest in joining the Correspondence Circle would be better promoted by publishing, either separately or as a section of the *Transactions*, short articles of a more elementary historical and research nature than the papers generally given in this lodge. There was serious discussion of this subject and it was resolved to publish a series of short pamphlets for sale. The arrangement was that different members should undertake responsibility for pamphlets on different subjects and several subjects were considered in detail and names actually put to them. One such pamphlet was produced but later notes show that, not only were there insufficient funds available to produce any more, but that there was some reluctance on the part of members to start writing, and so nothing was produced after the first.

Correspondence Circle and Finance

Although by 1935 economic matters in the country were a little more stable following the 1929 collapse, the membership of the Correspondence Circle continued to drop and so, therefore, did income. The subscription to the Circle still remained at 10s. 6d. (52½p), the level at which it had been set when the Circle was started in 1886. The cash position was also made worse by a decision relating to the membership living in Australia, whose currency, although still in £sd as in England, was very much below par. Australian subscriptions were therefore being held in Australia waiting for an improvement in the exchange rate. Every year, therefore, showed a loss on working and by the end of 1936 the accumulated loss on the Balance Sheet was £5,392. The assets shown amounted to £1,561. The *Transactions* were two years behind so that, with the

current year's Volume which was due to members in respect of the subscription paid at the beginning of the year, the lodge had a responsibility to supply three Volumes of *Transactions*, the cost of producing each being estimated at £1,200. Thus there was a very real liability, if the lodge continued, amounting to £3,600 for Volumes alone, while other immediate liabilities on the Balance Sheet amounted to £344. The lodge was clearly blatantly insolvent as a going concern and it was only the gradual falling behind in the production of the *Transactions* which enabled it to remain in being. At one point the bank account had had to go into overdraft to meet the current commitments.

During 1937 the committee grappled with this problem. They had increased the annual subscription due from full members, but that had no material effect on the situation. The Correspondence Circle membership had fallen to 3,072. The nettle was finally grasped, and in October 1937 it was decided that the Correspondence Circle subscription should be doubled at one guinea (£1.05). To assist recruitment in the light of this increased subscription, the joining fee was temporarily suspended. It was anticipated that there would be a noticeable immediate drop in Correspondence Circle membership, but this was not as sudden as had been thought. By November 1937 the figure was 2,851, but it did continue to decline, the next two years showing 2,589 in November 1938 and 2,268 in November 1939, by which time war had again started. Publicity was also given to the existence of the Publications Fund and donations over these three years totalled just over £500. With membership holding up even at the rate it did, the increase in subscription had an immediate effect with profits of £404 and £915 in the first two years of its operation. The cash position improved accordingly and by 1939 one year of the backlog on the *Transactions* had been caught up.

The Lodge Itself

During these years of run up to the 1939–45 war, the lodge went through a very dull period generally. Attendance at the meetings was not so large as it had been, often being below fifty, while in the early part of 1939 it fell below forty. The full membership was still treated in the same manner as formerly and deaths exceeded the number being invited to join so that by March 1939 the figure was down to twenty-one, the lowest ever. After 1934, only four new full members were elected (all in 1937) until after March 1939. There had been a surprising amount of illness among the full members, perhaps because of the high average age, for example, Elkington celebrated his eighty-sixth birthday while Master of the lodge. In 1938 Lionel Vibert intimated that failing health would mean that he must soon resign as secretary and he hoped that Poole might succeed him. In the event, he was forced to give up more quickly (and he died soon afterwards) and the lodge was left with finding a new secretary in November 1938 at very short notice. Colonel Rickard, who had become a full member just one year before, undertook the office but with Songhurst, still the

Treasurer at seventy-eight, as joint editor. Unfortunately Songhurst died in March 1939.

The progression to the Mastership had gone in normal fashion and except for the shrinkage in numbers, normal lodge business went on in the usual way. The summer outings continued right up to the war, Hereford being visited in 1935, followed by Chester, Leamington Spa, Peterborough and Hastings. Carlisle was to be the venue for 1940 but this had to be abandoned. These visits had been adjusted to provide a local liaison in response to requests to hold a meeting of the lodge out of London each year, which the committee thought impracticable. Therefore, there was included an 'At Home' at which the lodge members on the visit acted as hosts to meet as many interested local people as possible. Gordon Hills left the lodge a legacy of £100 which was used to place in the lodge library a set of publications of the Wren Society.

War Conditions

The full effect of war was not immediate for the report for 1939 showed a substantial surplus on operations and a catching up of arrears in the publication of the *Transactions*. Numbers attending meetings did decline a little further, but the meetings were held and papers delivered. One casualty in this respect was that Cecil Adams, installed in November 1939, was unable to deliver an inaugural address as he had not had time to prepare it—and the same applied in November 1940 when Boris Ivanov was installed, although he gave an outline of his theme. Committee meetings were put in abeyance meantime and the Master and Secretary empowered to take committee decisions. Timings of meetings were altered so as to be a little earlier, and no formal meal was provided, in accordance with Grand Lodge directions, although the May and June meetings in 1940 were still at five o'clock. In January 1940 the selection committee put forward seven names to strengthen the full membership, but of these one died, one was not immediately acceptable and two declined the offer, so that the membership was only increased by three. In October 1940, the 'Cold War' being over, the lodge felt the full force of war conditions, for the meeting coincided with an air raid, seven was the total attendance and the paper was 'taken as read'. At the end of 1940 the lodge was still operating in surplus, donations were still being received for the Publication Fund, the full membership was twenty-five and the *Transactions* were only one and a half years in arrear.

More serious changes, particularly to the time of meeting, were made after this and the winter meetings were called for 2.30 pm, the May and June meetings, with double summer time operating, being at 5 o'clock. The exception was the installation meeting in November which was held regularly from 1941 at noon and was followed by such a communal lunch as the rationing restrictions would allow. At the June meeting also an attempt was made every year to arrange a meal afterwards, not always with success. In war conditions,

recruitment had suffered, the arrears of subscriptions and consequently the loss of membership became alarming and by the end of 1942 the Correspondence Circle membership was down to 1,722, and of these, 126 were on the 'war list' and so not paying. The lodge was no longer operating profitably and, because of war restrictions, the *Transactions* were in danger of becoming very much behind again. In addition, costs were increasing still further, so that in 1943, under Ivor Grantham as Master, there was much consideration and discussion on the future of the lodge. By this time public opinion on the ultimate end of the war was becoming much more optimistic and this feeling permitted some result to the attempt to interest masons in the lodge work. Grantham had delivered an inaugural address on the ways in which the Correspondence Circle could help and, although firm decisions were not always the end product of discussion, the committee, which was by now meeting fairly regularly, did debate the nature of the research on which its members should be engaged. In many ways, 1943 was a turning point for from this time the Correspondence Circle membership started to rise again and never looked back, the operation was profitable and donations were still coming in for the Publication Fund. Early in 1944 a further six names were considered for full membership and all were accepted, bringing the total up to thirty for the first time since 1920. And six further names for early consideration were also noted.

Such was the feeling of optimism in 1944 that the committee gave active consideration to adequate pension arrangements for Miss Ellen Johnson, who had for many years been employed by successive secretaries as an assistant in the lodge office. After consideration of various expensive pension schemes from insurance companies which the committee felt were beyond the resources of the lodge, it was resolved to put aside, soon afterwards in a separate account, £156 a year to fund arrangements for Miss Johnson's ultimate retirement. Money was still short and Covey Crump's index of the *Transactions* up to date could not be printed but would remain in manuscript, and available in the office. In 1944 Bristowe, the Senior Warden, was too ill to go forward and Frank Rickard, the secretary, became Master, Lewis Edwards being nominally secretary for that year, Rickard returning to the office at the end of his year as Master. In 1944 also another attempt was made to have more meaningful accounts and the value in the Balance Sheet of a quantity of old publications considered unsaleable was written off. With an increase in basic costs shown in the accounts, which included the salaries, the financial situation again became very tight. The increase shown in this year was £211 which represented over thirty per cent more than the previous year.

Post War Conditions

Although the war finished in 1945 it took a long time after this for conditions to return to normal—for example, rationing continued for six years more. During 1946 it had been possible to arrange for a formal meal after some lodge

meetings, but the installation was still held at mid-day. Other problems meant that by the end of that year the *Transactions* were two-and-a-half years in arrear and costs were still rising. The lodge was, however, particularly happy that the Grand Master, the Earl of Harewood, accepted honorary membership. The Duke of Connaught had done so early in his Grand Mastership, and although the subject had been raised with the Duke of Kent, he died before an answer was received. Lord Harewood's successor, the Duke of Devonshire, also became an honorary member as did the Earl of Scarbrough.

By 1947 it was possible to start re-issuing the series of short pamphlets started just before the war and to ease the financial position the £1,000 of Consols, held since before the 1914–18 war, was sold. By 1947 all meetings were being held in the evenings with dinner afterwards. Recruiting was still satisfactory and for two years the Correspondence Circle membership had been over 2,000 and donations were still coming in regularly for the Publication Fund, but costs were rising and the last two financial years had shown a loss. A general increase in subscriptions was ordered, but second thoughts cancelled this and the only change was the re-introduction of the one guinea joining fee for the Correspondence Circle. Colonel Rickard, as secretary of the lodge, was not particularly sympathetic towards the Correspondence Circle and its members. In actual war time, when the main priority was keeping going with meetings, papers, and the publication of the *Transactions*, this attitude was not important. The need, which Grantham had stressed during his Mastership in 1942–43, was to increase this membership substantially as soon as the war was well over. Rickard by then nearly seventy-five, gave up as secretary in January 1948 while Wallace Heaton was Master. Rev. Herbert Poole, who had been a master at Christ's Hospital and was of a much more sympathetic and helpful character, was by then available and he was appointed secretary. Poole, along with, particularly, Heaton, the Master, immediately started a vigorous campaign of recruitment, assisted by Gilbert Johnson who donated all the printing. This campaign achieved some success, and was continued, so that the Circle membership increased from 2,045 at the beginning of 1948 to over 2,500 at the end of 1951. The full membership was maintained at around thirty by keeping elections in line with deaths, and their subscription was put up to three guineas (£3.15).

Parallel with the publications of the lodge there had appeared for some years *Miscellanea Latomorum*, which was generally believed to have been produced by the lodge. It seems to have been privately owned by successive secretaries of the lodge, Songhurst, Vibert and Rickard. Whether Poole had no wish to carry this on is not clear, but Rickard offered the rights in the publication to the lodge without payment, provided the lodge would undertake to continue to have it edited by a full member. During 1948 the state of the premises at 27, Great Queen Street, which had originally been built in the 1720s gave cause for concern. Little had been done during the war and, no doubt, because of

tightness of funds, as little as possible during the 1930s. A schedule of repairs was obtained and it was resolved to go ahead with them. The financial situation was still not rosy and the accumulated losses on the Balance Sheet at the end of 1948 amounted to over £4,500, but the *Transactions* were now only one-and-a-half years behind. The Grand Lodge of Manitoba made a donation of \$1,000 towards the expense of repairs, and later a donation of \$500 was received from the Northern Jurisdiction of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in the U.S.A. By the end of 1950, with a recruitment drive in a minor key being maintained, the lodge was reasonably paying its way every year and the delay on *Transactions* had been reduced to one year in arrear.

Change

Unfortunately, the year 1951 was to prove one of very great change. Poole, the secretary, died very suddenly early in the year. After a holding arrangement, in June, John Dashwood, a retired tea planter, who had become a full member two years before, undertook the office. Until this time from the days of Speth it had been the lodge practice for the secretary to receive an annual payment out of which he personally employed any assisting staff required. However, it is apparent from the arrangements considered for Miss Johnson's pension that the lodge members still felt some responsibility. When Dashwood was appointed a change was made and the secretary was paid an honorarium for himself alone, any office assistance being directly employed by the lodge. Miss Johnson had sought to retire about the end of 1951 so that a new assistant was immediately required. In October 1951 John Dashwood brought in Guy S. Wodeman, *CMG*, sometime District Grand Master for Ceylon (1936-42). Miss Johnson retired at the end of February on a pension of £4 per week—and she is still drawing the (increased) pension as we arrive at our centenary. She was originally engaged by Songhurst in 1919 and the members gave her a handsome present in cash as a token of their esteem.

Research Contributions

The subjects dealt with in the *Transactions* in this period were still many and varied and the principal contributors were Heron Lepper, Fenton, Radice, Gilbert Johnson and Ivor Grantham. However, the greatest number by far came from Douglas Knoop, either by himself or with others and there were twenty-three contributions, either full papers or articles, during his membership, 1931-48. In addition he published several books of which he was co-author. In a way, this period was dominated by Knoop's views and although some of his building work papers seem to have no real connection with Freemasonry and its origins, on which he held strong views, much of his writing was directed to this end. His views did not go uncontradicted in this area which originally gave rise to the formation of the lodge, for Herbert Poole wrote of

him, 'I still find myself in profound disagreement with some of his views'. This difference of opinion coloured most of the period and is particularly exemplified in comments in *AQC* 61 (Part I) pages 144–153.

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