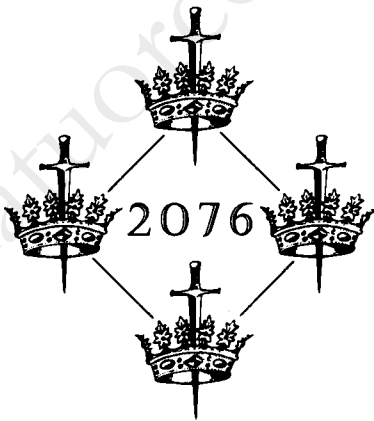


# The history of the first 100 years of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076



**Colin Dyer**

## V

The year 1951 may have been a year of substantial change but the year end brought to the new management a crisis which was sudden, sharp and severe. The minutes use the words 'financial crisis'; enquiry was made as to the extent of the liabilities attaching to the lodge in the event of the Warrant being surrendered to ascertain if debts could be met; and a resolution was passed that 'the lodge is justified in carrying on for the time being'. There is little doubt as to the gravity of the situation in which the lodge found itself at the audit meeting in January 1952 and the formal audit was postponed while ways and means of dealing with the situation were sought and considered. Parrett's, the Margate printers to whom Speth had gone for the first *Transactions*, had ever since continued to print for the lodge without any formal estimates or contract, there being considerable trust in such a long standing arrangement. The lodge was a year behind with the printing so that the Balance Sheet as originally drawn up, showed an estimated debt for the 1950 *Transactions* of £1,476 and for those for 1951, a round sum of £1,500. Right at the end of 1951 the printers intimated that costs had risen to such an extent that the account for the 1950 would be at least £300 greater, while that for 1951 would cost probably more than that. Even with the increase in the membership which had been achieved in the Correspondence Circle, the lodge was still not making a regular surplus; the accumulated deficit stood, at the end of 1950, at £3,388 and even before this news the deficit for 1951 (before considering the payment to the Staff Pension Fund) was likely to be £321. The Balance Sheet showed insufficient realisable assets to meet these immediate liabilities, although the subscriptions for 1952 had started to come in, but running costs were over £2,000 a year, exclusive of the printing bills.

The 1939-45 war, like the earlier one, had meant a question of keeping going, while the aftermath had continued for several years. The two secretaries during this period, Rickard, a retired Artillery officer, and Poole, basically a schoolmaster, were not essentially concerned with the economic side of the lodge, however well they coped with the editing and production, as it was possible in the prevailing circumstances, of the *Transactions*, and along with Miss Johnson's help, the administration of the office. Fortunately for the future of the lodge there were those available at this moment of crisis to propose

suitable courses of action and to persuade their fellow members to make sensible decisions. Guy Wodeman, the secretary's assistant, was one of these and the minutes suggest that Wallace Heaton took some part along with others. Within a short time proposals were made; not every one was accepted but the important ones were. A strict restriction on the length of papers for printing was immediately imposed; the inclusion of a photograph of the Master every year was discontinued; the practice of providing galley proofs to members before the meetings was discontinued; the annual payment of £156 to the Staff Contingency Fund was discontinued and, from the current balance of that Fund, Miss Johnson's pension was to be paid; alternative printing methods were examined. For forty years and more the *Transactions* has been produced each year in parts; as soon as the Editor had collected together a third or a half of the content (mainly the papers given in lodge and comments on them), this was sent to the printer, printed, bound and distributed. Thus, in earlier times there had been three parts in every year and, more recently, two. After consultation with Parretts, it was agreed to print in closer type, getting more lines to a page, and restricting margins, so that about one-third of the pages would be saved. Part I of Volume 63 (for 1950) had been completed but not paid for at the end of 1951 and Part II was in course of production. Part II was completed in the old pattern and the change would be made for Volume 64. Some provision was made in revising the accounts for 1951 to allow for the extra costs and a deficit of £872 was shown. In the event the costs of completing Volume 63 were greater than anticipated and the two parts came out at £2,050. The one part Volume 64 cost only just over half of this and, with one delivery only, the postage costs were also less. Consideration was given to selling some of the museum exhibits and of taking advertising in the *Transactions*, although the latter was never put into effect. The Establishment at Grand Lodge were sympathetic to the plight in which the lodge found itself and reduced the rent to be paid for 27, Great Queen Street to a nominal £25 per annum, a very real help. Gifts and legacies were also received. A serious effort again to increase the Correspondence Circle membership was made, this being the ultimate key to solvency, the main effort being directed to seeking the assistance, in recruiting, of local secretaries. This had an immediate effect and 558 members were recruited in 1952 bringing the total to over 3,000 and providing an operating surplus of £333. The effort thus started was not allowed to lapse, but with the strong persistence of Wodeman continued right through the 1950s so that when, at the end of 1958 a recasting of the form of accounts was proposed, the Balance Sheet showed a surplus carried forward on Profit and Loss account of over £2,500 after making full provision for likely losses, and the lodge had substantial sums invested. From a staff of the secretary plus Miss Johnson in 1951, there were now three assistants to the secretary. The salary review at 1 January 1959 showed a cost to the lodge of this staff of nearly £2,000 a year.

With the election of four new full members in 1951 the total had reached thirty-three, but the next two years brought a number of deaths and resignations. The selection committee were invited to meet; the first recommendations they made were not considered acceptable and when asked to look again, they stated that they had no recommendations to make. Periodically, from 1953 new members were found but losses were much more numerous than the intake and by 1961 the full membership was down to twenty-five. The trend continued into the 1960s and by 1968 the number was twenty-one. The age at which new members had been invited to join was a big factor in this difficulty of keeping up the numbers of the full members, for the average period of membership for men elected in, say, the upper sixties, was likely to be less than ten years. In the twenty years 1940–60 twenty-eight new members were elected; seven were over 69 and thirteen more were over 60. There may have been difficulty during the war in finding suitable candidates of moderate age, while the interruption of the war meant that there were likely to be fewer younger men who were yet interested in the work the lodge did. Five of the twenty-eight elected were based overseas. John Dashwood had become secretary so quickly after his joining that he had no opportunity to take progressive office. However, he took his normal rotation as Master in November 1955 and Sydney Pope became the nominal secretary for a year. When Heron Lepper died in 1953, Ivor Grantham became Treasurer.

With the increase in Correspondence Circle membership following the recruiting campaign, for a year or two average attendance at lodge meetings also increased but, although the rise in numbers of members continued, those attending normal meetings dropped back to an average of under fifty. The exceptions were weather and travelling conditions, when attendance might fall to thirty, and special occasions, particularly musical, such as that of 6 January 1956 for the Mozart bicentenary, which attracted a hundred. By 1953 the *Transactions* had been brought up to date, with only the current year to be issued, and this situation continued except for occasional problems, such as strikes, while Parretts continued to do the printing. Towards the end of 1954 R. H. McLeod died. He had taken over as the auditor when Alfred Gedge died, and between them they had audited the lodge accounts since 1897. The firm was known in 1954 as Gedge, Ilott & McLeod and other partners continued the work, the fee on this change being agreed at sixteen guineas (£16.80) a year; after this date the lodge accounts were not signed by an individual partner as auditor, but in the firm's name. This name was changed in 1959, by amalgamation, to Knox, Cropper, Gedge & Co. As the financial position improved, some of the restrictions imposed in 1952 were relaxed. Papers of over 10,000 words were permitted, with prior assent of the committee; the issue before the meeting date of galley-proofs to the full members was resumed; and later, the practice of including the Master's photograph was restored. The committee also felt by the middle 1950s that it might again start to publish

works on its own account. This started with issuing long papers which had to be summarised for the *Transactions*, as booklets for sale, and continued by reintroducing the older series of *Quatuor Coronatorum Antigrapha* in the form of old minutes and manuscripts. Most of these were successful financially, some very much so.

### *Premises Again*

By 1955 the committee had to take note of rumours regarding the future of premises on the north side of Great Queen Street and to consider, as it seemed quite possible that number 27 might be demolished as part of a scheme for redevelopment, the question of a base from which the lodge might work. Such rumours persisted until 1959 when it was confirmed that the premises were not to be demolished, but, at the same time, Grand Lodge were unlikely to continue indefinitely the concessional rent of £25 per annum. The Establishment at Grand Lodge began to make suggestions that an increase in Correspondence Circle subscription might provide more income and that the inclusion in the *Transactions* of more items of general interest might encourage more members. The committee took these approaches seriously and at one point the minutes read:

We are in agreement with the suggestion that we seek wider popularity in the masonic world by the issue of masonic literature on a more popular level.

This was done by incorporating into *Miscellanea Latomorum* as a section of the *Transactions* some items of general interest. The Board of General Purposes was anxious that the lodge should remain at number 27, but did point out that the neighbouring house produced £900 a year. The Board believed that the concessional rent was a major factor in the lodge financial arrangements but the lodge replied that an enhanced rent could now be afforded, but part of the premises could be given up if necessary. Negotiations began for the grant of a new lease.

It was ultimately agreed, after some vacillation, that increased costs did justify asking the members of the Correspondence Circle to pay a bigger subscription, and in 1960 the amount was increased to £2 a year, with a joining fee of £1, to be effective from November 1961. With a membership of almost 4,000, if there were not too many resignations, a virtual doubling of the subscription would help, not only to meet the increased property commitments, when agreed, but also to improve the financial position for the future of the lodge. The recasting of the Accounts in 1958 had discontinued the separate fund for Staff Contingencies, out of which Miss Johnson's pension was paid, and the lodge took on again the responsibility for this.

### *Change again*

It must be natural in any organisation that there are periods of little but normal activity and periods in which change seems to occur, and the phases in Quatuor Coronati seem to have repeated about every ten to twelve years. The end of 1960 gave a forboding of change, for Ivor Grantham gave up as Treasurer and Harry Carr, Master 1958–59, was elected to replace him. At this installation meeting in November 1960 is the first record that all three addresses were not given, only that to the Master. New by-laws were adopted in March 1961, including an increase in what full members paid, six guineas as joining fee and four guineas (£4.20) as subscription. At the same meeting proposals from Grand Lodge were received for a new seven year lease at an increasing rent, rising from the current concessional £25 to £1,200 over the last three years. The separate selection committee for new members was also abandoned at this time and for the future, preliminary consideration and selection were done by the full committee.

On 21 May 1961 John Dashwood, the secretary, died. At an emergency committee meeting on 1 June, Lewis Edwards undertook to be secretary until November and Harry Carr, the Treasurer, dealt with the office correspondence. It was agreed to approach three members to ask if they would accept the duties of secretary from November, and, after consideration, Harry Carr undertook the office. He was not slow to continue the policy which had been so successful over the previous ten years in promoting membership of the Correspondence Circle. He also pointed out the need for suitable quality papers for the lodge and the shortage of them. Some office reorganisation was undertaken and it was at this time that John Lindsay joined the staff as understudy and ultimate successor to Guy Wodeman, whose presence in the office had contributed so much to the success of the later 1950s. The first effects of Harry Carr's membership drive began to show by March 1962 and a year later the Correspondence Circle membership went over 5,000.

The whole of the 1960s appears in retrospect to have been a period of great change, contributed to by increasing costs due to inflation and by the energetic approach of Harry Carr, the secretary. At the end of 1963 an index to the full issue of the *Transactions* was proposed and suitably qualified associates to Reginald Hewitt sought to complete the task in about five years, funds being put aside for this. At the end of 1964 Parretts, the only printers ever to have handled the *Transactions*, indicated that they could no longer print for the lodge. Fortunately, with Gilbert Johnson still a member, his firm, Ben Johnson & Co., of York, were able to take the work over at a competitive price and Volume 78, published in October 1966, was the first handled by them. Guy Wodeman finally retired after thirteen years productive work managing the office and at the beginning of 1965 John Lindsay took this over alone. Harry Carr began to look for an editorial assistant against the day of his own ultimate retirement, but first attempts proved abortive. The change of printer produced

an unexpected bonus, for Parretts had in their works over 7,000 old Volumes of the *Transactions*, dating back, in some cases, a very long time. The request to remove them caused immediate storage problems, but they were offered to Correspondence Circle members at low prices and resulted in a considerable influx of funds. This was sufficient to maintain a surplus in the 1966 accounts when, otherwise, because of rising costs, including substantial increases in postal charges, there would almost certainly have been a deficit. This was followed by a further campaign to increase membership which was a sustained effort resulting in the number belonging to the Correspondence Circle passing the 10,000 mark before the end of 1970. New members were joining at a rate of over 1,000 a year; there were a number erased from the list every year in addition to natural wastage, but the climb from 3,980 at 31 October 1960 had been spectacular and had enabled the Correspondence Circle subscription to be held at £2 (with a £1 joining fee) right through the 1960s when costs were rising substantially.

### *Full Membership*

Sixteen full members died or resigned in the 1960s. Twelve new members were elected, of whom two had died by 1970, so that the difficulty in finding suitable members to carry on the lodge tradition is exemplified. Where previously the committee were considering several candidates and making a choice, in this period few obvious candidates appeared. The full membership dropped to twenty-one. This does not mean that the lodge and its work were failing, although Harry Carr was constantly reminding the committee of the shortage of satisfactory papers. The size of the *Transactions* had, by the end of the 1960s, gone from Volume 74 (for 1961) at 172 pages, the first edited by Harry Carr and still governed to some degree by the restrictions imposed in 1952, to an average 400 pages in the later 1960s and early 1970s. The lodge meetings were very much better attended, although weather conditions in January 1963 meant an attendance of only 29. At first, some special presentations attracted bigger attendances, such as the demonstration of the ritual used by the Pilgrim Lodge in May 1963 (171) and the talk on masonry among prisoners of war in May 1964 (127). John Rylands's paper on the penalties in the Obligations in January 1964 attracted some interest with 114 present. But by 1965 meetings were regularly attracting around a hundred and occasional meetings, particularly in June, with overseas visitors, and November for installation, had over a hundred and fifty present. The installation of James Stubbs in 1968 (at which Lord Cadogan, the Deputy Grand Master, was present) had an attendance of 390. A special occasion was made of the June meeting in 1967, the month in which the United Grand Lodge of England celebrated its 250th anniversary and including the installation of HRH the Duke of Kent as Grand Master. The date was changed so as to provide an opportunity to entertain some of the official guests in England for the celebrations. Some limitations had to be placed on attendance

because of lodge rooms available, but 253 attended when the lodge received twelve overseas Grand Masters and their delegations in Temple number 9.

By 1967 the seven year lease of the premises had expired and it was suggested by Grand Lodge that the tenancy be continued on a yearly basis with six months notice. Subject to assurance that it was not the intention to turn the lodge out, this was accepted. The strain on the staff of the rapidly increasing membership was shown by requests for new equipment and in 1969, with another drive for increased membership under way, it became necessary to spend £2,000 on re-equipping the office to cope. In 1968 Harry Carr had succeeded in finding an editorial assistant and early in 1969 Roy Wells took up the post. When Norman B. Spencer died in 1968 he left a legacy to the lodge which it was decided to use by endowing a prize of £50 yearly for an essay on a suitable masonic subject by a member of the Correspondence Circle. The first award was to be made in 1970 and the presentation in January 1971. A. C. F. Jackson was the first winner and although some years have not produced essays of sufficient quality to warrant an award, the prize has been presented in most years since.

In the past the lodge had occasionally invited the Prestonian Lecturer for the year to deliver his talk at one of the lodge meetings—and for him to suffer the members' comments after he had done so. From 1962 it became the practice for the Prestonian Lecture to be included in the programme and this has been so, except for a very few which may not have been suitable. Thus, with a Prestonian Lecture and an Inaugural Address taking up two meetings in every year, the pressure on research papers for the other meetings was reduced, probably to the benefit of the quality of those given. From the early 1950s by far the most prolific contributor was Harry Carr, and although some of the short papers appeared because he wrote notes covering matters to be publicised in the *Transactions*, he also produced a substantial number of full length papers. John Dashwood, editor for nine Volumes, was also a consistent contributor until he died, while there were a number also from Eric Ward, John Rylands, Norman Rogers, George Draffen, Reginald Hewitt and Lewis Edwards. This was a period when it first became natural for all those elected to membership to continue research and to produce papers, and one of the surprising points is the number of contributions from Milborne, Meekren and Horne, all from America. This was also the period, particularly under Harry Carr's secretaryship, when the lodge regularly sponsored and published books, going further than the *QCAs* and pamphlets of earlier days, and most were financially successful. During a period of inflation, costs were constantly increasing and if the Correspondence Circle subscription was to be kept at the same level, which seemed to be the determination of the lodge through these years, these increasing costs could only be met by constant drives to increase membership, and therefore subscription income, and by looking to other profits, from books for example, also to supplement the income. The enormous increase in membership itself caused increased costs. By this time the Correspondence Circle side of the



lodge had become a big business, and a business which was inseparable from the lodge itself, although it could not have had a more competent manager than Harry Carr. The lodge was giving a definite service to its Correspondence Circle members and one of the features started by Carr, the inclusion of Questions and Answers on pages 3 and 4 of the Summons, proved very popular. Unfortunately, in some areas, Carr's experience was not as broad as it might have been and some answers caused objections to be raised—to an extent that the Grand Secretary asked that the answers be qualified by a statement that they represented the Editor's personal opinion. The lodge had become such a feature world wide that its pronouncements had a special authority of their own.

The lodge managed to continue to make surpluses and by October 1970, with nearly 10,000 members of the Circle, the accumulated lodge fund was over £30,000 and the lodge had a financial reserve invested of more than this figure. The annual expenses were nearly £25,000. The projected index of the first eight Volumes of *Transactions* was completed by the end of 1970 but, because it had not been possible to enlist sufficient skilled indexers, it had been restricted to a Concise Index; Reginald Hewitt had controlled the production of this work. The annual *Transactions* were now being produced for a target date of early November but were occasionally a little later; it was finally agreed that new members should not have to wait until the end of the year for their first Volume. The entrance fee was raised to £2 and the new member received immediately a copy of the last available issue; but the subscription remained at £2. Correspondence Circle members were also encouraged to obtain advance proof copies of papers to be presented, so that they might comment at the meetings.