

William Farquharson Lamonby (1839–1926)

A Portrait of an Unknown Freemason

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THE INTRODUCTION OF ARISTOCRATIC GRAND MASTERS IN THE 1700S made Freemasonry popular amongst the upper levels of English society. The Craft became an association to join to improve one's status and to socialise with aristocrats and gentlemen, adding new reasons as to why men would want to become Freemasons. As Freemasonry developed connections with professional, literary, and scientific societies, such as *The Royal Society*, so men of influence and capital joined, further reinforcing Freemasonry's attraction to eighteenth-century gentlemen.

The Craft was carried to the far-flung corners of the Empire by businessmen, colonists, and the military, a point highlighted by John Stephen when writing from the colony of New South Wales in 1827: '... the greater part of the free community have been admitted as Masons in England from the prevailing notion of the necessity of being so on becoming Travellers...'¹

In the nineteenth century Freemasonry across the British Empire became a desirable social activity and considered a 'must' for any man of substance travelling within it. It

¹ J. L. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire – Freemasonry and British Imperialism, 1717–1927* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 1.

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offered mutual benefits to members throughout the Empire, and as it expanded so did Freemasonry. Those joining did so to cultivate fraternal relationships, moral refinement, and social advancement.

As a result of the spread of the Empire, and Freemasonry with it, English, Scottish, and Irish lodges were warranted in America, Canada, India, the Caribbean, Southern Africa, and in other far-flung places such as New South Wales.

New colonies required the infrastructure of the Empire to be established. Each colony had its own Governor and required administrators, bureaucrats, officials, and businessmen to manage, build, maintain, and project British power. English public schools provided the bulk of the manpower for the Imperial service, and the military officers who maintained order. Paul J. Rich commented in his book, *Chains of Empire*, that ‘The Empire wanted old boys for its leaders and old boys desired congenial employment.’²

Further,

There were practical reasons why a boy planning to spend a lifetime in Imperial service would consider joining a lodge. The masons had an effective system of communications and hospitality. Membership meant admission to the elite in any of Britain’s Colonies.³

Rules of conduct, dress codes, and high membership and joining fees ensured Freemasonry was restricted to men of a certain standing. In a fashion, Freemasonry in the 1800s offered a sense of exclusiveness very much akin to the fashionable gentlemen’s clubs and societies of the time.

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Victoria (E.C.) was formed on Monday 9 March 1857, when at Hockin’s Hotel, Elizabeth Street, Melbourne, Captain Sir Andrew Clarke was installed as Provincial Grand Master for Victoria. Captain Clarke had arrived in Australia in 1847 and, after a stint in New Zealand with Governor Sir George Grey, in 1849 he found employment in Hobart as private secretary to the lieutenant-governor, Sir William Denison. Captain Clarke wrote at the time (and it gives an insight into the man and perhaps society as well) when he said:

I am trying to seize the golden opportunity . . . which may lead ultimately not alone to wealth, but that which I prize still higher, the establishment of a name and character . . .⁴

For many of these Freemasons, time spent in the colonies was the beginning of a life of influential positions throughout the Empire. For others, time in the colonies

² P. J. Rich, *Chains of Empire: English Public Schools, Masonic Cabalism, Historical Causality and Imperial Clubdom* (London & New York: Regency Press Ltd, 1991), 82.

³ P. J. Rich, *The English Public Schools, Ritualism, Freemasonry and Imperialism* (London & New York: Regency Press Ltd, 1989), 93.

⁴ B. Malone, ‘Clarke, Sir Andrew (1824–1902)’, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <https://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/clarke-sir-andrew-3219/text4851>, published first in hardcopy 1969, accessed online 14 January 2023.

provided a certain gravitas when they returned to England, which they could parley into respect and influence. This was the case with many English Freemasons, who spent time in the Australian colonies. For example, Captain Sir Andrew Clarke attained the rank of lieutenant-general, and was appointed *CB* in 1869, *KCMG* in 1873, *CIE* in 1877, and *GCMG* in 1885.

Although many Freemasons left little trace of their existence, others left indelible marks of the time they spent in the colonies. Today they may not be recognized as their peers of the period but, nevertheless, they did leave a discernible presence, even though for some their fame was mostly confined to the annals of Freemasonry itself.

Portrait of an Unknown Freemason

The BBC website provides an interesting example of a gentleman, well-respected in Masonic circles in the colony of Victoria and in London upon his return to England in 1891, but almost completely unknown today.

When the Gordon Lodge No. 99 under the United Grand Lodge of Victoria (previously No. 2112 E.C.) celebrated its centenary in 1986, the lodge was able to locate two photographs of their founding master, William Farquharson Lamonby. One was a copy of his obituary, taken from *The Freemason* magazine of 27 November 1926, showing him looking much older and dapper in a suit with polka-dot bow-tie, and the other was a posed photograph taken in London with Bro Lamonby wearing his Victorian Past Deputy Grand Master dress regalia.

However, of particular interest was a painting discovered on a BBC website listed as held in the collection of the Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London and described as:

Portrait of an Unknown Freemason

William Farquharson Lamonby (1839–1926) by James Clarke Waite

Oil on canvas, 61 x 50.8 cm

Held in Collection of: The Library and Museum of Freemasonry in London.⁵

Cockermouth – Cumberland-Westmorland

Who was William Farquharson Lamonby and how did he come to have a portrait painted in Melbourne by one of the leading portrait artists of the time proudly displaying his Masonic jewels? Lamonby was born at Camberwell, London, on 8 November 1839 and christened in March the following year at Christchurch, London. Not long afterwards his Cumberland family moved back to Cockermouth where he was educated at the grammar school. The listing of principal inhabitants of Cumberland and Westmorland for 1829 has several instances of the family name Lamonby.

⁵William Farquharson Lamonby (1839–1926), Art.uk, <https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/william-farquharson-lamonby-18381926-192278>.



Fig. 1. This unknown Freemason is wearing two Masonic medals, or jewels. The one on the left indicates that he has served as master, or ruler, of a lodge, and the one on the right shows that he served as First Principal, or Ruler, in the Royal Arch, another Masonic order.¹

¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/yourpaintings/paintings/portrait-of-a-freemason-19227>

William Lamonby was one of the first Rifle Volunteers sworn in at Cockermouth in 1860 and served as a member until his departure overseas twenty-one years later. He joined Freemasonry in 1865 when he was initiated at the 2 May meeting of the recently formed Skiddaw Lodge No. 1002, Cockermouth, Cumberland. His father was a Freemason in the Cumberland area for many years, whilst his grandfather had been an active Mason in Banff, Scotland. In fact his grandfather's Masonic apron was one of Bro. Lamonby's most cherished possessions, and, as we shall see, this apron accompanied him throughout his life. However, Lamonby's initial career in Freemasonry was very short, for he resigned from the Skiddaw Lodge three years later in 1868. At this distance of time it is impossible to know why he resigned after only three years as a Mason, or why he re-joined the lodge in 1871. Yet he obviously reaffiliated with Skiddaw Lodge with a renewed vigour, for he was the Master of the lodge in 1875.

Whatever the motive, Lamonby did indeed immerse himself in Freemasonry with a great intensity. In 1875, the year he was the Master of the Skiddaw Lodge, he was also appointed a Provincial Grand Steward for Cumberland and Westmorland and within two years he was both lodge Secretary and Provincial Grand Registrar of his Province. When the Provincial Grand Lodge held its annual festival in 1877, it was in the town of Cockermouth under the banner of the Skiddaw Lodge. *The Freemason* magazine for 6 October 1877 devoted nearly four columns of text to the event, and Lamonby is mentioned no less than seven times: for opening the Skiddaw Lodge for the event, as the Secretary of the lodge, and as the Provincial Grand Registrar for the meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge.⁶

When Lamonby was initiated into the Skiddaw Lodge in 1865, he listed his employment as a land surveyor, and when he re-joined the lodge in 1871 his employment had changed to newspaper reporter. Possibly Cockermouth ran out of land to survey but, more likely, a career in the newspaper world in the 1800s was a more lucrative profession. This change of employment set the tone for the rest of Lamonby's life, as he became an author and reporter for various newspapers throughout his career.

In 1879 Lamonby published his first book on the history of Craft Masonry in Cumberland and Westmorland.⁷ Perhaps his employment as a reporter, or his travels around Cumberland and Westmorland as a WM and Provincial Grand Steward, afforded him the opportunity to consult the records of the lodges in the county, for his book gives a potted history of every lodge in the province, including the one Scottish warranted lodge over the border, the Union Lodge. His book displays a heavy Moderns Grand Lodge bias and a disdain for other 'seceder' Grand Lodges, in particular the Antients, although

⁶ *The Freemason*, 6 October 1877, 407–8.

⁷ *History of Craft Masonry in Cumberland and Westmorland, from the year 1740 to the present day* (Carlisle: G. & T. Coward, 1879).

he does begrudgingly note the antiquity of Masonry at York and the consequent Grand Lodge of York.

However, in the main, for Lamony the 1717 Grand Lodge of London and Westminster was true constitutional Masonry. As Lamony notes, all the pre-union lodges of Cumberland and Westmorland, except one, were warranted by the Moderns. The sole Antients pre-union lodge was the Lodge of Concord at Whitehaven.

Lamony's belief in the superiority of the Moderns Grand Lodge and his total disdain for 'seceders' is worth noting, considering that his arrival in the Colony of Victoria in 1882 coincided with moves to form a local Grand Lodge.

Sojourn to the Colony of Victoria

In the 1881 census of houses in Cockermouth William Lamony is listed the Head of Family, with his wife Isabelle, son William, and daughters Susannah, Isabelle and Bessie aged 3 years. The *Express and Telegraph* newspaper (Adelaide), for Tuesday, 21 February 1882, noted that,

Mr W. F. Lamony has resigned as the Provincial Grand Secretary of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Lodge of Freemasons, and accepted a three years' engagement on the staff of the Melbourne Argus and Australasian. He leaves Plymouth for Melbourne on February 25 . . .⁸

The eloquent, yet anonymous on-board description of the voyage of the *S.S. Cuzco* departing on 25 February from Plymouth to Melbourne, published in *The Argus* (Melbourne) on Thursday, 13 April 1882, suggests that perhaps this was Lamony's first story for the Argus newspaper:

The voyage socially was of a pleasant character throughout, and Captain Ridler and his officers came in for a meed of praise for their efforts to promote the general harmony. Dr. Swanston is medical officer on board, and his services were duly appreciated by passengers in all classes during the trip. As usual, the purser, Mr. Heathcote, was ready with files and despatches for *The Argus* on the steamer anchoring . . .⁹

Lamony immediately immersed himself in the colony's Masonic landscape, which by that time possessed English, Irish, and Scottish lodges. On arrival in Victoria Lamony forthwith joined the Melbourne Lodge No. 747 (E.C.). This lodge was founded in 1858 during the initial gold rush boom, meeting at St Patrick's Hall in Bourke Street, Melbourne; however, in 1880 it changed its name from Mariners to the Melbourne Lodge. The reason for this change of name is unclear, but the suspicion is that the original name no longer reflected the make-up of the membership. Perhaps this lodge was not the right

⁸ *The Express and Telegraph*, (Adelaide, SA), Tuesday, 21 February 1882, 3.

⁹ *The Argus*, Thursday, 13 April, 1882.

one for Lamonby, as one month later, in September 1882, he joined the Combermere Lodge No. 752 (E.C.), another lodge founded in 1858 during the gold boom, which he considered to be the best in the Colony, especially in terms of its work.¹⁰

During his ten years in Victoria Lamonby wrote a column for the London-based *The Freemason* magazine. In *The Freemason* for 8 July 1882 he described his arrival in Melbourne and his first six weeks in Victoria:

A day or two after my arrival in the colony I was introduced to the District G.Sec. of Victoria, Bro. P. H. Lempriere, P.M., P.Z., an enthusiast and veteran in Masonry, and a native of the colony, whose son he also initiated in his mother lodge a few years back. Through Bro. Lempriere's energy and fostering care, Craft and Arch Masonry, under the English Constitution, have attained a wonderful degree of vitality, and at the present time there are about a score of lodges and half-a-dozen chapters in active work belonging to the city and suburbs. I have had the pleasure to visit several lodges and chapters so far, preparatory to affiliating; but the great difficulty with me seems to make a choice, where one and all are so excellent in working and flourishing in number of members. What is termed the 'crack lodge' of Melbourne is the Combermere No. 752, and I had the good fortune to be present when there was a heavy night's work in the Three Degrees, an attendance of members and visitors close upon a hundred, and music by a choir of professional brethren, under the direction of Bro. David Lee, the city organist, the like of which I certainly never heard in the old country . . . I have been pleased to note that in all lodges and chapters the production of the certificate is the first 'sine qua non' towards the reception of a strange visiting brother . . . The ritual is almost the counterpart of the English, arising, no doubt, from the regular intercourse which exists amongst the bodies working under the three British Constitutions, as they meet in one common hall; in fact, the "entente cordiale" in this respect is a pleasing attribute of Masonry as practised in Australia.¹¹

In July 1883 Lamonby's wife and family set sail from London on the *Ivanhoe* to join him, arriving in Melbourne in October, with the family having grown with the addition of two-year-old Louise. He moved the family into a house in Sydney Street, Ascot Vale, which he named *Skiddaw Lodge*.

By March 1884 Lamonby was on the Ceremonial Committee charged with organizing the installation of Bro. the Honourable Sir William J. Clarke as the District Grand Master of the Scottish and English constitutions. Sir William was the largest landowner and one of the wealthiest men in the Colony of Victoria and this was reflected in the regalia he wore for the occasion:

¹⁰ P. T. Thornton, *History of Freemasonry in Victoria* (Shepparton, Victoria: Shepparton Newspapers, 1978), 52.

¹¹ *The Freemason*, 8 July 1882, 383.

The regalia worn by Sir William Clarke on the occasion of his installation as chief of the English Freemasons was solid gold 18 carat chain collar and jewel, with apron and gauntlets massively embroidered in bullion . . .¹²

Sir William had already been installed as the Provincial Grand Master of the Irish constitution in Victoria in 1880. Meanwhile Lamonby and his family settled into life in the colony with Bessie Lamonby listed as an end of year award winner in 1884 at Mrs Tulloch's Ladies School and in the same month of December, Isabella, the second eldest daughter, was married to Robert Boan at St Thomas' Essendon.¹³ In March 1885, when he was Master of Combermere Lodge, he invited the attendance of many visitors and,

In the presence of an "untiled" meeting of Masons, Miss Lamonby, the daughter of the master of the lodge, made a presentation of a silken banner, richly brodered in hand-work, with the name and number of the lodge, 572 E.C., and the motto "in Utraque Fortuna Paratus."¹⁴

One event that occurred within twelve months of Lamonby's arrival in the colony was the establishment of the Grand Lodge of Victoria, with George Selth Coppin as Grand Master. On 19th June 1883, a meeting of lodge delegates was held at the Masonic Hall with about 120 brethren, and a motion was passed: 'That a Grand Lodge of Victoria be established, and that the date of inauguration be the 2nd day of July, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-three.' Accordingly, on 2 July 1883 the Grand Lodge of Victoria was established with the Hon. George Coppin as Grand Master. This Masonic Union movement had acted quickly for in a space of three months it had gone from a preliminary meeting to the establishment of a Grand Lodge. The establishment of this Grand Lodge was the result of three decades of agitation for an indigenous Grand Lodge to manage the affairs of Freemasonry in the colony of Victoria. Initially the Grand Lodge of Victoria comprised six lodges, although by 1886 there were eighteen lodges affiliated to it.

As was evident in Lamonby's book on the Freemasonry of Cumberland and Westmorland, he was very much a Moderns enthusiast, and his view of the Coppin Grand Lodge was similar to the views he expressed regarding the Antients Grand Lodge, whose members he viewed as secessionists. Lamonby was very much of the view of the supremacy of English Freemasonry.

With the formation of this breakaway Grand Lodge Lamonby produced a series of articles for *The Freemason* very much against any movement to break away '... from their old mother country Grand Lodge . . .' In the 4 August 1883 edition Lamonby extols the virtues of a pamphlet issued to English lodges in Victoria. It

¹² *Mercury* (Hobart), Thursday, 27 March 1884, 3.

¹³ *North Melbourne Advertiser*, Friday 26 December 1884, 3; *Australasian*, Saturday, 6 December 1884, 2.

¹⁴ *The Australasian*, Saturday, 21 March 1885, 27.

is a lucid and well-reasoned out and seasonable publication. It exposed ably the alleged idle demand for separation, and encounters the professed reason for a demand for an independent Grand Lodge with marked force . . .

while he considers the rival rebuttal pamphlet to be ‘both jejune and feeble-forcible in idea and expression, abounds in fallacious suggestions, and above all, unwarranted inferences.’¹⁵

In 1888 Lamonby was appointed by the Provincial Grand Master, Sir William Clarke, as the District Senior Grand Warden for the Provincial Grand Lodge of Victoria (E.C.), and he was also appointed to a committee to consider the desirability of forming a United Grand Lodge of Victoria. In March 1889 many years of bitterness and dispute regarding the formation of a local Grand Lodge came to a conclusion with the coming together of the four Masonic Constitutions then in operation in the colony of Victoria, namely the English, Irish, Scottish, and Victorian Constitutions, to form the United Grand Lodge of Victoria. At the inauguration meeting Lamonby gave an historical sketch of Freemasonry in Victoria over the previous fifty years since the establishment of Lodge Australia Felix.

The intelligent foreigner, sauntering down the well paved streets of Melbourne, will hardly be able to realise that half a century ago the present fashionable promenade of Collins Street was marked by a line of gum trees stumps, deep ruts, and reservoirs of mud; that a piece of board nailed to a tree bore the inscription “This is Bourke Street.”¹⁶

Lamonby involved himself with many aspects of life in the colony of Victoria, from gun and coursing clubs, a Ballarat quartz and gold mining company, to numerous civil events. For example, in late 1889 preparations were in place for the proclamation of the town of Essendon and we find Lamonby appointed to the Children’s Demonstration Committee, the Sports Committee, the Refreshment Committee and the Luncheon, Printing, and Procession Committee.¹⁷

Lamonby – The Journalist and the Press

Lamonby had arrived in Victoria in early 1882 to take up a position with the *Argus* and *Australasian* newspapers. It is somewhat difficult to discern which newspaper articles at the time were written by a particular journalist, as many articles just state ‘from our Correspondent.’ It might be construed that the many news items and articles ranging from Freemasonry, coursing, gun clubs, and various hall companies that mention W. F. Lamonby were in fact written by him. For example, an article in *The Sportsman* newspaper

¹⁵ *The Freemason*, 4 August 1883.

¹⁶ W. F. Lamonby, *United Grand Lodge of Victoria: A Record of the Proceedings in Connection with its Inauguration, March 20th & 21st 1889* (London: ‘The Freemason’ Printing Works, 1894), 11.

¹⁷ *North Melbourne Advertiser*, Friday, 6 December 1889, 2.

on 15 July 1885, on the annual meeting of the National Coursing Club of Australia, mentions Lamonby four times in a small 226-word item.

In fact the number of times we find Lamonby's name in print, across the period of his stay in Victoria, is absolutely astounding. The story of the Gordon Lodge inaugural ball at the new Ascot Vale Masonic centre, in May 1887, was carried across all the local and national press with Lamonby's name prominent in all of them. The *North Melbourne Advertiser* ran with a full three-column article, which mentions W. F. Lamonby six times and his daughters twice. This high name visibility in the press is similar to the Masonic press records for his time with the Skiddaw Lodge in Cockermouth, prior to his journey to Victoria.

During his ten years in Victoria Lamonby also wrote a column for the *The Freemason* magazine. In these columns he gave London readers a somewhat biased view of affairs in Victoria and was quite dismissive of suggestions that there was any serious desire for a local Grand Lodge – very much the case of a 'nothing to see here approach.' In fact, when he wrote '... agitation ... principally amongst the members of the lodges hailing from the two sister constitutions ...', it was not the complete truth, for there were English Masons in Victoria at the time supportive of the idea of a local Grand Lodge.

A few months later another of Lamonby's articles in *The Freemason* helps provide an insight into the man, his attachment to the Craft, and his general character. In the 3 February 1883 edition we find his article entitled 'Masonry and Atheism in the Antipodes.' This piece describes the regular meeting of the Melbourne Lodge on Monday 18th December 1882, where he rose to move the following resolution:

That the Melbourne Lodge, No. 747, hereby places upon record its protest against, and, disapprobation of, the continued letting of the Masonic Hall to the Freethinkers' and Secularists' Association, as being a direct contravention of the constitution and landmarks of Freemasonry; and that a copy of the resolution be forwarded to the directors of the Masonic Hall Company forthwith.

While speaking to the resolution Lamonby praised the Masonry he had found in the colony but stated that he '... hardly could believe his eye when he saw announced in the public prints of Melbourne that the Freethinkers and Secularists were allowed to assemble in the Masonic Hall ... an association of infidels were to be allowed in another room consecrated and dedicated to Masonry ...'

The Lodge's Master sympathised with Lamonby's views on this matter, but suggested that the lodge was powerless as the Masonic Hall was owed by a private hall company and it was a simple case of income. But for Lamonby this was 'a scandal and disgrace to Colonial Masonry.' However, the members of the lodge agreed with the sentiments of

the Master, as expressed by other members as well, ‘and there being no seconder to the resolution, which accordingly fell to the ground.’

Lamonby was not pleased with this outcome of his resolution and stated that

after what had occurred, he thought it only fair to intimate his intention to forward an account of the facts and discussion thereon to the Grand Secretary in London for the consideration of the Colonial Board and Board of General Purposes.¹⁸

A week later Lamonby’s article in *The Freemason* detailed a lodge of sorrow ceremony held by the Victoria Lodge, Melbourne, and a meeting of Combermere Lodge, where he was able to slip his name into the article as a PM assisting the Master.

In *The Freemason* for 28 July 1883 Lamonby’s article from Australia covered three topics: the proposal for a new Masonic hall in central Melbourne, a meeting of the Combermere Lodge, and a meeting of the Neptune Lodge. In all three pieces we find Lamonby mentioned: he was appointed honorary secretary of the new hall committee, proposed an unsuccessful amendment at the Combermere meeting, and at the Neptune Lodge meeting, ‘there was a large attendance of visitors belonging to the three Constitutions, inclusive of Bros W. F Lamonby, P.M. 747, 752, 1002.’

Lamonby’s self-promotion continued in the 7 June 1884 edition of *The Freemason*:

Bro W.F Lamonby, P.M., Skiddaw Lodge, No. 1002, Cockermouth, Cumberland, was installed W.M. of the Combermere Lodge, No. 752, Melbourne, Australia, on the 17th of March, it being two years to the day since our brother landed in the Victorian capital. The Combermere Lodge (English Constitution) is one of the strongest and most influential in the Australian colonies, being popularly known as the ‘professions lodge,’ with a membership of over 150.¹⁹

And again, in *The Freemason*, this time on 26 September, 1885, we find Lamonby contributing a short note regarding the plan to found a new lodge to be called the Gordon Lodge:

A petition for a warrant to open a new lodge in the suburb of Flemington, Melbourne, Victoria has been forwarded to the M.W Grand Master. The title chosen is the Gordon Lodge, in memory of the hero of Khartoum. The W.M. designate is Bro W. F. Lamonby, P.M. and P.Z. 752, Melbourne, and PM 1002, Cockermouth. Strange to say, a petition for another lodge, also to be called the Gordon, was received a day after the foregoing, from Donald in Victoria. The name Wolseley has been suggested.²⁰

¹⁸ *The Freemason*, 3 February 1883.

¹⁹ *The Freemason*, 10 February 1883.

²⁰ *The Freemason*, 7 June 1884, 294.

Founding the Gordon Lodge

The first meeting of local Freemasons desirous of founding a new lodge in the Essendon area of Melbourne was held at the Ascot Vale Hotel on 9 July 1885. At that meeting, attended by twenty-three Masons, primarily from the English Constitution, but still with many from the Irish and Scottish constitutions, Lamonby took the chair. A list of furniture and jewel requirements was compiled and twenty attendees paid subscriptions for the founding of a Masonic lodge in Ascot Vale. This meeting resolved many issues, including that Lamonby was to be the chairman, that he would obtain a warrant and that he would be first WM of the lodge, that the lodge be under the English Constitution, and that it be called the Gordon Lodge.

Two days later, on 11 July 1885, Lamonby chaired another meeting at Ascot Vale Hotel, and there were two resolutions: that the lodge should meet on the second Thursday of the month, and that the lodge be held in the council chambers at the Essendon Town Hall. Of more importance was that this meeting completed the paperwork to form a new lodge to be called the Gordon Lodge. The form was also signed by the Master and Wardens of the Combermere Lodge as the sponsor lodge. It was undoubtedly no coincidence that Lamonby had just served as the Master of that lodge. Clearly, William Farquharson Lamonby was the driving force and when he was not present not much happened at these Ascot Vale Hotel meetings.

The warrant for the Gordon Lodge No. 2112 (E.C.), was approved and dated 31 October 1885, and in due course the regalia arrived from England. Thus on 11 February 1886 the Combermere Lodge opened in due form at 4 pm, the Gordon Lodge was consecrated, Bro. Lamonby installed, the officers invested, dozens of resolutions passed, and four candidates were balloted for and initiated.

Ascot Vale Masonic Hall, 1886

The laying of the foundation stone on Thursday 14 October 1886 for the Ascot Vale Masonic Hall (Gordon Lodge) building was a big day for the local community with the event covered in detail by the local press. For the foundation stone laying ceremony the Master of Gordon Lodge, William Lamonby, wore his grandfather's apron (that of Bro. Alex Grant of St Andrew's Lodge, Banf, Scotland) which at that time was supposedly 100 years old.

On arrival, an ode was sung by 'scholars' from the Ascot Vale State School under the direction of the Head Master. In the presence of a large assemblage of Masons and local dignitaries, the foundation stone was laid with full Masonic honours, which included the obligatory Masonic speeches, a time capsule, trowelling cement on the foundations before the stone was lowered, and then trying the stone once in place with the square, level, and



Fig. 2. Ascot Vale Masonic Hall. Photo used with kind permission from Gordon Lodge No. 99. Taken from *Gordon Lodge: An Historical Sketch on the Occasion of the Jubilee Celebrations* (Private publication, 1986), 20.

plumb-rule. Corn, wine, and oil were then used to anoint the stone, after which more odes were sung, followed by a return procession to the Council Chambers to close lodge.

We can get a sense of the station Freemasons held in the community from the size of this event and the fact that the students of the Ascot Vale State School were given a holiday for the occasion – an inference that the ‘lodge’ was once an important part of the community.²¹

Gordon Lodge met for the first time at the Ascot Vale Masonic Hall in March 1887, with the Hall formally opened with a Ball on Friday 13 May 1887. The Lodge room was officially dedicated and consecrated in December 1887 by the District Grand Master (EC), Sir William Clarke.

Lamonby was the Master of Gordon Lodge for the first two years of its existence (1886–1887) and his influence in Victorian Freemasonry is illustrated by the following newspaper article for the installation of his successor in 1888:

... The Gordon Lodge No. 2112 E.C. held a very successful meeting in the Ascot Vale Masonic Hall, on Monday evening last. Bro. W. Simmons, was installed in the master’s chair for the ensuing twelve months. The installation was performed in a most effective manner by Bro. W. F. Lamonby, who has been master of the lodge since its consecration... The Gordon Lodge, it may be mentioned, although only consecrated

²¹ *The Argus*, Melbourne, Victoria, Friday, 15 October 1886, 7; *Gordon Lodge No. 99, An Historical Sketch* (Private Publication, 1986), 12–15.

about two years since, is now in the foremost rank, and bids fair to become one of the most powerful in Melbourne.²²

Lamonby remained a member of the Gordon Lodge until his death in November 1926, aged eighty-seven years

Departure and return to England

Despite Lamonby's firm views regarding supremacy of English Freemasonry and his strident criticism of the Coppin Grand Lodge, he was respected and liked by many of the Masons with whom he came into contact in Victoria. One event Lamonby was involved in organizing was the ceremony to lay the foundation stone for the new Melbourne Freemasons' Hall, on the corner of Flinders Lane and a smaller lane that later became known as Freemasons Lane, which took place on Thursday 26 March 1885. The event had extensive press coverage, in part due to the participation of Sir William J Clarke, Bart., *MLA*, Provincial Grand Master in Victoria of the Irish Constitution, Scottish Constitution, and English Constitution lodges.

The laying of the foundation-stone of the Masonic Hall in Flinders-lane east, at the rear of the club premises in Collins-street, was performed with great ceremony this morning. The proceedings commenced with the assembling of the Grand Lodges under the English, Scottish, and English, Scottish, and Irish constitutions in the Town Hall, all three joining in the main hall under the united presidency of Sir W.J. Clarke. Subsequently they proceeded in procession, to the number of fully 1,500, up the street to the site of the new building. A magnificent band headed the procession. All the brethren were in full regalia, bearing elaborate banners of their lodges and insignia. The stone was laid with every attention to Masonic rites by Sir W. J. Clarke.²³

Lamonby was the honorary secretary of the executive committee responsible for the laying of the Melbourne Freemasons' Hall foundation stone and at Clements's Café in Melbourne on 15 May 1885, he was presented with a testimonial in token for his services as the honorary secretary. The testimonial consisted of a timepiece, surmounted by a greyhound *en couchant*, and on a silver plate the following inscription: 'Presented to W. F. Lamonby, PM and PZ, 752 EC, as a memento of the laying of the foundation-stone of the Freemasons' Hall, Melbourne, on March 26, 1885.'²⁴

At the installation meeting of the Gordon Lodge on 9 April 1888, Lamonby was presented, in recognition of his two years as the first WM of Gordon Lodge, with 'a most handsome testimonial in the shape of a liquor stand from the brethren, and a portrait of

²² *North Melbourne Advertiser*, Saturday, 14 April 1888, 3.

²³ *The South Australian Advertiser*, Friday, 27 Mar 1885, 5.

²⁴ *Australasian Sketcher with Pan and Pencil*, 1 June 1885.



Fig. 3. Laying the Foundation Stone of the Flinders Lane Masonic Hall, 26 March 1885.
Source: Charles Rudd (1849–1901), photographer. No known copyright restrictions.

Brother Lamonby, another present from the brethren, was uncovered.²⁵ We can probably assume that the portrait presented to Lamonby is the one which was painted by the artist James Clarke Waite and now resides in the Museum of Freemasonry in London.

Lamonby, like many Englishmen in Victoria at that time, never considered himself as anything but an Englishman, and he had no intention of making the colony of Victoria his permanent home; he never seriously considered any other option other than at some future point he would return ‘home.’ ‘A safe return to his native land if he so desires’ originally meant an Englishman returning to his homeland. Accordingly, on Saturday 22 August 1891 Bro. William Farquharson Lamonby departed aboard the steamship *Orotava* bound for Liverpool.

The week prior to his departure involved a series of presentations and luncheons and dinners. For example, on the Tuesday Lamonby was wined and dined by the sporting fraternity at the *Maison Dore*:

Mr Lamonby was highly esteemed by all whom he came in contact with, whether in sporting circles or socially, and prior to his departure for England his numerous friends took the present opportunity of wishing him bon voyage. A great number of sporting men were present at the dinner . . .²⁶

²⁵ *North Melbourne Advertiser*, Saturday, 14 April 1888, 3.

²⁶ *Weekly Times*, Saturday, 22 August 1891, 12.

In fact, the events during that week give an insight into Bro. Lamonby's equally full non-Masonic life:

Prior to his departure, Mr Lamonby . . . was entertained on different evenings of last week by a party of all his sporting friends, by members of the Anglican Church at Ascot Vale, the local residents of Ascot Vale, and by his Masonic brethren. Many good wishes for his future welfare were expressed, and several presentations were made to him . . .²⁷

On the Friday afternoon friends of Lamonby gathered at the Masonic Club, where he was presented with an illuminated address and a purse of 150 gold sovereigns by Sir William Clarke, who stated that the members of the Craft could not allow him to take his departure without a token of the esteem in which he was universally held.

The George Coppin, Combermere Mark and Cambrian Lodge Sagas Three instances in particular, two related to the colony of Victoria and one to the colony of New South Wales, provide some idea of Lamonby the man and his world view, especially in relation to his thoughts regarding the pre-eminence of English Freemasonry.

One interesting thread through the local press was the ongoing animosity between Bro. Lamonby and MW Bro. George Coppin, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Victoria. In the *Argus* newspaper for 20 May 1884 Grand Master Coppin detailed a visit to England of James Brown Patterson, Coppin's successor as Grand Master and a future Premier of Victoria, whom he entrusted with a letter for the Prince of Wales. During the visit Patterson went to the Alnwick Lodge and was warmly received. Lamonby's *Letter to the Editor* on 29 May was blunt and scathing with a tinge of distain, for he deliberately refers to the Grand Master as Mr Coppin:

Sir, Referring to a communication signed 'George Coppin' which appeared in *The Argus* of the 20th inst, I cannot but think that the writer and his subordinate, Mr J. H. Patterson, have a great deal to answer for in presuming on the evident ignorance of the WM of the Alnwick Lodge, a small body of Freemasons in the North of England, that could have no knowledge whatever of the existence of an irregular body choosing to style themselves the 'Grand Lodge of Victoria.' I will go further and say it was a cruel proceeding for Mr George Coppin to commit the circumstance to print, for he must have known that the WM of the Alnwick Lodge and all concerned will be severely censured as soon as the supreme authorities in London hear of it, which they most assuredly shall by this week's mail.

Yours, &c.

George Coppin replied with a longer rebuttal:

²⁷ *Bairnsdale Advertiser and Tambo and Omeo Chronicle*, Thursday, 27 August 1891, 2.

To those who have proclaimed throughout the colony that a Mason working under the Grand Lodge of Victoria would not be admitted into any of the lodges of England, Ireland, or Scotland, this public reception of Brother Patterson's must be very disappointing, as the summons calling the lodges states, 'Brother J. B. Patterson, PM, WM, of the Metropolitan Lodge, Victoria, and specially accredited representative of the Grand Lodge of Victoria, will honour this lodge with his presence.' As Brother Lamonby thinks 'that it was a cruel proceeding for Mr George Coppin to commit the circumstances to print by sending the communication to *The Argus*, I trust that you will insert this explanation, and oblige.²⁸

Yours, &c..."

Lamonby was not going to let that comment by GM Coppin to go without a retort, and he fired off an immediate reply which was published the next day:

Sir, In reply to the letter signed 'Geo. Coppin', which appears in *The Argus* of today, it is only necessary that I should quote the following editorial note in the London *Freemason* of April 19:

'We are unable to publish the report of the Alnwick Lodge, as the so-called Grand Lodge of Victoria is not recognised by our Grand Lodge. We are somewhat astonished that an English lodge would apparently acknowledge the legality of this new body.'

Further comment is needless, as the Colonial Board at home will, in all probability, issue a circular warning lodges not to hold any communication with members hailing from the irregular Grand Lodge of Victoria, just as they did in the case of the New South Wales institution.

Yours, &c.

May 30 W. F. LAMONBY.²⁹

Lamonby's conflict with George Coppin continued to play out in the newspapers. For example, twelve months later Coppin was goading Lamonby regarding the formation of Gordon Lodge and the choice of name and the fact Gordon was not a Freemason:

WAS GENERAL GORDON A FREEMASON!
TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

Sir, An account of a meeting appears in *The Argus* of this morning held in Flemington for the purpose of forming a new Masonic lodge: 'The name chosen was the Gordon Lodge in memory of the hero of Khartoum, who was a member of the craft.' If the latter part of this statement is correct, it will relieve several members of the Grand Lodge of Victoria from a difficulty. Encouraged by the great success both financially

²⁸ *The Argus*, Friday, 30 May 1884, 7.

²⁹ *The Argus*, Saturday, 31 May 1884, 5.

and as a solemn Masonic ceremony, it was proposed to hold another Lodge of Sorrow to the memory of the late General Gordon but, unfortunately, we have not been able to ascertain that the late hero of Khartoum was a Freemason. The name of Brother Lamony being associated with the announcement to which I refer is almost a sufficient guarantee for its correctness, and if he will kindly give his authority, I will at once take steps to hold a Lodge of Sorrow to the memory of the late General Gordon upon an enlarged scale, at the exhibition-building the proceeds to be given to the Gordon Memorial Fund, which would no doubt increase the amount already subscribed by £300 or £400.

Yours. &c.

GEORGE COPPIN,

*Grand Master Grand Lodge of Victoria. Pine-grove, Richmond, July 9.*³⁰

The Grand Lodge of Victoria and the Combermere Mark Lodge

Lamony was one of the first English Freemasons in Melbourne with experience in the Mark Degree. He claimed to have brought with him to Melbourne the latest authorized Mark ritual, suggesting that he was responsible for English Mark ritual being adopted for a period in Mark lodges then working in Victoria.³¹

However, it was an incident in the Mark degree, one of many for Lamony, which related to the Grand Lodge of Victoria where Lamony's response highlights his complete self-assurance of the totally veracity and probity of his opinions and beliefs. With the formation of the Grand Lodge of Victoria in 1883 the situation arose where Mark members had joined the new unrecognized Grand Lodge of Victoria. The reply from Grand Mark in London was that the Mark was a separate and independent institution, so no action should be taken against those Mark Masons who had transferred their allegiance to this new Grand Lodge. For Lamony and other English Mark Masons it was intolerable that they would have to sit in lodge with those who had chosen to desert their colours.

Lamony formed a new Mark Lodge, the Combermere Mark Lodge, which he then consecrated while the Mark Provincial Grand Team were prevented from entering, due to seceders being in their number, namely the Mark Provincial Grand Junior Warden Bro Drew, who was also Director of Ceremonies in the Grand Lodge of Victoria. '... Traitors anywhere were a dangerous evil and a mitigated nuisance...'³²

Lamony installed the Master designate, advanced new members, and consecrated Combermere Mark Lodge, without at that time being in possession of the dispensation warrant, which was downstairs with the non-admitted Provincial Grand Mark Team.

³⁰ *The Argus*, Saturday, 11 July 1885, 5.

³¹ P. T. Thornton, *100 Years of Mark Masonry in Victoria* (Private Publication: UGLMMV, 1998), 8, 40.

³² *Ibid.*, 10.

This Mark lodge ceased to work after this 1884 installation, and was used by Lamonby purely to make a point and express his displeasure at the turn of events regarding Mark Masons who were affiliated to the Grand Lodge of Victoria. Lamonby's belief in the supremacy of English Freemasonry countenanced and validated his course of action, as in his view it was the secessionists who were at fault.

Cambrian Lodge No. 656 (EC), New South Wales

The Cambrian Lodge saga was an on-going drama in which Lamonby fully involved himself upon his return England. The issue was in relation to the Lodge Cambrian No. 656 (EC) and the decision by that lodge to join the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales, established in 1888, thereby becoming Lodge No. 10 on that Grand Lodge's register. Unfortunately, a few weeks later about a third of the original membership of Lodge Cambrian applied for the return of their warrant, as they wished to remain under the English Constitution. Finding their repeated requests not being met, the issue was taken up by UGLE with a letter received by the UGLNSW in January 1892 from the Assistant Grand Secretary of the UGLE, requesting that the warrant be returned to the Cambrian Lodge.

The Grand Secretary of the UGLNSW replied that the Lodge Cambrian warrant was sent to the UGLNSW by a majority of the members in 1888, duly cancelled, which was endorsed by the Grand Registrar of UGLE, and returned to the Cambrian Lodge, now No. 10.

At the 7 June 1893 UGLE Quarterly Communication a Report of the Colonial Board regarding the Cambrian Lodge was tabled. An eighteen dot-point summary of events concluded that '... the Warrant was properly under the direct authority emanating from the M.W. the Grand Master, given at the time of the recognition of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales, no action should be taken ...'³³

VW Bro. Eve, P.G. Treasurer, rose to move that in regards to Lodge Cambrian, '... the Alleged Cancellation of the Warrant was in direct contravention of the terms on which Grand Lodge granted recognition to the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales ...'³⁴ This dispute with the Lodge Cambrian continued on for decades, involving court cases, two Cambrian lodges, and the English Cambrian Lodge being declared irregular by the UGLNSW.

How could Lamonby not involve himself in a situation that concerned a new Australian colonial Grand Lodge and a plucky group of Englishmen who did want to give up their lodge's original warrant and join the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales? The Quarterly Communication on Wednesday 6 March 1895 at Freemasons' Hall, London,

³³ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 7 June 1893, 220–222.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

highlighted Lamonby's involvement. At that meeting he raised the Lodge Cambrian saga and rose to speak against the action of the President of the Board in requesting him to withdraw from the meeting of 18 January, 1895.

Lamonby's appeal involved the subject of the Cambrian Lodge and it was requested that he might withdraw from a meeting of the Colonial Board as they were discussing the Cambrian Lodge and because he was a member of that lodge and Lamonby had joined this dissenting English lodge in NSW. Lamonby declined to absent himself while discussion regarding the Cambrian Lodge took place, on the grounds that there was no charge or complaint against the lodge. The Colonial Board unanimously agreed that further discussion was not possible on the issue with Lamonby present, and that a committee be appointed to deal with the matter. Lamonby eventually agreed to withdraw from the meeting, and this was the basis of his appeal. However, he soon realised he had no support at the Quarterly Communication for his position and withdrew his appeal.³⁵

In England

In England Lamonby continued his hectic Masonic activities. There is in the 29 October 1892 edition of *The Freemason* is an article on the recent meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cumberland and Westmoreland held at Millom, in which Lamonby was mentioned nearly as often as the Provincial Grand Master, the Earl of Bective (and that he was also appointed as the Provincial Senior Grand Warden).³⁶ Lamonby managed to keep up his name recognition approach, as exemplified by the 18 February 1893 edition of *The Freemasons* that mentioned his attendance at the Board of Benevolence meeting.³⁷

The Quarterly Communication at Freemasons' Hall, London on 6 September 1893 was when Lamonby really began to attempt to gain influence. He used his time in the colonies of Australia as his rationale for tabling a Notice of Motion requesting that the records of the dissolved District Grand Lodges of South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, and Tasmania, be requested to be forwarded to the Grand Secretary. The view was that Grand Lodge had no authority to make such a claim, especially as the District Grand Lodges referred to had been dissolved. There was also a question raised as to whether or not the motion was in order.

The Right Worshipful Deputy Grand Master in the chair noted that no Returns were owing from the District Grand Lodges referred to, and that these District Grand Lodge had been dissolved. He therefore, with the support of the Pro Grand Master, declared the motion out of order. The mood of the brethren present toward this motion and its proposer was indicated by the bracketed 'Hear, Hear.' Lamonby made a couple of attempts

³⁵ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 6 March, 1895, 23–25.

³⁶ *The Freemason*, Saturday, 29 October 1892, 196.

³⁷ *The Freemason*, 18 February 1893, 93.

to speak again with his final attempt noted as: ‘W. Brother W. F. LAMONBY: I beg to say that – (cries of ‘Chair, chair.)’

The mood of the meeting is best encapsulated by the next three lines in the minutes; -

The Right Worshipful Deputy GRAND MASTER in the Chair: No, you cannot go into anything that is out of order. It must be in order.

The Grand Lodge was closed in due form and with solemn prayer.³⁸

At the September 1894 Quarterly Communication of the UGLE Lamonby returned to one of his regular themes, when he rose to move a motion regarding a change to the constitution in cases where a lodge warrant is lost, or more importantly, when it is improperly held. The motivation behind the motion was the actions of the secessionists of the ‘. . . unrecognised and so-called Grand Lodge of New Zealand [and Lodge Otago, who] has had its warrant stolen . . . I therefore suggest that it is the bounden duty of Grand Lodge to provide some means whereby the brethren may have their warrant restored.’³⁹ This motion received a far greater positive response than Lamonby’s previous notice of motion and was carried easily.

In that same year (1894) Lamonby published his second book on Freemasonry, which was entitled, *United Grand Lodge of Victoria. A Record of the Proceedings in Connection with its Inauguration, March 20th and 21st, 1889*. This was a small 36-page book, of which five pages consisted of the historical sketch of Freemasonry in the colony of Victoria that Lamonby delivered on the day. No doubt these initial thoughts formed the basis for Lamonby’s third book on Freemasonry, published in 1906, entitled, *Some notes on Freemasonry in Australia, from the earliest times to the present day*. In a brief review of Lamonby’s second book in *AQC* R. F. Gould commented that,

An Historical Sketch, by the writer of the Pamphlet, of Freemasonry in Victoria, which is too long for quotation, but would be spoilt by compression, forms a highly agreeable feature of this little publication.⁴⁰

At the following Quarterly Communication on 5 June 1895 Grand Lodge had not progressed far through the agenda, when Lamonby rose to ask, ‘I trust I am not out of order, but I may inform you that the election of members of the Colonial Board has not been mentioned.’

The Right Worshipful Acting Grand Master: ‘I believe it was on the same paper with the Board of General Purposes.’

³⁸ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 6 September 1893, 227–80.

³⁹ *The Freemason*, 8 September 1894, 91.

⁴⁰ R. F. Gould, Review of *A Record of Proceeding, Connection and Inauguration, Victoria United Grand Lodge*, by Lamonby, William Farquharson (1839–1926) in *AQC* 7 (1894), 178.

W. Brother W. F. LAMONBY: 'Certainly. My object in rising was that I have notified the Grand Secretary that in the event of my not being elected a member of the Board I shall, in pursuance of the provisions of Rule 283 of the Constitutions, claim a seat on that Board.'⁴¹

One might get the impression that Grand Lodge might have been a little tired of Lamonby, for the acting Grand Master just moved onto the next item of business without any reply. A Bro. J. S. Cumberland eventually asked if Lamonby was correct in his assertion that in the event he is not elected to the Colonial Board that he can claim a seat on that Board by virtue of being a Past Master of a Colonial Lodge. The response from the Deputy Grand Registrar would suggest Lamonby's star was waning: 'I do not think there can be much difficulty as to the meaning of that rule, and to attempt to explain it would be an insult to common sense.'⁴²

Consequently, at the September 1895 Quarterly Communication Grand Lodge had just opened and Lamonby was on his feet to request that the Minutes so far as regards the election of the Colonial Board, be not confirmed.

The RW Acting Grand Master explained that the question of the Minutes not being confirmed 'is because a brother who missed out on being elected to the Colonial Board (namely Lamonby) claims that he should be so on the grounds of being a member of a Colonial Lodge.' The acting Grand Master stated such an appointment would be at the discretion of Grand Lodge, not a right. The Minutes were put and confirmed, whereupon Lamonby jumped to his feet to inform the acting Grand Master that he wished to intimate that he would appeal against his decision.⁴³

From that point Lamonby became noticeably quiet at subsequent Quarterly Communications, possibly because at the Quarterly Communication at Freemasons' Hall, London, on Wednesday 3 June 1896, under The Board of General Purposes Report, it lists among members elected by Grand Lodge William Farquharson Lamonby, PM, No. 962.

The next we hear from Lamonby is at the Quarterly Communication of June 1897. Much of the evening was taken up by a 'Report of the Special Committee Appointed by Grand Lodge to consider certain Additions to, and Alterations in, the Book of Constitutions.' Lamonby was a member of this Committee and was listed as W. Bro. W. F. Lamonby, P. G. Warden of the Grand Lodge of Victoria. The contentious changes revolved around the forming of independent Grand Lodges in the colonies, which was one of Lamonby's pet topics.

⁴¹ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 5 June 1895, 58a–59a.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 4 September, 1895, 110–111.

VW Bro. Richard Eve moved that the proposed changes be let sit for six months while the views of the colonies were further sought, with Lamonby seconding the motion. In response, VW Bro. Richard Horton Smith, QC, Deputy Grand Registrar stated:

I am an old-fashioned person, and brought up in those ideas in which we learned the maxim, *Non tali auxilio* - if my Brother Eve thinks of carrying this motion beforehand he would have got a more cordial supporter than Brother Lamonby. (*Non tali auxilio* is Latin for 'Not with such allies').

Perhaps Grand Lodge was tiring of Lamonby and his interjections and motions, as he still fought the fight against local Grand Lodges in the colonies.⁴⁴ However, at the September 1898 Quarterly Communication Lamonby was again concerned about the founding of local Grand Lodges in the colonies, this time prompted by the founding of the Grand Lodge of New Zealand, successfully moved a motion, which read:

That in order to better ensure the preservation of the rights and privileges of minorities, and to prevent subsequent disputes, Grand Lodge respectfully suggests and prays that the Most Worshipful the Grand Master may be pleased to command that Lodge Warrants shall not be cancelled until the expiration of three calendar months from the date of receipt of such Warrants by the Grand Secretary.

The Acting Grand Master: Those in favour of that resolution signify the same in the usual manner. (*After a pause*). On the contrary. I declare it carried.

The Grand Lodge was then closed in form, and with solemn prayer.⁴⁵

Finally, a win for Lamonby – albeit rare.

At the March 1900 Quarterly Communication the matter of the establishment of the bogus Grand Lodge of Western Australia was on the agenda, with Lamonby interrogating the Grand Registrar over the matter.

W. Bro. Lamonby: Most Worshipful Grand Master in the Chair . . . I wish to enquire whether any official information has been received by this Grand Lodge that the new Grand Lodge of Western Australia has been formed.

VW Bro. Strachan, Q.C.: Yes.

Bro. Lamonby: When?

Bro Strachan, Q.C.: Most Worshipful Grand Master in the Chair; I hope I am not going to be cross-examined. (*Laughter*.) I never heard of the Grand Master's message

⁴⁴ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 5 June 1897, 442–445.

⁴⁵ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 6 September 1898, 123–124.

being at any time met with a motion that the consideration of it be suspended for six months.

Lamonby had moved an amendment that any consideration of this Grand Lodge of Western Australia should be deferred for six months. After Lamonby brandished a copy of the *Australasian Keystone* magazine and cited a report from the Grand Lodge of Victoria, the Acting Grand Master then put the amendment, for which three hands were held up, and it was declared lost.

The Grand registrar then moved:

That the application from an irregular body styling itself the Grand Lodge of Western Australia, requesting recognition as sole and supreme Masonic Authority in the Colony, be refused . . .

Lamonby was quick to second this motion, which was put and carried unanimously.⁴⁶

Over the next nine years Lamonby continued his battle against local Grand Lodges in the colonies, championing the rights of English Masons who wished to stand apart from these entities. He continued to attend Quarterly Communications of Grand Lodge up to the end of 1909, and his final notice was in the Minutes for the Quarterly Communication of Grand Lodge held at Kingsway Hall, London, on Wednesday, 2 March 1927 which read:

The Board has the melancholy duty to report the death, since its last Report, of the following Present and Past Grand Officers, all of whom have been conspicuous by their devotion to the Craft.

W. Bro. William F. Lamonby, P.A.G.D.C.⁴⁷

Conclusions

Bro. William Farquharson Lamonby did indeed leave an indelible mark from his ten years in the Colony of Victoria, although the vast majority of that notoriety was confined to the annals of Freemasonry. He was a man much-immersed in the Craft; in particular, he took great pride in being an English Freemason. No doubt much of his power and influence stemmed from a fluent eloquence in the English oral ritual, from initiation to installation. In fact, we find Lamonby conducting installation ceremonies right up to his departure from Melbourne in 1891.

Bro. Peter Thornton, in *The History of Freemasonry in Victoria*, wrote that during the latter part of the 1800s

⁴⁶ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 7 March 1900, 426–429.

⁴⁷ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 2 March 1927, 289.



Fig. 4. Foundation Stone of Ascot Vale Masonic Hall. Photo by the Author.

an increasing number of well qualified Englishmen were taking up residence in Victoria . . . and masonry was beginning to show signs of becoming an avenue in which to display class distinction [with] qualifications and embargoes which were considered to be essential to keep the menial class out of Freemasonry . . .⁴⁸

Lamonby stayed in Victoria for ten years and played a large part in the Masonic affairs of the State. In fact, following his arrival he had quickly become part of the local Masonic landscape: ‘Long and favourably known among Freemasons.’⁴⁹ Lamonby obviously drew a lot of pleasure from being a Freemason, while deriving a sense of importance and status from his knowledge and understanding of English Freemasonry in particular. We get a sense of Lamonby’s presence and influence upon Freemasonry in the colony of Victoria from when he was the WM of Gordon Lodge (EC, 2112) for the first two years of its existence (1886–87) from the following newspaper article for the installation of his successor in 1888:

The Gordon Lodge No. 2112 E.C., held a very successful meeting in the Ascot Vale Masonic Hall, on Monday evening last. Bro. W. Simmons, was installed in the master’s chair for the ensuing twelve months. The installation was performed in a most effective manner by Bro. W. F. Lamonby, who has been master of the lodge since its consecration... The Gordon Lodge, it may be mentioned, although only consecrated about two years since, is now in the foremost rank, and bids fair to become one of the most powerful in Melbourne . . .⁵⁰

⁴⁸ P. T. Thornton, *History of Freemasonry in Victoria* (Shepparton Newspapers, 1978), 165–166.

⁴⁹ *North Melbourne Advertiser*, Friday, 5 February 1886, 3.

⁵⁰ *North Melbourne Advertiser*, Saturday, 14 April 1888, 3.

The fact that Lamonby founded the Gordon Lodge and its building is testament of his passion for Freemasonry, for when he arrived in Melbourne he settled in Ascot Vale, which at that time did not have a local lodge or Masonic halls. In fact, lodge halls in Melbourne were still a rarity, with most lodges still meeting in hotels, clubs, and halls, such as the St Patrick's Hall, although due to the gold rush lodge halls had been erected in many of the rural towns across Victoria. The Gordon Lodge building was about the sixth or seventh purpose-built lodge building in Melbourne.

What motivated Lamonby to found Gordon Lodge and to construct the building? Was it that he simply wanted an English lodge that was only a short walk from his Ascot Vale residence, with its own structure? Perhaps it was that simple, as those Lamonby joined on arrival in Melbourne involved travel; the Melbourne lodge met in central Melbourne and Combermere Lodge was meeting in Collingwood. Lamonby's character suggests there was a dash of self-promotion and importance in being the driving force behind the establishment of the lodge and the Ascot Vale Masonic building. However, this view is tempered by Lamonby remaining a member of Gordon Lodge until his death in November 1926. The fact he remained a member when he returned to England 1891 shows his passion and commitment, given it was unlikely he would ever attend a meeting again.

Lamonby was not backward in indulging in shameless self-promotion in his printed articles both in England and in Victoria. He was not averse to his position as a reporter to keep his name constantly in focus. He obviously considered himself an expert on Freemasonry on matters concerning the Antipodean colonies, as evidenced by his comments in 1905: 'as a PM of two Australian Lodges for over 20 years, and still a subscribing member to one of those Lodges, I trust I may be considered qualified and entitled to say a few words.'⁵¹

On his arrival in Melbourne Lamonby was soon making plenty of noise, while burnishing his credentials as the expert with English Masonic experience. Conversely, back in England Lamonby acted as the self-appointed expert with Australian Masonic colonial experience. In fact, expertise in Antipodian Freemasonry appeared to have been a valuable Masonic asset, for as William Watsons stated in his review of Lamonby's *Some Notes on Freemasonry in Australia from Earliest time to Present day*:

very few of us, indeed, at this side of the world have any idea of Masonry in the Antipodes, either as to its extent, organization, or work, and the information which the learned and distinguished author now affords us comes as a striking revelation as to the magnificent position Freemasonry has attained there.⁵²

⁵¹ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 6 September 1905, 391.

⁵² W. Watson, 'Review of *Some Notes on Freemasonry in Australia from Earliest time to Present day (1803–1906)*, by Lamonby, William Farquharson (1839–1926)' in *AQC* 19 (1906), 248–9.

And it is this high esteem in which Lamonby was held in QC circles, and during his sojourn in Victoria, that markedly contrasts with the view we gain of him from the Minutes of the Quarterly Communications of UGLE and from incidents during his time in Victoria.

Lamonby always thought it was his prerogative to offer unsolicited Masonic advice on any given situation, and his response to various incidents shows a man totally self-assured of the correctness of his opinions and righteousness of his beliefs. The Combermere Mark Lodge and the Cambrian Lodge sagas reveals much about him and provides valuable insights into his thinking and the lengths he would go to in attempts to influence Masonic events. This is also evinced by his vehement and vocal efforts against a local Grand Lodge in the Colony of Victoria, and his ongoing war of words with Bro. George Coppin, much of which was played out in the press.

As previously noted, during Lamonby's ten years in Victoria he wrote a column for the London *Freemason* magazine. In these columns he gave the London readers a somewhat biased view of affairs in that colony, and was quite dismissive of suggestions there was any serious desire for a local Grand Lodge: a nothing to see here approach. In fact, Lamonby wrote, '... agitation ... principally amongst the members of the lodges hailing from the two sister constitutions. ...' Peter Thornton suggested that Lamonby, through his columns, deliberately misled English Masons on the matter of a local Grand Lodge, in particular his omission to mention that all discussion of the issue of a local Grand Lodge had been forbidden in Victorian English Constitution Lodges.⁵³

British society in in the 1880s was then debating whether or not atheism was acceptable, or whether it represented a clear and present danger sapping and degenerating the morals of society? In terms of Freemasonry the 1877 removal of all references to the Great Architect from French ritual and ceremonial provided 'conclusive proof' of the dangers in allowing atheists and freethinkers to propound their views and proselytise the weak-minded. So it is no surprise then to find Lamonby, within a few months of arrival in Melbourne, penning the article entitled 'Masonry and Atheism in the Antipodes.'

The photograph of Lamonby in his Victorian Constitution Past Deputy Grand Master regalia raises a whole series of questions, many of which may give an insight into the character of the man. The initial response is that the photo must have been taken in Victoria, as the existence of the photo suggests he was conferred the rank of PDGM before he returned to England in 1891. However, Lamonby was not conferred the rank of PDGM until 1897. Presumably the photo was taken in that year or thereafter, yet Lamonby's possession of this regalia is effectively useless, as he did not hold that rank in England, and thus could not wear it in an English Lodge. He could only wear it if he returned to Australia at some future point.

⁵³ Thornton, *History of Freemasonry in Victoria*, 79.



RE. WOR. BRO. W. F. LAMONBY, P.D.G.M.,
Foundation Master, Gordon Lodge,
1886 and 1887.

Fig. 5. William Lamonby in his regalia as Past Deputy Grand Master of Victoria. Photo taken from *Gordon Lodge 99, 1886–1986* with kind permission from Gordon Lodge.

From associated Minute books and other sources there was no suggestion that Lamonby left Victoria with any intention of returning to the State, so why purchase expensive regalia he would never have the opportunity to wear? Perhaps the answer to that question affords us an insight into his character: his passion for Freemasonry and perhaps even the financial means at his disposal.

Unsurprisingly, at the Quarterly Communication of UGLE on 6 March 1901 Lamonby moved a motion that brethren with colonial Grand rank can wear their regalia at Quarterlies. In his reply, the Grand Registrar, V. W. Bro. John Strachan, stated:

Bro. Lamonby need not fear that our Colonial Brethren will be placed at any disadvantage by this; for if they are members of this Grand Lodge, they wear here its distinguishing clothing; and if a Colonial Visiting Brother is not a member of this Grand Lodge, he wears the distinguishing clothing of his own Grand Lodge, which we are always proud to honour.

After that effective put-down, Lamonby's motion was lost.⁵⁴

Given our extensive knowledge of Lamonby's activities, as they were always played out in the press and often involved him in a dispute of some sort – we tend to see him in a negative light. He perpetually appears as an interfering and self-opinionated Englishman, or as Peter Thornton perhaps aptly noted regarding Lamonby: 'Whenever the masons of Victoria ran up against an awkward situation, or were experiencing a period of controversy, they could be sure of unsolicited advice from one particular source.'⁵⁵

His departure from Melbourne was met with numerous instances where feelings of approbation and esteem were expressed:

The executive committee connected with the recent laying of the foundation-stone of the Freemasons' hall, Collins-street east, met at Clements's Cafe on May 15, and presented Mr. W. F. Lamonby with a testimonial in token of his services as hon. secretary. Mr. George Baker, as deputy of the Irish Freemasons, and chairman of the committee, presided, in the unavoidable absence of Sir W. J. Clarke. The testimonial consists of a timepiece, surmounted by a greyhound en couchant, and on a silver plate is the following inscription: 'Presented to W. F. Lamonby, P.M. and P.Z., 752, E.C., as a memento of his services as honorary secretary to the executive committee of the laying of the foundation-stone of the Freemasons' hall, Melbourne, on 26 March, 1885.'⁵⁶

For a man who was such an active and ardent Freemason to have his painting listed as a *Portrait of an Unknown Freemason* reminds us all that any fame or notoriety in Freemasonry is just that, confined to the annals of Freemasonry. Lamonby is an excellent case in point, for he managed to seed his name throughout endless Masonic journals, reports, Minutes and newspaper articles, as well as on a large foundation stone. His expertise and knowledge of English Masonic workings provided him with a level of immediate gravitas and respectability in colonial Melbourne of the 1880s. He derived a certain cachet in Melbourne due to his English Masonic experience, and conversely derived a certain prestige back in England for being a Past Master in the colonies and the founder of an English Masonic lodge. Being a reporter gave Lamonby the opportunity and means to make himself known as an expert in all his pursuits, and to leave a deliberate trail of bread crumbs detailing his life in Freemasonry.

That trail also included Lamonby having short articles published or his books reviewed in editions of *AQC* at least nine times: seven times during his lifetime and two posthumous reviews of his books. As mentioned above, R. F. Gould commented favourably on Lamonby's pamphlet 'A Record of Proceeding, Connection and Inauguration, Victoria United Grand Lodge', while Bro. William Watson stated in his review of Lamonby's *Some*

⁵⁴ UGLE Quarterly Communication Minutes, 6 March 1901, 26–28.

⁵⁵ Thornton, *100 years of Mark Masonry in Victoria*, 25.

⁵⁶ *Australasian Sketcher with Pen and Pencil*, Monday, 1 June 1885, 86.

Notes on Freemasonry in Australia from Earliest time to Present day that ‘we have not the least misgiving that if the merit of Bro. Lamonby’s work is appreciated as it well deserves to be, a second edition will soon be demanded.’⁵⁷ That Lamonby was held in high regard in *AQC* was exemplified in a comment in Volume 7 concerning correspondence with Lamonby that he was a valued member of the Correspondence Circle.⁵⁸

Freemasonry during the 1800s provided a network of lodges which enabled middle-class Englishmen, primarily military and colonial officials, and businessmen, to move easily about the Empire. However, Freemasonry had another important benefit, in that Masonic membership provided an avenue to gain rank, respectability, and reputation. Lamonby provides an example of the fruits of that benefit, for when he arrived in Melbourne he had immediate access to the gentlemen elite of that city. Through his position and knowledge of English Freemasonry he was able to converse regularly with men such as Sir William Clarke, Bart., the largest landowner in the State, MLA, and the Provincial Grand Master in Victoria for the Irish, Scottish, and English Constitution Lodges.

Back in England, Freemasonry gave Lamonby the opportunity to aspire to greater heights, and through his efforts he was able to address directly the Peers of the Realm who presided at the Quarterly Communications of the United Grand Lodge of England. He was someone of importance who had attained stature, position and respectability in Freemasonry, and this had given him a degree of power. The time Lamonby spent in Melbourne enhanced his Masonic stature and fame within Freemasonry. In class-conscious England of the nineteenth century perhaps Lamonby had achieved a certain respectability beyond his station in life.

It is a testament to William Farquharson Lamonby’s sense of himself and his desire to leave his mark in history that we can so readily rebuild his life, particularly in relation to Freemasonry. The more you look, the more this ‘unknown Freemason’ becomes a distinct figure of influence on the course of Freemasonry in the colony of Victoria, which is quite a remarkable achievement for a brother who spent just ten years in the antipodes.

⁵⁷ Watson, Review of *Some Notes on Freemasonry*, 248–9.

⁵⁸ The Goose and Gridiron (London Tavern, 1717) (L.1* & L.2), (Daily Graphic 1894) [PGL] 7:182-3



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