

OCTOBER MEETING

1st Talk

Aspects of Freemasonry

A talk by Brian Powell and Mike Webb
reported by Alan Lee

Brian Powell, the Assistant Grand Master of East Kent commenced the first talk with the question, "What is freemasonry?" He went on to say, "Ask 10 masons and you will get 10 different answers." He then described the way the masons are governed, from the United Grand Lodge of England to the provincial lodges and down to the local lodges. There are three different ceremonies to initiate new members that go back some three hundred years.

Only men can become full members but many women attend as guests. Ladies lodges do exist but they are under a separate organisation. A local one is the White Cliffs Lodge.



The Provincial Grand Master of East Kent
and Senior Officers

Brian has been a member since he moved to Dover from London in 1967. This has enabled him to meet a great many people and over the years make a lot of firm friends.

The history of the masons derives from the old stone masons who formed a society to ensure their workmanship was kept to a high standard. It also worked as a form of friendly society. The first documentation of the making of an English freemason was that of Elias Ashmole in 1646. In 1717 the four London lodges met at the *Goose and Gridiron Ale House* in St Paul's Churchyard and declared themselves a Grand Lodge. Then in 1813 the United Grand Lodge was formed. During the 18th and 19th centuries the movement spread worldwide. This mirrored the expansion of the British Empire.

Many lodges were formed with a military connection. At this time many of the Dover lodges had military ties. The first local one was formed by the 1st Battalion Lancashire Militia who held their meetings in the canteen of Dover Castle.

The oldest lodge that still meets in Dover is the Lodge of Peace and Harmony No 199. It was formed in 1792 and used to hold its meetings in various local taverns.

The present premises in Snargate Street were formerly the London and County

Bank and were purchased in 1886. The dark blue colour of the building happened by mistake. It was intended to be a light blue. Blue has been the colour of craft freemasonry for a great many years. After painting a small section the tradesman told the wife to pass a message to her husband that if he heard nothing by the afternoon he would assume the colour was all right. He heard nothing so finished the job. Days later she remembered to tell her husband, but by then it was too late.

Brian is a member of the Military Jubilee Lodge, formed in 1887. It was named in honour of Queen Victoria's Jubilee. One previous member of the lodge Worshipful Bro. William Bernard Traynor was awarded the Victoria Cross while serving as a Sergeant with the 2nd Battalion West Yorkshire Regiment (Prince of Wales Own) during the 2nd Boer War. On 6th February 1901 at Bothwell Camp South Africa he helped carry a wounded comrade to safety and although badly wounded himself, he remained on duty to encourage his men. Born in Hull, East Yorkshire on 31st December 1870 he was invalided out of the army and settled in Dover in 1902. He retired as a Barrack Room Warden in 1935. He died at Buckland Hospital Dover on 20th October 1954 and is buried with his wife Jane and son Frank in Charlton Cemetery.

At present there are eleven lodges that meet in Dover with a total membership of 634. They are military, professional, artisan or a

mixture of all three. At present freemasonry in the town is in good health. Freemasons support four national charities and after the government they are the largest donors to the hospice movement. They also raise considerable sums to donate to county and local charities. In East Kent they have given £180,000 to members in need and £250,000 to hospices in Kent.

Membership in England and Wales is about 250,000 and worldwide some 6 million. There have been many well known masons among them Arthur Wellesley, '1st Duke of Wellington', Sir Winston Churchill, Sir Alexander Fleming, Sir Ernest Shackleton, Robert 'Robbie' Burns, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, Henry Ford, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Nat 'King' Cole, William 'Buffalo Bill' Cody, Clive Lloyd, Arnold Palmer, John Wayne, Peter Sellers and many more. The United Grand Lodge of England has been governed by The Grand Master, The Most Worshipful, His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent for over 40 years.

Mike Webb then continued the talk with details of his latest trip to America where he was privileged to meet many masons. His daughter and son-in-law live in Boise, the capitol of Idaho, and so this visit saw Mike travel right across America to the west.

The first six Presidents of the United States were all freemasons as were Meriwether Louis and



The Grand Master HRH The Duke of Kent

William Clark. In 1803 Thomas Jefferson sent them and their Corps of Discovery to find a water route to the Pacific. During the journey they discovered some 300 species of plants and animals unknown to science, nearly 50 different Indian tribes and the Rockies.

They finally started from St Charles, Missouri on 21st May 1804 and reached the Pacific Ocean, near the estuary of the Columbia River, in the middle of November 1805. After over wintering there they started for home and reached St Louis and an enthusiastic welcome on 23rd September 1806 - two years four months and ten days after they left.

It was also in 1803 that Jefferson concluded the purchase of Louisiana from the French for \$15 million or 4 cents an acre. This doubled the size of the United States of America.

The Star Spangled Banner (the US anthem) was written by a freemason as was the Pledge of Allegiance. Other famous masons were the aviators Charles Lindbergh (first solo flight across the Atlantic), Louis Bleriot (first solo powered flight across the Channel) and Edwin Eugene "Buzz" Aldrin Jr. (pilot of first moon landing and second man to walk on the moon).

Mike and his wife visited Idaho City, now a virtual ghost town where the three largest buildings are the jail, the Mayor's house and the masonic hall. In 1864 the population was in excess of 7000 people, by 1920 it was down to 104 and in the 2000 census it stood at 458. The Grand Lodge of Idaho (the Idaho Lodge No 1) was founded here in 1867, and is now located in Boise. In America the freemasons

are the largest donors to children's charities.

During the talk some interesting facts emerged and some myths were dispelled. Freemasonry is slightly old fashioned and retains a high standard of politeness and behaviour. Some of the ceremonies are similar to the local mayor making and the opening of Parliament. Masons are not in existence to rule the world and they are not a cult. Religion and politics are not allowed to be discussed at the lodge. At a meeting there is always a toast drunk to the reigning monarch. All religions are accepted by freemasons: the only people not welcome are atheists. Masons recognise a duty of citizenship and of making a contribution to the family and society. The Knights Templar are not a main part of the masonic belief but they are a secondary unit of the organisation.

The fundamental rules first laid down in the book of constitutions still apply to this day. The dress code is usually a dark suit, tie, white shirt and black shoes.

The main masonic museum is in Great Queen Street, London the Masonic Museum in St Peter's Place, Canterbury will reopen again in 2012.



Dover Masonic Hall