

2018 will Mark Significant Anniversaries for some Twenty-five
Craft Lodges registered on the books of Grand Lodge of Ireland

Welcome Brethren,

As in previous years, 2018 will mark significant anniversaries for some twenty-five Lodges registered on the books of The Grand Lodge of Ireland. Of these, one Lodge, St John's No 134 in Lurgan will celebrate 275 years of Masonic endeavour and achievement, since the issue of their Grand Lodge Warrant to Bros John Magill, William Guthry and Robert Turbett to form 'St. John's Lodge' in LURGAN, Co. Armagh, 20 May 1743. Sadly, the Lodge records contain no information about the constitution of the Lodge. Nothing is known about the occupations of its members or their original meeting place. For the first 40 years or so of the Lodge's existence a separate minute book was not kept to record proceedings. During this period the only book of record would appear to have been the lodge cash book, which served a variety of purposes.

Some curious facts are recorded such as on page 1 of this cash book was recorded: '1742, August 20, our Lodge formed in Lurgan. The Lodge would appear to have been in existence for some nine months before Grand Lodge issued Warrant No 134 to the Brethren in Lurgan. It seems that one of the main problems confronting the Grand Lodge of Ireland in its early years was that of securing general recognition as the governing body over all the Lodges in the country at that time. Nothing is known of the steps taken by Lodge 134 to secure its warrant, or the reason for the 9-month interval between the formation of the Lodge and the issue of the warrant. The Lodge cash book shows payment 4 days later of £2 18s.9d. The actual cost of the warrant was 2 guineas, equivalent to £2 5s. 6d. in Irish currency, the balance of 13s. 3d. being made up of registration and other fees.

Extract from AQC Volume 68 Part 1

The Irish Lodge: Its Furniture and Properties by Bro. C. Marshall Rose.

"... Early mention of an outstanding chair as a piece of furniture, together with a Table, is associated with Lodge 134, which has worked continuously at Lurgan, Co. Armagh, since 1743, when it received its warrant. The chair was formerly in the possession of the late Captain Wilson, of Lurgan, and was used by the Master when the Lodge met, in early days, in the house of Captain Wilson's forebears. On the back is carved, within a square frame, or centre panel, a Harp, Compasses, Square, Level, and other symbols; round the outside of the frame is the date 1681, and certain letters A.J.R., K.C.B. In Volume viii., A.Q.C. is a sketch submitted by Bro. J.H. Clendinning, of Lurgan. Contemporary with this chair is another of very similar design associated with Carrickfergus, which is preserved in St. Nicholas' Church of that town. The design of the frame is a circle, containing the same letters A.J.R., K.C.B., and the date in 1685. The symbols are Harp and Square and Compasses (and degree).

In a note on these chairs (Irish Lodge of Research 1926) we read, it is 'averred that (Lurgan) chair and table always were together and were part of the same set of Furniture.

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It is thought that the two chairs, with possibly a third, were used by the Master and two Wardens of an old operative Lodge in Lurgan; in 1681 at the time, the Parish Church was being built. Lodge No. 134, according to their extant cash books, certainly was working before they received their present warrant from Grand Lodge in 1743. To quote from History of Grand Lodge, p. 38, the authors make these pertinent comments:

'The similarity of the lettering in the Irish examples joined to the difference in dates and the variation in the tools is extraordinarily intriguing ... what words are the mysterious letters intended to represent? What is conveyed by the working tools, however, will require no interpretation. There is no doubt that, as depicted on these chairs, they have ceased to be operative and have become speculative. Some records survive of another chair being purchased by Lodge 134 in 1809 for the use of the Master. Bro. Jenkinson gives a general description of Masters' chairs then in use, and this chair in particular. "These Masters' chairs fulfilled the dual purpose of Chair and Lodge chest; the seat forming the cover of the Box like cavity in which the Lodge property was stored. Usually these chairs had a large canopy beautifully decorated with masonic emblems, sometimes carved, or as in the case of Chair of No. 134, painted on woodwork. From the cash entry it will be seen that out of a total of £17 the sum of £7 was paid for painting, indicating that this chair must have been elaborately embellished."

One of the earliest references to Floor Cloths is recorded in the History of St. John's Lodge, No. 134, Lurgan, which received its Warrant in 1743. The entry is possibly cryptic and vague yet throwing light upon the early history of lodge furnishings. The entry reads: -

9th November 1743

Carpet and money to treat Brothers - 7s. 9½

Amongst the many fascinating items detailed in the surviving Minute Books from St John's Masonic Lodge No 134, we find references to the following: -

Deacon's Wands

A surviving Minute Lurgan Lodge, No. 134, makes reference to Rods in 1774, when it purchased "**a pair of Rode's**" for 1s. 1d.; again in 1804, "**John Hill for making Polls,**" £2. 8s. This must have been one of the earliest references to Deacons and their association with Rods, although on the authority of Bro. W. Jenkinson, in his notes on St. John's Lodge, No. 134, Lurgan, he says: "It would appear that Deacons were appointed, under the Irish Constitution as far back as 2nd February 1726/7."

Aprons

In the Minutes of Lodge 134 dated July 9th 1774, we find: - *Robert Barnet to an apron 10d.*

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Master's Cloak.

In September, 1835 we find: - *Purchased a cloak at a cost of £1 12s. 8d.* This is described as a prominent item of Lodge clothing, made of red cloth, probably trimmed with black velvet, and worn by the Master along with the Tall Hat both in Lodge and when Brethren walk on St. John's Days.

Lodge Warrant

Lurgan Lodge, No. 134. 24th June 1782. *To cash Recd., from Bro. Gadder by John Hill Toward framing the Warrant 2. 8½*

Lodge Flag.

The historian of Lurgan Lodge, No. 134, makes mention of 11s. 4½d. "Paid for the Flag," and in 1835 paying "Mrs. Walsh for Dying Flag" 3s. 0d., but it must be explained that the Lurgan Lodge is not definitely mentioned

Lodge Sword.

The first notice is found in the notes relating to St. John's Lodge, No. 134, Lurgan, when on 8th June, 1747, a "sword was paid for out of the Box" at a cost of 1s. 7d. Again, in June, 1769, we read "that Bro. McClatchy was paid 2/8½ for mending 'Flaming Swords'."

Lodge Chest.

In the early days of Lurgan Lodge, No. 134, warranted in 1742, the Master had charge of the box or chest; he also acted as Treasurer - a wise precaution when we remember that the Lodge cash was kept in the chest. One of the earliest entries records the obtaining of the chest: -

Aug. 20th 1742. "Our Lodge formed in Lurgan."

Followed by

To Box and Locks 6s. 5½d.

To Ribens and utencels and socits (?) 3s. 3½d.

And referring to glasses etc.

Hospitality.

As hospitality was a feature in the conduct of Lodges, it is not surprising we have many references to Jugs and Glasses included in the contents of the chest.

Glasses etc.

St. John's Lodge, Lurgan, No. 134, Amongst the first items of Lodge expenditure we read: 1744, "*To Juuls and Glasses £1. 1. 5.*" This small cost may be explained that only one or two officers were provided with a jewel. Later we find, in 1807, *jewels were purchased at a cost of £3 10s. 0d., and in 1813, £2 9s. 4½d was expended on "Ribbons' for aprons and Juels."*

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Then we read of Lurgan Lodge, No. 134, providing themselves with Jugs, usually a set of three. The purchase of a Jug is thus related: - *24 June 1788. - Paid by David Gaddes for trateing Bro. Douglas on Receiving the Lodge Jug 18s. 8d.* - Presumably this sum included the cost of Jug.

Clearly Brethren, there is much of interest to learn from the history of St John's Masonic Lodge No 134, and we in The Irish Lodge of Research are currently in communication with St John's Lodge No 134, to set up a formal visit to Lurgan, later this year.

Some 50 years will pass until we reach the Constitution of our next Lodge, True Blue No 794 New bliss. The Grand Lodge of Ireland on the 3rd April, 1794 - Ordered the issue of Warrant No 794 to Brothers. James. Gray, Robert. Gray and Oliver Bryson, to hold a Lodge in the town of New bliss in the Co. of Monaghan. Here again is a Lodge-room with much of interest to the Masonic Historian.

The first item of interest is a complete set of hand-cut brass Dress buttons with Ulster Lodge No. 790 inscribed round a Compass and Square. The original Craft, Royal Arch and Knight Templars brass smoke seals still survive and of great interest is The Banner of Lodge No. 184, Drum, Co. Monaghan, is worthy of special mention. It was made of white linen with blue fringe 68" by 55" over all. Above Armorial shield stands the Master of the Lodge properly clothed, according to the custom of the time, with a red cloak trimmed with ermine - under it a blue coat reaching to his knees and beneath that a yellow jacket and white knee-breeches. (N.B., being properly clothed the Master did not wear an apron).

Supporting the shield are the two Wardens attired in blue and each carrying a truncheon. The shield is painted in colours of gold, blue, red, yellow, green, white, and black. This Lodge is reputed to be the only one in the Province of Armagh that had its own flag. It is now preserved in New Bliss Masonic Lodge, No. 794 along with the remains of their own Lodge (794) Flag. The Banner of 794 is of special interest in as much as it was rescued from the rubbish heap when it was put out to be burnt in 1896.

Hospitality.

New bliss Masonic Lodge, No. 794. The Minutes for 1868 record - "*That each member supply themselves with a tumbler and a glass at the sum of 3/- each to be held and considered as their own property during their stay in the Lodge and when leaving may be removed by them at their own option if in full standing order.*"

For your interest, we attach a few abstracts from the Lodge Minutes: -

7 January, 1806.

The members assembled for the greater part it being Lodge night.... Then the Lodge closed and opened on that awful Degree of Kts of the Red Cross at which juncture Sir Thomas Butler was duly initiated in that most awful order.

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The Lodge then changed to the Grand Royal Arch Degrees....was arched. Then the Chapter closed and changed to that magnanimous order of High Knt. Templars and Knits of Malta....were dubbed High Knt. Templars and Knts of Malta by us in a Grand Encampment. Then the Encampment closed and changed to a Refreshment....

21 May, 1839.

The Revd. M. Woods [and 5 other brethren] raised to the Degree of Super-Excellent Arch Freemasons.

23 July, 1839

Godfrey Hill, Esq., Master; [List of another 4 brethren] received the degree of Night Templars and Knights of Malta.

12 February, 1844.

Lodge worked the Royal Arch and Super-Excellent Degrees.

24 June, 1849.

Lodge went to Clones to attend a church service under the auspices of Clones Lodge No. 881.

9 August 1853.

New bliss Masonic Lodge No. 794 Royal Arch Chapter opened in due and ancient form.... [3 brethren named] Lodge closed in due form.

A Grand Encampment of High Knight Templars and Knights of Malta opened [5 brethren named]

10 January, 1855.

Royal Arch Masons applying for a Royal Arch Warrant.

[There follows a list of 9 brethren]

Knight Templars applying for a Knight Templar Warrant: -

[There follows a list of 6 brethren all included in R.A. list]

First meeting of both R.A.C. and H.K.T. was held on the 17 May, 1855.

2 October, 1866.

Met in Love, Peace and Harmony for the discharge of ordinary Lodge duties. In the absence of the W.M. the chair was filled by Bro. John Burke - It was proposed by Bro. Robert Crawford and seconded by Bro. Burke that each member of 794 be immediately written to attend on next Tuesday at 7 o'clock for the purpose of taking into consideration the propriety of returning the different Warrants connected with 794 to the Grand Lodge of Ireland, or maintaining, in a proper and constitutional manner the dignity of the ancient Lodge. Members present: -

[Names of 4 brethren]

The requisite letter was sent on the 9th October to 13 brethren]

The brethren met and duly resolved to meet again in December to appoint officers for the ensuing six months.

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The Companions of the Chapter wrote to Grand Chapter on 26 December 1869 complaining as to the charges being made to them. [The extracts were made by Bro. Crossle from the original books of the Lodge at the time in the care of Bro. Sergeant Climigan R.I.C., of Canal St. Newry]

Here again Brethren, we learn much about the history of True Blue Lodge No 794 New bliss, as they celebrate their 225th Anniversary on the 3rd April 2018. Now it is off southwards to The Provincial Grand Lodge of Midland Counties. Of particular interest to us today, is Ossory Lodge No 150 based in Rathdowney in what was then known as Queens County. The Memorial was submitted to Grand Lodge on the 30th June 1843 by Bros John. F. Harte, Sen.; John. Kennedy and Richard. Atkinson and was Recommended by Lodges 37, 642 and 646. Grand Lodge Board was Resolved That it be recommended that a Warrant shall be issued directed to the parties' names in the application and Warrant No 150 was duly issued on the 6 July, 1843.

Some Notes from Lodge Records.

1. *19 Aug. 1843 - "I beg leave to inform you that the Master, Wardens & some of the Brethren of Lodge 646 from Durrow, attended here on the 17th inst., & in due form installed Brother John J. Harte, Master, John Kennedy Senr. Warden, and Richard Atkinson Junr. Warden of 150, which will in future meet in this town" The above names Brethren are all late Members of 646 and are to remain in Office until 24th June, 1844."*
2. *Crossle questionnaire showing the Warrant issues to the brethren names above. Lodge meeting in two houses in the Square, Rathdowney and now [1893] in a Special Building. It would appear that the Lodge held both R.A. & K.T.*

Our next two Lodges - Leinster Lodge No 115 Colombo, Sri Lanka and Northern Star Lodge No 438 Raphoe in Donegal both celebrate their 150th Anniversary in 2018. From our files, we learn that Leinster Lodge was: -

*Warrant No. 115 Colombo, Ceylon, as "Leinster Lodge", 2 May, 1868
William Keen; George Nichols and Christopher O'Halloran together with nine other brethren all from Lodge No. 107, registered 2 May, 1868. A total of 252 brethren registered up to 11 February, 1900. In most cases the dates when the degrees were conferred and the issue of certificates is shown.*

28 November, 1898 - Read application from 115 Colombo, Ceylon for a Subscription towards building a Masonic Hall in Colombo. To be informed that no funds are available for such a purpose.

5 June, 1900 - Read communication from 115 Colombo, Ceylon for leave to meet in new premises. Granted. - 1 April, 1901. Read letter from Lodge 115 Colombo for leave to change its place of meeting to a new Hall built in Colombo. Approved.

Similarly, from the Grand Lodge files we learn that: -

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Lodge No. 438

20 April, 1786 - Read a Petition of Brs. Geo. McClennan, Saml. McClure and Robt. Sayers of No. 438 praying the Grand Lodge to revive said Warrant to them in the town of Convooy Co. Donegal. Ordered that on paying the full fee of a new Warrant that their Petition be granted.

Lodge No. 346 Raphoe installed three of its members as Master and Wardens of this Lodge, the brethren in question being, George McClenaghan, Samuel McClure, and Robert Sayers. Brother McClenaghan MD., was originally a member of Cannongate Kilwinning Lodge No. 2 SC. who affiliated with No. 346 in 1786. Bro. McClure was Junior Warden of No. 346 from December 1785 and Bro. Sayers was for some time Secretary of Lodge No. 346.

Present day Raphoe Masons meet in Northern Star Lodge No. 438 under a Warrant which Raphoe Lodge No. 346 had recommended, and which the worthy brethren of No. 346 installed in Convooy in 1786. No. 438 Convooy was cancelled on the 6th July, 1815, and issued on the 20th March, 1868 to Raphoe where, "it is to-day a flourishing Lodge."

From the Minutes of the G.L. Board of G.P.

Lodge 438

2 March, 1868 - Read letter from R.W. Sir Jas. Stewart, Bt. P.G.M. of Derry and Donegal enclosing a Memorial from Br. Jno. K. Irwin, P.M. of Lodge No. 102 Lifford and P.S.G.W. of the Province and other Brethren praying for a Warrant to hold a Lodge at Raphoe in the Co. Donegal. Read letter dated 26th February from Br. J.K. Irwin enclosing £7 and requesting on behalf of the Memorialists that No. 438 may be granted to them. The Board recommend that the prayer of the Memorialists be granted and that a Warrant to be numbered 438 be issued to them.

Reissued to 'Northern Star Lodge' in RAPHOE, Co. Donegal, 20 March 1868.: Warrant issued 20 March, 1868 to Raphoe, Co. Donegal to John King Irwin; Charles Smith and Whittaker M. Morrow.

Masonic Bazaar in Raphoe.

Yesterday a Masonic bazaar, under the distinguished patronage of his Grace the Duke of Abercorn, Most Worshipful Grand Master of Freemasons in Ireland; the Duchess of Abercorn, the Marquis of Hamilton, MP., Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of Derry and Donegal; and many other prominent persons, was opened in the Royal School, Raphoe, County Donegal, in aid of the funds of the new Masonic Hall erected some time ago.

The Raphoe Masonic Lodge has existed since 1763, and the new hall was erected as a memorial to the late Mr. Wm. Wilson, a highly popular gentleman in the district for many years, and MP., for County Donegal from 1876 to 1899.

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Mr. David Wilson, solicitor, presided at the opening ceremony, which was gracefully performed by Mrs. Sinclair, of Hollyhill, Tyrone, who spoke very highly of the Masonic body and of their charitable and philanthropic disposition in many deserving causes.

The arrangements for the bazaar were energetically carried out by Mrs. M'Feeters, the Diamond, Raphoe, and Miss. Bain, Foster House. In addition to the sales there was a lengthened programme of amusements. The attendance was large, and the bazaar, on the whole, was a great success. This report was published in the Belfast Newsletter on the 29th June 1907.

-End-