

## Freemasonry in the Town of Ballymena 1759 - 2017.

Freemasonry began in the town of Ballymena on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1759 when Grand Lodge issued Warrant No 317 to Archie McAlester Gent, James Moore Gent and Joseph Deane Gent. This Lodge was known as The Orange and Blue Lodge, as its members trimmed their blue aprons with orange ribbon. It is important to point out that there was no political significance in the colour orange, which was only selected to make Lodge Members stand out from other Lodges at the annual St John's Day services.

We first learn of the existence of this Lodge in an article published in The Belfast Newsletter on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1783 published by the Lodge Secretary thanking their worthy Brother the Rev John Torrans for his excellent sermon on the 24<sup>th</sup> June last, and to the Brethren of Shanemullagh Lodge No 581 for their politeness that day in joining the procession to church. Signed by Order - Patrick McVickar Secretary.

Sadly, the only surviving written records of this Lodge comes from the Grand Lodge Membership Registers held in their archives, and a series of news items published in the Belfast News Letter in the years 1783, 1785, 1786 & 1787 marking their annual St John's Day services on the 24<sup>th</sup> June and 27<sup>th</sup> December every year. We know that 317 had some 25 members registered on the Grand Lodge Books, but in the spirit of the time there may have been other members of the Lodge, who had not paid enough of their joining fees, for the Secretary to officially register them as members.

We learn from these Press reports that Lodge No 317 traditionally used two ministers, the Reverend John Torrens of Hazelbank and the Reverend John Lang. Of note was the church parade on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 1787 when the Lodge were accompanied to and from the church by the band of the Right Hon. John O'Neill. Sadly, like many other Irish Lodges they fell behind with their annual Dues payments, and on the 7<sup>th</sup> October 1813, their Warrant, with many others, was cancelled by The Grand Lodge of Ireland.

However, this was not to be the end of the story. We in The Irish Lodge of Research, on the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1929, received correspondence and a photograph, from a Brother G. W. Crossley, of the Masonic Hall, Bendigo, Australia. He had found, hanging on a wall, in a store-room in the Bendigo Hall, the original 317 Warrant, dated 1759, signed by The Rt Hon The Earl of Drogheda GM, John Bury Esq D.G.M. Major Edward Windus & The Right Hon Charles Gardiner Grand Wardens, and made out in the names of Archibald McAlester, James Moore and James Deane Gents.

To erect a Lodge of Freemasons in the town of Ballymena. Clearly, in the 1812 - 1813 period, one of the senior Lodge Members of the day, must have emigrated, and took the Warrant with him, possibly to hold a Lodge in the lands of Australia. He may have ended up in Bendigo, or after the passage of time, the Warrant itself may have been surrendered to the Constituted Lodge in Bendigo. In either case, there are no surviving written records, to explain how the Warrant ended up on the wall in Bendigo.

As we have already learned, the first Ballymena Lodge was Constituted in the year 1759. However, it would be a further 28 years, until the second Warrant No 676 was issued on the 4<sup>th</sup> of October 1787 to Bros John McIntyre, John McCluskin and John Moore to hold another Lodge in Ballymena. In this case, the Lodge was known as the Ballymena Blue Lodge, and it was to have a varied career, with periods of suspension, followed by Restoration by Grand lodge, until its Warrant was finally cancelled on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1859, during its chequered history, it brought some 247 new Members to the Light, and of interest to us today, in the year 1792 it initiated Brothers William, Matthew and Robert Harbison into the Order. At that time, there had been ongoing discussions within the Lodge for the formation of a daughter Lodge, and it was these three brothers, who were selected by the members of 676, to put their names forward and apply for a third Warrant in the town.

The Memorial to Grand Lodge for what was the third Lodge to be established in the town of Ballymena was submitted by Bros. William, Matthew and Robert Harbison who had been initiated in Lodge No. 676 and registered in Grand Lodge on the 4th October 1792. Their application was considered by Grand Lodge at the October 1792 meeting at Taylor's Hall, Dublin and Warrant No. 775 was granted. As the three Grantees were so closely related the Lodge quickly became known as the '*Three Brother's Lodge.*'

The selection of new members remained low for the first six years, indeed no further names were registered until January 1798, however, this does not mean that the Lodge was not flourishing as one finds that on the 29th January 1798 a further sixteen new members were registered by the Lodge bringing the declared membership of the lodge up to nineteen. A hand-written Certificate dated 8th January 1798, at present in the Museum of the P.G.L. of Antrim, indicates that one brother, Thomas Hunter was a member of this lodge even though his name did not appear as a member in the Grand Lodge Register. The Certificate is typical of the period and is signed by the three principal officers, Matthew Harbison, William Harbison and Robert Wilson, together with G. Jackson, Secretary. The Lodge Seal is also attached.

## Masonic Sermon.

The Masters, Wardens, and Brethren of Lodges No. 424, 551, 590, 676, 704, 725, **775**, 776, and 802 do return our most sincere thanks to the Rev. Foot Marshall for the excellent Sermon delivered by him in the Meeting House of Connor, the 24th day of June, on the duties and principles of Masonry.

Signed by order,

David Manson, Sec. 802, Kells. June 29, 1796.

N.B. The Members of 802 return those different Lodges their unfeigned thanks for attending with so much regularity that day.

John Irwin, Master.

Published in the Northern Star Newspaper, 22 July 1796.

It would be worth reminding all present, just how onerous our John's Day ceremonies were back in the 1800's. The Lodges met early in the morning to install their Wor Master, Wardens and Officers for the next six-month period up to the next St John' Day. This tradition was maintained under the Irish Constitution right up to the 1880's. Once the Installation was complete, the Master called his Lodge down, giving the Brethren an opportunity to tidy up their regalia, and themselves, prior to marching off to their Church Service.

In this case, our Brethren in Three Brothers, left their Lodge-rooms and set off on a six mile stroll out to the village of Connor. They would have made their way to a pre-selected field, where the Lodges would get in order, with lowest numbered Lodges to the front, and the host Lodge, in this case 189 Conner, bringing up the rear. They then made their way to Connor Meeting House, went through the service, then paraded, en masse, back to the field, before the various Lodges then set off homeward, to their individual Lodge-rooms. Here the Master would call his Lodge back up, before Closing the meeting. Then the Brethren would retire for some harmony, before finally making their way homeward, after a long and tiring day.

The 1798 Rebellion affected the Lodge as no meetings could be held due to a Proclamation of Martial Law enacted on 27th May 1798 which was strictly enforced. This state of affairs lasted until early 1799, however, when meetings resumed the Brethren rallied round and the Lodge had survived its first crisis.

Fortunately, none of the Lodge Members were found to be involved in the Turn-Oot in June 1798, although as we know, there was much United Irish activity in the town.

Several thousand United Men arrived in the town on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 1798 and laid siege to the Market House (currently the Town Hall) which was defended by a party of Yeomanry, some of the military and several loyal local inhabitants.

The ground floor was captured, allowing the rebels to light fires under and smoke out the defenders above. This allowed the United men to capture the Market House at the cost of the lives of three of the men who had been defending it. But it was a short-lived victory, and by the 9<sup>th</sup> June 1798, the town was back in government hands.

Labour resumed in Three Brothers Lodge in 1799, when the military authorities relaxed the curfew, and powers to prevent more than six people assembling together in the evenings. The Lodge registered a further ten members on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 1799 and this growth was to continue, six more being registered on the 16<sup>th</sup> July and a further four on the 16<sup>th</sup> September, a busy year. The Lodge continued to expand for the next ten years.

We know, from Grand Lodge records that on the 8 April 1799 - the Lodge issued a Certificate to Bro. John Morrow of this Lodge signed by William Harbison, Master; Matthew Harbison, S.W. and John Beatty, J.W. [Copy of the Lodge Seal shown]

We know from Grand Lodge records that a total of 65 Brethren registered as members of 775 up to 2 September 1807. We also know, that in the in the very early days the Brethren were registered in batches and this carried on until about 1828.

The Lodge was called upon by Grand Lodge from time to time, along with other local Lodges, to form an investigating committee and to report their findings for confirmation. These local committees were very common in the early years of the nineteenth century and in most cases managed to have the dispute referred to them, settled amicably. When this was not the case the committee would recommend various terms of suspension and Grand Lodge invariably confirmed the punishment.

In April 1809, the Lodge along with Lodges, 424, 487, 533, 676, 704 and 802, submitted a Memorial to Grand Lodge, requesting that that Body not to grant a Warrant to a named Brother as they considered that "he was not suitable to receive same." It appears that this step was taken to prevent the Brother concerned from causing further disruption to Masonry in the Ballymena area. At the same Grand Lodge meeting a further Memorial was read from the Brother concerned requesting Grand Lodge to issue a Warrant in lieu of a Dispensation from A. Seton.

The application was refused in view of the submission of Lodge 775 and others. The matter continued to cause trouble for some time and eventually was referred to Bro. George Hutchinson of Lodge 135 Ballymoney to investigate. By September 1809 Bro. Hutchinson had made no progress and the Masters of Lodges 123, 258, 487, 537 and 518 were instructed to report, this notwithstanding that Lodges 487 and 537 had signed the original Memorial. Judgement went against the Master of 533 Ballymena "for obtaining said Warrant by fraud and that Warrant No. 533 was cancelled."

Warrant No 382(A) was issued to Bros John Hall, Robert Christy and John Carson, to form a Lodge in Ballymena, to be known as the Ballymena True Blue Lodge. However, this Lodge was formed at the start of a very difficult period in the history of Ballymena, with several Cholera outbreaks, poverty and emigration. Warrant 382(A) was Cancelled by Grand Lodge on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 1833. There seems to have been some question over the Cancellation of the Warrant as this Lodge continued to work in the town. Grand Lodge records show that another three Brothers, in this case William, Charles and David Blair are recorded as Master and Wardens in a letter to Grand Lodge dated 7<sup>th</sup> November 1833.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1810 another Lodge, No 364 was Constituted in Ballymena, and was known as Hibernia Lodge. In 1835 Hibernia Lodge moved out to Slatt, in the south west of the town, where it held its meetings up until the year 1845. It then returned to Ballymena in 1845, and worked there up to the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1850, when its Warrant was suspended by The Provincial Grand Lodge of North Antrim, Southern Division, for marching to church on St John's Day, despite a ban on such parades having previously been advised to all Lodges in the Province at the end of May 1850. The Warrant was restored in February 1851, but by then numbers had started to fall away. On the 12<sup>th</sup> September 1864, the remaining Brethren called it a day, and Sent-Up their Warrant via Provincial Grand Lodge to headquarters in Dublin.

In June 1811 the Master of 775, Wor. Bro. Sam Thomson sent a letter to Grand Lodge recommending that a Standing Committee be established in the Mid Antrim area similar to the Armagh, Down, Tyrone and Belfast Committees. Grand Lodge considered this request at its July, 1811 meeting and decided to defer its decision until a later date.

Regrettably no Minutes survive from this period and little information can be gleaned from the Correspondence files of Grand Lodge.

The earliest letter on file is a Return of Officers and Members made on the 24th December 1825 and shows Bro. Robert Sutter as Master, and Bros. Samuel McDowell and William Reid Wardens together with a further twenty-one members. With this return the Secretary enclosed the sum of £1.0.0 and undertook to clear all outstanding debts by the next Return.

In the Three Brothers Lodge report to Grand Lodge dated 24<sup>th</sup> June 1828, we find the usual list of registered Lodge members (32 on this occasion) and then in the accompanying letter to The Grand Secretary, we first learn about a complaint levelled against one of the members of Three Brothers Lodge, by a member of Broughshane Lodge No 424. It turned out that the two Brothers were neighbours, and the Brother from 424 had set off from Broughshane and made his way to the beach at Carnlough, where he filled his cart with seaweed and made his way homeward, where he spread the seaweed over a part of his field to act as a fertiliser. Once this was done, he got back on the cart and returned to Carnlough for another load. By the time of his second return to Broughshane, you can well image his surprise, when he discovered that the first load of seaweed was no longer in his field, but had now miraculously moved into his neighbour's field, that belonged to the Brother from Three Brothers Lodge. He was not best pleased and got the Secretary of 424 to write to Three Brothers Lodge.

The Master in Three Brothers Lodge challenged the Brother concerned, who denied all knowledge of his neighbour's loss and claimed that he too had been at the shore and brought home his own seaweed fertiliser. Clearly a problem that would have troubled Solomon himself, and caused a series of ripples in the Minutes of the Grand Lodge of Ireland for the next three years. In that time, several different investigations were carried out, but ultimately it came down to the word of one Brother against another. In the end, the whole matter was dropped, without any decision either way.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1846, a further Warrant numbered 431(A) was issued to Bros John McKillop Capt RN, Andrew Todd Dickey and Stephen Wilson McNeale, Deputy Provincial Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Cary & Dunluce, to hold a Lodge in the town of Ballymena. In the following year, Stephen Wilson McNeale became the Provincial Grand Master of Cary and Dunluce, after Archdeacon Walter Bishop Mant resigned, as he had been promoted within the Irish Church and moved out of the district to his new Parish in the town of Hillsborough. From the late 1850's, the Lodge would appear to have been known as the Prince Frederick William of Prussia Lodge.

One of the more remarkable features in the history of 431 is the origin of the unusual Lodge name. Indeed, why the Brethren chose this name is unclear. What

is however known is that Prince Frederick William of Prussia married the Princess Royal of England in January 1858. A request was made to the Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes seeking approval to use the name, but in the view of the Board they believed Grand Lodge had no authority to grant permission to the Lodge, so to style itself, and Grand Lodge concurred. Nevertheless Lodge 431 continued to use the name for a further 50 years until all things Prussian fell generally out of favour. Interestingly, at the time when Lepper and Crossle were working on Volume 1 History of The Grand Lodge of Ireland in 1924, there is a letter on file from the then Lodge Secretary of Lodge 431, informing Bro Philip Crossle that the Lodge had on file a letter from Prince Frederick of Prussia granting permission to the Lodge to be called The Prince Frederick William of Prussia Lodge.

Grand Lodge records show that Three Brothers Masonic Lodge No 775 had registered a total of 212 Brethren up to 10 November 1857. It was just after this correspondence, that we find the Brethren of 775 on the wrong side of two separate reports from Grand Lodge and The Grand Lodge Board of General Purposes.

From the Minutes of Grand Lodge: 4 March 1858 - Read Resolutions agreed to by Lodges No. 189, 364, 537, 574, 676, 775, 704 and 430 refusing to conform to the new regulations passed by Grand Lodge respecting fees etc. Lodge 430 returned their copy of the book of Constitutions lately forwarded to them stating that they did not require it.

Bro. Acheson Junior Grand Warden proposed - That these rebellious Lodges be reprimanded and that their attention be directed to rule 130 page 75 Ahiman Rezon, and that they be called on to show cause why their Warrants be not suspended, seconded by Bro. Ingram, Senior Grand Warden. The Question was put to Grand Lodge and agreed to.

To make matters worse on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1858 The Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter wrote to The Board of General Purposes of The Grand Lodge of Ireland to report to the Grand Lodge that Supreme Grand Chapter had been informed that the following Lodges persist in working Royal Arch Masonry under their Blue Warrants without any authority from the Grand R.A. Chapter. Viz: Nos. 45, 56, 189, 194. 246, 364, 537, 676 and 775 and as the Grand R.A. Chapter has no jurisdiction over these Lodges, it requests that the Grand Lodge will make such an order as may put a stop to such a serious violation of the Masonic Law.

The Board recommend that these Lodges be called upon to show cause why their Warrants be not cancelled for conferring High Degrees without proper Warrants.

Fortunately, Brethren, Lodge 676, which was already in trouble for marching to Church of St John's Day, despite a specific ban on such a march by Grand Lodge, was then also taken to task and found guilty for the above offences, by having its Warrant suspended at the pleasure of Grand Lodge. All the other Lodges listed above were written to and warned if they continued to disregard the regulations of Grand Lodge, then they too could face further censure.

Warrant number 776(A) was issued to Bros Frederick A. Matthews, David McKillop and John Radcliffe Matthews, all Past Master's of Lodge 431 on the 7<sup>th</sup> May 1861 to hold a Lodge in the town of Ballymena. Their application was supported by Lodges 364, 431 and 775. This was perceived to be a Gentleman's Lodge, but sadly, it failed due to lack of support, and Warrant was Sent-Up by the remaining Members, to Grand Lodge on the 7<sup>th</sup> March 1889.

The Ballymena Observer, in its publication on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 1867 records that the members of Masonic **Lodge No. 775** celebrated the festival of St. John by dining together in the Albert Hotel, Ballymena. The Worshipful Master, Mr. H. Cameron, occupied the chair. Mr. R. Fisher, P.M., acted as Vice-President. The usual loyal, Masonic, and complimentary toasts were proposed and duly honoured, and a very pleasant evening was spent in peace, love, and harmony.

In the Belfast Newsletter of the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1868, we learn that Three Brothers Lodge No 775 was represented by Bro. R. Fisher at the ceremony of opening of the St John's Masonic Hall in Larne. Much has changed in Larne, since 1868, with a fine new Masonic Centre on the outskirts of the town. However, the St John's club, continues to survive right up to the present day.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> January 1869, the Brethren of Three Brothers moved their Lodge Room to the top floor (Mayor's Chamber) of the Town Hall Buildings. In earlier times the Three Brothers Lodge met in several locations in and around Ballymena during its first hundred years. The earliest recorded location was a public house in Wellington Street, Ballymena owned about 1829 by a Robert Black. By 1831 the lodge was meeting in the upstairs room of a private house in Linenhall Street and later removed to the Protestant Hall in Henry Street. A further move to a property in Mill Street followed and finally they removed to Waveney Road, Ballymena. And here they stayed until their move to the Town Hall.

In 1893 application was made to the Supreme Grand Chapter of Ireland to issue a Royal Arch Warrant to the ten named Companions, and said Warrant would be attached to The Three Brothers Lodge No 775. The Foundation Excellent King was Ex Companion Samuel W. Perry, the High Priest was John Patrick and the Chief Scribe was Lambert McKillop. Interestingly, all three of the Foundation



Triumvirate were all members of Lodge 431. In all there was six foundation Companions from 431, two from 246 and two from 775.

In 1894, a further new Warrant was issued in the town, and on this occasion, it was to found the first Temperance Lodge in Ballymena. On the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1894 Warrant No (149) was issued to Bros William Mehaffy a Past Master in 775, Christopher Todhunter a Past Master in 254 Holywood and Henry O'Hara from Lodge was named after the Most Wor Grand Master - The Duke of Abercorn and became known as the Abercorn Temperance Lodge. Its application had been supported by those three well known bastions of Temperance Three Brothers 775; Clough 574 and Prince Frederick William of Prussia Lodge No 431.

And still the Three Brothers Lodge continued to grow. A total of 220 Brethren had been registered by Lodge 775 up to 7 November 1900.

4 December 1905 - Read letters from Lodges 149 and 775, Ballymena for permission to meet in new rooms, examined and approved by the P.D.G.M. Approved. This appears to be the first announcement that led to a general move by the Lodges in the town, to secure their own purpose built Hall. Work progressed slowly until the right site was found and paid for. A general appeal for financial support throughout the Constitution was approved by Grand lodge and issued in March 1913. The Brethren had secured a prominent site at The Pentagon, in the centre of the town from The Adair Estates and got drawings passed for the construction of their new Hall. The building committee had set a budget of £ 1,900.00 for their new Hall and quickly raised some £900.00 from members of the three Lodges, three Chapters and the one Preceptory that was working in the town, at that time.

In the Great War 1914 - 1918, Thirteen members of Three Brothers Lodge volunteered for service to King and Country. Mercifully and unusually all thirteen Brothers survived and returned, to join their Brethren back in Lodge.

Warrant number 428 (B) was Constituted in the town on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 1917. Its Foundation Master was Wor Bro William Mehaffey Lodge 775 and Foundation Master of 149, and the two Wardens were Thomas Boyd from 149 as Senior Warden and John Harper from 775 as Junior Warden. This Lodge is known as Harmony Lodge, and has celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> March 1920 Seven Towers Lodge No 476 (B) was Constituted, and it too continues to grow and prosper. Its Foundation Master was John Erwin, a PM in Lodge 775, and the Senior Warden Robert Griffin was also a member of 775. The Junior Warden, John Calvert, worked as a Clerk in Ballymena, but his mother Lodge No 145 I.C. is based IN Gilford, Co Down.

Three Brothers Lodge was represented at a Masonic Service held in First Broughshane Presbyterian Church under the auspices of Lodge No. 246 and R.A.C. No. 246. A report on the St John's Day service appeared in the issue of the Ballymena Observer published on the 29 June 1923.

We know from Grand lodge records that, when Volume 5 of The Grand Lodge register was opened in 1925 and the first Brother from Three Brothers to be registered was Bro John Nesbit, Scutch Mill Manager., registered 14 March 1925. A further 120 Brethren registered up to 7 October 1952.

Three Brothers Lodge was represented by several Brethren at a Masonic Service held in the Connor Presbyterian Church, under the auspices of Connor Lodge No. 189, as recorded in the Belfast News Letter on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 1926. It was also represented at a Masonic Service held in the St. Patrick's Church Glenarm, under the auspices of Lodge No. 45, and again details of the service can be found in the Belfast Newsletter on the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1928.

Volume 6 of the Grand Lodge Register was opened in 1953 and we find the first name registered by Three Brothers Lodge to be that of Robert Ferguson, Master Baker, who was registered 6 June 1953. We also learn that a further 104 Brethren were registered, as joining Three Brothers Lodge in the period from 6<sup>th</sup> June 1953 up to 4 December 1984.

Harp & Crown Masonic Lodge No 60 (A) was Constituted on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1982, To mark the sixtieth anniversary of the formation of The Royal Ulster Constabulary. The three Grantees were Bro Francis Todd, a retired RUC officer, a member of Adelaide Lodge No 650 Belfast; Bro Alexander McCabe RUC Superintendent, and member of Royal Blue Lodge No 754 Coleraine; and Bro Samuel A. Mackenzie, RUC Officer of Shaw Memorial Lodge No 769 Clough.

You may be interested to learn that when Warrant No 60 was working down in Ennis, Co Limerick, in the year 1808, surviving records in Molesworth Street, record the use of a unique piece of Masonic Equipment, in the Lodge, at that time.

It was known as A set of Philosophical Bellows, an item, whose purpose is unknown, and certainly, I have never found references to in any other Irish Lodge. The mists of time have removed all records of its intended use, and leaves us all wondering what it may have been used for.

In 1991, the Brethren of Ahoghill Ancient Blue Lodge 704, sought approval and were permitted to leave their hall in Ahoghill and move into the Ballymena Masonic Centre. They held their first meeting in Ballymena on the 25<sup>th</sup> September 1991,

and one of their first items of business was to agree the sale of their hall, and the transfer of the proceeds to the Trustees of the Ballymena Masonic Centre, so that these funds could go a little way in paying for the ongoing modernisation and upgrading of The Ballymena Masonic Centre, that was underway at that time.

1993 was another important year in the history of Three Brothers Royal Arch Chapter No 775. The Chapter had been formed, some one hundred years earlier on the 6<sup>th</sup> November 1893 and its Foundation Excellent King had been Excellent Companion S.W. Perry. On Saturday, the 6<sup>th</sup> November 1993 the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Convocation and Service of Thanksgiving was held in Ballymena Masonic Hall. The Convocation was opened by Ex Companion David Kennedy, EK 1996 and the service was conducted by Ex Comp. the Rev Matt G. Evans B.A. The organist for the occasion was Ex Comp Maurice McQuitty A.L.A. The meeting was well attended, including a delegation from District Grand Chapter of Antrim lead by Most Excellent Companion William W. Preston, District Grand King.

On the 10<sup>th</sup> January 1996, the Ballymena Times ran an article under the headline *Senior Members honoured by Three Brothers Masonic Lodge*. The article records that for the first time in 203 years, the Lodge held its Installation of Officers, not on its stated day of meeting, the first Tuesday of the month, but on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> January. On this special occasion, the Lodge presented two sixty year jewels, to two of its more senior Lodge Members. The first presentation was made by Rt Wor Bro William W. Preston, himself an honorary member of 775 to Wor Bro James Carson of Ballymarlow, to mark 61 years of service. James joined the Lodge on the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1935 and served as WM in 1951.

The second presentation was made by Rt Wor Brother Rev Matthew G. Evans Assistant Provincial Grand Master of Antrim to Wor Bro William McWilliams, of Queen Street in the town, who joining the Order in Maine Valley Masonic Lodge, Cullybackey on the 19<sup>th</sup> December 1935. William affiliated to 775 on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 1940 and went on to serve as Master of the Lodge in 1960.

There was a large turnout of Members and Visitors present on the day including dignitaries from the Provinces of Antrim and Londonderry & Donegal.

Stalwart Lodge No 96 was Constituted by The Most Worshipful Grand Master, Darwin H. Templeton on Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> November 1996. The Foundation Master was Bro Samuel junior A. MacKenzie, a Past Master of Lodge 60; Bro Alexander McCabe also PM Lodge 60 and Crawford Mitchell, member of 189 & 799 served as Senior and Junior Wardens respectively.

The most recent Lodge to come in to the Ballymena Masonic Centre, was Lodge No 189 Connor. At a meeting of The Grand Lodge of Ireland held in the South

Court Hotel, Limerick on the 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015, permission was granted, on the recommendation of The Grand Lodge Board of General purposes for Warrant 189 to be removed from Connor and relocated in The Masonic Centre, Ballymena.

And our final three notifications, again from the Minutes of The Grand Lodge of Ireland record the recommendations from the Board of General Purposes, that the names of Wor Bro Robert H. A. Wilson, Very Wor Bro David Henderson and Wor Bro William T. I. McElpatrick be forwarded to The Grand Lodges of Maryland, North Carolina and Ecuador respectively, for the issue of Letters Patent, appointing said Brethren to be Representatives of The Grand Lodges of Maryland, North Carolina and Ecuador, at The Grand lodge of Ireland. On receipt of their Patents, these Brethren will be invited to the next Grand Lodge, when they will be presented to The Grand Master and receive their Patents, at the start of their ten-year appointment as Foreign Grand Representatives.

Brethren, I can think of no finer way, to conclude the 225-year history of The Three Brothers Masonic Lodge No 775 I.C. The three Harbison boys brought the Lodge to life in a very politically fraught time in the history of Ireland. The Lodge played an active part in the development of Freemasonry in the town and provided Officers and support to many of the other Lodges that were formed in Ballymena in the last 225 years. And in all that time, it worked conscientiously, steadily and deliberately, bringing many worthy men forward into the Masonic Order. In the early days, we heard of the use of the Lambeg drum in leading the two annual St John's Day walks to Church, and in the last few years, another very well known Lambeg drummer - Willie Drennan, joined the Lodge and plays an active part in its activities.

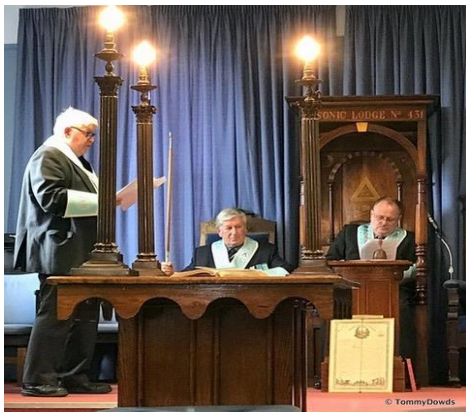
Brethren, it is a great honour to play a small part in the celebrations of this old Lodge, as they mark this important milestone in their history. We in the Irish Lodge of Research, are delighted to be here today, to join in your celebrations, and we wish you continued growth, progress and development in the years ahead. Much has changed, since those faltering early days, in an upper room, lit by candlelight, and yet, so much of our ritual is still the same, as when the three Brothers first came together. Brethren I thank you for the way in which you received this paper, and I especially thank the Wor Master, Officers and Brethren of Three Brothers Lodge No 775, for their kind invitation to be here today.

Rt Wor Brother Robert T. Bashford.  
Secretary Irish Lodge of Research.

-End-

The following pictures are of the brethren of both lodges at the festive board; special permission was obtained to take pictures of Rt Wor Brother Robert Bashford presenting the paper to both lodges, including presenting a small token of friendship; Worshipful Frank Lee of Lodge 200 to the Worshipful Master of Lodge 775 in reaching their century of 250 years.

Presentation Pictures



W Bro Robert Bashford presenting the Paper "Freemasonry began in the town of Ballymena, and Lodge 775 Three Brothers".



Worshipful Master Frank Lee of Lodge 200, present's a small token to the Worshipful Master of Lodge 775

Festive Board Pictures



Left to Right

- R W Br Robert Bashford, of Lodge 200 Secretary
- W Master Frank Lee, of Lodge 200
- W Bro Ian MacIntyre, of Lodge 200 Hon Treasurer

Left to Right & Front

- W Bro Cris McClintock member of Lodge 200, also the author of the book "Cross and the Craft".
- R W Bro Robert Bashford of lodge 200 Secretary
- W Master Frank Lee, of lodge 200
- W Bro Grant Smith, of Lodge 200





## Some of the Brethren of Lodge 775



Snap shot in masonic history of the Worshipful Masters Chair of the Three Brothers Lodge 775, with the box below the masters' seat, which was used the storage of the lodge regalia and other items of the lodge. The box was secured by three keys, the key holders would have been the three principal's officers (e.g. WM, SW & JW) ensuring the three principals officer would turn up for each meeting.

This chair is no longer used; however, continues to occupy its rightful place within the lodge room located in the west to rear of the senior warden position.



Ballymena Freemasons Hall, located, 103 Mill Street, BT43 5AD, Brethren should time out to visit the hall, there is also a small museum, the museum holds several interesting masonic items, which is worth taking the effect to visit the hall view the museum.

-End-