



150th
Anniversary Dinner

Provincial Masonic Hall
Rosemary Street

Thursday, 30th November 1967



Worshipful Master :

Wor. Bro. H. E. AGNEW

Menu

PRAWN COCKTAIL

MINISTRONE

SOLE BONNE FEMME

ROAST SIRLOIN STEAK

BRAISED SPICED PEACHES AND MUSHROOMS

BRAISED CELERY HEARTS GARDEN PEAS

ROAST AND CREAMED POTATOES

ICED FRUIT PUDDING

BISCUITS AND ASSORTED CHEESE

COFFEE

One Hundred and Fifty Years . . .

The original Warrant of Lodge CXI survived for 75 years in the turbulent Ireland of the Eighteenth Century. It had been issued at Carlow in 1739, and they can have been no men of straw who carried it through that troubled age till its lapsing in 1814.

Three years later, "in the year of our Lord God 1817, and of Masonry 5817", it came to us, The Lodge of Harmony, CXI. Surely there was a festive board, and surely there was singing when under John Armstrong, W.M., we met for the first time in Edward Street, at the tavern of Bernard McClune.

We don't know now what brethren were there; among them veterans of Waterloo, maybe, talking of Napoleon only lately gone to St. Helena; or men who had a share in the building of a young and growing city—who had helped to build "Inst", perhaps, finished only three years before, or St. George's in High Street, completed but a twelvemonth. There may have been overseers from Belfast's cotton mills, excited at the coming of the new machines. There was surely talk of Daniel O'Connell, then rampaging Ireland for his Catholics . . . Dan the Liberator, a Mason himself till his bishops forbade it, his only farewell criticism being that Masonry "was not free from the wine drinking habits of the country". Neither it was, and no doubt on that evening in Edward Street one-hundred-and-fifty years ago, Bernard McClune was glad because of it.

No minute books exist of those earliest years, but in other records an odd mention, a note here and there suggest that One-one-one was a virile body: in 1848 for instance, one of the officers in the newly constituted Provincial Grand Lodge was from CXI.

The earliest complete record we have begins, after a gap of 47 years, with the minutes of an Emergency Meeting called in Donegall Place Buildings for the 25th October, 1864. The emergency seems to have been the admission on transfer of ten brethren from Lodge 59, and one from Lodge 97. The brother from 97 was not a notable man, but for a swif t evocative second his line in the minute book brings through the yellowing page the Belfast of a century ago. The mullioned windows come back, and the diamond leading, the ships' masts where the Albert now is, the smells of the tanneries and the taverns, and the clatter of hoofs on cobblestones, for he is entered as John Mearns, Clockmaker, of High Street.

Of the ten brethren from Lodge 59, the first bore a name that was to appear again and again in the minutes of 111—Brother O'Connell Shaw, a most worthy man. A man of tenacity, too, for coming to us on transfer to 1864, he appears in the minutes of 1886, proposing that the transfer fees be reduced. Perhaps it took him the 22 years to decide that he had not received value for his money, but it was more likely that he was making it easier for others to come in and share the blessings of membership among us, for by that time O'Connell Shaw had already left his imprimatur not only on 111, but on Irish Masonry in general, but particularly in Antrim.

He was a steward of Provincial Grand Lodge at the laying of the foundation stone of Arthur Square in 1868, when "the entire array of Masons marshalled numbered about 1200" in a procession which, according to the *Northern Whig* was "very fine . . . glittering with silver and gold . . . jewels . . . stars . . ." and with an enterprising Mr. Galbraith of High Street skipping around taking photographs.

Present that day, too, as Deacon With Wand, was Brother H. J. Hill, also of 111. The portraits of both these memorable men hang in Arthur Square—each V.W., each 18 degrees, P.P.S.G.W. and P.P.J.G.W. respectively of Antrim, and heavy with other honours. In the words of V.W. Bro. Leighton, the historian of Arthur Square, each “lived to old age, full of years”, and each was “a pillar of 111”.

But meanwhile, as these heights were being climbed by its outstanding members, the Lodge, according to its minutes, continued on its own dynamic way. It had really qualified as a Lodge of Harmony in 1864, when for the first time on record for Belfast “solemn music” was introduced by 111 at an installation. Ours was the first harmonium in Arthur Square, and no doubt we were envied by other less tuneful lodges. We seem to have been generous with our harmonium, too, lending it to our neighbours in the greatest good-fellowship. But even in masonry there are Joneses who have to be kept up with, so what did Lodge 51 go and do but buy itself a piano!

Naturally we, as the most advanced musicians in the place, asked for and got the loan of it, and no doubt exploited it in a very expert way. However, there did not follow the spread of harmony throughout Arthur Square that one might have expected. Among accounts for payments that came up at 111 at the Communication of 5th December, 1889, was one from Lodge 51, demanding five shillings for the use of their piano. The minutes merely record a discussion, but the Victorian whiskers must have been bristling during it, for the Lodge directed the Secretary to write to 51 stating that as they had had the free use of our harmonium for many years, the least they could have done in return was to allow us the free use of their piano.

Lodge 51 had the grace to return the five shillings, but there were hard men among them, too, for they intimated that any future use of the piano would be charged for.

The minute books are of necessity only stark hints of the real, rich life of any lodge; the details are lost and gone, and the tensions and the strains and the humour only to be guessed at now. Perhaps among the folklore of Arthur Square is the background to a motion of 2nd May 1872, proposed and seconded “that this lodge highly approves the conduct of its representative, Bro. O’Connell Shaw, in opposing the holding of meetings at which ladies are permitted to be present, and cordially supports the House Committee in their objection to such meetings.”

What had the ladies been up to?

Or the background to the little breeze that ruffled things in 1874, when “certain matters” led the W.M. to have arbitrators from the lodge appointed to “settle differences”. The arbitrators found against the W.M., “who had acted indiscreetly in using the language he did”. The lodge received the arbitrators’ report, but the I.P.M., the linguist concerned, proposed an amendment (defeated) that it be not received. Nobody resigned; peace, love and harmony prevailed as always. Only the ghosts can know why the language was used, and smile at the use of it. All we can know is that 111 must have been very alive in that old time, for moribund men do not go to war.

With January, 1885, came the first hint of a dark increasing shadow that was to haunt all the lodges as the years went on, and is a blacker black upon us in our time. In those days, the three principal officers of 111 donned with their collarettes a very substantial burden . . . it was they, the three, who gave the Installation Supper. On a day in January, 1885, the W.M., W. B. Carswell, announced that he and his wardens would

give the supper as tradition demanded, at the Royal Avenue Hotel, but that the hotel insisted on supplying the drink: what, asked Bro. Carswell, did the lodge propose to do in the circumstances?

The lodge, as always, discussed the problem with the gravity it deserved, and agreed to take its share of the liquor bill. In those blessed days, £5 appeared enough to cover it.

But it was a better supper than expected. On 5th March, the account from the hotel—£7 3s 6d—was received with some consternation. Brother Shaw moved that the stipulated £5 be paid on account, but that consideration of the balance be held over till the next communication. Infuriatingly, we shall never know what steps were taken to cope with the crisis, for the pages of the minute book of the next communication are missing.

However, the ultimate result of all this was that the next W.M., obviously an up-with-this-we-will-not-put sort of man, proposed that the custom that the three principal officers provide the Installation Dinner be discontinued. Thus a tradition died, and thus the Masters and Wardens of today rejoice in a happy immunity, all unknowing of the danger their predecessors forfended.

The minutes of a whole century continue on a plane of apparent mediocrity, as they must, with only an occasional and almost accidental entry to suggest the colour and life that was there. All through, in 111, there is the suggestion that from time to time men with a freebooting instinct managed to get past the Southern Gate. Thus we find the Grand Lodge asking us in 1855 to show reason why our Warrant should not be suspended—apparently we had conferred a degree on somebody from another lodge without going through the proper channels . . . and, added Grand Lodge darkly, this was not the first time we'd been up to something illegal.

That bit of "castin' up" probably referred to the fact that four years before, our Secretary had resigned and then grassed to Grand Lodge that we were breaking rules, though which rules is not clear. Anyhow, as a result of bringing outsiders into a private fight, eleven members were suspended, and the membership thus reduced to eight. But the eight were in there fighting, and the secretary who had made the report next found himself on the Grand Lodge agenda, with a request to explain some of his own misdemeanours. A flavour of dirty linen, perhaps, but from all of it, even the trivia, there emerges the one bright fact—111 was alive, alive!

But they died, too. From America, in 1882, came a touching letter from Detroit Lodge No. 3, to say that a Brother Milliken, lately one of us, had fallen sick in that alien land, and that they had been able to arrange for him to have special attention in hospital there, and when at last he died, had seen that he had a Masonic burial in their beautiful City of the Dead.

On the grey sea of the stark records, over a century and a half, comes bobbing up only infrequently a human note like that. Occasionally we find a proud fact, such as that a veterinary surgeon of Chichester Street, who went on to cushion the world on his tyres, once belonged to us—John Boyd Dunlop. But the humanity is too often wholly unrecorded, and it is the humanity of the men who have gone before us that we have sought to revive in this brief history, rather than to present statistics of membership, or dates of events, or sums subscribed to charity.

The record, therefore, is incomplete, saying nothing of our Lodge's high regard for the principles of Masonry and its forms, and the ritual of labour, and the dignity of it. Our list of Past Masters contains many names followed by the glittering "P.P. . . ." Currently we could boast, if we were boastful, of Worshipful Brother Herbie Thompson, P.P.J.G.W., of Antrim. But these things are of the tradition our predecessors have given to us, and will have spoken for themselves to all who have eyes to see and ears to hear; they are of the texture of the Lodge.

But after labour comes refreshment and the most colourful parts of the tapestry of any lodge are often woven at the Festive Board. This is certainly so in our tradition. We are not in name only The Lodge of Harmony. That is why, on our 150th Anniversary, we have chosen to pay special tribute to those musical brethren who have contributed most to the enjoyment and the image of 111.

It is a sad thing that no minutes are kept of Festive Boards, and that they last only in a living memory. Thus we know nothing, nothing at all, of the men who entertained in the tavern of Bernard McClune, or what songs were sung to us, anywhere at all, in all of that century.

Memory goes back little more than thirty years, and only the senior members of 111 can recall the melodies associated with names like Jack Spottiswood, Jimmy McAlpine, Stanley Kennedy, Wal Donagy, Harry Larmour, Jimmy Johnston. Only two of those will not be among the ghosts providing a spectral harmony at this our latest Merry Meeting, and only a few of our members can have known them.

It is to compensate in some measure for this transience of fame, and of our 150th Anniversary. As their photographs show, none of them could enter more than a doubtful claim to remembrance for their prettiness, but who that has heard them will ever forget Fraser Doherty's "Charge of the Light Brigade", or Deryck Gilmore's soaring tenor, or Joe Morrison's thunder and his "Nut Brown Ale"? When Robinson, Brown and McCaw decide to travel it, could anyone go down The Old Bog Road in better company? And behind them all, Johnny Hogg and his talking piano—he could make it talk.

Worshipful Brother Norman McCaw is in the galaxy, but only against his will, modest fellow that he is. To present any compliment to the musical brethren of 111 and leave him out, however, would be give some sort of permanence to our appreciation of the delight they have brought to us, that we feature our current musical brethren in this souvenir unthinkable . . . quite unthinkable. These men are his friends. Without him they would not be there, and without them, 111 at its refreshment would be a lodge of lesser harmony. We owe all of these talented men our gratitude, and offer it to them now—for past merry meetings, and for this one, and the next, and the next, and the next

And so, tonight, after one hundred and fifty years, we are what we are, and what our predecessors have made us. It would be nice to think that there was some divine mechanism whereby all those souls could be warned, by summons or otherwise, that the Mother Lodge was holding a Special Communication, with Festive Board, so that at ten o'clock there would be no absent brethren, but that they would all be there, invisible in the shadows and liking what they see.

Toasts

THE QUEEN

The Most Worshipful The Grand Master and Officers
of the Most Worshipful The Grand Lodge of Ireland

The Right Worshipful The Provincial Grand Master
and Officers of The Right Worshipful The Provincial
Grand Lodge of Antrim

The Lodge

Our Absent Brethren

Our Masonic Charities

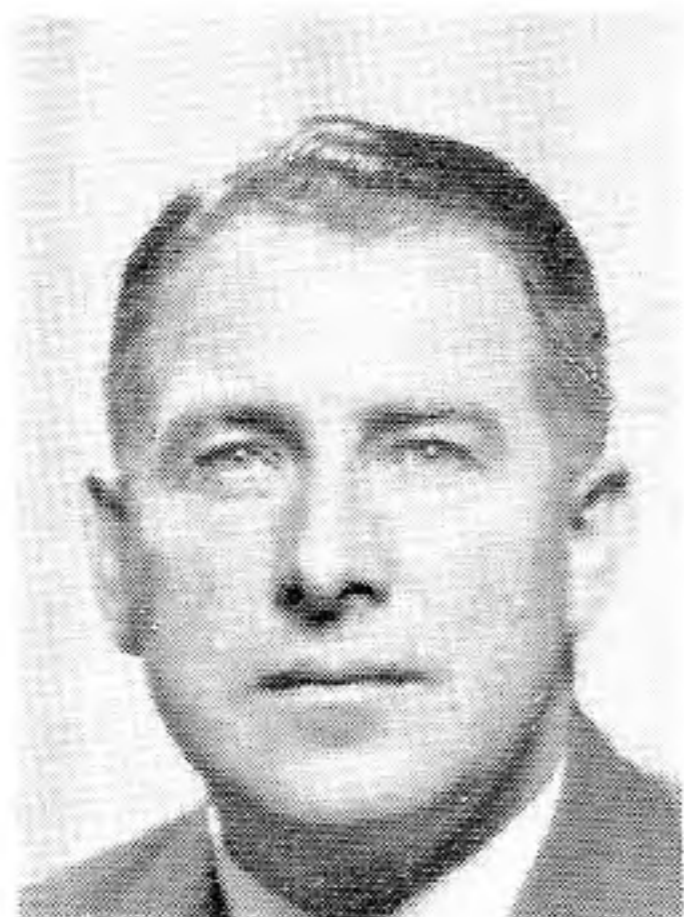
Our Visiting Brethren

Our Musical Brethren

Our Next Merry Meeting

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM

Our Musical Brethren . . .



W. Bro. Norman McCaw



Bro. John Hogg



Bro. Joseph Morrison



Bro. Deryck Gilmer



Bro. Ernest Robinson



W. Bro. Frazer Doherty



W. Bro. Waring Brown

OFFICERS FOR 1967

Worshipful Master	...	...	Bro. H. E. Agnew
Senior Warden	...	...	Bro. D. T. Myles
Junior Warden	...	...	Bro. G. R. McCaw
Treasurer	...	...	W.Bro. W. H. Jones
Secretary	...	...	W.Bro. G. B. Johnston
Assistant Secretary	....	....	Bro. I. A. McCluskey
Senior Deacon	...	...	Bro. N. B. Harrison
Junior Deacon	...	...	Bro. H. D. Meeke
Inner Guard	...	...	Bro. Geo. Tate
Immediate Past Master		...	W.Bro. R. B. Harland
Chaplain	...	...	Bro. C. J. Boyd
Dir. of Ceremonies	....	....	W.Bro. L. Allan
Organist	...	...	Bro. J. Hogg
Senior Steward	...	...	Bro. M. E. Scott
Junior Steward	...	...	Bro. M. Malone
3rd Steward	...	...	Bro. C. L. Neill
4th Steward	...	...	Bro. L. R. McGookin
Auditors	W.Bros. J. A. McDonald & S. H. McCaw		