

## ***Masonic Research***

### ***Opening Address at the ANZMRC Conference on Saturday 4 October 2008***

by MWBro Dr Gregory Henry Levenston MD, JP

*Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory*

On behalf of the Masonic Jurisdiction of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory it gives me great pleasure to welcome you here this morning to the 9th Biennial Australian and New Zealand Masonic Research Conference featuring the presentation of the 2008 Kellerman lectures. And let me say just how close this jurisdiction was to losing our research lodge, and this hole in the force has been replaced by the Discovery Lodge of Research.

Masonic Education, Masonic Studies, and Masonic Research are very dear to me; my early mentor, in my mother lodge, Lodge Harold Herman Unity No 428 of this jurisdiction, was RWBro Harry Kellerman, who managed to get not only into my ear, but also into my heart, and into my soul.

According to Bro Harry, Freemasonry is a 'system of education'. Part of that system is to 'research'. We need to:

- discover knowledge past;
- prove legitimacy of same;
- prove the truth; and
- prove and justify the theoretical basis of the topics.

Research must:

- deal with establishing and proving facts, not ideals, by comparing and contrasting substantiating sources;
- challenge and expand original thought;
- be useful and useable, and
- extend its influence to the ordinary Mason.

At the consecration of Quatuor Coronati Lodge 2076 EC in 1886, the following was said:<sup>1</sup>

. . . we may help forward the important cause of masonic study and investigation, may induce a more scholarly and critical consideration of our evidences, a greater relish for historical facts, and subserve at the same time the increasing and healthy movement for the extension of libraries and museums in all Lodges . . . [We believe] that such a study, thoughtful and prudent, zealous yet discriminating, is essential to a proper understanding of masonic archaeology and masonic formulae . . . For thus it may chance that we shall be enabled to rescue contemporary Freemasonry from the charge frequently brought against it, that it sacrifices an intellectual study of Freemasonry proper to the more pervading requirements of the social circle, and that it is too easily contented with a routine of ritual on the one hand, and the pleasing exercise of hospitality on the other . . . as Freemasons who take pride in their order, and who feel strongly that knowledge and light, the opposites of ignorance and darkness, are, ever have been, and we trust ever will be, characteristic features and the abiding distinction of Freemasonry.

That was in 1886—122 years ago.

We are accepted into the Craft because we affirm a general desire for knowledge. We are admonished to make daily progress in the acquisition of Masonic knowledge, and we are rewarded for making progress in the science. Two kinds of knowledge are described, that of the Liberal Arts and Sciences, and the hidden mysteries of Nature and Science. We must be prepared to make the effort and discover the vast unknown of Masonic knowledge.

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<sup>1</sup> by Revd A F A Woodford, Past Grand Chaplain (EC), author of *Kenning's Cyclopaedia*, in (1886–1888) *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* 1:4

Research requires dedication. Research requires time. We need more Brethren to undertake research. We need to make research 'sexy', the place to be. We need to promote ourselves to the very early grass roots of this organisation, to the very first steps. We need to mentor and tutor these Masons, and say strongly 'we want you, we need you', and put out a hand of scholarly friendship: no closed shop, no closed minds, no 'wait for your turn'.

We must identify and engage talent, promote, present, and be seen. Research is a career path in Freemasonry that should have specific attractive signposts. Active participation is the way to learn, and original thought and work is within all of us.

Research is necessary to define 'What is Freemasonry'. Freemasonry as a living organisation with a distinguished history is in need of a contemporary, flexible image. We must enjoy our Freemasonry, and learn to 'talk the talk' across the generations.

And I call for the creation of an ANZ Resource Centre, with all our Masonic libraries distributing and sharing their data bases, and spreading the *words* of this 'talking'.

The discipline of training, study and analysis is crucial to the process, and creates the differential between 'a member' and 'a Mason'.

And Brethren and friends, if we need time to take up research, there is no better time than *right now*, to attract the hearts and minds of all our Brethren. *Right now!* I challenge you to make this conference the starting point to reinvigorate research and study across this jurisdiction, and across Australia and New Zealand, to reach out to the X's and Y's and Younger Boomers, personally and electronically—and in 25 years time let it be said that it was this group, you Brethren here today, that made the difference!

Again I welcome you to the conference, I wish you well on the crucial journey that lies ahead for us all, and I formally open the conference. Thank you.