

ANZMRC lectures 2007: SYNOPSES

1. THE 4TH EARL OF CARNARVON IN AUSTRALIA, OCTOBER 1887 – FEBRUARY 1888

This illustrated (PowerPoint) lecture was written specifically with my visit to Australia in mind. Today, a hundred and twenty years after Lord Carnarvon's four month visit to Australia, the Australian press would devote few, if any, column inches to a visit by an out-of-office former British Cabinet minister, however distinguished. But 1887 was a special year, and the visitor was an exceptional one.

All over the British Empire the subjects of Her Britannic Majesty Queen Victoria were celebrating the fiftieth year of her long reign. The as yet unfederated Australian colonies also had some more domestic reasons to celebrate in 1887: a hundred years earlier, the first convicts had been landed at Botany Bay, and so the white settlement of the Australian continent was now marking its centenary. And in 1887 one of the five Australian colonies, South Australia, was also celebrating its own jubilee.

Lord Carnarvon was the most senior metropolitan politician – and, indeed, the most senior officer of the United Grand Lodge of England – ever to have visited any of the Australian colonies, where he was warmly received. In this lecture I examine the part played by Carnarvon in the formation and recognition of Australian Grand Lodges and I place his visit in the context of the changing relationships between Britain and her colonies towards the end of the nineteenth century.

2. PURE - AND ACCEPTED - MASONRY: THE CRAFT AND THE EXTRA-CRAFT DEGREES 1843-1901

When the two rival Grand Lodges in England combined in 1813 to form the United Grand Lodge of England, the Articles of Union declared:

‘that pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more, viz., those of the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft, and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch. But this Article is not intended to prevent any Lodge or Chapter from holding a meeting in any of the degrees of the Orders of Chivalry.’

The second sentence of this article, referring to the degrees of the orders of chivalry was omitted when it was included in the 1853 edition of the Book of Constitutions. Yet by 1901 the Grand Master of the UGLE was or had been the head of several extra-Craft degrees, thereby exemplifying their status as accepted forms of Freemasonry. This paper attempts to explain the changes of Masonic climate in English Freemasonry which occurred between the Articles of Union (1813) and 1901. Some of the questions to which at least partial answers will be provided are: who during this time were the key players in the development of Orders and degrees beyond ‘pure Ancient Masonry’?; were there lodges, chapters or encampments where they tended to congregate?; who guided Grand Lodge towards accepting extra-Craft Bodies?; and what is the relevance of the period 1843-1901 to English Freemasonry today?

3. 'AN INTIMATE AND PERMANENT TYE': ANGLO-SWEDISH MASONIC RELATIONS 1868-1870

In 1799 the Premier Grand Lodge of England agreed to the request of the Grand Lodge of Sweden that the two Grand Lodges should be bound together by ‘an intimate and permanent tye [sic]’. In 1872 the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) wrote to the Grand Lodge of Sweden that they were ‘united by a bond which can never be dissevered’. Yet the unexpected initiation of the Prince of Wales at Stockholm in December 1868 shocked many in the English Craft; English ignorance of the Swedish masonic system was revealed, and rumours in the English masonic press that the Prince of Wales wished to introduce the Swedish system into England aroused suspicion and even hostility. This lecture attempts to describe in some detail the difficult passage through which Anglo-Swedish masonic relations went in the years 1868-1870, and to set this passage in the context of Anglo-Swedish masonic relations in the 18th and 19th centuries.

4. 'MW BRO. THE REVEREND CANON G R PORTAL, MA: FROM REBEL TO RULER'

An illustrated (PowerPoint) lecture on the masonic career of that extraordinary freemason, Canon George Raymond Portal (1827-1889), one of the most influential English Freemasons of the second half of the 19th century. Portal was one of the leading critics of the ‘clique’ running the UGLE in the 1850s and which he held to be responsible for the secession of masons in Canada to form the first independent Grand Lodge in the British colonies. A key player in the formation of the first Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons, Portal served as the president of its General Board for more than thirty years and as one of its earliest Grand Masters.

Portal incorporated the Royal Ark Mariners with the Mark, and became the first head of the Royal and Select Masters, the Red Cross of Constantine and the Allied Masonic Degrees in England. The lecture also brings to light Portal's links with other movements, such as ‘Ritualism’ which shook the Church of England at that time and his role in founding the National Deposit Friendly Society, still a presence on the high streets of many English provincial towns. By showing Portal in the round, this lecture demonstrates how Portal's work as a freemason connects with wider social developments in Britain at this time – the move towards greater respectability, sobriety, thrift and independence which underpinned the emergence of the Victorian middle classes.

5. 'FROM ALABAMA TO WALES VIA A TEXAN STAR: ASPECTS OF ANGO-AMERICAN RELATIONS 1860-1875'

“One of the best known of the many colourful stories associated with the history of the confederate states of America is that of the confederate naval cruiser, the CSS Alabama. Built secretly to the same specifications used by the British Admiralty in the yards of John Laird at Birkenhead as ‘No. 290’, she sailed under a civilian crew to the Azores where she was commissioned in the Confederate navy. The Alabama terrorised shipping of the northern United States in the Atlantic and Indian Ocean for nearly two years, attacking more than 60 ships. The Alabama was eventually sunk outside Cherbourg...Outraged by alleged British complicity in allowing the Alabama to be built and commissioned, the United States brought several claims for reparation against the British government, and a third war between the two countries was narrowly averted.” In this illustrated (PowerPoint) lecture I describe “a feature of the Anglo-British negotiations on the ‘Alabama Question’ in 1871 which has previously been unnoticed by historians, namely that the British negotiating team was dominated by senior British and Canadian freemasons, including the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England. While freemasonry appears to have played no direct part in the successful outcome of the negotiations, the visit of the English Grand Master was honoured by a major masonic meeting in Washington, at which the common ties between Britain, Canada and the United States were celebrated, in terms which reflected the kind of language also used in the diplomatic outcomes.” [The quotations are taken from Professor Andrew Prescott’s preface to my *Masonic Networks and Connections*.]

6. DR ROBERT HAMILTON, MA, MD, 1820-1880: HIS MASONIC LIFE AND TIMES

From relatively humble beginnings in Ireland, Robert Hamilton became an important player on several Masonic stages, at home and abroad, from the late 1850s until his death in 1880. After his initiation in a lodge in Cork and while still completing his medical studies in England and France, Hamilton went to Jamaica to take over a coffee-estate which he had inherited. There he became a leading member of the establishment, and from that base he paid several extensive visits to England. He went on to become the head of the English Craft, Royal Arch and Mark in Jamaica – and, in London, the Grand Secretary of the English Supreme Council and the first Provincial Grand Master of the Royal Order of Scotland in London. He attended the Lausanne Conference of Supreme Councils, when the first tremors of the earthquake soon to split the masonic world were felt. Hamilton’s visit to Canada persuaded the English Supreme Council to set up there the first independent Supreme Council in the British colonies. While Hamilton’s claims to membership of the Queen Victoria’s bodyguard and to the arms of the Dukes of Hamilton now seem far-fetched, there is no disputing his influence on the administration of English Freemasonry in England and in the colonies during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

7. GRAND LODGES IN BRITISH COLONIES 1850-1890: IMPERIAL CONSOLIDATORS OR COMMONWEALTH SEEDLINGS?

In this lecture I examine the masonic and wider contexts in which independent Grand Lodges were established in Canada, Australia and New Zealand in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the reasons advanced for their creation, the reaction of the English Grand Lodge and the gradual development of its policy towards masonic independence movements in British colonies. I shall show that whereas the nations of Canada, Australia and New Zealand did not finally sever their formal links with Britain until late in the 20th century, the Grand Lodges in those former colonies achieved independence from the moment of their inception. Indeed, their creation may be said to have foreshadowed the disintegration of the British Empire.

8. THE UNITED GRAND LODGE OF ENGLAND’S EXTERNAL RELATIONS 1950-2000: POLICY AND PRACTICE

Referring to the leaflets *Basic Principles for Grand Lodge Recognition* and *Aims and Relationships of the Craft*, the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England, MW Bro HRH The Duke of Kent, said at his Installation on 27 June 1967: ‘These two documents contain all that is vital in our Grand Lodge contacts with our Masonic neighbours.’ That statement remains true, but neither those leaflets nor any subsequent official publications fully set out the UGLE’s external relations policy, or document and discuss its implementation. While I can only agree with my Grand Master that ‘The whole system and science of Masonic foreign relations is a complicated business’ I nevertheless attempt in this lecture:

- (a) to highlight what I consider to be the main aspects of Grand Lodge’s activities in the ‘sensitive field’ of external relations during the last half of the twentieth century – as reported in the *Proceedings* of the UGLE and other publicly available documents;
- (b) to show how the UGLE’s policy developed during that time, and
- (c) to distil from this review the main features of the UGLE’s external relations policy at the start of the twenty-first century.