

Lodge 669 Newsletter

Issue No. 7, November 2012

Full Circle

My first year as a Freemason by Bro. Paul Francey



In September 2011, I first entered the doors of Freemasons' Hall, Arthur Square, Belfast.

As with many likeminded people before, I had known something of the Masonic as my grandfather was a Mason and my nephew is currently one.

It was by chance that I am now a member of Lodge 669.

I was walking through the barrier at Central Station where I work when I was involved in a conversation with W. Bro Raymond Heald about an upcoming Ladies Night.

I expressed an interested and he told me I would be most welcome. However I was unable to attend but, a few weeks later I got talking to him again, and I told him that I was interested in becoming a member, as I had a history of the Masonic within my family. So I gave him my details and here I am now.

I was met at the door of the Arthur Square building by W. Bro. Raymond and he brought me up to the Donegal Club. as I entered the building and ascended the stairs the old nerves were starting to tingle, noticing the pictures as I was being escorted up the stairs wishing we had taken the lift as we got to the top of the stairs. I walked into the Donegal club and there the room was filled with my now brothers. I was introduced to a few members and a few jokes were passed like another lamb to the slaughter or don't worry we'll take it easy on you. (*the nerves were really starting to get to me now*) This was my first time in Arthur Square, unlike most that get to meet the brethren at a festive board before hand, I was going to go through the entered apprentice degree with the only person that was known to me and that was Brother Raymond Heald.

So as I'm standing around looking at all the strange faces trying to put on a brave face and a smile to everyone that catches my eye, and shaking hands with complete strangers (*now my nerves are really starting give me jip*) I'm introduced to Brother Neil Merritt and was told that he also would be doing his first degree (*what a relief I wasn't on my own*)

The Lodge started and we were taken to a small room, myself and Neil were left on our own until we were wanted. Sitting in the room with Neil trying to make conversation, with the unknown still ahead of us, the door opens and W. Brother Ronnie Craig enters to prepare us (*now the nerves excitement and whatever else have hit thered zone*). At this point I must stop..... after the meeting I and Neil now newly made Entered Apprentices made are way up the stairs once more for the festive board with huge smiles on our faces and a great sense of relief and the puzzling fact the we couldn't remember anything.

W. Brother Brian McBride informed us that we should stand up after the meal and make a short speech just to thank those that had taken part.

Totally unprepared and a couple of pints later we did. (*thanks Brian for that*)

The following month I got the chance to see an Entered Apprentice degree being done to someone else and sitting saying to myself: I don't remember that bit, or that, or that, or that, and when the meeting came to order, could I remember what I was meant to do or say, not knowing where I should even sit, but I need not be worried as I was truly welcomed as a fellow Brother in the Lodge. So for the next couple of months I attended each meeting and in myself started to grow as an Entered Apprentice.

In December 2011 there was an invite to a Philippines night at the 45 Club which I attended, and had a really great night, and the food was nothing but fabulous. I was one of the last to leave and I was asked if I would like to take some of the food that was left home with me and there was quite a bit. So, a number of our brethren from the Philippines started to bag up some of the food. Take some of this and this and this, before you knew it I had a huge amount of food. I was able to have a Philippines night at my home on the Sunday (*and I still had some left for the Monday and Tuesday*)

January saw myself coming to my first Installation and dinner and what an experience, and such a happy time, not just for the fellowship with the brethren from our lodge, but meeting many others from other lodges as well. A couple of months went past and in March 2012 I, and Brother Neil Merritt went through our Fellow Craft degree.

Although the nerves weren't as bad as they had been when I had gone through my first degree, I still had butterflies in my stomach again of the unknown. We were again prepared and yes you got it I must stop at that point.....

As the months rolled toward the summer Break I attended each meeting with growing confidence and getting to know more of the brethren, and letting it be known that I wished to help out in whatever way I could (*put 100% in you get the same back that's what I say*), so alas it came to the summer break. Oh Woe how depressing, I wasn't going to get a break from the wife, Oh what was I to do??????? (*My better half says I seemed to have withdrawal symptoms on the fourth Saturday of July and August.*) I couldn't wait until September.

In September 2012 we as a Lodge took the train to Dublin where we had a chance to see around and take the tour of the different rooms at the Grand Lodge of Ireland, Molesworth Street. A great day out was had by all and a few drinks were consumed on the train home. (*Just for medicinal purposes you understand*)

This piece is entitled "Full Circle" and the reason for this is that on Saturday 27th October 2012, I attained my Master Masons Degree, thus completing my own circle and my first year as a Freemason. The question is: what it has meant to me? I have met likeminded men who I trust without questioning. I have had many laughs on the way, and made a lot of what I can call life friends, and I've met a number of people I work with who were as surprised to see me as a Mason as I was them, and I feel pride in knowing that I am an active member of the Sir George Clark Memorial Lodge 669. I know that should I ever need help or I can give the same, it will always be there. I must at this point mention again Brother Neil Merritt, who is now overseas.

As we both went through our first and second degrees together we will, I feel, always have a special bond between us, and will forever have that. I have written this piece to encourage those that have started on the same path as myself, and those who are about to begin their own circle. Enjoy the fraternal Brotherhood, attend the meetings, and take part as much as you feel you can. Attending the meetings every month will fill your cup to overflowing with the fraternal love which can only be found within the body of the lodge. Not attending the meetings your cup will surely run dry. You will always have Brethren you can turn to for advice, and don't be afraid to ask if you are unsure of anything. I have enjoyed every moment and I'm sure I will continue to do so. Always on the level and keeping to the square.

So here's to the next thirty or so years Peace Love and Harmony to all that read this.....

An Historical Meeting of Lodge 669 by W. Bro. Norman Lacey

Saturday 27 October was a busy and enjoyable day for Sir George Clark Memorial Lodge 669. Two separate meetings were held in Freemasons' Hall, Arthur Square. The first an emergency meeting in the afternoon where the Master Mason degree was conferred on Brother Paul Francey with Brother Paul Lockhart receiving his Master Mason Degree at the regular communication in the evening.



This was also a historic day for the Lodge as W Bro Neil Ritchie, Provincial Grand Organist, attended and returned to the Lodge a Maul which he had been given to him at a Masonic funeral at which he was the Organist. The Maul had been found in a rubbish skip. Neil cleaned it and returned it to its' rightful owners.

This Maul had been presented to L669 at the consecration of the lodge in 1938. It was presented by W Bro A Brown, a foundation member, who subsequently became WM in 1951. The names of many former WMs are inscribed on the Maul and the lodge agreed to add as many more Past Worshipful Masters as possible. A new Maul would also be obtained and the tradition continued.

On arrival at Arthur Square that same day the Lodge Secretary had received a parcel containing the Apron which had belonged to W. Bro Henry Harrison, the foundation Junior Warden and WM in 1940. This, together with a booklet used at the Consecration of L669, had been returned to the lodge by the family of a recently deceased mason W Bro Jim Ferguson. The Lodge agreed that the serving WM would wear this apron during his tenure and the Maul was used during the MM degree on Bro Paul Lockhart



L669 is becoming truly international. Bro Alexis Lambert, born in France and now an Irish Mason, had travelled from Dublin where he now lives to attend the communication. (Cable Tow!!!!)

Four of our Filipino Brethren assisted at the meeting; Bro Bal Madrid was Junior Deacon. Bro Fred Presbitero acted as Inner Guard for the first time in that office, doing an excellent job in the Calling Up of the Lodge and the MM degree. Bro Romeo Godines was Chaplain and received the Candidate while Bro Benji Barga instructed the candidate on the Working Tools.

A ballot was held for two prospective candidates. William Kingsberry from Belfast!!! and Jorge Garcia originally from Mexico. I am pleased to report that both passed.

A prospective candidate attended the Festive Board. Dr Dimitri Bakiritzis originally from Greece. Dimitri is known to several masons through his Church connections and the Tongue of Good Report had been favourable.

Last but not least W Bro Neil Ritchie had added to the dignity of the evening and the enjoyment of the brethren by playing very appropriate music during the meeting and degree. Thanks Neil. We always enjoy your company and if you ever feel like joining ANOTHER Lodge please consider 669.

Proposed Visit by Norwegian Brethren to our November Stated Communication

W.Bro. Patrick Elliott has several Norwegian friends who have expressed an interest in visiting the Lodge at our next meeting on Saturday 24th November. Our visitors are looking forward to being able to see the Lodge at labour with the conferring of a Entered Apprentice degree as part of the business, and also to join us at our Festive Board afterwards. We will endeavour to ensure that they spend an enjoyable evening in our company.

Congratulations to our Director of Ceremonies



W. Bro. Norman Lacey

At the meeting of **District Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Antrim** held on Monday 22nd October, W. Bro. Norman received District Honours when nominated by the District Grand King to serve as **District Grand Steward** for the year 2013.

W. Bro. Norman will be installed at the **District Grand Royal Arch Chapter Meeting to be held on Saturday 26th January 2013.**

Ladies Night 2012

The Ladies Night this year although poorly supported by the members of the Lodge in comparison to previous years, managed to raise £141 towards the Charities. Discussion at our recent meeting would suggest that perhaps the event should be brought forward to an earlier part of the year and perhaps this would help in getting more support. This will be a topic for further discussion.

Newly elected Officers for 2013

Congratulations and best wishes must go to all our newly elected Officers as they look forward to taking up their posts in January. We trust they will enjoy their part in what we hope will be yet another eventful and successful year in Lodge 669, and we wish them well.

Date for your Diary

Installation Ceremony & Dinner will be held on ***Saturday 26th January 2013***

Meeting commencing at 4.00pm

Sitting down to Dinner 6.30 – 7.00pm

The Installation and Dinner has always been well supported by our visitors in the past and the forthcoming event is already attracting interest, with the possibility of a group of up to 12 Brethren from a Lodge in England coming along.

Further details regarding Menu and costs yet to be agreed but will be distributed as and when they become available.

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Please send your items and pictures for inclusion in the Newsletter by email to: Secretary@lodge669ic.org