



Chingford Area Masonic Social Group October 2008 - Newsletter No.23

Editor: W Bro Allan de Luca PPAGDC
www.chingfordmasonichall.org.uk

Forthcoming Events - 2008

Oct 27: - Combined Chapter Meeting - Hosted by Epping Chapter No.2077

Nov 9 - Remembrance Sunday - Wreath laying ceremony at Chingford War Memorial - further details will be made available nearer the date

Nov 22 - Old Parkonians Chapter invites Royal Arch Masons to a talk on the Rose Croix Degree by E.Comp. B Willis at Chingford Masonic Hall - contact Gerry Scott - 01277 656 544 for further information and dining

Nov 29: - "A Night at the Races" - Chingford Masonic Hall - book early to avoid disappointment - Tickets £10 inclusive of supper.

Dec 19 - Friday - The Broken Column Widows Luncheon at Chingford Masonic Hall - 11.30 to 3.00 p.m. - contact Bernard Willis 01582 621496 for further information and bookings

for more information on these forthcoming events please visit the website www.chingfordmasonichall.org.uk click on diary of events

Thomas Fitzgeorge Dunckerley

Born 23rd October 1724 – Died 19th November 1795

Thomas Dunckerley is reckoned to be the originator of Provincial Grand Lodges and, per se, Provincial Royal Arch Chapters. He is a particularly significant Mason as far as Essex is concerned because was appointed as its first Provincial Grand Master in 1776. He was also appointed the first Grand Superintendent about one



year later.

This version of his life was produced for the member of the London Lodge No. 108, of which Thomas Dunckerley was a founder.

Thomas Dunckerley was born on the 23rd of October 1724, and in the year 1735 left school and took to the sea in the Royal Navy in which he served till 1764.

The late Bro. Sadler

informs us he was a man of great personal charm of manner and held a position in the craft – “so remarkable that neither before his time nor since, has any other person filled a similar place in Freemasonry”; also the late Bro. Heron Lepper describes him, “one of the greatest Masons of all

time.” The indefatigable energy he contributed to the organisation and promotion of the Craft during his Masonic life, one might assume, was inculcated or fostered by his 26 years disciplined service in the Royal Navy. During these years he saw considerable action and for a number of years held the important warrant of Master Gunner.

“Honestas et Fortitudo was a motto he took at ten years of age, when a thirst for glory and a desire to engage in the bustle of the world induced him to leave school abruptly and enter the Royal Navy where, during 26 years constant service, he had the honour and satisfaction to obtain the commendations and friendships of a number of gallant commanders under whom he served, including Admirals Sir John Norris, Matthews and Martin and Captains Cornish, Russell, Berkeley, Coates, Jekyll, Legge, Marshall, Byron, Swanton, Peyton and Marlow, but having no parliamentary interest, nor any friend in power that he knew of to assist him, his own modest merit and means were insufficient to procure him a commission.”

We find, from the Public Record Office, that Dunckerley served in the following ships. H.M.S. Namur, Edinburgh, Fortune, Crown, Nonsuch, Tyger, Eagle, Vanguard and Prince and, as a boy, he probably served on H.M.S. Britannia under Admiral Sir John Norris, but this is not recorded in the Muster Book - as a boy he would have received only quarters and rations.

There is also recorded his holding of the following warrants

H.M.S. Edinburgh. Under Capt. Thomas Coates 1744-47. Dunckerley granted Warrant and appointed School Master 1744-46. Under Capt. Jekyll 1746-47. Dunckerley warranted as Gunner 1746-47.

H.M.S. Fortune Under Capt. Jekyll 1746-47. Dunckerley warranted as Gunner 1746-47.

H.M.S. Tyger Under Capt. S. Marshall 1753-54. Dunckerley warranted as Gunner.

H.M.S. Vanguard Under Capt. Robert Swanton 1757-63. Dunckerley warranted as Gunner and Schoolmaster. Further Warrant granted by Admiral Boscawen as Gunner and Teacher of Mathematics.

H.M.S. Prince 2nd rate. 3 Decks. 96 Guns. Under Capt. Joseph Peyton 1758-62. Dunckerley warranted as Gunner appointed by Lord Anson 1761-62. Under Capt. Benjamin Martin 1762-63. Dunckerley warranted as Gunner. .

It is of interest to learn that Dunckerley served till the end of the seven years war with France, and was superannuated in 1764.

The Warrant of Gunner in the Royal Navy in the eighteenth century was a responsible post. In a 1st, 2nd or 3rd rate battleship of the line, there were usually four Wardroom Officers who held commission warrants, the Master, who was responsible for navigation, the Chaplain, the Surgeon and the Purser. There were also three Lower Deck Warrant Officers. The Gunner, who was the senior, was responsible for Ordnance and for all warlike stores and for maintenance and serving the fighting equipment. The Boatswain was responsible for sails and rigging, and the Carpenter for spars and hull. If a flagship, the complement of Officers and Warrant Officers was larger.

H.M.S. Vanguard, serving from 1748 to 1774, the fourth of the name, was built at East Cowes in 1748 and was a Third Rate of 1419 Tons, 74 Guns with a complement of 520 men.

The vessel served at Louisburg, Cape Breton, Quebec, Martinique and Granada and was sold out of the Service in 1774. In 1758 the French were in occupation of Cape Breton located to the north east of Nova Scotia, Canada.

Admiral Boscawen, with fifteen Men o' War, escorted General Wolfe with an Army of 12,000 to attempt its conquest. The Army was embarked and the siege began. After about a month the French Fleet, after several actions and numerous bombardments of the harbour, and the French garrison, were left with two battleships in Louisburg Harbour. The Admiral decided to destroy them in a night attack. Accordingly he directed the ships boats, three at a time, to make for the mouth of the harbour. The boats, with 600 men in all, started at midnight with muffled oars. In their favour, it was pitch dark and a dense fog. The French Governor had thrown up entrenchments, erected batteries and built a chain of redoubts along the coast. The boats entered the harbour before alarm was given, boarded the two ships -cutlass and pistols did the rest - and before the Garrison ashore was aware of it, the two ships 'Prudente' and 'Bienfaisant' were prizes. In towing the 'Prudente' away, she went aground and had to be fired; by this time the Garrison opened a furious discharge of cannon, mortars and musketry. The adventurers towed the "Bienfaisant" in triumph. To the capture of these two ships by the fleet's boats on this memorable occasion, a brave action, must be mainly attributed the capitulation of the fortress two days later.

H.M.S. Vanguard as part of the fleet took part in this amphibious operation. In the following year, 1759, she covered the landings in the St. Lawrence River. In the attack General Wolfe led his troops in the famous climb to the Heights of Abraham, culminating in the fall of Quebec. In this action both General Wolfe and the French General Montcalm died from wounds. Subsequently, in 1760, when our Garrison was being hard pressed by the French, Vanguard contributed her share to the relief operations. Mortars were landed and enemy trenches were bombarded, and assisted also by the guns of the Fleet, forced the abandonment of the positions and the final defeat of the French in Canada on 17th May, 1760

Now as regards Dunckerley's Masonic career during these years, he was initiated on 10th January 1754 in the Lodge of Antiquity held at The Three Tuns, Portsmouth. He exalted into the Royal Arch in the same year.

In 1757 his book 'Light and Truth of Masonry Explained': was published, and he was well known to the Grand Lodge Officers. He visited lodges in London from time to time, when his various ships called at Deptford for victualling.

Whilst serving on H.M.S. Vanguard in Quebec in 1759, he was approached by the various lodges (some of which were army lodges), to make representation for a warrant to appoint a Provincial Grand Master for Quebec, to be granted by the Grand Master of Freemasons in England, i.e. of the Premier Grand Lodge or 'Moderns'.

Hence when H.M.S. Vanguard sailed for England late in 1759

for refit and victualling, Dunckerley carried their petition to Grand Lodge.

Whilst in London in January 1760 he attended his Mother's funeral. However, before she died, she informed him of his birthright - that he was a natural son of King George II.

It was not until seven years later, in 1767, that he was formally acknowledged by George III to be the natural son of George II and was given a Privy Purse pension of £100 a year. Dunckerley then adopted the Royal Arms with the Bar Sinister and the appellation of Fitz-George, and later was given residence at Hampton Court Palace (a royal residence at that time). H.M.S. Vanguard had been ordered to take in stores and return to Quebec as soon as possible. At this time Dunckerley obtained from Grand Lodge in January 1760 two concessions. A Warrant No. 254 dated 16th January 1760, which was an itinerant warrant to hold a Lodge aboard H.M.S. Vanguard which ultimately founded the London Lodge. The second concession was an Appointment or Patent 'To inspect into the State of the Craft wheresoever he may go'. By Power of this Authority, on his return to Quebec, he installed Colonel Simon Fraser as Provincial Grand Master of Quebec on June 24th 1760. Col. Fraser had taken a distinguished and leading part in the attack on Quebec and had been wounded in the campaign. It will be realised, with the entrusting of appointment of the rank of Inspector to Dunckerley, the very high estimation in which he stood with Grand Lodge, and that his organising abilities were beginning to be recognised.

The Vanguard Warrant No. 254 established the first Royal Naval Lodge founded on board a Man o' War - and she was literally *at war* in Quebec.

In the records of the Grand Lodge Meeting on May 14th 1760, the following item appears in the Statement of moneys:-

"Constitution of a Lodge on board His Majesty's Ship the Vanguard £2.2.0."

In the following year, it is recorded that the Lodge was credited with the same amount to the 'Fund of Charity'.

In the records of the London Lodge an item in their Lodge Minutes dated 16th April 1782 reads as follows:-

"Brother Dunckerley Father and Founder of this Lodge, which was first initiated at his own expense on board his Majesty's Ship Vanguard in the last war, from thence to the Queen of Bohemia's Head in Wych Street, and since to the London Coffee House, most obligingly requested the Lodge to accept of the Constitution." This favour was accepted by the Master and Brethren and the unanimous thanks of the Lodge were voted to Bro. Dunckerley for his polite compliment. The 'HMS Vanguard' certificate, dated 16th October 1760 not only confirms that the Lodge No. 254 was at labour, but that Dunckerley was working the Tri-gradal degrees in 1760.

In 1761 Dunckerley was appointed by Lord Anson (First Lord of the Admiralty) Gunner of H.M.S. Prince: Dunckerley continued his Masonic work on this ship From the 'HMS Prince' certificate under Warrant No. 254 we find in the preamble on this certificate:- "Know ye, That having authority from the R.W. John Revis, Esq., District Grand Master, of the

most Ancient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons, to Make, Pass and Raise Masons on Board any Ships or Vessels under the sanction of Number 254 etc."

Under this certificate, Dunckerley again Initiates, Passes, and Raises a Brother. The certificate is in Dunckerley's own handwriting and finishes "Given under my hand on board His Majesty's Ship 'Prince' in the Downs this 1st April 1762. Thos. Dunckerley E.M." The water-mark in the paper is evidently service, a Crown surmounting G.R. Bro. Dunckerley obviously carried the 'Vanguard' Warrant No. 254 with him to the 'Prince'. In May 1762, he obtained another Warrant No. 279 whilst still serving in Prince. This Warrant subsequently became H.M.S. Guadeloupe Lodge No. 279. In August 1764, Dunckerley took the opportunity of taking a cruise, nominally as an Able Seaman but actually as a passenger with his friend Captain John Ruthven of H.M.S. Guadeloupe, a 6th Rater. The No. 279 Warrant must have been used on this cruise in the Mediterranean. In June 1765 he was put ashore at Marseilles with a severe attack of scurvy, six weeks later, after recovery, he visited Minorca and finally returned via France overland to England and took up residence with his wife and family at Somerset House.

It was on the 1st of May 1768 that Dunckerley, with Warrant No. 254, removed from on board his Majesty's Ship Vanguard, to the Queen of Bohemia's Head in Wych Street in the Parish of Saint Clement Dane as the earliest Minute Book of the London Lodge records. The Lodge moved, in December 1771, to the London Coffee House and with its number 202 (the renumbering arising from closing up of numbers) and, in February 1782, with its number now 162, it adopted the name of London Lodge, evidently from its meeting place, the name it holds today but now numbered 108.

It is of interest to record that the warrant No. 279 became, on 22nd May 1766, The Somerset House Lodge. Bro. Dunckerley having founded this Lodge; The Somerset House Lodge merged with Old Horn Lodge No. 2 and later with the Royal Inverness Lodge and finally the Title of 'Royal Somerset House and Inverness Lodge No. 4',"constituted Time Immemorial" the phrase means it was in existence (Old Horn Lodge) before the formation of the Premier Grand Lodge in 1717.

Bro. Dunckerley took a very active part in promoting the Craft and instructing in the lectures and presided over the following Provinces as Provincial Grand Master:-

Hampshire - 1767 Isle of Wight - 1772 Essex -1776

Dorset - 1777 Wiltshire - 1777 Somerset - 1784

Gloucestershire - 1784 Bristol - 178 Herefordshire - 1790

He was installed, in January 1767 as First Grand Principal in the Royal Arch, and presided over 18 Provincial Grand Chapters. He was also leader of the Order of Knights Templar. His energy was terrific and his visits not only covered the Southern half of England, but he travelled as far North as Durham, York and Westmoreland in the course of his Masonic lecturing and visiting of Lodges - and these were days when coach travel was not too frequent or safe.

In 1774 he was called to the Bar, but never actually practised as a barrister. In the same year he was appointed Lieutenant of

South Hants Militia.

The last Lodge he founded was Lodge of Harmony No. 255 in 1785 and in which he served as Master. This Lodge, in the same year, subscribed the sum of £25 to Hall Fund and duly received a Hall Medal.

Bro. Dunckerley worked hard to achieve the erection of a Grand Hall, to be the headquarters of Freemasonry in England. Much of the work he contributed to the Craft, did assist, and lead up to peace and reconciliation between the Antients and the Moderns; and to our United Grand Lodge of England.

During the later part of his life he lived at Hampton Court Palace.

He died at Portsea on 19th November 1795 aged 71 and was buried in St. Mary's Churchyard Portsmouth.

If you ever get asked the question "Who was the first Provincial Grand Master of Essex", you now know, it was "Thomas Dunckerley".

The Lea Valley Experience Museum Project **1909 Roe Avroplane Replica Takes Shape**

Press Release 8th June 2008.

On Saturday 7th of June at Brooklands Museum Weybridge as part of the 100 year Celebration of British Aviation a section of the 1909 full size triplane replica constructed in Manchester was unveiled to the public for the first time.

The plane was commissioned to be built by Mr Lindsay Collier MA. Mr Collier who is also the founder of the exciting and unique local Lea Valley Experience Museum project was very excited with the progress of its construction.

Lindsay Collier Stated:

Although only the middle section was on show today we now have one hell of a replica aircraft. After the many years of trails and tribulations and hard work my vision is now at last starting to come to fruition. We now at last have something that will make the residents of Waltham Forest and the Lea Valley fill proud of.

The plane is being constructed to mark the AVRO Centenary Celebrations of the first all British powered aviation flight in an all British built plane in 2009. This took place on the 13th July 1909 on Walthamstow Marshes. The builder and pilot of the plane was Sir Edwin Alliott Verdon-Roe who went on to form the AVRO aviation company in 1910

The plane will also feature at Farnborough later this year. July 2009 will mark the Centenary Celebrations of this first flight and a two day event is now being planned to be held on Walthamstow Marshes. The event called the 2009 Lea Valley Heritage Festival will also celebrate the unique and forgotten Industrial Heritage of London's Lea Valley.

Historian Dr Jim Lewis Stated:

It is now about time that this National Industrial Heritage story also got the recognition that it deserves. With the 2012 Olympics also coming to the Lea Valley, let's just say that a unique opportunity now exists to do just that at the Lea Valley Experience Museum Project.

The AVRO 2009 Centenary Celebration Committee wishes to hear from anyone that is willing to assist in its objectives. We are also looking for sponsors for the event.



If you are interested in supporting this national celebration then please email Mr Lindsay Collier Chairman l.collier418@btinternet.com or call 07930 662252

picture above : *The 1909 Roe Avroplane Replica Takes Shape*
The R101 Airship Disaster – Honouring of the Dead and the Lying in State at the time of the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the Chingford Masonic Hall on Saturday 11th October 1930

On the occasion of the Laying of the Foundation Stone of the Chingford Masonic Hall on Saturday 11th October, 1930, there was a very sombre mood in the air at the loss of the Airship R101 which crashed on 5th October 1930 in France, during its maiden overseas voyage, killing 48 people.

“The Provincial Grand Master, R.W. Bro. Brig-Gen R. Beale Colvin, on arriving at the Chingford Masonic Hall building site referred to the disaster to *R101*, the victims of which were at that time being laid to rest at Cardington; and the Brethren stood to order in respect to their memory” - [The Freemason 25th October 1930]

In the “Times” on Saturday 11th October 1930, the paper had attributed a whole page to “Honouring the dead of the R101: The Lying-in-State”, with many photographs.

On Friday 10th October 1930, London paid its homage to the dead of the R101 as thousands passed through Westminster Hall, where the coffins of the 48 Victims, each covered with the Union Jack, lay surrounded with flowers.

St. Pauls Cathedral was not large enough to accommodate the crowds who wished to attend the memorial service in the morning. There was an all day procession from 8 o'clock until mid-night, with a continuous procession through Westminster Hall. There was a long queue of people extending from Westminster down Millbank. The flag of the R101, which escaped destruction in the fire that followed the crash of the airship, was placed on the altar of St. Paul's Cathedral for the memorial service.

Of the dignitaries in attendance for the memorial service, was the Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) who represented the King (George V), The Prime Minister Ramsay MacDonald and General Davies the American Ambassador.

Among the many representatives of foreign powers at the St. Paul's service were General Balbo Italian Minister for Air, and

M.Laurent Bynac the French Minister for Air.

The building of the R101 began in 1926 at the Royal Airship Works at Cardington in Bedfordshire. Due to a failed attempt to create hydrogen-powered engines and several other new design concepts, the project's completion was delayed from 1927 to 1929.



Photograph above: *the scene at Westminster Hall as the coffins of the 48 victims being draped with the Union Jack and the procession of crowds paying their last respects.*

During its flight at the Hendon Air show in 1930, it almost plunged to the ground, as well as repeatedly going into a dive during the return flight. Its gas bags also developed numerous leaks. The gas bag valves were of a novel design and placement, they showed a tendency to open slightly as the ship rolled thus causing a continual leakage of lifting gas and leading to constant decrease lift in flight.

Despite this, it was given a Certificate of Airworthiness. Engineers lengthened the frame, added another gas bag, reversed propellers, and replaced the outer cover.

After that, the ship was 777 feet long with a total volume of 5.5 million cubic feet and a useful lift of just under 50 tons. She was the largest flying aircraft ever built, surpassing the LZ 127 *Graf Zeppelin* which was of similar length but carried only 3.7 million cubic feet of lifting gas, but the *Hindenberg*, exceeded this five years later, at a length of 804 feet and volume 7 million cubic feet.



The passenger accommodation was spread over two decks and included 50 passenger cabins for one, two or four people, a dining room for 60 people, promenade decks with windows down the sides of the ship and even an asbestos-lined smoking room for 24 people. Most of the passenger space was on the upper deck with space for the crew, kitchens and washrooms, and the smoking cabin on the lower deck. The R101 was fitted

with five heavy diesel engines. They were designed by combining two four cylinder railway transport units into the 8 cylinder Beardmore Mk1 Tornado engine. The engines were intended to have reversing propellers, but they failed. At one point during the development, one engine was to be aimed astern and used only at the start and finish of the flights, a decision that astonished the engineers on the R100 team. This was later changed when two engines were made reversible.

With the Air Ministry putting pressure on the engineers to finish the project, the final trial flight of the R101 was originally scheduled for the 26th September 1930, but an unfavourable wind delayed it until 1st October. The R101 slipped her mast at 4.30 p.m. with the plan to fly a 24 hour endurance flight to complete the engine and other trials. The ship left Cardington and headed south to London, then turned east following the Thames and out across Essex.

She spent the night out over the North Sea. Due to an early failure of an engine cooler in the forward starboard engine it was impossible for the ship to make a full speed trial, and during the flight the conditions were noted as "perfect" and that all other items in the ship behaved perfectly. Even though there was not time to make formal reports, it was noted that the ship handled and appeared to be much better in the air than previously.

It was with this that it was agreed to curtail the flight and head for home at Cardington. The ship returned to the mast at 09.20 a.m. on Thursday 2nd October, although only being in the air for just 17 hours in smooth flying conditions.

Eventually the R101 departed on 4th October 1930 at 6.24 p.m. for its intended flight to Karachi (then part of British India) via a refuelling stop at Ismailia in Egypt under the command of Flight Lieutenant Carmichael Irwin.

The passenger list included, Brigadier-General Lord Thompson, Secretary of State for Air, Sir Sefton Brancker, Director of Civil Aviation, and Squadron Leader William Palstra, RAAF air liaison officer to the British Air Ministry. The airship had to drop 5 tons of water ballast to lift off.

Over France, the R101 encountered gusting winds that tore back the outer covering, exposing and rupturing the first gas bag, causing the R101 to crash into a hillside near Beauvais, north of Paris, at only 13 mph. The crash ignited the leaking hydrogen and fire quickly engulfed the entire airship.

Forty six of the fifty-four passengers and crew were killed instantaneously, two men who survived the crash later died at the hospital, bring the total fatalities to forty eight. At the following court of enquiry, there was evidence that there had been a failure of the outer cover of the upper nose. This, it was postulated, led to the destruction of a gas bag, loss of the flammable hydrogen lifting gas, and caused the nose to drop. The exact source of ignition was never determined.

R101 was the end of British attempts to create lighter-than-air aircraft.

Its competitor R100 despite a more successful development programme, and a safe transatlantic trial flight, was mothballed immediately after the R101 crashed and sold for scrap in 1931.

Full state honours were given to the victims as special trains were laid on to transport them from the crash site to the channel. They were later loaded on to H.M.S. Tempest at Boulogne and then carried to Dover where a special train took

the bodies to Victoria Station. From there they were carried in state to Westminster Hall at the Palace of Westminster where they were to be laid in state.

From here the mourning public waited many hours to file past the coffins to show respect. A memorial service was held at St. Pauls Cathedral on Saturday 11th October, after which the coffins were taken by train to Bedford, then they were walked two miles to Cardington Village, where a space had been prepared in the Village Churchyard. All 48 bodies were finally laid to rest in a special grave.

A final small service was undertaken with distinguished guests including Dr Hugo Eckener (*Airship Pioneer and Commander of the Graf Zeppelin*) and Hans Von Schiller (*Skipper of the Graf Zeppelin*), followed by a flypast by the RAF flight.

In 1931 a memorial tomb was completed and inscribed with the names of the victims. This memorial still dominates the tiny churchyard to this day



Picture above: The memorial to the victims of the R101 Disaster
article and research by W Bro Allan de Luca

Acknowledgements:-

- [1] "The Times - 10th October 1930"
- [2] The Freemason - 25th October 1930

Planning for that Special Event ?

The Chingford Masonic Hall
is available for:- Ladies Festivals
Wedding Receptions
Association Dinner and Presentations
Charity Fund Raising events
at very reasonable prices.
An excellent selection of Wines and
Champagnes always available for all
occasions - Contact the Secretary on
020 8524 5142
or email: chingfordmh@btconnect.com

Masonic Historians.

Someone defined history as "an account of what didn't happen by someone who wasn't there" and although that may be a humorous and cynical opinion, it is preferable to the unconsidered acceptance of statements concerning Masonic history made in many of the popular non-fiction books. Sensationalism sells books! We must also be aware of the dangers in accepting as undeniable truth, the inadequately researched and biased statements, articles and talks, from self-proclaimed Masonic experts. The Orator scheme may correct this problem. It is difficult enough to be absolutely certain

about events that occurred only 60 years ago in World War II despite the availability of a wealth of written and photographic evidence. How much more difficult is it to get at the truth of events that occurred 200 or 300 years ago when the participants in those events were reluctant to put anything in writing. In both the recent and distant past, 'reports' are distorted by political pressures, bias and downright reporting inaccuracy either deliberate or accidental.

Masonic History is a question of probability. Some interpretations can be considered 'probably true' others as 'possibly true' some as 'unlikely' and the remainder 'virtually impossible'. There is rarely 'absolute truth' but all too often what is 'possible' is presented as 'fact' and their in lies the danger.

Where evidence is scarce, as it often is when dealing with Masonic history, speculation may be valuable as long as the speaker or writer makes it clear to the audience that the thoughts are just speculative. Speculation can be a thought provoking and interesting. Maybe, it can promote discussion and even open new avenues of research.

We need to be particularly aware of the inaccuracies which abound in the popular non-fiction works which purport to contain serious historic research. Their main aim is not accuracy but popularity. The formula used in these works of fiction, is to make statements such as "It has been tentatively suggested that Freemasonry has its roots in the Knights Templar" [No reference given of course]. Later in the same book can be found the statement "...as has been shown, Freemasonry developed from the Knights Templar.". Speculation suddenly becomes a fact on which further dubious speculation is developed.

The works of popular fiction are harmless. Good tales, an easy read with intertwined fact and fiction. We would not believe anything contained in these excellent books any more than we would believe in the exploits of Sherlock Holmes.

The insistence by some self styled Masonic Historians, that their interpretation of our history is the absolute undeniable truth, is particularly dangerous. As an illustration of how a probability can, over the years if repeated often enough, become 'a fact', consider the date given and accepted for the formation of the premier Grand Lodge of 24th June (John the Baptist Day) 1717 when at an assembly and feast, Mr. Anthony Sayer, Gentleman, was elected Grand Master of Masons (i)..

This date was given by Dr. Anderson in his Book and Constitution of 1738 but there is, as far as I know, no independent verification of this date although no one at the time challenged Anderson's date.

Anderson also said that when the 'old brothers' met at the Apple Tree, they agreed to constitute themselves into a Grand Lodge and forthwith *revived the quarterly communication* (2) and also referred to an earlier Grand Lodge, which had failed due to the neglect of its Grand Master Sir Christopher Wren, who suffered from bad health in his later years. At the time, no one challenged these statements either.

We ACCEPT Anderson's 1717 date although there is no contemporary supporting evidence. We want to believe it so it's accepted and becomes thought of as more or less fact.

But when Anderson mentions a 'revival' and Wren, we decide that it was written for 'effect' and is a fabrication despite there

being some supporting evidence. We don't want it to be true so it's deemed by the so called 'experts' to be a fiction and dismissed without any justification. This is quite illogical and an unsupportable attitude. A more rational approach would be to say that, based on the evidence of Anderson's 1738 Constitution, the date of 1717 is probably true and, with other supporting evidence, the existence of an earlier Grand Lodge is a slim possibility.

The sole point I wanted to make is that the so called 'experts' tell us what evidence we are allowed to believe and what evidence we are to ignore because the source, they say, is unreliable. Worse, they never say why we should ignore the bits that don't happen to fit in with their entrenched interpretation of the evidence. We all have a duty to look at the evidence, such as it is, and, together with the literature from reliable historians, make up our own mind what to accept and what to reject. As a further, although rather different example. The date of 1725 is often quoted, by even the most respected authors, for the formation of the Grand Lodge of Ireland. Bro Yoshio Washizu in his paper points out that "We have no knowledge about the origin of the Grand Lodge of Ireland except for an account in the Dublin Weekly Journal (26th June, 1725), we know it was in operation in 1725 and assume it had existed for some time previously. (3)"

Far too often the Masonic 'experts' will make statements implying that what they say is the absolute truth and not to be questioned, when in fact it is no more than a probability. Those who follow then accept the statement as absolute truth. It isn't! These 'experts' always fail to mention any evidence that contradicts their view of 'the truth'.

1. Anderson's Constitution of 1738 (See www.kessinger.net)
2. The Grand Lodge of England by Bro. A. R. Hewitt, AQC, Vol. 80 pp 210
3. "Critical Reading of Masonic Literature" by Yoshio Washizu. AQC Vol. 114 pp200

Alec Hall.

*Reproduced by very kind permission of
W Bro Alec Hall - Philbrick Lodge No.2255*

**The Annual Meeting of the Chairman and Secretaries of
the Masonic Halls in the Province of Essex held on Tuesday
28th July 2008 at Braintree Masonic Hall.**

The Annual Meeting of the Chairman and Secretaries of the Masonic Halls in the Province of Essex was hosted by Braintree Masonic Hall on Tuesday 28th July 2008.

Ray Rayner, Chairman and Allan de Luca, Company Secretary of the Chingford Masonic Hall attended with many other representatives from most of the Masonic Halls within the Province of Essex. W Bro Andrew McLeod, the Chairman of the Braintree gave a warm welcome to the representatives, followed by an interesting history of the founding of the Braintree Masonic Hall, by the President W Bro John Woods.

On the agenda, a talk, presented by W Bro Alan Garner, PAPGM on the working and use of the Provincial Building Fund, which has a very interesting history, and W Bro Alan gave an introduction on as to how the fund was originally activated. The Building Fund originated in April 1971 by W Bro Lestikow, APGM, with a levy of £1 on every member in the Province until sufficient funds had been raised. The loan rate

is set at 5%, with no time limit to pay back the loan, which can be from 5 years to 10 years and no penalties for early settlement.

W Bro Alan went on to explain the process of applying for loans, which in the first instance applications are discussed at their board meetings, and whether more information is required. Should a loan be successful, a first charge will be made on the building. All applicants have to consider all the necessary recent legislation in respect of Health & Safety and Disabled Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA), both these items of legislation do need careful study so that the facilities of our Masonic Halls do not fall outside the law. As an example of a loan, the Loughton Masonic Hall were recently granted £44k to refurbish their kitchen. W Bro Roy Smith, Chairman of the Loughton Masonic Hall stated that all plans are going according to plan within their six week time window allocated for the project.

It was also mentioned some old buildings do have some amounts of asbestos, and the necessary certificates are required. It is easy to cut corners, but where gas and electricity are involved we must consider more experienced tradesmen in these areas. W Bro Alan stated that he and the Building Fund Board are to there to assist and advise. Although the Building Fund board may be "pernickety", they need to be sure that the loan is secure. There is £436k in hand, with some loans as listed in the Provincial handbook for 2008. The onus is on the centre to complete their risk assessments and comply with the necessary statute laws in force. Ramps, lifts, and means of escape all being necessary under the various laws and advice is always available from the board who will visit the site and make recommendations. There was a cautious note, to be wary of "Brewery Loans", they might be attractive when offered, but may have some hidden clauses and could be costly at the end of the day. W Bro Alan added that he thought some of the Masonic Hall buildings were looking very tired. Money is only lent to centres who are Limited Companies, although the bottom line is that the Provincial Benevolent Fund can recover the money....even if not loaned to a non Limited Company, and there must be a first charge.

The £1 levy to the building fund is no longer payable, it was stopped some years ago, the actual date now unknown. This was just a broad picture on how the Provincial Building Fund operates. There was an open floor and the representatives individually gave an update as to their various Masonic Halls, with **Halstead** saying that they have difficulties with access for disabled persons. **Rochford** are in the process of refurbishing their kitchen, which they have funded themselves at a cost of £30k plus. It was also informative as some snippets of useful information are aired, one of worthy note, mentioned the arrangement of Asbestos Certificates, as once you have initiated an inspection, paid for and received the necessary certificate, there is a possibility they require an annual inspection, this should be queried !! **Wivenhoe** are considering a ramp, but have difficulties in making a decision, due to its location, additionally the centre is owned by one Lodge, and difficulties have arisen with the trustees who need to give their permission, even to hang a picture on the wall, a frustrating predicament for the centre.

Saffron Walden it is well known in the Province that due to a

fire in 2000 the building was gutted, but out of the ashes the centre was rebuilt and reoccupied in 2002, so everything satisfies current legislation. The **Chelmsford** representative made mention of their negotiations with the County Hotel, which have been ongoing for the last 70 years, however, due to recent management changes, fresh negotiations are taking place and the centre are moving on with their redevelopment, and will include a dining room, kitchen and bar for approximately 70, with possible scope for 90, they are very excited with the possibility of having a new building, it's a wait and see scenario. **Thurrock** stated that the maintenance of the centre is costly, and the centre is too big for their requirements, and need to attract outside functions, but a lot of renovations will be required. There were plans to purchase a property called "Oddfellows Hall" but unfortunately, negotiations have fallen through. There is suggestion to ask Lodges to meet on Saturday mornings therefore freeing up the evenings for social events, a system which Southgate Masonic Centre is now operating. Another question that was raised was that on the subject of Shareholders Annual General Meetings, which can be costly with all the printing postage and stationery to distribute the necessary paperwork, only to have very few shareholders attending. The suggestion in reply was to consider (a) changing the Articles of Association, (b) transfer of shares (c) and where possible use email to distribute information.

Southend - Saxon Hall informed the meeting that they have created sub-committees and recruited non-directors and new board members, along with an appointment of a new General Manager for the centre. They are pleased with this move as they do not meet many problems and the sub-committees are up and running reasonably successfully. There was mention on the cost of utilities which are continually on the increase, however, the centre is tied in with their electricity with Southend Airport. They are now leaning more and more to sending all their communications electronically (email), and normally within an hour there is a reply to their missive, some, unfortunately are not so responsive. They have initiated a new feature called "Loyalty Cards", which when swiped through at the point of sale will give a 5% rebate to the Lodge, and on the application form there is the by-product of being able to catch email addresses, additionally members are now beginning to understand the reason for private functions as a necessary supplement to the income of the centre. The email is now becoming an essential part of normal day to day communications with Lodges etc.

Orsett are pleased to say that they have now sorted out their shareholding, and have changed their rental to a per capita charge. The centre has changed dramatically for the better, especially with the bar which has made a very large contribution to the funds of the centre.

Colchester, their representative has only been in situ for a couple of months, but watch this space !!

Chingford mentioned there has been a lack of outside bookings and Ladies Festivals, and thought that advertising should be considered, either in Essex Mason or other sources, and the centre was also considering an application to obtain a license to perform marriages under the civil law. A representative added that no forms of crosses, banners or other items are allowed to

be displayed in the wedding room, which would not be a problem for Chingford. Southend – Saxon Hall, made mention of their One thousand pound wedding, which was an interesting idea, additionally they have circulated Funeral Directors advertising the Saxon Hall facilities that are available for a “Wake”.

Maldon were pleased to announce that they did not have so many issues to address, although their centre is on a hill, they have noticed some cracks appearing, an off the cuff remark was made in that, it is the hope that they were not “slowly going down hill”, which was taken in the light hearted manner in which it was given.

The final item was to request a venue for 2009, and the Thurrock Masonic Hall were pleased to offer their facilities for the annual Chairman and Secretaries meeting.

In conclusion, W Bro Alan Garner suggested that it would be a good idea if all the centres were under one umbrella, however, it is not possible due to the different constitutions of each Masonic Centre, and went on to add that there is clearly a lot of work put in by the Chairmen and Secretaries of the various centres, and made the suggestion that perhaps the Year Book publish a list of the Board of Directors and Secretaries of each centre to make communication much easier.

Everyone then adjourned to dine convivially and continued their discussions over an excellent meal of eggs mayonnaise, and a cold meat salad.

Allan de Luca - Company Secretary Chingford Masonic Hall

The Third Victory in succession !! for the Chingford Masonic Hall Cricket Team.

On Sunday 20th July 2008 at the Loughton Cricket Club, the Chingford Masonic Hall and the Loughton Masonic Hall again enjoyed a glorious sunny day on the occasion of the Third inter Masonic Hall Cricket Match. This event has been successfully supported, with many brethren and their families turning up to enjoy the day. It was another glorious victory for the Chingford Masonic Hall, their third consecutive win, and retain the coveted "Masonic Cricket Trophy".

The young man by standing by the score board: (photograph left displaying the final score) is George, the 5 year old son of Lee Ellaway of High Beach Lodge, and Lee informs me that George is a proud Chingford fan and future High Beach Lodge Member.



There was a superb bar-b-que with plenty of burgers and sausages in a roll, freshly cooked by W Bro Tony Curtis and his good lady Maureen. The total amount raised on the day was £311.00 which was equally shared between the two Masonic Halls.

(photograph right) W Bro Roy Smith, Chairman of the Loughton Masonic Hall, congratulating the Chingford Team Captain and presenting



the "Masonic Cricket Charity Trophy", which will again be placed on display along with other artefacts in the glass cabinet in the Main Temple at the Chingford Masonic Hall.

article: "ex capite" by W Bro Allan de Luca
photographs: W Bro Lee Ellaway - High Beach Lodge No.7669

Proud Dad - W Bro Lee Ellaway (High Beach Lodge No.7669) - his 10 year old Daughter Hannah to be appearing on the Disney Channel

W.Bro Lee Ellaway - whose son is pictured above at the Inter Masonic Cricket match, has more talent in the family, his ten year old daughter, Hannah Ellaway has successfully auditioned for Disney and will be appearing on the Disney Channel in a programme entitled What's The Word?



photograph left: Hannah Ellaway

Hannah, has been a student of the Jenny Myhill School of Dance and Performing Arts since the age of three. She studies ballet, tap, modern and musical theatre at the Bishop's Stortford-based school. Hannah is extremely grateful for the tutoring, support and guidance that Jenny has always given her. Hannah also studies drama at the Sylvia Young Theatre School in London. She has been represented by 'Young Un's' – the theatrical agency at Sylvia Young's for just a couple of months. During this time she has auditioned for a number of West End theatre and television parts and is really excited about getting her first professional work so quickly, and with such a high profile employer as Disney.

reproduced by very kind permission of W Bro Lee Ellaway - High Beach Lodge No.7669

A Stimulant to the Members

taken from the History of the Hainault Lodge No.4367 1922-1972 - something we can all share

*Are you an active Mason
the kind that would be missed?*

*Or are you just contented
that your name is on the list,
Do you attend the meetings
to try and do your best?*

*Or do you stay at home and
Criticise the rest.*

*Do you take an active part
to help the "craft" along?*

*Or are you satisfied to be
The kind that "just belong"?*

*Think this over, brother
You know right from wrong,
"Are you an active Mason,
or do you just belong?"*