

EARLY FREEMASONRY IN TANDRAGEE

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Read by the author in Belfast on 25th September, 1965.

The following paper is based entirely upon notes written by my late father, Very Worshipful Brother Samuel McClelland, who was Secretary of Lodge 105, Tandragee, for thirty-nine years. Doubtless a more detailed paper could have been written using other sources, but I have preferred to use only his notes, as a filial tribute to a man who all his Masonic career was a zealous protector of the ancient landmarks of our Order.

Tandragee is a small market town in Co. Armagh, five miles south of Portadown on the road to Newry. In the early years of the last century Tandragee was a thriving village with a very large fair and the largest flax-market in Ireland—indeed, so prosperous was it that even the publicans were supposed to be lavish with their measures! Their action, now a thing of the past, is the origin of the well-known slogan, "Tandragee no pinch!" But the growth of railways led to the growth of Portadown, and Tandragee decayed, only the large, well-built, stone warehouses remaining as relics of a prosperous past.

The earliest lodge working in Tandragee, of which we have any record, is Lodge 315, which was warranted on the 5th April, 1759, the grantees being James Bell, John McGomery and Samuel Ferguson.¹ Lodge 315 was known as "The Orange Lodge" from as early as 1788, a date which shows that the title had no party significance, as the Orange Order was not founded till 1795. They were apparently proud of their title, and tried unsuccessfully to incorporate the colour into their regalia, as the minutes of Grand Lodge, 1st July, 1830, record:

"Received the application of 315 to be permitted to wear their aprons trimmed with orange, along with black, red, and blue. Ordered— that the Grand Lodge gives no permission to wear any colour but blue and white."

Lodge 315 continued to labour in Tandragee until the year 1831, when the warrant was exchanged for No. 79. Grand Lodge minutes, 3rd March, 1831, read:

"Received the application of 315 to have a number senior to 105, which is recommended by said number. Granted 87."

It should be stated, in explanation of this minute, that Grand Lodge had found it necessary to rule that no application for a senior warrant could be granted to any one of a number of lodges in the same town or village, unless the lodge whose seniority was being displaced approved of the application. In this instance the granting of a more senior number (87) would have entitled its holders to take precedence over 105 in the St. John's Day processions, which were such a feature of Masonic life in those days. Lodge 105, in thus allowing itself to be superseded in seniority, was probably agreeably acknowledging the fact that Lodge 315 was actually an older lodge.

But the brethren of 315 were not content, as the minutes of Grand Lodge, 5th May, 1831, read:

"Received the application of 315 to have 79 instead of 87: Granted."

The warrant of Lodge 79 was issued to Tandragee on the 28th June, 1831, and eventually moved to Donaghmore in 1864, and from there to Newry in 1893. Even after the removal of the warrant to Donaghmore, the Tandragee brethren apparently took an

interest in the lodge, as six members of Lodge 105 appear as grantees of a Knight Templar warrant which was issued on the 11th October, 1866. These were Robert Boyd Hardy, William Buckby, Joseph Abbott, David Hutchinson, John Stratton and Dr. William Saunderson.²

Unfortunately, none of the minute books of Lodge 315 survive, except for one fragment,³ but we catch a brief glimpse of the lodge in the early minute book of Lodge 328, Richhill. For example, Lodge 328 was informed on the 10th March, 1794, by the Chairman of the County Committee, that Grand Lodge had laid Lodge 526, Hallsmills, and Lodge 715, Loughbrickland, under censure for six months for walking with members of "erazed" Lodge 315, Tandragee, on St. John's Day last. I don't know why the warrant was "erazed," but I am glad to say that on the 24th November, 1794, Lodge 328 met by order of the County Committee and the warrant of 315 was installed. Brother William Kinkade was installed Master, Brother Campbell Kinkade, Senior Warden, and Brother John Finn, Junior Deacon.⁴ The minutes also record that Brothers Patrick Whitten, Hugh Coburn, Patrick Harvey, John McNight, George Gibson, George Joyce and James Black are allowed to join 315.

The next reference to 315 in the Richhill minutes is in 1797, when on the 13th November, " Notice was given by the Master of George Joyce of Drumlin Hill being suspended for five years; also Daniel Hughes of Tandragee for one year from 315, from October 16, 1797.⁵

LODGE 361

The next Lodge to labour in Tandragee was Lodge 361, the warrant of which was issued on the 4th March, 1760. The grantees of this warrant were William Ferris, William Craig and James Garland.⁶ The warrant was cancelled by Grand Lodge on the 5th September, 1822. No Royal Arch or Knight Templar degrees were worked in this Lodge, and during its sixty-odd years of existence, only 98 members were registered.

LODGE 330

Less than a year later, on 5th June, 1823, a new warrant was issued to Tandragee. This was No. 330, which had previously sat in Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, from 1759 till 1813. The grantees were Patrick McGourgy, James Kearney, and Edward McConnell, and it is highly probable that all the members of 330 were former members of 361. The present Lodge jewels of 105 were made (by James Brush, Dublin) for 361, and are stamped with that number.

LODGE 105

Lodge 105 is one of the old original warrants of which there is no trace in Series 1 of the Grand Lodge Register, the first known issue being Loughbrickland, although Spratt's " Constitutions " of 1744 gives it as then sitting at "The Cock," Warburgh Street, Dublin, every other Friday. This warrant was cancelled in 1805, and it was again issued on the 3rd August, 1809, to Loughbrickland, Co. Down, the grantees being Patrick Murnaghan, Daniel Murnaghan and James McCabe, all members of Lodge 715, which sat in Loughbrickland from 1790 till 1822.

Lodge 105 worked in Loughbrickland for almost twenty years, and left there under the following circumstances. Owing to a dispute amongst the brethren of Lodge 330 as to whom they would appoint as Secretary, a number of brethren left that Lodge and

purchased the warrant 105 and transferred it to Tandragee. This purchase was a well-known but illegal practice, and doubtless Grand Lodge were not informed, or they would not have agreed to the petition for transfer which was laid before them, and granted, on 3rd January, 1822.

The Lodge first met in Tandragee on the 12th January, 1828, when it elected its officers and agreed that the regular night of meeting be the second Thursday of each month. Lodge 105 still flourishes, and is now the only craft Lodge in the town.⁷ Originally, Lodge 105 met in a public house, but it now sits in what is the oldest hall in the Province of Armagh, having been opened on the 12th March, 1875. The leading spirit in having the hall built was Dr. Francis Crossle, later Provincial Grand Secretary of Down. Crossle was initiated in Lodge 105 on the 4th March, 1873, and was Master in 1875. The day the hall was opened was a memorable day for Crossle, as early that morning his son Phillip, co-author of Volume 1 of "The History of the Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland" (1925), was born.

The title of the Lodge is Union Band Masonic Lodge, and it is likely that it owes its name to the association of several Lodges in the district, who combined for the purpose of exercising supervision of the working of higher degrees under the authority of craft warrants. These Union Bands, which existed in Ulster up till about 1860, were controlled by a president and seven warranted masters, each holding a seal, no document issuing from the band being legal unless it bore all of these seals.

One of the most colourful members of Lodge 105 was Brother Samuel Rainey, who died on the 18th March, 1953, at the patriarchal age of 102. As a young man he worked for Barnum and Bailey's circus, touring Europe and North America, and then returned to Tandragee to look after his aged father. When father and son were evicted from their farm by the Duke of Manchester, Rainey fought and won a lengthy legal action, and his victory (in 1908) was reported all over the world. My father used to tell how, when Rainey heard the result, he galloped on horseback up the street uttering Indian war-cries, and firing a Colt revolver shot out the windows of the Estate Office.

Rainey's father spanned three centuries. He was born on the 1st November, 1799 and died in April, 1905—the oldest Freemason in Ireland. When he died King Edward VII sent £10 to erect a headstone.

LODGE 82

The warrant for Lodge 82 was issued on the 7th June, 1810 to Drumnahare, near Loughbrickland, where it flourished for many years under the title, "The Tradesman's Body." The warrant moved to Gilford, and on the 12th July, 1843, it was transferred to Tandragee by Brother James Searight.

During its stay in Tandragee it changed its name to "Wellington Lodge," a title which it still retains, and it soon became, at least from a social point of view, the leading lodge in the district. Lord Robert Montagu, younger brother of the sixth Duke of Manchester, the local landlord, was one of the members.⁸ Evidence of the style which characterised its proceedings during its stay in Tandragee can be seen in the three beautiful punch jugs which are still in the possession of the Lodge. They bear the inscription, "Presented to Wellington Masonic Lodge, No. 82 Tandragee by Bro. Frederick Ogle, on his leaving the Lodge, 24th June, 1948."⁹

No. 82 removed to Portadown on the 4th May, 1854, and on the 25th November, 1858, the warrant was sent up, in trust, to Grand Lodge. Finally, on 5th May, 1864, at the instigation of Brother David Hutchinson, a former member of the Lodge, the warrant was returned to Brother Thomas Carlton of Portadown, and it has continued to labour there ever since.

THE HIGHER DEGREES

The higher degrees were first introduced to the brethren of Tandragee on the 1st September, 1787. On that date Patrick McCullough, Master of Lodge 459, Clare, brought his warrant to Lodge 315, and under its authority formed a Royal Arch Chapter, and initiated six of the 'brethren. On the 12th of the same month ten brethren received the degree of Knight Templar under the authority of the Clare warrant; a Knight Templar fraternity was formed, and its officers appointed. The Knight Templar degree appears to have been worked in Lodge 315 until 1817.

Although Lodge 79, when it sat in Tandragee, had a Royal Arch Chapter warrant, Lodge 105 did not have a Royal Arch Chapter warrant until the 14th March, 1860. The grantees were Thomas E. Shannon, W. H. Purcell, James Pollock and C. Kinney of Lodge 213,¹⁰ Robert Boyd Hardy and Joseph Abbott of Lodge 105, and William McAmulty, William Curry and Abraham Walker of Lodge 23.¹¹

A few months after receiving the Royal Arch Chapter warrant, a warrant for a preceptory was granted on the 20th July, 1860. The grantees were Samuel G. Getty, William S. Tracey, Maxwell C. Close, Henry Mumey, John G. McGee, James Girdwood and Denis Leonard.¹²

A LINK WITH CANADIAN MASONRY

On the 27th December, 1845, a number of Irish Freemasons, who were not members of any of the Lodges working in Toronto, held a meeting at the Tyrone Inn, then kept by Brother John Trueman, and decided to make application for a warrant for a new Lodge. This meeting was convened by Brother William Cassidy, a past master of Lodge 105, and a son of the Brother William Cassidy whose name appears on the receipt when the warrant was purchased from Loughbrickland. The Cassidy family lived in the townland of Cargins, and one wall of the cottage still stands.

A deputation was appointed to wait upon Brother Francis Richardson, Secretary of the Provincial Grand Lodge of England for Canada West, to request his assistance in obtaining a warrant. Brother Richardson declined to grant the request of the deputation, as in his opinion the Lodges then in existence in Toronto were quite sufficient for all Masonic purposes.

When the deputation reported back to their brethren they were not satisfied with Brother Richardson's refusal, and prepared a petition to the Grand Lodge of Ireland, praying for a warrant to empower the petitioners to meet as a regular Lodge, to be named King Solomon's Lodge of Toronto. The petition was forwarded by Brother William Cassidy to his brother, Brother Hiram Cassidy, Master of Lodge 105. Brother Hiram Cassidy was able to persuade Lodges 79, 82 and 105 to recommend the petition to the favourable consideration of the Grand Lodge of Ireland.

On the 15th August, 1846, Brother George Rankin, Deputy Grand Secretary, wrote to the petitioners, stating that their prayer had been granted, and on receipt of the necessary funds a warrant would be issued. This request was attended to, and the warrant. No. 222 was issued on 3rd February, 1847. It arrived in Toronto on the 25th March, 1847, having

been brought from Ireland by Brother Solomon Cassidy, a brother of William and Hiram, and like them a member of Lodge 105.

The brethren leased a room in the Tyrone Inn from Brother Trueman, who was a member of Lodge 565, and held their first meeting on 24th June, 1847. Brother William Cassidy was installed as Worshipful Master, Brother David Hopkins, of Lodge 105, as Senior Warden, and Brother Solomon Cassidy as Secretary. The two Cassidys were active members of Lodge 222 for many years, and the portrait of Brother Solomon Cassidy and the framed Master Mason certificate of Brother William Cassidy, dated 11th November, 1833, adorn the Lodge room of 222.

This last statement is not quite correct, because when the Grand Lodge of Canada was formed on the 10th October, 1855, King Solomon's Lodge applied for a warrant, and was issued No. 16 on 3rd February, 1856. On the renumbering of the lodges in 1858 the Lodge became No. 22, its present number on the roll of the Grand Lodge of Canada. The Irish warrant was returned to the Grand Lodge of Ireland on 21st June, 1858. Lodge 222 played an important part in the history of the craft in Canada, as it has the honour of having called the first convention which ultimately led to the formation of the present Grand Lodge of Canada.

¹ McGomery (1738-'98) married Matilda Harford, and was the ancestor of Harford Montgomery Hyde, the biographer and historian, and former M.P. of North Belfast.

² Robert Boyd Hardy (1806-'70) of Cooley Hill, Tandragee. A land agent. William Buckby, Mullahead, Tandragee. Grandfather of the late Thomas Sinton, a Tandragee mill-owner.

Joseph Abbott, a Tandragee blacksmith, and the last Roman Catholic to be associated with Freemasonry in Tandragee. He was initiated into Lodge 361 at the age of 18, and when he died on the 21st October, 1886, aged 84, he was buried in Ballinabeck R.C. graveyard with full Masonic honours. His Knight Templar apron is preserved in Tandragee Masonic Hall.

John Stratton (d.1880) lived in Violet Hill, Tandragee. He was a descendant of the Rev. Moses Cherry, minister of Clare Presbyterian Church, Tandragee, who led the Clare Volunteers to Carrickfergus when the French landed there in 1760. His home, which still stands, was formerly the home of William Irwin, who first brought John Wesley to the North of Ireland.

Dr. Saunderson (d.1880), son of Francis Saunderson, Prospect House, Tandragee, lived at Union Lodge, Poyntzpass, which was previously owned by William Fivey (d.1820), a member of 315.

³ 18th July, 1785. Monday evening. Half-past-nine o'clock. Bro. Redpath being no Deacon, went out, and being ordered to his place by Bro. Harvey, Master, took umbrage at him, and took off his apron, and through (threw) it at Bro. Harvey in a disdainful manner. The Lodge then closed and met again. By a Comattie (sic) on a dispute between Bro. Harvey, Master, and Bro. Redpath, it being agreed that the Deacons should clear the ring.

⁴ At the Armagh Assizes, 15th September, 1794, William Kincead, Campbell Kincead and Patrick Harvey were found guilty of a riot in Tandragee on 3rd November, 1793, and of assaulting Thomas Ferguson. They were each sentenced to one month's imprisonment, fined one mark each, and ordered to give good security to keep the peace.

John Finn was not registered in Grand Lodge until 6th June, 1795! He was one of the grantees Of Lodge 79 in 1831, as was his son, John Finn, junior.

⁵ Joyce was a prosperous linen manufacturer, whose only daughter married one of the Brown family, Round Hill, Ballynahinch.

Daniel Hughes was a former secretary of the Lodge, and as such signed the first declaration of Masonic loyalty to the Crown. See my paper: "Some Aspects of Freemasonry in the late 18th and Early 19th Century." Transactions 1958-1962.

⁶ William Ferris (d.1787) was the principal innkeeper. He is an ancestor of Dr. R.B. McDowell, F.T.C.D. William Craig was the ancestor of Judge Craig, Recorder of Belfast early this century.

⁷ Since this paper was read, a warrant has been granted for Lodge No. 263.

⁸ Lord Robert Montagu (1825-1902) was Conservative M.P. for Huntingdonshire, 1859-'74, and President of the Board of Health and a Charity Commissioner, 1867-'8. Although a prominent Orangeman he then became a Roman Catholic, and was elected Home Rule M.P. for Westmeath, 1874-'80. In 1850 he married the heiress of the Cromore Estate, Portstewart, which remained in the possession of the Montagu family until 1967.

⁹ Brother Frederick Ogle (d.1869) was a son of Brother John Ogle, one of the founders of Lodge 18, Newry. He was a wine merchant in Newry and later in Belfast. His link with Tandragee was probably his wife, Sarah, daughter of John Hardy of Cooley Hill, and sister of Robert Boyd Hardy, whom he married 29th April, 1840.

¹⁰ Lodge 213 sat in Poyntzpass from 1857 till 1870, when the warrant was surrendered.

¹¹ Lodge 23 was a Newry Lodge. Abraham Walker was engaged in the milling trade in Newry. He was a cousin of George Benn, the Tandragee-born historian of Belfast, whose name is perpetuated in the Benn Hospital. Abraham Walker Craig, the first man who succeeded in weaving linen by power in Belfast, and founder of the Falls Factory and Craig's Mill, which later became the New Northern Spinning and Weaving Company, was another cousin.

¹² Samuel G. Getty, Lodge 40, Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Belfast and North Down. William S. Tracey (d.1873), Resident Magistrate. Succeeded Brother S. G. Getty as D.P.G.M., on 6th October, 1956, and resigned on 25th March, 1863, when he was transferred to Sligo.

Maxwell Charles Close (1827-1903) of Drumbanagher. M.P. for Co. Armagh, 1857-'64 and 1874-'85. The first Provincial Grand Master of the Province of Armagh.

Henry Murney, M.D. A Roman Catholic, and a prominent member of the Belfast Liberal Party.

John Getty McGee, the founder of the Belfast firm of tailors which added the word "ulster" to the English dictionary.

James Girdwood (1823-'73), a member of a Lurgan family whose name is commemorated in Belfast in Girdwood Park. His mother was a cousin of Robert Emmet, the Irish patriot, who was executed in 1803.

Denis Leonard (1800-'78) was a native of Kilkenny, who, after graduating at Trinity College, Dublin, qualified as a solicitor. He then became an actor, and appeared in all the leading theatres in the British Isles and North America. He retired from the stage and went to live in the South of Ireland. Here he met the Marquis of Downshire, who appointed him as the law agent for his extensive estates in Down and Wicklow.

