

FREEMASONRY IN MEATH AND WESTMEATH

**THE INFLUENCE OF FREEMASONRY IN
MEATH
AND WESTMEATH IN THE EIGHTEENTH
CENTURY.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

FREEMASONRY HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IF NOT ALWAYS OBVIOUS INFLUENCE ON IRISH HISTORY AND SOCIETY. ITS IMAGERY IS WELL KNOWN, BUT ITS ORIGINS LESS SO. MASONIC HISTORY CAN BE TRACED FROM THE EARLY MEDIEVAL CRAFT GUILDS IN WHICH SKILLED CRAFTSMEN ASSOCIATED WITH ONE ANOTHER AND RECEIVED THEIR TRAINING, THROUGH TO THE TIME OF THE LABOUR COMBINATIONS, AND LATER, THE TRADE UNIONS. FREEMASONRY WAS ALSO CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THE JACOBITE MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND FROM WHENCE ITS INFLUENCE SPREAD TO IRELAND. DURING THE EARLY PART OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY THE ORGANISATION OF THE SOCIETY BECAME MORE FORMALISED AND STRUCTURED. THIS CULMINATED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND IN DUBLIN BETWEEN 1723 AND 1724, AND THE APPOINTMENT OF A GRAND MASTER WHO WAS INVARIABLY A MEMBER OF THE NOBILITY.¹ AS WILL BE SEEN LATER, THE IDEALS AND SECRECY OF FREEMASONRY CAN ALSO BE TRACED IN OTHER ORGANISATIONS SUCH AS THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT AND THE UNITED IRISHMEN. SUBSEQUENTLY, FREEMASONRY LOST ITS REPUBLICAN ETHOS AND IDEALISM AS IT BECAME DOMINATED BY THE GENTRY AND NOBILITY IN WHOSE HANDS IT BECAME AN INCREASINGLY POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL ORGANISATION. IT IS NOT SURPRISING, THEREFORE, TO FIND THAT MANY OF THE INFLUENTIAL FIGURES IN IRISH SOCIETY AND INDEED INTERNATIONALLY WERE FREEMASONS.² MUCH HAS BEEN MADE OF THE SECRECY SURROUNDING THE MASONIC ORDER. HOWEVER, AS ROBINSON HAS POINTED OUT, THE ORDER AND SIMILAR FRATERNAL SOCIETIES, WERE, IN REALITY, NOT AS SECRET AS OFTEN SUPPOSED. OFTEN THEY WERE NOT 'SECRET SOCIETIES' IN THE SENSE THAT MEMBERSHIP WAS SECRET, BUT THEY WERE SOCIETIES WITH SECRETS DESIGNED TO PRESERVE AND PROTECT THE BROTHERHOODS' RITUALS, ORAL TRADITIONS AND METHODS OF MUTUAL RECOGNITION ... THEIR SECRET SYMBOLS WERE PUBLICLY DISPLAYED ON SPECIFIC CALENDAR DATES; NOT AS IS COMMONLY BELIEVED TO PROVOKE ANTAGONISM, BUT RATHER TO PROVOKE ENVY AND TANTALIZE POTENTIAL SUPPORT.³ MOREOVER, AS WILL BE DEMONSTRATED LATER, THE PROMINENCE AND STANDING OF MANY MEMBERS OF THE MASONIC ORDER MADE IT INEVITABLE THAT THE BROTHERHOOD, AS IT IS OFTEN REFERRED TO BY ITS

MEMBERS, WAS TO THE FOREFRONT OF PUBLIC NOTICE AND AT THE HEART OF IRISH GEORGIAN SOCIETY.

2. THE ORIGINS AND SPREAD OF FREEMASONRY.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FREEMASONS' SOCIETY IN IRELAND DATES BACK TO THE STONE MASONS OF THE MID-TWELFTH CENTURY. THESE EARLY MASONS WORKED ON THE ERECTION AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE MEDIEVAL CHURCHES AND CATHEDRALS, NOT ONLY IN IRELAND, BUT THROUGHOUT EUROPE. THAT IRELAND HAD A TRADITION OF EXPERIENCED STONE MASONS IS EVIDENCED BY THE MANY ROUND TOWERS WHICH ADORN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THESE STONE MASONS WERE THUS REFERRED TO AS OPERATIVE (I.E. ACTUAL) STONE MASONS. IT IS EVIDENT FROM MASONS' MARKS DISCOVERED ON THE STONWORK OF THE CISTERCIAN ABBEYS AT MELLIFONT AND BECTIVE,⁴ ERECTED IN THIS PERIOD, THAT GROUPS OF OPERATIVE MASONS WERE ACTIVE DURING THIS TIME AND EXISTED UP TO THE FORMATION OF THE CRAFT GUILDS OF THE EARLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY. INDEED, UP TO THE YEAR 1688, TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, HAD BOTH OPERATIVE MASONS (WHO WERE INVOLVED IN ERECTING NEW BUILDINGS IN THE COLLEGE), AND SPECULATIVE MASONS (A FREEMASONS' LODGE HAVING BEEN ESTABLISHED THERE), WITHIN ITS CONFINES.⁵ SPECULATIVE MASONRY (FROM WHICH MODERN FREEMASONRY STEMS) WAS DERIVED FROM THESE OPERATIVE MASONS. HOWEVER, SPECULATIVE MASONS NEVER ACTUALLY UNDERTOOK THE ACTIVE DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION OR ERECTION OF BUILDINGS. SPECULATIVE MASONRY DEVELOPED FROM THESE EARLY CRAFT GUILDS, ADOPTING THE OPERATIVE MASONS' SYMBOLISM OF SET-SQUARE AND COMPASS, LEVEL, TROWEL, AND KEYSTONE, BUT IMBUING THEM WITH A NEW SET OF SPIRITUAL AND MORAL MEANINGS. AS TIME PROGRESSED SPECULATIVE MASONRY BECAME LESS AND LESS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CRAFT GUILDS AND DEVELOPED INTO A SOCIETY IN ITS OWN RIGHT. THE CRAFT GUILDS WERE ESSENTIALLY CLOSED TRADE UNIONS OR ASSOCIATIONS, MEMBERSHIP OF WHICH WAS GUARDED JEALOUSLY.

THIS LED TO THE USE OF SECRET WORDS AND RITUALS TO EXCLUDE PEOPLE WHO WERE NOT INITIATES OF THAT PARTICULAR CRAFT GUILD. FOR EXAMPLE, IN 1523, ALL ENTERED APPRENTICES OF THE DUBLIN CARPENTERS, MILLERS

AND MASONS' GUILD HAD TO SWEAR TO THEIR SECRET COUNCIL WITH ITS GUILDMASTER AND WARDENS, AND ON COMPLETION OF THEIR APPRENTICESHIP, FURTHER PRIVATE RITUALS WERE COMMON PRACTICE, AS WAS THE PASSING OF THE "SECRET WORD" AND "HANDSHAKE", THAT WOULD ENABLE TRAVELLING JOURNEYMEN OR CRAFTSMEN TO BE IDENTIFIED. OCCASIONALLY, MEMBERS OF THE ORDER WERE BOTH OPERATIVE AND SPECULATIVE MASONS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE RENOWNED ENGINEER THOMAS TELFORD WAS BOTH. TELFORD WAS ORIGINALLY A STONE MASON WHO SERVED HIS APPRENTICESHIP THROUGHOUT SCOTLAND AND ENGLAND. MANY OF THE STONE BUILDINGS ON WHICH HE WORKED STILL BEAR HIS MASON'S MARK.⁶ TELFORD WENT ON TO BECOME A FAMOUS CIVIL ENGINEER, UNDERTAKING HIS FIRST ENGINEERING PROJECT IN 1793. IT WAS AFTER THIS TIME THAT HE WENT ON TO BECOME A FREEMASON BY JOINING A MASONIC LODGE.⁷ AS JONES POINTS OUT, CRAFT GUILDS WERE OFTEN MORE THAN JUST ASSOCIATIONS OF CRAFTSMEN: "THE CRAFT GUILD CAME INTO BEING TO WATCH THE INTERESTS OF THE SKILLED WORKPEOPLE, BUT IT WAS ALSO A RELIGIOUS FRATERNITY WHOSE MEMBERS HAD TO MAKE FREQUENT ATTENDANCE AT CHURCH ... THE GUILDS ... HERE AND THERE ... DID ACTUALLY GROW INTO IDENTITY WITH THE CITY GOVERNMENT, AND ELSE-WHERE THEIR LEADING MEMBERS WOULD BE SO INFLUENTIAL AS TO HAVE THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TOWN, IF NOT DIRECTLY, THEN INDIRECTLY IN THEIR HANDS."⁸ PARADOXICALLY, THE GROWING POWER AND INCREASING AUTOCRACY OF THE GUILDS IN IRELAND WAS ULTIMATELY TO LEAD TO THEIR DOWNFALL. THE DOMINATION OF THE CRAFT GUILDS BY THEIR MASTERS LED TO BITTER INTERNECINE DISPUTES WITH THE GUILDS' JOURNEYMEN; AND THIS, TOGETHER WITH THE EXCLUSION OF ROMAN CATHOLICS FROM GUILDS, RESULTED IN THE FORMATION OF RIVAL ORGANISATIONS. THESE NEW ORGANISATIONS IN TURN CHALLENGED THE GUILDS' DOMINATION OF MUNICIPAL POLITICS WHICH WAS FURTHER ERODED WITH THE ENACTMENT OF THE MUNICIPAL CORPORATION ACT OF 1840 WHICH REFORMED THE SYSTEM OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN IRELAND.⁹ THE ORGANISATIONS WHICH CHALLENGED THE SUPREMACY OF THE CRAFT GUILDS WERE INITIALLY THE COMBINATIONS AND LATER THE TRADE UNIONS. INITIALLY, MEMBERSHIP OF THESE ORGANISATIONS WAS PROSCRIBED AND CARRIED SEVERE PENALTIES AS THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLE ILLUSTRATES: DESPITE PUBLIC WARNINGS BY THE LINEN BOARD, PUBLISHED IN THE NATIONAL PRESS FROM 1752, AGAINST THE FORMATION OF COMBINATIONS BY JOURNEYMEN, AND PRO-HIBITING

EMPLOYERS FROM PARTICIPATING IN AGREEMENTS ON MATTERS SUCH AS CONDITIONS, WAGES, ETC. WITH EMPLOYEES OF COMBINATIONS, THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT A MILITANT COMBINATION EXISTED IN THE LOUTH/MEATH/NORTH DUBLIN AREA UNTIL THE EARLY DECADES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, AT A TIME WHEN THE GUILD OF THE DROGHEDA WEAVERS WAS QUITE ACTIVE.¹⁰ THE LOCAL NEWSPAPER, THE DROGHEDA JOURNAL AND LOUTH AND MEATH ADVERTISER, AT VARIOUS TIMES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR 1795, CARRIED SIMILAR FRONT PAGE NOTICES WARNING THAT ANY EMPLOYER OR EMPLOYEE, CONVICTED OF ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS WITH COMBINATIONS, WOULD BE PUBLICLY LASHED, OR IMPRISONED FOR AT LEAST SIX MONTHS, OR BOTH.¹¹ DESPITE THE GROWING PROSPERITY IN MANY PARTS OF IRELAND, BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE GROWTH IN THE LINEN TRADE,¹² THERE WAS EVIDENCE OF INCREASING INDUSTRIAL UNREST DURING THE EARLY YEARS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, AND IN SPITE OF THE WARNINGS FROM THE LINEN BOARD, AGREEMENTS WERE ENTERED INTO BY COLLON INDUSTRIALISTS WITH THE COMBINATION WHICH REPRESENTED THE LOCAL WEAVERS.¹³ FURTHER EVIDENCE EXISTS OF INDUSTRIAL UNREST AT THE SAME TEXTILE MILL IN JANUARY 1809, AND IS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE FOLLOWING LETTER TO THE RT. HON. JOHN FOSTER:

*THE WEAVERS HERE HAVE ANOTHER TIME OUT FOR THE ADVANCE OF WAGES AND IN CONSEQUENCE OF MY NOT AGREEING TO THEIR DEMANDS A NUMBER OF THEM UNKNOWN BUT WHO ARE SUPPOSED TO BE THE JOURNEYMEN ASSEMBLED BELOW THE TOWN OF ARDEE THIS DAY ARMED WITH SEVERAL OFFENSIVE WEAPONS AND STOPPED AN INDUSTRIOUS MAN THAT HAS BEEN LONG IN MY EMPLOYMENT KNOCKED HIM DOWN AND SEVERELY THREATENED HIM...*¹⁴ NOT SURPRISINGLY THEREFORE, BY NECESSITY, THESE ORGANISATIONS WERE ALREADY SHROUDED BY A VEIL OF SECRECY. THIS WAS AS MUCH FOR SELF- PRESERVATION AS FOR THE PROTECTION OF PRIVILEGES. ATTEMPTS WERE MADE TO RESTRICT THESE ORGANISATIONS BY WHATEVER MEANS POSSIBLE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE COMBINATION ACT OF 1763 FORBADE THE ISSUING OF ANY EMBLEM OF MEMBERSHIP. UP UNTIL THE TRADE UNION ACT OF 1824, THE TRADE UNIONS WERE ILLEGAL. HOWEVER, AFTER 1824, THE TRADE UNIONS GRADUALLY REPLACED THE GUILDS AND THE COMBINATIONS AS THE MAIN FORM OF ORGANISED LABOUR.

MANY OF THE MEDIEVAL CRAFT GUILDS DISPLAYED MASONIC IMAGERY IN THEIR RITUALS OF INITIATION AND ADVANCEMENT, AS WELL AS IN THEIR

PARAPHERNALIA. THIS IN LARGE PART STEMMED FROM THEIR ASSOCIATIONS WITH OPERATIVE MASONRY. WITH THE LEGITIMISATION OF THE TRADE UNIONS DURING THE MID NINETEENTH CENTURY THERE CAME A DESIRE ON THEIR PART TO ADOPT THE TRAPPINGS AND IMAGERY OF THE GUILDS. IN SOME INSTANCES THEY ADOPTED NOT ONLY THE NAME OF THE GUILD WHICH THEY REPLACED BUT, ALSO, THEIR DATE OF INCORPORATION.¹⁵ THE AURA OF RESPECTABILITY AND POWER WHICH THE GUILDS POSSESSED PROVED A GREAT ENTICEMENT FOR THE LATER TRADE UNIONS, WHICH, IN TURN, TOOK ON MUCH OF THE MASONIC IMAGERY AND PARAPHERNALIA OF THE EARLIER GUILDS. IN THIS WAY MASONIC IMAGERY AND PRACTICES WERE TRANSFERRED FROM ONE SET OF FRATERNITIES TO ANOTHER. THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES PROVIDE EVIDENCE OF THIS FACT: THE IRISH BUILDING TRADES' GUILDS STILL RETAINED AN AFFINITY WITH THE SYMBOLISM OF FREEMASONRY AND EVEN AS LATE AS 1864, AT A PROCESSION TO CELEBRATE THE UNVEILING OF A STATUE TO THE TEMPERANCE CAMPAIGNER, FR. MATTHEW, IN CORK, THE CORK STONECUTTERS' BANNER DEPICTED THE "*FIVE ORDERS OF ARCHITECTURE, WITH THE ACCESSORIES OF RULE AND LINE, SQUARE AND COMPASS, AND ALL THE OTHER MYSTIC PHARAPHERNALIA*". THE PLASTERERS' GUILD PROCESSED WITH BRASS EMBLEMS OF THE SQUARE AND COMPASS HUNG AROUND THEIR NECKS. THE MASONS PARADING IN THE SAME PROCESSION WERE DECKED OUT IN WHITE APRONS EMBROIDERED WITH THE SQUARE AND COMPASS AND THE ALL-SEEING EYE.¹⁶ THE DUBLIN BRASSFOUNDERS' BANNER WHICH WAS CARRIED IN THE O'CONNELL CENTENARY PROCESSION OF 1875, DEPICTED THE "TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM", WITH ITS ARCHITECT "HIRAM", AND THUS REPRESENTED TWO CENTRAL ASPECTS OF MASONIC HISTORY. IN FIGURE 1 THE INFLUENCE OF MASONIC IMAGERY IN THE CRAFT GUILDS CAN ALSO BE SEEN. HERE, THE DROGHEDA CARPENTERS' BANNER WHICH WAS USED UP TO 1867, PROMINENTLY DISPLAYS THE MASONIC SYMBOL OF THE SET-SQUARE AND COMPASS AT ITS CENTRE.

3. THE INFLUENCE OF FREEMASONRY IN NATIONAL POLITICS.

THE NEXT SIGNIFICANT PHASE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MASONIC SOCIETY IN IRELAND BEGAN WITH THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND, SOME TIME BETWEEN 1723 AND 1724. THIS GAVE A POWERFUL

IMPETUS TO THE MASONIC ORDER, AND SECURED ITS SURVIVAL TO THE PRESENT TIME.¹⁷ FOLLOWING ITS FORMATION, THE GRAND LODGE WAS QUICK TO TRY AND ASSERT ITS AUTHORITY BY ISSUING A MASONIC CONSTITUTION TO WHICH ALL LODGES HAD TO ADHERE. IN ORDER TO RECEIVE RECOGNITION WITHIN THE IRISH MASONIC CONSTITUTION, INDIVIDUAL LODGES (NEW AND EXISTING) WERE REQUIRED TO HAVE A WARRANT ISSUED BY THE GRAND LODGE.¹⁸ INITIALLY NOT ALL LODGES ACCEPTED THE AUTHORITY OF THE GRAND LODGE AND FOR MANY YEARS THERE WERE A NUMBER OF CLANDESTINE OR "HEDGE" LODGES. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THAT THE GRAND LODGE SOUGHT TO IMPRESS ITS AUTHORITY BY MAKING CONTINUAL APPEALS IN THE NEWSPAPERS, THROUGHOUT THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, ENTREATING THESE CLANDESTINE LODGES TO AFFILIATE. THIS PROBLEM WAS NOT FULLY OVERCOME UNTIL THE 1840s.

DURING THE YEARS 1723-1725 THE INFLUENCE OF THE MASONIC ORDER WAS EVIDENT IN THE POLITICAL UNREST BETWEEN THE IRISH GOVERNMENT AND THE VICEROY OVER THE GRANTING OF A MINTING PATENT TO AN ENGLISH IRON MERCHANT NAMED WILLIAM WOOD TO MANUFACTURE WHAT WAS CONSIDERED POOR QUALITY COINAGE FOR DISTRIBUTION IN IRELAND. THIS PROPOSAL ENRAGED THE DUBLIN CRAFT GUILDS AND ALSO DEAN SWIFT¹⁹ WHO DENOUNCED BOTH WOOD AND THE ENGLISH, EXCLAIMING "A HALFPENNY FOR A BEGGAR AND BURN EVERYTHING BRITISH BUT THEIR COAL".²⁰ IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE LAST PROTEST AGAINST WOOD'S HALFPENCE IN THE NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS, IN OCTOBER 1724, WAS SIGNED BY A NUMBER OF FREEMASONS INCLUDING THE EARL OF ROSSE, THE GRAND MASTER OF THE MASONIC ORDER. THIS CONTROVERSY, COMBINED WITH PRESSURE FROM THE TRADE GUILDS, LED TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE VICEROY, THE DUKE OF GRAFTON, AND HIS REPLACEMENT BY LORD CARTERET, IN AN EFFORT TO PLACATE THE GROWING DISSENSION. HOWEVER, SWIFT'S INTERVENTION IN PUBLISHING THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS WAS THE DECISIVE MOVE AND RESULTED IN THE PATENT BEING REVOKED IN SEPTEMBER 1725.²¹

POLITICAL UNREST CONTINUED THROUGHOUT THIS PERIOD AND AT THE HEART OF MUCH OF THE MAIN POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF THIS PERIOD WE FIND PROMINENT MEMBERS OF THE ORDER. THE SUPPRESSION OF IRISH INDUSTRY, ESPECIALLY THE WOOLEN, GLASS AND CATTLE TRADE, BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT, GREATLY STRAINED IRISH/ENGLISH RELATIONS IN THE MID

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. EVEN RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH AND THE HOUSE OF COMMONS WERE FAR FROM HARMONIOUS DURING THE EARLIER PART OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. APPOINTMENTS OF ALL IRISH PROTESTANT BISHOPS WERE VESTED IN THE CROWN AND IT WAS THE ENGLISH MINISTRY AND NOT THE IRISH PARLIAMENT THAT ADVISED THE CROWN IN THE MATTER OF CHURCH APPOINTMENTS. MANY OF THE BISHOPRIC APPOINTMENTS WERE ENGLISHMEN AND THIS WAS BITTERLY RESENTED BY IRISH PROTESTANTS. FROM 1702 UNTIL THE ACT OF UNION, ALL PROTESTANT PRIMATES OF ARMAGH WERE ENGLISHMEN, SOME OF WHOM ACTED AS LORD JUSTICES AND WERE THE MAINSTAY OF ENGLISH INTEREST IN IRELAND IN THE ABSENCE OF THE LORD LIEUTENANT.²² HOWEVER, THE EMERGENCE OF HENRY FLOOD²³ IN 1759 AS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND LATER AS A LEADER OF THE PATRIOTS, RESULTED IN INCREASING PRESSURE FOR CHANGES IN CIVIL RIGHTS IN IRELAND. NEVERTHELESS, PARLIAMENTARY CORRUPTION REMAINED RAMPANT AND AT THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1761 THE CONTEST FOR THE BOROUGH OF MULLINGAR RESULTED IN A BITTER DISPUTE BETWEEN THE PROPRIETORS OF THE BOROUGH AND THEIR RIVAL CANDIDATE, JOHN NUGENT.²⁴

THE PROPRIETOR OF THE BOROUGH OF MULLINGAR WAS THE EARL OF GRANARD. NOT SURPRISINGLY HIS TWO SONS, LORD FORBES AND ADMIRAL FORBES, WERE RETURNED AS MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE BOROUGH. HOWEVER, THEIR DEFEATED RIVAL, JOHN NUGENT, PETITIONED THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AGAINST ADMIRAL FORBES'S RETURN AS M.P. ON THE GROUNDS THAT NUGENT WOULD HAVE HAD A MAJORITY OVER FORBES IF A NUMBER OF VOTES CAST FOR NUGENT HAD NOT BEEN IMPROPERLY DISALLOWED BY THE RETURNING OFFICER.²⁵ ADMIRAL FORBES ISSUED A COUNTER PETITION DENYING THE TRUTH OF NUGENT'S ASSERTION. THE HOUSE OF COMMONS FOUND IN FAVOUR OF FORBES'S CASE.

UNTIL 1771, DISPUTED PARLIAMENTARY CONTESTS WERE DECIDED BY A VOTE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE OF COMMONS. GIVEN THE MANNER, IN WHICH IRISH POLITICS OPERATED DURING THIS PERIOD, THE REALITY OF PETITIONING THE HOUSE WAS THAT THE DECISION RESTED MORE ON THE CONNECTIONS OF THE PETITIONER THAN ON THE STRENGTH OF THE CLAIM. THE FORBES INCIDENT, HOWEVER, PROVED TO BE A CATALYST IN THE INSTIGATION OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, THE RESULT OF WHICH WAS THAT ALL FUTURE PETITIONS WERE TO BE HEARD BY A PARLIAMENTARY SELECT COMMITTEE.

THIS MEASURE WAS AN EFFORT TO STOP CORRUPTION AND PREVENT INFLUENCE BEING EXERTED IN FAVOUR OF POWERFUL CANDIDATES. THE FREEMASONS PLAYED NO SMALL PART IN BRINGING THIS REFORM ABOUT. THE STRUCTURE OF THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS UNTIL THE ACT OF UNION WAS BASED UPON THE ELECTION OF 300 MEMBERS FROM 32 CONSTITUENCIES, EACH RETURNING TWO MEMBERS, AND A FURTHER 117 BOROUGHES ALSO RETURNING TWO MEMBERS, AS WELL AS THE UNIVERSITY CONSTITUENCY OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN, WHICH RETURNED A FURTHER TWO MEMBERS.²⁶ PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WAS PRACTICALLY NON-EXISTENT, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF 12 BOROUGHES, COMMONLY CALLED "THE POT WALLOPING BOROUGHES", WHEREBY A PERSON WAS ENTITLED TO VOTE PROVIDED ONLY HE COULD UPON OATH SWEAR THAT HE HAD BOILED A POT (I.E. HAD SUPPER) THE PREVIOUS NIGHT WITHIN THE BOROUGH.²⁷ THIS ENSURED THAT ONLY RESIDENTS OF THESE "POT WALLOPING" BOROUGHES WERE ENTITLED TO VOTE. THE REMAINING BOROUGHES AND CONSTITUENCIES WERE IN THE CONTROL OF FAMILIES OF THE GENTRY OR NOBILITY. THESE FAMILIES OFTEN TREATED THEIR PARLIAMENTARY SEATS LIKE BANKABLE COMMODITIES. MANY OF THE ANGLO-IRISH ASCENDANCY FAMILIES HAD INTERESTS IN SEVERAL PARLIAMENTARY SEATS AND OFTEN SOLD OR TRADED SOME OF THESE FOR FAVOURS, PATRONAGE OR PECUNIARY GAIN.²⁸

WITHIN TEN YEARS OF THE NUGENT ELECTION DISPUTE, THE INFLUENCE OF FREEMASONRY WAS AT ITS ZENITH IN THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS WITH THE ELECTION OF MASONIC CANDIDATES WHO SET UP IN OPPOSITION TO THE SITTING MEMBERS FROM THE ANGLO-IRISH ASCENDANCY.²⁹ EVIDENCE OF THIS TURNABOUT IS ILLUSTRATED IN AN INTERESTING ACCOUNT OF THE 1776 ELECTION WHICH APPEARED IN THE BELFAST NEWSLETTER.³⁰ SIR ARTHUR BROOKE, THE SITTING MEMBER FOR COUNTY FERMANAGH, HAD SUPPORTED A BILL WHICH WAS PRESENTED TO THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS, "TO ENABLE PAPISTS UPON TERMS AND SUBJECT TO THE PROVISIOES MENTIONED THEREIN, TO TAKE LEASES." THIS SUPPORT GREATLY ANGERED MANY OF HIS CONSTITUENTS AND AT THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1776 HE WAS OPPOSED BY WILLIAM IRVINE OF IRVINESTOWN. THE ELECTION RESULTED IN IRVINE'S DEFEAT BY THREE VOTES. IRVINE THEN PETITIONED, ALLEGING FRAUD AND CORRUPTION, AND IN A COUNTER PETITION PRESENTED BY BROOKE, IT WAS CLAIMED THAT MANY OF HIS SUPPORTERS WERE UNABLE TO VOTE BECAUSE OF A MOB OF BETWEEN TWO AND THREE HUNDRED FREEMASONS, ARMED

WITH CUDGELS AND WHIPS, WHO ROAMED THE STREETS OF ENNISKILLEN. BROOKE ALSO CLAIMED THAT THE MOB TRIED TO BURN THE HOUSE WHERE HE WAS LODGING BY ROLLING BURNING TAR BARRELS INTO IT.

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1776 TOOK PLACE DURING THE OPENING STAGES OF THE AMERICAN WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, WHEN THE AMERICAN COLONISTS REVOLTED AGAINST BRITISH RULE. AS A RESULT OF THE REVOLUTION ALL AVAILABLE TROOPS WERE POSTED TO AMERICA AND THE COUNTRY WAS LEFT PRACTICALLY DEFENCELESS.³¹ A NOTEWORTHY VISITOR TO IRELAND DURING THIS PERIOD WAS BENJAMIN FRANKLIN. IN 1771, FRANKLIN, A PROMINENT AMERICAN FREEMASON, VISITED DUBLIN. FRANKLIN WAS WELL KNOWN FOR HIS OPPOSITE POLITICAL VIEW TO THAT OF THE ANGLO-IRISH ASCENDANCY ON THE QUESTION OF BRITISH COLONIALISM. HOWEVER, WHILE EN ROUTE TO BELFAST HE STAYED AT HILLSBOROUGH CASTLE, AS THE GUEST OF WILLS HILL, THE EARL OF HILLSBOROUGH.³² AND ALTHOUGH HIS VISIT TO IRELAND HAD BEEN TREATED SUSPICIOUSLY BY THE GOVERNMENT, AS A RESULT OF HIS ANTI-COLONIAL SPEECHES IN AMERICA, HE WAS WARMLY RECEIVED BY THE EARL OF HILLSBOROUGH. A MORE SERIOUS THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT EMERGED DURING THE 1770S WITH THE SIGHTING OF FRENCH SHIPS OFF THE IRISH COAST, AND MORE PARTICULARLY, WHEN A SMALL FLEET OF FRENCH SHIPS ARRIVED IN CARRICKFERGUS IN 1779, RESULTING IN GREAT FEAR AND COMMOTION FOR THE CITIZENS OF BELFAST. THIS WIDESPREAD CONCERN OVER A POSSIBLE FRENCH INVASION GAVE RISE TO A RASH OF VOLUNTEER COMPANIES BEING ESTABLISHED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. FORTUNATELY, THIS EIGHTEENTH CENTURY HOME GUARD WAS NEVER REALLY PUT TO THE TEST. HOWEVER, AS A MILITARY MOVEMENT IT HAD AN IMPORTANT EFFECT ON THE COURSE OF IRISH POLITICS. THE VOLUNTEERS SOON REALISED THAT THEY WERE A POLITICAL FORCE NOT TO BE IGNORED, AND DELEGATES AT THEIR CONVENTION IN DUNGANNON IN 1782 PASSED RESOLUTIONS WHICH THE IRISH PARLIAMENT WAS FORCED TO ACCEPT.³³ MANY OF THESE VOLUNTEER COMPANIES CONSTITUTED ENTIRE MASONIC LODGES. IT IS ON RECORD THAT THE HON. GEORGE AUGUSTUS ROCHFORD, THE SECOND EARL OF BELVEDERE, FORMED THE FIRST VOLUNTEER CORPS IN THE COUNTRY, IN MULLINGAR, IN 1777. THE EARL OF BELVEDERE WAS ALSO THE FIRST WORSHIPFUL MASTER OF LODGE NO. 433.³⁴ IN THAT YEAR HE WAS ALSO THE FIRST REVIEWING GENERAL OF A VOLUNTEER FORCE, CONSISTING OF 1,000 INFANTRY AND 600 CAVALRY. THAT THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT WAS A SIGNIFICANT FORCE IN IRISH

POLITICS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY IS ALSO EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT EVEN SOMEONE OF THE POWER AND INFLUENCE OF THE RT. HON. JOHN FOSTER ACQUIESCED IN THE CANDIDACY AND ELECTION OF VOLUNTEER JOHN WILLIAM FOSTER FOR THE BOROUGH OF DUNLEER IN 1783.³⁵ HOWEVER, SUCH A CONCESSION, IF INDEED, HIS COUSIN'S ELECTION WAS ONE, WAS AS FAR AS THE RT. HON. JOHN FOSTER WAS PREPARED TO GO. IN 1784, WHEN THE VOLUNTEER FACTION FROM HIS OWN CONSTITUENTS DELIVERED TO HIM AN ADDRESS INSTRUCTING HIM TO SUPPORT A PLAN OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM DRAWN UP AT THE VOLUNTEER CONVENTION IN FEBRUARY 1782, HE STEADFASTLY REFUSED.³⁶ THIS EPISODE PROVIDES A GOOD EXAMPLE OF THE CONFIDENCE AND DETERMINATION OF THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT IN CHALLENGING THE MAN WHO ONLY A YEAR LATER WAS TO ATTAIN THE HIGHEST OFFICE IN IRELAND BY BECOMING THE SPEAKER OF THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS.

THE ENTIRE VOLUNTEER FORCE AT THE END OF 1781 NUMBERED 100,000 MEN.³⁷ A NUMBER OF THE LEADERS OF THE VOLUNTEERING FORCE WERE PROMINENT PARLIAMENTARIANS, INCLUDING LORD CHARLEMONT, HENRY GRATTAN, AND HENRY FLOOD, AND IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE HISTORIC VOLUNTEER CONVENTION HELD IN DUNGANNON, ON 15 FEBRUARY 1782, WAS CHAIRED BY WILLIAM IRVINE, THE UNSUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE AT THE FERMANAGH ELECTION OF 1776, WHO WAS AT THIS TIME THE PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER OF ULSTER.³⁸ BOTH FLOOD AND GRATTAN WERE ALSO FREEMASONS, BOTH BEING MEMBERS OF THE DUBLIN VOLUNTEER LODGE. LORD CHARLEMONT WAS ALSO A PROMINENT MEMBER OF THE ORDER AND WAS, IN ADDITION, ONE OF THE ORIGINAL KNIGHTS OF ST. PATRICK. IN ACCEPTING THIS HONOUR IN 1783, HIS POLITICAL PROCLIVITIES WERE MADE CLEAR:

"IT SEEMED TO BE, AND IN MY OPINION REALLY WAS A PROPER AND HONOURABLE DISTINCTION TO THE KINGDOM, AND MIGHT BE CONSIDERED AS A BADGE AND SYMBOL OF HER NEWLY RESCUED INDEPENDENCE ... I MUST CONFESS TO DISCOVER IF POSSIBLE HOW THE MEASURE WOULD BE TAKEN BY THE PEOPLE ... MY PRINCIPAL OBJECTION ... HAD BEEN LEST THE PEOPLE SHOULD CONSIDER MY ACCEPTANCE OF ANY ROYAL FAVOUR AS A DERELICTION OF THEIR INTERESTS, AND SHOULD ON THAT ACCOUNT WITHDRAW FROM ME THAT UNBOUNDED CONFIDENCE BY WHICH ALONE I COULD BE USEFUL. BUT EVERY SUCH DANGER WAS ... CLEARLY OBIATED,

*SINCE BOTH THE PEOPLE AND THE VOLUNTEERS MIGHT THEREIN AT THE FIRST GLANCE PERCEIVE THAT THE HONOUR WAS OFFERED AND ACCEPTED MERELY AS A REWARD FOR SERVICES PERFORMED, NOT TO THE CROWN, BUT TO THEM ... I DID NOT WISH TO TAKE UPON MYSELF THE POSSIBLE DANGER OF DEPRIVING THE KINGDOM OF SO HONOURABLE AND SO PROPER A DISTINCTION."*³⁹

LORD CHARLEMONT WAS ANXIOUS FOR GOOD REASON, AS SUSPICION AND CONSPIRACY WERE THE ORDER OF THE DAY. THE SPEED WITH WHICH MATTERS WERE CHANGING IS EVIDENCED BY THE FACT THAT NINE YEARS LATER THE ORDER OF ST. PATRICK WAS VIEWED WITH SUSPICION, AS THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS BY DR. DRENNAN MAKE CLEAR, IN WRITING TO HIS SISTER MARTHA MCTIER IN BELFAST, "THE COLLARS OF THE KNIGHTS OF ST. PATRICK WILL IN TIME STRANGLE THE FREEDOM OF THE NATION."⁴⁰

4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF FREEMASONRY IN MEATH AND WESTMEATH.

THE POPULARITY OF THE MASONIC ORDER IN MEATH OWES MUCH TO THE FIFTH VISCOUNT NETTERVILLE, THE RIGHT HON. NICHOLAS NETTERVILLE, WHO HELD THE OFFICE OF GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND IN 1732. HE RESIDED AT DOWTH, COUNTY MEATH AND CAME FROM AN ANGLO-NORMAN CATHOLIC FAMILY; HIS MOTHER, FRANCES, WAS THE ELDEST DAUGHTER OF THE EARL OF ROSSE, THE FIRST GRAND MASTER OF IRELAND. WITHIN SEVEN YEARS OF HIS ELECTION TO OFFICE, THE FIRST MASONIC LODGE HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN THE TOWN OF NAVAN, WHEN LODGE No. 107 WAS GRANTED A WARRANT, ON 6 MAY 1739; THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LODGE No. 197, ON 4 OCTOBER 1749, AT OLDCASTLE. THE TOWN OF TRIM SAW ITS FIRST LODGE ESTABLISHED ON 7 MAY 1772, AND IT WAS IN THIS LODGE, No. 494, THAT BOTH RICHARD COLLEY WELLESLEY, THE 2ND EARL OF MORNINGTON, AND HIS DISTINGUISHED BROTHER, ARTHUR, THE DUKE OF WELLINGTON,⁴¹ WERE ADMITTED AS MASONS. THEIR FATHER, GARRET, WAS ALSO INITIATED INTO THIS LODGE. HE WAS REMARKABLE FOR HIS MUSICAL TALENTS⁴² AND WAS A FOUNDER MEMBER OF THE DUBLIN MUSICAL ACADEMY IN 1747. BOTH GARRET, THE 1ST EARL, AND HIS SON RICHARD COLLEY WELLESLEY, THE 2ND EARL, WERE GRAND MASTERS OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND FOR

THE YEARS 1776 AND 1782 RESPECTIVELY. TWO FURTHER LODGES WERE ALSO ESTABLISHED IN COUNTY MEATH, THE FIRST, LODGE No. 509, ON 4 NOVEMBER 1773, AT CROSSAKEEL, KELLS, AND LODGE No. 607, ON 1 JANUARY 1789, IN THE TOWN OF KELLS. BOTH LODGES WERE INVOLVED IN THE VOLUNTEER MOVEMENT. ANOTHER NOTABLE MEATH FAMILY TO BE INITIATED INTO THE ORDER WAS THAT OF RUXTON. CAPTAIN RUXTON, ORIGINALLY FROM BECTIVE, FOUGHT FOR THE CROWN AT ARDEE IN 1641, AS A RESULT HE WAS GRANTED EXTENSIVE LANDS IN THE AREA. HE SETTLED IN ARDEE AND LATER BECAME AN INFLUENTIAL MEMBER OF ARDEE CORPORATION. HIS GRANDSON, WILLIAM RUXTON OF ARDEE HOUSE, BORN IN 1721, BECAME A RENOWNED SURGEON. HE WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDER MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND IN 1784.⁴³ WILLIAM RUXTON ALSO HELD THE PRESTIGIOUS POSITION OF DEPUTY GRAND MASTER IN THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND IN THE YEAR 1769.

THE SPREAD OF FREEMASONRY IN WESTMEATH IS MAINLY ATTRIBUTED TO THE HON. HUMPHRY BUTLER OF LANESBOROUGH, COUNTY LONGFORD. HE WAS APPOINTED HIGH SHERIFF FOR COUNTY CAVAN IN 1727, AND FOR WESTMEATH IN 1728, AND IN THAT SAME YEAR, ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER, HE WAS CREATED VISCOUNT LANESBOROUGH. HUMPHRY BUTLER WAS ALSO APPOINTED DEPUTY GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND AT ITS INSTITUTION BETWEEN 1723 AND 1724. HIS SON, BRINSLEY, WAS APPOINTED JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND FOR THE YEARS 1751-52 AND LATER HELD THE PRESTIGIOUS POSITION OF DEPUTY GRAND MASTER FROM 1753-56. BRINSLEY WAS APPOINTED TO THE HIGHEST OFFICE OF THE ORDER THE FOLLOWING YEAR, BEING ELECTED GRAND MASTER IN 1757. HE EVENTUALLY SUCCEEDED HIS FATHER AS 2ND EARL OF LANESBOROUGH IN 1768.⁴⁴

MR. DILLON POLLARD HAMPSON OF CASTLEPOLLARD, COUNTY WESTMEATH, WAS ALSO ANOTHER NOTABLE OFFICER IN THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND, BEING APPOINTED JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN IN 1731. ROBERT NUGENT,⁴⁵ OF CARLANSTOWN, COUNTY WESTMEATH, WAS APPOINTED TO THE SAME OFFICE IN 1732 AND BOTH MEN WORKED RELENTLESSLY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE MASONIC ORDER. ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR IN THE SPREAD OF FREEMASONRY IN WESTMEATH WAS THE APPOINTMENT OF THE RT. HON. THOMAS NUGENT, 6TH EARL OF WESTMEATH, TO THE POSITION OF GRAND MASTER OF ALL IRELAND, FOR THE YEARS 1763 AND 1764. NUGENT WAS

DESCENDED FROM AN OLD ANGLO-NORMAN FAMILY, AND WAS THE FIRST PROTESTANT PEER OF HIS HOUSE. LIKE CHARLEMONT, HE WAS ONE OF THE ORIGINAL 15 FOUNDING KNIGHTS OF ST. PATRICK INSTALLED IN 1783, AN HONOUR WHICH WAS MOST SOUGHT AFTER BY IRISH PEERS OF THE TIME.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS ROCHFORD (VISCOUNT BELFIELD), OF GAULSTOWN HOUSE, MAY BE RECORDED BY HISTORY AS ONE OF WESTMEATH'S NOTABLE PARLIAMENTARIANS AND ONE OF GEORGIAN IRELAND'S MOST RENOWNED FREEMASONS. HE REPRESENTED WESTMEATH IN PARLIAMENT FROM 1761 TO 1776 AND ALTHOUGH HE SUCCEEDED AS THE 2ND EARL OF BELVEDERE ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER IN APRIL 1772, HE CONTINUED TO SIT IN THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS AS VISCOUNT BELFIELD UNTIL THE END OF THE PARLIAMENTARY SESSION 1769-1776. HE WAS APPOINTED GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND IN 1774 AND 1775, PRIOR TO THE WIDESPREAD RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEER FORCES THROUGHOUT IRELAND.

THE EARLIEST LODGE TO BE CONSTITUTED IN WESTMEATH WAS LODGE No.22 WHICH MET IN A TAVERN KNOWN AS "THE PLOUGH AND HARROW", AT WILLBROOK, NEAR ATHLONE, IN 1733.⁴⁶ ON 10 MARCH 1739 " THE SHAMROCK LODGE 101" WAS CONSTITUTED IN ATHLONE (SEE APPENDIX A). HOWEVER, NO FURTHER LODGES WERE FORMED FOR ALMOST 20 YEARS. IT WAS NOT UNTIL 2 NOVEMBER 1758 THAT LODGE No. 304 WAS ESTABLISHED, IN MOATE. THIS LODGE OPERATED WITHIN THE LONGFORD MILITIA, WHO WERE QUARTERED IN THE TOWN DURING THIS PERIOD. FURTHER LODGES WERE FORMED IN KILBEGGAN (No. 337), ON 4 OCTOBER 1759; ATHLONE (LODGE No. 342), FORMED ON 7 FEBRUARY 1760; AND TWO LODGES (No. 360 AND No. 433) WERE ESTABLISHED ON 4 DECEMBER 1760 AND 7 MARCH 1765, RESPECTIVELY, IN THE TOWN OF MULLINGAR. A LODGE WAS ESTABLISHED IN CASTLEPOLLARD (No. 467), ON 4 MARCH 1769. WIDESPREAD RECRUITING FOR THE VOLUNTEER FORCES FROM THESE LODGES TOOK PLACE, AND IN THE CASE OF LODGE No. 433, EVERY MEMBER WAS RECRUITED. THE VOLUNTEERS WERE ACUTELY AWARE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE AMERICAN COLONISTS IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST BRITISH RULE, AND THE OUTBREAK OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION IN 1789 GAVE A POWERFUL IMPETUS IN IRELAND TO A NEW IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY.⁴⁷ THIS NEW IDEAL OF DEMOCRACY WAS AIMED AT THE FREEING OF THE IRISH PARLIAMENT FROM THE CONTROL OF WESTMINSTER, THE REMOVAL OF AUTHORITY FROM THE BRITISH PRIVY COUNCIL OVER IRISH COURTS, AND THE EMANCIPATION OF

IRELAND'S ROMAN CATHOLICS. HOWEVER, ONCE THE DANGER OF INVASION HAD RECEDED, THE VOLUNTEERS, BECAUSE OF THEIR INTERFERENCE IN POLITICS AS WELL AS THEIR RADICAL VIEWS, WERE FINALLY DISBANDED BY THE GOVERNMENT IN 1793.⁴⁸

5. FREEMASONRY AND THE BIRTH OF REPUBLICANISM.

A NEW SOCIETY, WITH AIMS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE VOLUNTEERS, WAS LAUNCHED IN BELFAST IN OCTOBER 1791 UNDER THE TITLE THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT IN MAY 1791, FIVE MONTHS BEFORE THE UNITED IRISH SOCIETY WAS FOUNDED, DR. WILLIAM DRENNAN, ITS FIRST SECRETARY AND LATER PRESIDENT OF THE DUBLIN SOCIETY, WROTE IN A LETTER TO HIS BROTHER-IN-LAW, SAMUEL MCTIER, AS FOLLOWS:

*"I SHOULD MUCH DESIRE THAT A SOCIETY WERE INSTITUTED IN THIS CITY HAVING MUCH OF THE SECRECY AND SOMEWHAT OF THE CEREMONIAL OF FREEMASONRY, SO MUCH SECRECY AS MIGHT COMMUNICATE CURIOSITY, UNCERTAINTY, EXPECTATION TO THE MINDS OF SURROUNDING MEN, SO MUCH IMPRESSIVE AND AFFECTING CEREMONY IN ITS INTERNAL ECONOMY AS WITHOUT IMPEDING REAL BUSINESS MIGHT STRIKE THE SOUL THROUGH THE SENSES."*⁴⁹

DR. DRENNAN HAD BEEN INITIATED INTO THE FREEMASONS' SOCIETY IN NEWRY IN 1784, AND SUBSEQUENTLY MOVED TO DUBLIN WHERE HE ACTED IN THE CAPACITY OF HEAD OF THE UNITED IRISH INTELLIGENCE UNTIL 1794. HE FREQUENTLY EXPRESSED HIS MISTRUST AND SUSPICION OF VARIOUS PEOPLE AND ORGANISATIONS IN LETTERS WHICH HE REGULARLY SENT FROM HIS RESIDENCE IN DUBLIN TO HIS SISTER MARTHA AND HER HUSBAND, SAMUEL MCTIER, IN BELFAST.⁵⁰

TOWARDS THE END OF 1792 MANY MASONIC LODGES LAUNCHED INTO A FRENZY OF POLITICAL DISCUSSION AND PASSED RESOLUTIONS, WHICH WERE DULY REPORTED IN THE BELFAST NEWSPAPERS. MANY PRESBYTERIAN MINISTERS IN IRELAND FAVOURED A REPUBLIC AND THE FIRST OF THESE CLERGYMEN TO SPEAK OUT PUBLICLY AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT WAS REV.

THOMAS LEDLIE BIRCH, WHO PREACHED AT A MASONIC SERVICE ON ST. JOHN'S DAY IN 1795, IN FIRST SAINTFIELD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, TO THE MEMBERS OF LODGES No. 343 CROSSGAR, No. 425 SAINTFIELD AND No. 659 LISNOD. THE CONGREGATION OF FREEMASONS WAS TREATED TO A SERMON AMOUNTING TO A VITRIOLIC TIRADE, DURING WHICH THE REV. BIRCH DESCRIBED KINGS [THE MONARCHY] AS: "*BUTCHERS AND SCOURGERS OF THE HUMAN RACE, WHO REVELLED ON THE SPOILS OF THOUSANDS, WHOM THEY HAVE MADE FATHERLESS, WIDOWS AND ORPHANS. UNTIL THE JUDGEMENT OF THE ALMIGHTY SHALL COME DOWN ON THOSE MONSTERS, AND CAUSE THEM WHO LIVE BY THE SWORD TO PERISH BY THE SWORD*". AS A RESULT OF HIS FORTHRIGHT REPUBLICAN VIEWS THE REV. BIRCH WAS TRIED ON A CHARGE OF TREASON IN 1798 AND WAS FORCED TO EMIGRATE TO AMERICA.⁵¹ THE REV. BIRCH WAS NOT THE ONLY PRESBYTERIAN MINISTER INVOLVED IN THE UNITED IRISH SOCIETY. THE MINISTER OF BALLYBAY, JOHN ARNOLD, WAS DESCRIBED AS "A UNITED IRISHMAN IN THE MOST STRICT SENSE OF THE TERM."⁵² THE REV. WILLIAM MOORE OF ERVEY AND REV. JOHN CRAIG OF CORRONEARY WERE ALSO HEAVILY INVOLVED IN THE MOVEMENT. INDEED, THE LATTER WAS FORCED TO FLEE TO AMERICA IN JUNE 1793 WITH PART OF HIS CONGREGATION.

ANOTHER PROMINENT VOLUNTEER AND REPUBLICAN OF THIS ERA WAS JAMES REYNOLDS, A MEDICAL DOCTOR FROM COOKSTOWN, COUNTY TYRONE, WHOSE VIEWS ON REPUBLICAN RADICALISM IN THE 1790S INSPIRED THE REV. THOMAS LEDLIE BIRCH TO BECOME AN ADVOCATE IN PUBLIC AGITATION FOR PARLIAMENTARY REFORM. REYNOLDS WAS APPOINTED WORSHIPFUL MASTER OF MASONIC LODGE No. 738, WHICH MET AT COOKSTOWN IN 1793. THIS LODGE WAS MORE RADICAL THAN MOST OF THE ULSTER LODGES, AND IN 1793 IT PASSED MANY RESOLUTIONS CONDEMNING CORRUPTION IN THE IRISH HOUSE OF COMMONS. REYNOLDS HAD IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR BEEN SUMMONED BEFORE A SECRET COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS, TO GIVE EVIDENCE UPON OATH. HE REFUSED, AND WAS COMMITTED TO PRISON, BUT AFTER HIS RELEASE HE CAME TO DUBLIN, ON 20 DECEMBER 1792, AND BECAME THE CHAIRMAN OF THE DUBLIN SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN.⁵⁴ IT WAS IN FACT THROUGH THE ENDEAVOURS OF JAMES REYNOLDS THAT THE FIRST SEEDS OF REPUBLICAN RADICALISM WERE SOWN IN THE CITY OF DUBLIN, AND IT WAS THE SAME MAN WHO TEN YEARS EARLIER, IN 1782, COINED THE SLOGAN:

LET EVERY LODGE IN THE LAND BECOME A COMPANY OF CITIZEN- SOLDIERS

LET EVERY VOLUNTEER COMPANY BECOME A LODGE OF MASONS.⁵⁵

THE GOVERNMENT ATTEMPTED TO CONTROL THE INCREASINGLY UNSTABLE SITUATION BY TWO METHODS: POLITICAL AND MILITARY ACTION. THE FIRST WAS THROUGH THE INTRODUCTION OF THE CATHOLIC RELIEF ACT OF 1793. AND, SECONDLY, THERE WAS THE FORMATION OF MILITIA AND LATER YEOMANRY (A FORCE WHICH WAS LARGELY RECRUITED FROM PROTESTANT PEASANTRY). THIS DUAL APPROACH WAS DOOMED TO FAILURE. THE MILITIA WERE NEVER STATIONED IN THE SAME AREA IN WHICH THEY WERE FORMED. THIS MEASURE WAS TO PREVENT THOSE WHO ENLISTED FROM COMING UNDER UNDUE INFLUENCE OF FAMILY AND FRIENDS IN THE LOCALITY. INSTEAD, AS REGIMENTS MOVED FROM AREA TO AREA, THEY SPREAD THE UNITED IRISH MOVEMENT, ACTING AS A CONDUIT FOR DISPERSAL OF REPUBLICANISM (AND FREEMASONRY) THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IN TIME, EVEN THE YEOMANRY WERE INFILTRATED BY THE UNITED IRISHMEN.⁵⁶ THE FOLLOWING EXTRACT FROM A LETTER BY NORMAN STEELE GIVES AN INDICATION AS TO THE EXTENT OF THE FAILURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY:

... BY A VOTE OF THE PROTESTANT PART OF THE FARNEY CORPS, THOUGH SUPPORTED BY THE OTHER PARTY ... THE SECRETARY (A PRESBYTERIAN) WAS DISMISSED FOR AVOWING HIMSELF A UNITED IRISHMAN AND WEARING A GREEN HANDKERCHIEF THE BADGE OF SEDITION. I SUPPOSE THAT THE 11 ROMAN CATHOLICS NOW IN THE CORPS WILL BE DROPPING OUT ON EVERY PRETEXT.⁵⁷

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN CAN BE SEEN FROM THE FACT THAT IN THE DRUM AREA OF COUNTY MONAGHAN MANY ORANGEMEN WERE LEAVING THE ORANGE ORDER AND JOINING THE UNITED IRISHMEN.⁵⁸ A SIMILAR OCCURRENCE WAS ALSO NOTED IN COUNTY CAVAN.

DESPITE THE CONTINUED DISBANDMENT OF THE VOLUNTEER FORCE AFTER 1782, THE INTRODUCTION OF THE IRISH MILITIA ACT OF 1793 FELL WELL SHORT IN CURBING THE ACTIVITIES AND GROWTH OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN IN LEINSTER, A CAUSE FOR MOUNTING CONCERN AMONGST LOCAL MAGISTRATES. IT WAS UNDER THIS ACT THAT BOTH THE MEATH AND WESTMEATH REGIMENTS OF THE MILITIA WERE FIRST ESTABLISHED. EVEN DURING THE TIME THAT THESE REGIMENTS WERE BEING FORMED, THE UNITED

IRISH SOCIETY WAS SPREADING RAPIDLY THROUGHOUT ULSTER AND THE MIDLANDS, WITH UNITED CLUBS BEING FORMED AT PLACES SUCH AS NEWRY, DUNDALK, ARDEE, NAVAN, JAMESTOWN, ELPHIN, TULLAMORE, AND LIMERICK.⁵⁹ NO SOONER WAS THE UNITED IRISH SOCIETY ESTABLISHED IN LEINSTER THAN SIMULTANEOUS MOVES WERE MADE TO ESTABLISH NEW MASONIC LODGES IN THE COUNTIES OF MEATH AND WESTMEATH. THIS WAS QUICKLY FOLLOWED UP BY THE GRANTING OF WARRANT NO. 773, IN 1792, TO HOLD A FREEMASONS' LODGE IN KINNEGAD. A NUMBER OF OTHER LODGES WARRANTED AT THIS TIME WERE AS FOLLOWS:

ON 7 NOVEMBER 1793, LODGE NO. 791 WAS CONSTITUTED WITHIN THE WESTMEATH MILITIA, FOLLOWED BY LODGE NO. 862, IN THE TOWN OF TRIM, IN 1798, AND FINALLY THE ESTABLISHMENT OF LODGE NO. 898, ON 7 MAY 1801, WITHIN THE MEATH MILITIA.⁶⁰ FROM THE TIME OF THE FORMATION OF THESE LODGES UNTIL AFTER THE REBELLION OF 1798, REGIMENTS OF BOTH THE MEATH AND WESTMEATH MILITIA HAD BEEN INFILTRATED BY THE UNITED IRISHMEN. THIS ALL TOOK PLACE AT A TIME WHEN THESE REGIMENTS WERE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN ATTEMPTING TO APPREHEND AND INCARCERATE MEMBERS OF BOTH THE UNITED IRISH SOCIETY AND THE DEFENDERS.

IT WAS ALSO FROM THE MID 1790S THAT NORTHERN UNITED IRISH EMISSARIES WERE FIRST REPORTED TO BE ACTIVELY ORGANISING DISAFFECTION AMONGST THE REGIMENTS OF THE MILITIA IN THE COUNTIES OF MEATH, TIPPERARY AND CORK.⁶¹ THE ULSTER UNITED IRISH LEADERS REGARDED THE RECRUITMENT OF DEFENDERS AND ESPECIALLY DEFENDERS IN THE MILITIA, AS THE KEY TO THEIR REVOLUTIONARY POTENTIAL AFTER 1795.⁶² AND IT IS QUITE CLEAR FROM CONTEMPORARY ACCOUNTS THAT CONSIDERABLE RECRUITMENT FROM THE REGIMENTS OF THE MILITIA TOOK PLACE IN BOTH THE COUNTIES OF MEATH AND KILDARE, IN PREPARATION FOR THE REBELLION OF 1798. THIS IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE CASE OF WILLIAM AYLNER, A YOUNG LIEUTENANT IN THE KILDARE MILITIA, WHO MUTINIED WHEN HIS COMMANDING OFFICER, THE DUKE OF LEINSTER,⁶³ RESIGNED FROM THE REGIMENT. AYLNER THEN COMBINED WITH A BAND OF REBELS IN HARASSING PARTS OF DUBLIN, KILDARE AND MEATH, PLUNDERING HOUSES AND MURDERING PROTESTANTS.⁶⁴ THAT AYLNER'S CAMPAIGN WAS SUCCESSFUL IS DEMONSTRATED BY THE FOLLOWING COMMENTS BY FOSTER:

IT IS SUSPECTED THEY HAVE BEEN PRIVATELY TREATING WITH AYLNER ... HE REJECTED THEIR OFFER OF A PARDON ON CONDITION OF TRANSPORTATION,

*FIRST SECURING IT IN WRITING FROM LORD CASTLEREAGH, AS HE BOASTS. A NEW OFFER OF A PARDON ... HAS GONE, AND HIS ANSWER IS NOT YET DIVULGED ... HE ... WAS AN INSTRUMENT OF LORD EDWARD'S, NO WAY CLEVER, BUT VERY PERSEVERING AND BOLD, AND IS THE ONLY INSTANCE OF A MAN WHO BORE A COMMISSION IN THE MILITIA TURNING REBEL.*⁶⁵

FREEMASONRY DURING THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WAS MORE POPULAR IN MUNSTER THAN IN ANY OTHER PART OF IRELAND. THIS ENABLED THE EMISSARIES FROM THE ULSTER UNITED IRISHMEN WHO VISITED THE PROVINCES, TO MANIPULATE THE HOSPITALITY OF THE MASONIC BRETHERN, MAKING GOOD USE OF THEIR SHARED BOND OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE MASONIC ORDER. AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT GAVE THE UNITED IRISH AGENTS ACCESS TO A READY-MADE NETWORK OF LODGES, WHICH ENABLED THEM TO SPREAD THE UNITED IRISH MOVEMENT RAPIDLY THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH AND TO ENCOURAGE THEIR MASONIC BRETHERN TO SUPPORT THE CAUSE OF REVOLUTION.

THE UNITED IRISHMEN WERE ABLE TO RECRUIT FROM THE MASONIC ORDER BECAUSE MANY OF THEIR NUMBER WERE ALREADY MEMBERS OF BOTH ORGANISATIONS. RECRUITMENT WAS ALSO CARRIED OUT ON A LARGE SCALE AT CONFRATERNITIES, PILGRIMAGES AND SPORTING EVENTS. THE GOVERNMENT INFORMER, THOMAS BOYLE, DESCRIBED A TYPICAL EXAMPLE OF THE SUCCESS ACHIEVED BY THE UNITED IRISHMEN, IN RECRUITING MEMBERS FOR THEIR SOCIETY AT A COCK-FIGHT, HELD IN A BARN AT CLONARD, ON THE MEATH KILDARE BORDER, IN 1797. BOYLE STATED THAT THERE WERE 100 MEN IN ATTENDANCE ON THE NIGHT OF THIS EVENT, 90 OF WHOM BECAME MEMBERS BY TAKING THE UNITED IRISH OATH.⁶⁶

PERHAPS WHAT STRIKES US MOST FORCEFULLY ABOUT FREEMASONRY IS ITS ADHERENCE TO SECRECY, ITS HONOUR, AND ITS LOYALTY TO THE MEMBERSHIP, PARTICULARLY IN THE CLOSING DECADES OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. THIS IS DEMONSTRATED IN ROBERT CLIFFORD'S ENGLISH TRANSLATION OF THE BOOK APPLICATION OF BARUREL'S MEMOIRS OF JACOBINISM TO THE SECRET SOCIETIES OF IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN, PUBLISHED IN LONDON IN 1798, WHICH DESCRIBES THE MEATH DEFENDER, CAPTAIN LAWRENCE O'CONNOR, WHO WAS EXECUTED AT NAAS IN 1796 AS A FREEMASON, AND WHO CONSPICUOUSLY AVOIDED IMPLICATING IRISH MASONS AS A BODY IN ANY REVOLUTIONARY CONSPIRACY.⁶⁷ THE VIEW EXPRESSED BY MADDEN, IN HIS HISTORY OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN, REFLECTS

THE OPINION HELD BY THE GOVERNMENT IN 1796, WHICH PORTRAYS THE DEFENDERS AS AN ORGANISATION OF UNEDUCATED PEASANTS. PROPAGANDA ISSUED BY THE GOVERNMENT AT THE TIME OF O'CONNOR'S EXECUTION CLAIMED THAT THE ONLY MAN KNOWN AMONG THE DEFENDERS ABOVE THE CONDITION OF A LABOURER WAS A SCHOOLMASTER WHO WAS EXECUTED AT NAAS IN 1796.⁶⁸ HOWEVER, THIS WAS FAR FROM THE TRUTH. THE NAMES OF NUMEROUS LEADERS OF THE DEFENDERS APPEAR IN GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS OF 1795, AND AMONGST THEM IS LISTED THE NAME OF ANTHONY DALY, A MILLER, FROM LONGWOOD, COUNTY MEATH.⁶⁹ OTHER PROMINENT LEADERS OF THE DEFENDERS NAMED AT THE TIME WERE CHARLES TEELING, A MAJOR LINEN MERCHANT, AS WELL AS ANTHONY McCANN OF CORDERRY, COUNTY LOUTH, AND MICHAEL BOYLAN, BLAKESTOWN, COUNTY LOUTH, WHO WERE BOTH SUBSTANTIAL FARMERS.

FROM 1792, ATTEMPTS WERE MADE IN ALMOST EVERY COUNTY BY THE GRAND JURIES TO IMPLICATE MEMBERS OF THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE WITH THE DEFENDERS, BUT THIS TACTIC ULTIMATELY BACKFIRED. THE GREATEST DISAPPOINTMENT SUFFERED BY THE CATHOLIC COMMITTEE AROSE FROM THE INCOMPLETE NATURE OF THE CATHOLIC RELIEF ACT OF 1793, WHICH ROBBED THEM OF A POWER THEY POSSESSED IN THE PAST TO PLACATE THE DEFENDERS. IT WAS NO ACCIDENT THEREFORE, THAT FROM 1793, THE DEFENDERS WERE FORCED DOWN THE ROAD OF RADICALISM, TOGETHER WITH THE UNITED IRISHMEN, EFFECTING A MERGER OF THE TWO,⁷⁰ ALL THE WHILE ADOPTING GREATER SECRECY AND CIRCUMSPECTION WHICH MUST HAVE BEEN CONSIDERED BY MANY AT THE TIME TO BE MORE APPARENT THAN REAL.

THE INCREASING FINANCIAL INSTABILITY AFTER 1793 HEIGHTENED THE SENSE OF THE IMPENDING CRISIS.⁷¹ THIS, COUPLED WITH DISAFFECTION AT THE SLOW PACE OF PARLIAMENTARY REFORM, PREFACED A GRADUAL BUT CERTAIN DRIFT TOWARDS THE REBELLION OF 1798. IN THIS CLIMATE OF UNCERTAINTY THERE CAN BE LITTLE DOUBT THAT MANY MASONIC LODGES WERE LITTLE MORE THAN MEETING PLACES FOR THE NOW PROSCRIBED UNITED IRISHMEN. LORD CARHAMPTON, WRITING TO DUBLIN FROM BELFAST, IN NOVEMBER 1796, STATED THAT "LAST NIGHT I VISITED SOME PUBLIC HOUSES, WHERE WERE ASSEMBLED MEETINGS OF FREEMASONS AND ARRESTED MR. CUTHBERT, THE TAILOR, AND I AM GOING TO COMMIT HIM FOR AN UNBAILABLE OFFENCE, CONSPIRACY TO MURDER".⁷² HE THEN WENT ON

TO INDICATE THAT THESE MASONIC LODGES WERE LITTLE MORE THAN ASSASSINATION CLUBS.

6. THE GROWTH AND SPREAD OF SECRET AND FRATERNAL SOCIETIES.

ANOTHER NOTABLE FRATERNAL SOCIETY OF THE PERIOD WAS THE ROMAN CATHOLIC DEFENDERS.⁷³ THIS SOCIETY, ORIGINATING IN 1784, WAS OFTEN MISREPRESENTED BY HISTORIANS IN THE PAST WHO ALLEGED THAT IT WAS A SECTARIAN SOCIETY SIMILAR TO THE ORANGE ORDER, RECRUITING ONLY ROMAN CATHOLICS FOR ITS MEMBERSHIP. WHILST UP UNTIL 1795 THE DEFENDERS, LIKE THE ORANGE ORDER, REMAINED LOYAL TO THE CROWN, MEMBERSHIP OF THE DEFENDERS WAS BY NO MEANS SOLELY CONFINED TO ROMAN CATHOLICS.⁷⁴ IN TIME THE DEFENDERS DIRECTED THEIR SUPPORT TOWARDS THE REPUBLICAN AIMS OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN, AND IN ULSTER, MANY PRESBYTERIANS SWELLED THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE LATTER, INCLUDING THE REDOUBTABLE JIMMIE BURNS AND JAMES NAPPER TANDY.⁷⁵ AT FIRST THE DEFENDERS DIFFERED IN THEIR IDEALS FROM THE UNITED IRISHMEN AND WERE ENGAGED ONLY IN DEFENCE OF ROMAN CATHOLIC PROPERTIES AND PROVIDING PROTECTION FOR ROMAN CATHOLICS IN ATTACKS FROM THE "PEEP O'DAY BOYS".⁷⁶ BY 1792, HOWEVER, THE ORGANISATION HAD CHANGED FROM BEING A SOCIETY ENGAGED IN RELIGIOUS FEUDING TO ONE ACTIVATED BY POLITICAL MOTIVES. WITH THE OCCURRENCE OF THE "ARMAGH OUTRAGES" IN 1795, WHEN SEVERAL HUNDRED ROMAN CATHOLIC FAMILIES WERE FORCED TO FLEE FROM THEIR PROPERTIES AND SETTLE IN OTHER COUNTIES, IT WAS ACCEPTED BY THE DEFENDERS THAT THEIR OVERALL AIMS DIFFERED LITTLE FROM THOSE OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN.

ANOTHER INCIDENT, IN SEPTEMBER 1795, RESULTED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ORANGE ORDER. THIS WAS A FRACAS BETWEEN THREE GROUPINGS OF DEFENDERS FROM THE COUNTIES OF LOUTH, MONAGHAN AND TYRONE, AND A GATHERING OF PEEP O'DAY BOYS, AT THE DIAMOND, NEAR THE VILLAGE OF LOUGHGALL IN COUNTY ARMAGH.⁷⁷ THIS INCIDENT WAS EUPHEMISTICALLY REFERRED TO AS THE "BATTLE OF THE DIAMOND".

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THIS "BATTLE", WHICH SAW THE DEFEAT OF THE DEFENDERS, THE FIRST ORANGE LODGE WAS CONSTITUTED IN "SLOAN'S TAVERN", IN LOUGHALL, WITH THOMAS VERNER, A LOCAL GENTLEMAN, BEING APPOINTED THE FIRST GRAND MASTER OF THE NEW ORANGE SOCIETY, THUS ENDING THE EARLIER REGIME OF CLANDESTINE ORANGEISM WHICH ORIGINATED FROM THE PEEP O'DAY BOYS IN ARMAGH IN 1784. APART FROM THE SECTARIANISM INHERITED FROM THE PEEP O'DAY BOYS, THIS NEW ORANGE SOCIETY ADOPTED A MASONIC IMAGERY SIMILAR TO THAT OF BOTH THE DEFENDERS AND THE UNITED IRISHMEN. AMONGST ITS MEMBERS WERE NUMEROUS NORTHERN LODGES OF FREEMASONS, ALL OF WHOM WERE LOYAL SUPPORTERS OF THE CONSTITUTION AND THE CROWN. YET THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE ORANGE ORDER, FROM 1795 ONWARDS, INCLUDED ONLY A MINORITY OF NORTHERN FREEMASONS, WHO JOINED TOGETHER WITH LOYALIST SUPPORTERS FROM ACROSS THE PROVINCE OF ULSTER. AS THE CENTURY DREW TO A CLOSE THERE WAS A RAPID INCREASE IN THE GROWTH OF THE ORANGE ORDER THROUGHOUT ULSTER. FOR EXAMPLE, BY 8 MARCH 1798, THERE WERE 16 ORANGE LODGES IN COUNTY MONAGHAN ALONE.⁷⁸ HOWEVER, APART FROM DUBLIN, WHERE AN ORANGE LODGE WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1798, LITTLE PROGRESS WAS MADE IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ORANGE SOCIETY WITHIN THE SOUTHERN COUNTIES UNTIL THE EARLY 1820s. THE MAJORITY OF THE GENERAL MEMBERSHIP OF BOTH THE UNITED IRISHMEN AND DEFENDERS, INCLUDING THEIR LEADERSHIP, WOULD APPEAR, AFTER 1795, TO HAVE BEEN ACTIVE FREEMASONS. BOTH SOCIETIES OPERATED WITHIN THE RINKS OF "REGULAR" (OFFICIAL) AND "CLANDESTINE" (UNOFFICIAL) LODGES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE DEFENDERS AND THE UNITED IRISH SOCIETY BORROWED FREELY FROM THE MASONIC TERMINOLOGY AND PRACTICE. THE ESOTERIC STYLE OF DEFENDER CATECHISMS, PASSWORDS AND HAND-SIGNS BEARS AN UNMISTAKABLE MASONIC IMPRINT, AND IT IS NOT SURPRISING TO FIND THAT, IN 1796, JOHN MAGENNIS, LEADER OF THE COUNTY DOWN DEFENDERS, ADOPTED THE TITLE OF "GRAND MASTER". TO SOME EXTENT THE ORANGE ORDER ALSO BORROWED FROM THE MASONIC TERMINOLOGY, BUT IN PRACTICE THEIR RITUALS DIFFERED. FROM ITS ORIGIN IN 1795 UNTIL THE 1820s THE RECRUITMENT OF MEMBERSHIP OF THE ORANGE ORDER WAS DRAWN LARGELY FROM WITHIN THE COMMUNITY OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH.⁷⁹

AS THE CENTURY DREW TO A CLOSE THERE WAS AN INCREASE IN SMALL SOCIETIES AND FACTIONS. THIS, COUPLED WITH AGRARIAN UNREST WHICH

GAVE RISE TO FACTION FIGHTS AND DISTURBANCE, PROMPTED THE GOVERNMENT TO INVESTIGATE THE SITUATION.⁸⁰ THIS ENQUIRY REVEALED A HOST OF SMALL SOCIETIES AND FACTIONS SUCH AS BILLY SMITHS, FRATERNALS, MOONLIGHTERS, RIBBONMEN, ROOKIES, SHAMROCKS, THRASHERS, WHITEBOYS, WHITEFEET, AND NORTHERNERS. THEY ALSO ADOPTED MASONIC PRACTICES; FOR EXAMPLE, ONE FACTION, STYLED ON RIBBONMEN, WERE KNOWN IN COUNTY MEATH AS BILLY SMITHS. THIS GROUP WAS BOUND BY "SECRET OATHS AND SECRET PASSWORDS".⁸¹ THE FREEMASONS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, DESPITE THEIR HIGH IDEALS AND MORAL EXHORTATIONS, WERE NOT AVERSE TO TAKING PHYSICAL ACTION WHEN EVENTS WARRANTED SUCH A COURSE, AS HIGHLIGHTED BY WILLIAM IRVINE'S PETITION AGAINST SIR ARTHUR BROOKE REFERRED TO EARLIER. ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE TRADITION OF PHYSICAL FORCE IN THE EARLY MASONIC MOVEMENT CAN BE SEEN FROM A NUMBER OF DISPUTES THAT OCCURRED WITH THE ORANGE ORDER. ABOUT 1800, REGULAR FACTION FIGHTS WERE WITNESSED AT BALLYCARRY BETWEEN BALLYCARRY FREEMASONS AND MAGHERMORE ORANGEMEN.⁸² OTHER FACTION FIGHTS OCCURRED BETWEEN FREEMASONS AND ORANGEMEN IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1798 REBELLION, PARTICULARLY IN ULSTER. THESE FACTION FIGHTS WERE DULY REPORTED IN THE NORTHERN NEWSPAPERS. ONE OF THE BEST KNOWN FIGHTS TO HAVE OCCURRED WAS "THE BATTLE OF KILREA", WHICH WAS FOUGHT IN THE TOWN ON THE FAIR DAY, 7 JUNE 1802. THE BELFAST NEWSLETTER REPORTED ON THE INCIDENT THUS:

ABOUT SIX O'CLOCK IN THE EVENING, AFTER THE GREATEST PART OF THE PEOPLE WERE SUPPOSED TO HAVE GONE HOME, A LARGE MOB, CALLING THEMSELVES FREEMASONS, AND HEADED BY THE MASTER OF VOW LODGE, ASSEMBLED IN A VERY TUMULTUOUS MANNER, ARMED WITH LARGE STICKS OR QUARTER-POLES, CALLING OUT FOR ORANGEMEN. THE ORANGEMEN (WHO HAD ALL GONE TO THEIR HOMES EXCEPT ABOUT SEVENTEEN), TOOK EVERY AFFRONT WITHOUT RETURNING THE LEAST INJURY, AND AT LENGTH, AFTER BEING SEVERELY BEATEN, TOOK REFUGE IN A HOUSE WHERE THEY SECURED THEMSELVES AS WELL AS THEY COULD; BUT THE MOB ATTACKED THEM THERE ALSO, AND BROKE THE WINDOWS WITH LARGE STONES:

AT LAST THE ORANGEMEN WERE OBLIGED TO HAVE RESOURCE TO WHAT ARMS THEY HAD, AND AT FIRST FIRED ONLY POWDER, WHICH SERVED ONLY TO MAKE THE MOB MORE FURIOUS; THEY WERE OBLIGED, IN THEIR OWN DEFENCE, TO

FIRE BALL, WHICH SOON DISPERSED THEM, BUT NOT UNTIL TWO MEN WERE KILLED AND SEVERAL BADLY WOUNDED.⁸³

AFTER THE TURN OF THE CENTURY, THE FAMINES OF 1817 AND 1821 LED TO FURTHER AGRARIAN UNREST WHICH POLARISED THE DIFFERENT RELIGIONS. THIS, COUPLED WITH THE SPREAD OF THE ORANGE ORDER, PARTICULARLY IN ULSTER AND THE ADJOINING COUNTIES, PROMPTED THE REAPPEARANCE OF THE DEFENDERS, CALLING THEMSELVES RIBBONMEN. THE TWO GROUPS ENGAGED IN SECTARIAN FACTION FIGHTING AND CONFLICT DURING THE FIRST QUARTER OF THE NEW CENTURY.

7. CONCLUSION.

THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND WAS SO DISTURBED BY THE COURSE OF EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY DURING THE LATTER PART OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY THAT WARRANTS FOR NEW LODGES WERE WITHHELD, EXCEPT ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF A MAGISTRATE. THE DEPUTY GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND, DR. WALTER WADE,⁸⁴ WAS APPOINTED TO INVESTIGATE THE CONDUCT OF BOTH MASONS AND LODGES THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY DURING THE YEARS OF THE UNITED IRISH INFILTRATION. DR. WADE WAS A RENOWNED DUBLIN SURGEON. WADE'S APPOINTMENT TO INVESTIGATE LODGES AS EARLY AS 1795 PROVIDES A GOOD INDICATION OF THE POINT AT WHICH THE UNITED IRISHMEN FIRST INFILTRATED THE MASONIC ORDER. HIS REPORT TO THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND, ON THE STATE OF FREEMASONRY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, RECOMMENDED VARIOUS AMENDMENTS TO THE RULES (BYE-LAWS) OF THE GRAND LODGE, ONE OF WHICH FORBADE DISCUSSION OF ANY RELIGIOUS OR POLITICAL MATTERS WITHIN LODGES.⁸⁵ THIS WAS CLEARLY AN ATTEMPT TO DIFFUSE THE INFLUENCE OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN AND DEFENDERS WITHIN THE ORDER.

AS A RESULT OF HIS INQUIRY DR. WADE ISSUED AN APPROVED GRAND LODGE PAMPHLET, WHICH CONTAINED THE RULES AND REGULATIONS IN RELATION TO THE REGISTRATION AND CONDUCT OF MEMBERS OF THE ORDER, AND BY THE TURN OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY, THIS MEASURE HAD LARGELY PROVED TO BE FRUITFUL. A SUBSEQUENT COMMITTEE OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND REPORTED IN JANUARY 1801 THAT THE GREAT NEED OF THE MOMENT WAS TO GET IN TOUCH WITH LODGES, MANY OF WHICH WERE EXTINCT; MANY OTHERS

WERE IN ARREARS, WHILST SOME HAD NOT BEEN HEARD OF FOR YEARS. THE NON-COMMUNICATION OF 169 LODGES WITH THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND BETWEEN MID-1795 AND 1815 BEGS THE QUESTION: WHAT EXACTLY WAS THE NUMBER OF MASONIC LODGES WHICH HAD UNITED IRISH INVOLVEMENT? THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN WAS KNOWN TO HAVE CONCEALED THEIR GATHERINGS UNDER THE PRETENCE OF MEETING AS LODGES OF FREEMASONS. AND INDEED THERE IS A HIGH PROBABILITY THAT MANY OF THESE 169 LODGES FELL INTO THAT CATEGORY. AT LEAST ONE COUNTY MEATH LODGE (NO. 107), WHICH HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED IN NAVAN IN 1739, HAD ITS WARRANT CANCELLED ON 7 OCTOBER 1813, BY THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND. COUNTY WESTMEATH ALSO WITNESSED A SIMILAR INSTANCE WHEN ITS LONGEST ESTABLISHED LODGE, NO. 22, HAD ITS WARRANT WITHDRAWN ON 5 NOVEMBER 1801. THIS LODGE HAD MET AT "THE PLOUGH AND HARROW" TAVERN IN WILLBROOK, SINCE 1733. TWO OTHER WESTMEATH LODGES OF NOTE WERE LODGE NO. 337, ESTABLISHED IN KILBEGGAN ON 4 OCTOBER 1759, AND THE VOLUNTEER LODGE, NO. 433, MULLINGAR, FOUNDED BY LORD BELFIELD, ON 7 MARCH 1765 (SEE APPENDIX B); BOTH WARRANTS BELONGING TO THESE LODGES WERE CANCELLED BY THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND ON 7 OCTOBER 1813.⁸⁶

THE WADE INQUIRY, AS FAR AS THE GOVERNMENT WAS CONCERNED, HAD FAILED, ALTHOUGH EVERY EFFORT TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM HAD BEEN MADE BY THE FREEMASONS THEMSELVES. THIS PROMPTED THOMAS PELHAM, THE CHIEF SECRETARY OF IRELAND, TO COMMUNICATE BY LETTER TO THE GRAND MASTER OF THE FREEMASONS, LORD DONOUGHMORE, IN 1797, REQUESTING HIM TO CHECK THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO TURN THE ORDER "INTO A POLITICAL ENGINE".⁸⁷ INFORMATION GIVEN IN 1796 BY THE GOVERNMENT SPY, JOHN HENRY SMITH, ALIAS BIRD, SHOWS THE HOLD THE UNITED IRISHMEN HAD ESTABLISHED WITHIN THE MASONIC ORDER: HE WROTE "THERE'S SCARCELY A UNITED IRISHMAN WHO IS NOT A MASON, NOR A MASON WHO IS NOT BOTH."⁸⁸ THIS SUBSEQUENTLY LED TO MILITARY SWOOPS ON LODGE MEETINGS, AND ALSO TO THE ARREST OF SUSPECTS. A SIMILAR PATTERN TOOK PLACE IN DUBLIN WHERE REVOLUTIONARY CELLS MET UNDER THE GUISE OF MASONIC LODGES. IN 1798, AFTER A RAID ON A NEWRY TAVERN, AN ENTIRE LODGE OF FREEMASONS WERE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY, BUT THERE WAS NEVER ANY EVIDENCE OF CONVICTIONS. ALSO, IN NOVEMBER OF THAT YEAR, SEVERAL DUBLIN LODGES WERE SUSPENDED BY THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND, PENDING ENQUIRIES INTO THE ACTIVITIES OF THEIR

MEMBERS BEFORE AND DURING THE REBELLION.⁸⁹ HOWEVER, THE LODGES IN QUESTION NEVER CAME TO PUBLIC NOTICE AS AN INTERNAL INVESTIGATION WAS UNDERTAKEN BY THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND.

DUE TO THE REBELLION, THE GRAND LODGE DID NOT MEET BETWEEN 3 MAY AND 1 NOVEMBER 1798. WHEN THE GRAND LODGE MET AGAIN RESOLUTIONS TO EXPEL FROM MEMBERSHIP THOSE WHO WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING THE ORDER INTO DISREPUTE WERE PUT FORWARD, BUT THIS ACTION WAS QUICKLY QUELLED BY THE THEN GRAND MASTER, THE EARL OF DONOUGHMORE. LORD DONOUGHMORE WAS PERHAPS THE MOST RENOWNED PEER OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY TO TAKE UP THE CAUSE OF CIVIL RIGHTS ON BEHALF OF THE IRISH PEOPLE.⁹⁰ HIS WISDOM AND JUDGMENT DEFUSED THE PRECARIOUS SITUATION THAT EXISTED AFTER 1798. FOLLOWING THE REBELLION, THERE WAS GREAT FEAR AND ANXIETY, BORDERING ON HYSTERIA, WITH MANY ALLEGATIONS BEING LEVELLED. THESE INCLUDED ALLEGATIONS OF REPUBLICAN PLOTS AND CONSPIRACIES MADE AGAINST THE MASONIC ORDER. THESE WERE, HOWEVER, SHOWN TO BE WITHOUT FOUNDATION. NEVERTHELESS, IT IS GENERALLY ACCEPTED BY THE MASONIC ORDER THAT THERE WAS A LARGE PRESENCE OF ITS MEMBERSHIP (SOME UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN AND DEFENDERS), INVOLVED IN THE REBELLION OF 1798. THE ACT OF UNION DEFUSED THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN IRELAND AND THE ORDER USED THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXTRICATE ITSELF FROM POLITICAL INFLUENCE. HOWEVER, THE NUMBER OF LODGES IN MEATH AND WESTMEATH DECLINED AFTER THIS TURBULENT PERIOD.⁹¹ WITH THIS DECLINE THE NUMBER OF ROMAN CATHOLICS JOINING THE ORDER ALSO DECREASED. FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE NEW CENTURY THE ORDER IMPRESSED ITS AUTHORITY ON INDIVIDUAL LODGES, AND UNDER THE DIRECTION OF LORD DONOUGHMORE, BECAME INCREASINGLY RESPECTABLE, AND, AS A RESULT, WAS DOMINATED BY THE UPPER AND MIDDLE CLASSES.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

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9. REFERENCES.

- 1. THE FIRST GRAND MASTER OF THE ORDER WAS THE EARL OF ROSSE AND THE DEPUTY GRAND MASTER WAS THE EARL OF LANESBOROUGH.**
- 2. THE FREEMASONS' SOCIETY HAS ALWAYS ASSERTED THAT IT IS A NON-SECTARIAN AND NON-POLITICAL ORGANISATION (ALTHOUGH INDIVIDUALS MAY ENGAGE IN POLITICS). AN EXAMPLE OF THIS FACT WAS THAT DANIEL O'CONNELL WAS A MEMBER OF THE ORDER, JOINING DUBLIN LODGE No. 198 IN 1799. HE DESCRIBED THE ORDER AS BASED ON "PHILANTHROPY UNCONFINED BY SECT, NATION, COLOUR OR RELIGION". HOWEVER, HE LATER RESIGNED FROM THE ORDER AND IN 1837, RENOUNCED IT IN THE NEWSPAPER *THE PILOT*, ON THE BASIS OF "WANTON AND MULTIPLIED TAKING OF OATHS'. J.H. LEPPER, AND P. CROSSLE, *HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND*, 1 (DUBLIN, 1925), P. 427; SEE ALSO *THE FOLD*, NO. 1, JULY 1956, PP 31-33.**
- 3. P. ROBINSON, "HANGING ROPES AND BURIED SECRETS", *ULSTER FOLKLIFE*, 32(1986), P. 3.**
- 4. R. STALLEY, "MELLIFONT ABBEY: A STUDY OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY", *PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY*, 80c, 14, P. 330.**
- 5. LEPPER AND CROSSLE, *HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND*, VOLUME 1, P. 36.**
- 6. AN OPERATIVE OR WORKING MASON IDENTIFIED HIS WORK BY CARVING ON THE STONE A MARK THAT WAS ASSOCIATED ONLY WITH HIM. THIS ENABLED HIM TO DEMONSTRATE HOW MUCH WORK HE HAD DONE, WHICH, IN TURN, FORMED THE BASIS FOR THE AMOUNT HE WAS PAID AT THE END OF A PARTICULAR PERIOD. SPECULATIVE MASONS HAVE COPIED THIS ASPECT BY ADOPTING MARKS IN DIFFERENT BRANCHES OF FREEMASONRY, WHICH IDENTIFY THEM IN THEIR RITUALS. FOR EXAMPLE, SEE E. FITZGERALD, "ON**

ANCIENT MASON'S MARKS AT YOUGHAL AND ELSEWHERE AND THE SECRET LANGUAGE FOR THE CRAFTSMEN OF THE MIDDLE AGES IN IRELAND", *JOURNAL OF THE KILKENNY AND SOUTH EAST ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*, II (1858/89), p.67.

7. P.J. GERAGHTY, *A HERITAGE IN STONE: THE LIFE AND CAREER OF ARCHITECT JOHN MURRAY* (MONAGHAN, 1994), p. 6; SEE ALSO S. SMILES, *LIVES OF THE ENGINEERS HISTORY OF ROADS, METCALFE: TELFORD*, 3 (LONDON, 1874), p. 116.

8. B.E. JONES, *FREEMASONS' GUIDE AND COMPENDIUM* (LONDON, 1986), PP 62-3.

9. B. LOFTUS, *MARCHING WORKERS* (DUBLIN, 1978), p. 7.

10. L. CONLON, *THE HERITAGE OF COLLON: 1764-1984* (COLLON, 1984), PP 38-44.

11. *DROGHEDA JOURNAL AND LOUTH AND MEATH ADVERTISER*, 1795.

12. W.H. CRAWFORD, "THE RISE OF THE LINEN INDUSTRY", IN L.M. CULLEN (ED.), *THE FORMATION OF THE IRISH ECONOMY* (CORK, 1976), PP 25-35.

13. FOSTER MASEREENE PAPERS, MEMORANDUM D507-14507, THE PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND, BELFAST (HEREAFTER CITED AS PRONI).

14. *IBID.*, CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN JOHN KIRKLAND AND RT. HON. JOHN FOSTER, DATED 2 JANUARY 1809.

15. LOFTUS, *MARCHING WORKERS*, p. 1.

16. *IBID.*, p. 16.

17. LEPPER AND CROSSLE, *HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND*, p. 53.

18. THESE WARRANTS WERE ISSUED IN ASCENDING NUMERICAL ORDER (I.E. LODGE NO. 244, HEADFORT). THEREFORE, THE LOWER THE NUMBER OF THE WARRANT THE OLDER THE LODGE.

19. SWIFT WAS VICAR AT LARACOR, COUNTY MEATH, FROM 1700 UNTIL HIS DEATH IN 1743. HE WAS ALSO DEAN OF ST. PATRICK'S, DUBLIN FROM 1713. SWIFT WAS ALSO A PROMINENT FREEMASON.

20. SEAN McMAHON, *A DIRECTORY OF IRISH QUOTATIONS* (DUBLIN, 1984), P. 150. SEE ALSO *THE DRAPIER'S LETTERS MSS.*, TRINITY COLLEGE LIBRARY, DUBLIN.

21. J.C. BECKETT, *THE MAKING OF MODERN IRELAND 1603-1923* (LONDON, 1966), PP 165-6.

22. M. WALL, *THE PENAL LAWS: 1691-1760* (DUNDALK, 1976), P. 4.

23. HENRY FLOOD, HENRY GRATTAN AND SAMUEL MCTIER WERE ALL PROMINENT VOLUNTEERS AND MEMBERS OF THE MASONIC ORDER.

24. JOHN NUGENT, OF CLONLOST, WAS DESCENDED FROM A POWERFUL MASONIC FAMILY. HE WAS A COUSIN OF BOTH THOMAS, THE 6TH EARL OF WESTMEATH, GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND 1763-64, AND ROBERT NUGENT, OF CARLANSTOWN, JUNIOR GRAND WARDEN, 1732. HIS DAUGHTER MARRIED ROBERT ROCHFORD, WHOSE BROTHER, GEORGE, SUCCEEDED TO THE TITLE AS THE 2ND EARL OF BELVEDERE IN 1772, AND WAS APPOINTED GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND 1774-75. J. AIKIN, AND W. ENFIELD, *PEERAGE AND GENERAL BIOGRAPHY* (LONDON, 1799), P. 389; SEE ALSO LEPPER AND CROSSLE, *HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND*, P. 211; SEE ALSO J.C. LYONS, *THE GRAND JURIES OF THE COUNTY OF WESTMEATH, 1727-1853*, VOL. 1 (LEDESTOWN, 1853), PP 222-5.

25. FORTY SHILLING FREEHOLDERS RESIDENT AND NON-RESIDENT WITHIN THE MANOR BOROUGH OF MULLINGAR WERE ENTITLED TO VOTE IN ELECTIONS.

26. T.W. MOODY, AND WE. VAUGHAN (EDS), IV, *A NEW HISTORY OF IRELAND 1691-1800* (OXFORD, 1986), PP 72-5.

27. *IBID.*, PP 74-83.

28. A.P.W. MALCOLMSON, "THE FOSTER FAMILY AND THE PARLIAMENTARY BOROUGH OF DUNLEER: 1683-1800", *JOURNAL OF THE COUNTY LOUTH ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*, XVII, 3(1971), PP 162-3.

29. FOR EXAMPLE, JAMES WILSON (A PROMINENT FREEMASON) WAS AN INDEPENDENT CANDIDATE FOR THE SEAT IN COUNTY ANTRIM. HIS ELECTORAL PLEDGE WAS THAT HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT "PLACE, PENSION, TITLE OR OTHER PRIVILEGES". WILSON WAS DULY ELECTED AND DURING THE VICTORY CELEBRATIONS 10,000 MEN WORE BLUE COCKADES AND 400 "FREE-MASONS, ATTIIRED IN THEIR JEWELS, ARMED WITH CARBINES ... ATTENDED." SEE A. MCCLELLAND, "SOME ASPECTS OF FREEMASONRY IN THE LATE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY", *TRANSACTIONS OF THE LODGE OF RESEARCH FOR THE YEARS 1958-1962*, P. 17.

30. MCCLELLAND, "SOME ASPECTS OF FREEMASONRY IN THE LATE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY", P. 17.

31. *IBID.*, P. 18.

32. STEWART, A.T.Q., *A DEEPER SILENCE: THE HIDDEN ORIGINS OF THE UNITED IRISHMEN* (LONDON, 1993), PP 174-5. IT IS NOTABLE THAT THE EARL OF HILLSBOROUGH WAS ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S LEADING PRO-BRITISH PEERS OF THE PERIOD.

33. BECKETT, *THE MAKING OF MODERN IRELAND: 1603-1923*, PP 221-4.

34. GRAND LEDGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND, MEMBERSHIP REGISTER FOR THE YEAR 1765, MSS (MASONIC ARCHIVES, DUBLIN).

35. ADMITTEDLY, JOHN WILLIAM FOSTER WAS THE RT. HON. JOHN FOSTER'S COUSIN. NEVERTHELESS, THE LATTER WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE RESISTED SUCH A SITUATION IF HE HAD THOUGHT THAT HE HAD SOME CHOICE IN THE MATTER.

36. A.P.W. MALCOLMSON, JOHN FOSTER: *THE POLITICS OF THE ANGLO-IRISH ASCENDANCY* (OXFORD, 1978), PP 130-1.

37. L. CURTIS, *THE CAUSE OF IRELAND: FROM THE UNITED IRISHMEN TO PARTITION* (BELFAST, 1994), P. 4.

38. IRELAND, EXCLUDING DUBLIN, IS DIVIDED INTO 13 MASONIC PROVINCES. THE PROVINCE OF ULSTER HAS NOW BEEN REPLACED BY THE INDIVIDUAL PROVINCES OF ARMAGH, ANTRIM, TYRONE AND FERMANAGH, DOWN AND

LONDONDERRY, AND DONEGAL. IN THE MIDLANDS, THE MODERN PROVINCES ARE MEATH, NORTH CONNAUGHT, AND THE MIDLAND COUNTIES.

39. CHARLEMONT MSS, HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION VOL. 1, PP 152FF. QUOTED IN P. GALLOWAY, *THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS ORDER OF ST. PATRICK 1783-1983* (CHICHESTER, 1983), P. 9.

40. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN DR. WILLIAM DRENNAN AND MARTHA MCTIER, DATED JUNE 1791, DRENNAN PAPERS, MSS. T.765/2/1/75. PRONI.

41. W. O'CONNOR-MORRIS, *WELLINGTON: SOLDIER AND STATESMAN* (LONDON, 1909).

42. GARRET RECEIVED HIS DOCTORATE IN MUSIC IN 1764, FROM TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN AND WAS PROFESSOR OF MUSIC IN THE COLLEGE. SEE LEPPER AND CROSSLE, *HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND*, P. 212; SEE ALSO E. LONGFORD, "WELLINGTON AND THE IRISH CONNECTION", *RIOCHT NA MIDHE*, IX, 1(1994/95), PP 51-60.

43. RUXTON WAS SURGEON-GENERAL TO THE ARMY IN IRELAND. HE LATER PETITIONED THAT THE DUBLIN SOCIETY OF SURGEONS BE FORMED INTO THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND (1784). SEE L. CONLON, "ARDEE CORPORATION 1641-1841", *ARDEE MONASTERY NATIONAL SCHOOL JUBILEE PUBLICATION 1988-1989* (ARDEE, 1989), P. 52; SEE ALSO H. O'SULLIVAN, "THE PLANTATION OF THE CROMWELLIAN SOLDIERS IN THE BARONY OF ARDEE, 1652-1656", *JOURNAL OF THE COUNTY LOUTH ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY*, XXI, 4(1988), PP. 449-450.

44. LEPPER AND CROSSLE, *HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND*, P. 184.

45. ROBERT NUGENT (1702-1788), WAS BOTH A POLITICIAN AND POET. HE WAS BORN AT CARLANSTOWN, COUNTY WESTMEATH. NUGENT INHERITED AN ESTATE OF 1,500 POUNDS STERLING PER YEAR. THIS HE AUGMENTED BY HIS SKILL IN MARRYING RICH WIDOWS, WHICH CAUSED HORACE WALPOLE TO INVENT THE, DESCRIPTION 'TO NUGENTIZE'. HIS FIRST WIFE EMILIA WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THE EARL OF FINGAL AND DIED IN 1731; HE MARRIED ANNE KNIGHT, ALREADY TWICE A WIDOW, IN 1736; SHE DIED IN 1756 AND HE

AGAIN MARRIED, THIS TIME ELIZABETH, THE WIDOW OF THE 4TH EARL OF BERKELEY, FROM WHOM HE SECURED A LARGE FORTUNE. HE WAS ELEVATED TO THE PEERAGE AS BARON NUGENT ON 19 JANUARY 1769, AND WAS CREATED EARL NUGENT ON 21 JULY 1776. HE SERVED AS A MEMBER OF THE ENGLISH HOUSE OF COMMONS, REPRESENTING ST. MAWS, IN CORNWALL, IN 1741 AND 1747. NUGENT WAS APPOINTED A PRIVY COUNCILLOR IN 1759 AND SERVED IN BOTH THE OFFICES OF A PRIVY COUNCILLOR AND VICE-TREASURER OF IRELAND UNTIL 1765. SEE H. BOYLAN, *DICTIONARY OF IRISH BIOGRAPHY* (DUBLIN, 1978), P. 265.

46. P. CROSSLE, *IRISH MASONIC RECORDS* (DUBLIN, 1973), P. 24.

47. J. BARDON, *A HISTORY OF ULSTER* (BELFAST, 1992), P. 214.

48. MCCLELLAND, "SOME ASPECTS OF FREEMASONRY IN THE LATE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY", P. 19.

49. D.A. CHART, *THE DRENNAN LETTERS: 1776-1819* (BELFAST, 1931), P. 54.

50. SEE FOR EXAMPLE, THE DRENNAN PAPERS, MEG. T.765/2/1.175, PRONI, CONCERNING THE KNIGHTS OF ST. PATRICK MENTIONED AT FOOTNOTE 40.

51. MCCLELLAND, "SOME ASPECTS OF FREEMASONRY IN THE LATE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY", P. 23. SEE ALSO PRESBYTERIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY, *A HISTORY OF CONGREGATIONS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND 1610-1982* (BELFAST, 1982), P. 743.

52. L.T. BROWN, "THE PRESBYTERIAN DILEMMA", *CLOGHER RECORD*, XV, 2(1995), P. 46.

53. *IBID.*, P. 47.

54. J. SMYTH, "FREEMASONRY AND THE UNITED IRISHMEN", IN D. DICKSON, D. KEOGH AND K. WHELAN (EDS), *THE UNITED IRISHMEN: REPUBLICANISM, RADICALISM AND REBELLION* (DUBLIN, 1993), PP. 167-75. JAMES REYNOLDS ALSO EMIGRATED TO AMERICA IN 1794.

55. MCCLELLAND, "SOME ASPECTS OF FREEMASONRY IN THE LATE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY", P.21.

56. *IBID.*, p. 45.

57. CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN NORMAN STEELE AND EVELYN P. SHIRLEY DATED 1797, D353 1/A/5, p. 92, PRONI; SEE ALSO BROWN, "THE PRESBYTERIAN DILEMMA", p.45.

58. BROWN, 'THE PRESBYTERIAN DILEMMA', p.46.

59. CHART, *THE DRENNAN LETTERS: 1776-1819*, pp 64-5.

60. GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS IN IRELAND, MSS. REGISTER OF WARRANTS ISSUED FOR THE YEARS 1792-1801, MOLESWORTH STREET, DUBLIN.

61. M. ELLIOTT, *PARTNERS IN REVOLUTION: THE UNITED IRISHMEN AND FRANCE* (LONDON, 1982), p. 128.

62. *IBID.*, p. 231.

63. WILLIAM ROBERT FITZGERALD, THE 2ND DUKE OF LEINSTER, WAS GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND IN 1770, AND HIS SON AUGUSTUS FREDERICK, THE 3RD DUKE, WAS GRAND MASTER FROM 1813-1874. HIS BROTHER LORD EDWARD FITZGERALD (BORN 1763), WAS PERHAPS ONE OF THE MOST RENOWNED UNITED IRISHMEN. LORD EDWARD DIED ON 4 JUNE 1798 OF WOUNDS HE RECEIVED IN RESISTING MAGISTRATES WHO WERE ATTEMPTING TO TAKE HIM INTO CUSTODY ON A CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON.

64. THE SHEFFIELD PAPERS, CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HON. JOHN FOSTER AND LORD SHEFFIELD, DATED 19 JUNE 1798, T.29651 156 AMS 5440/3 15 (PRONI).

65. THE SHEFFIELD PAPERS, CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN HON. JOHN FOSTER AND LORD SHEFFIELD, DATED 23 JULY 1798, T.29651 160 AMS 54401320 (PRONI).

66. K. WHELAN, "THE UNITED IRISHMEN, THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND POPULAR CULTURE", IN D. DICKSON, D. KEOGH AND K. WHELAN (EDS), *THE UNITED IRISHMEN: REPUBLICANISM, RADICALISM AND REBELLION*, p. 287. SEE ALSO REBELLION PAPERS, 620/18/3, LETTER FROM THOMAS BOYLE, LETTER DATED 13 APRIL 1797, NATIONAL ARCHIVES, DUBLIN.

67. S. O'LOINGSIGH, "THE REBELLION OF 1798 IN MEATH: THE UNITED IRISHMEN FOUNDATIONS GROWTH", *RIOCHT NA MIDHE*, 4, 2 (1969), PP 39-40; SEE SMYTH, "FREEMASONRY AND THE UNITED IRISHMEN", P. 168; SEE ALSO R. CLIFFORD, *APPLICATION OF BARUREL'S MEMOIRS OF JACOBINISM TO THE SECRET SOCIETIES OF IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN* (LONDON, 1798), P. 25.

68. J.H. LEPPER, *FAMOUS SECRET SOCIETIES* (LONDON, N.D.), P. 222; AND R.R. MADDEN, *THE UNITED IRISHMEN THEIR LIVES AND TIMES* (DUBLIN AND LONDON, 1858-60, 2ND EDITION, 4 VOLS), 1, P. 115.

69. FRAZER, MSS. 2/465/21, VOL. 1, AND 2, NATIONAL ARCHIVE. THE INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY THE GOVERNMENT INFORMER FR. MICHAEL MCPHILLIPS BY LETTER DATED 2 NOVEMBER 1795, STATES THAT HE HAD A MEETING WITH ANTHONY DALY, A MILLER FROM LONGWOOD, WHO WAS THE CHIEF DEFENDER IN COUNTY MEATH IN THAT YEAR. FR. MC PHILLIPS, A FRANCISCAN FRIAR FROM SLIGO, ENDEAVOURED IN EVERY WAY TO INFILTRATE THE DEFENDERS IN THE COUNTIES MEATH, LOUTH, DOWN AND ANTRIM. SOME MONTHS LATER HIS LIFE WAS BROUGHT TO AN UNTIMELY END AS A RESULT OF BEING UNMASKED BY THE SOCIETY OF UNITED IRISHMEN IN BELFAST, WHERE HIS REMAINS WERE DISCOVERED AND TAKEN FROM THE RIVER LAGAN.

70. O'LOINGSIGH, "THE REBELLION OF 1798 IN MEATH: THE UNITED IRISHMEN FOUNDATIONS END GROWTH", P. 34; SEE ALSO M. ELLIOTT, 'THE DEFENDERS OF ULSTER', IN D. DICKSON, D. KEOGH AND K. WHELAN (ADS), *THE UNITED IRISHMEN: REPUBLICANISM, RADICALISM AND REBELLION* (DUBLIN, 1993), P. 231.

71. R.F. FOSTER, *MODERN IRELAND 1600-1972* (LONDON, 1989), PP 259-70.

72. MADDEN, *THE UNITED IRISHMEN THEIR LIVES AND TIMES*, P. 365. JOSEPH CUTHBERT, AND FIVE OTHER UNITED IRISHMEN WERE PUT ON TRIAL AT CARRICKFERGUS FOR THE MURDER OF AN INFORMER NAMED LEE, BUT WERE ACQUITTED AS A RESULT OF A PLEA FROM THEIR DEFENCE LAWYER, JAMES MCGUCKEN, WHO STATED THAT ON THE EVENING THE ALLEGED MURDER HAD BEEN COMMITTED ALL THE ACCUSED WERE IN ATTENDANCE AT FREEMASON'S LODGE.

73. D.W. MILLER, *PEEP O'DAYS BOYS AND DEFENDERS: SELECTED DOCUMENTS ON THE COUNTY ARMAGH DISTURBANCES, 1784-96* (BELFAST, 1990), PP 1-7.

74. JAMES NAPPER TANDY, THE CELEBRATED UNITED IRISHMAN, WAS SWORN INTO THE DEFENDERS AT CASTLEBELLINGHAM, COUNTY LOUTH IN 1796. JIMMIE BURNS FROM ANTRIM ALSO JOINED THE ORGANISATION; BOTH MEN WERE OF THE PRESBYTERIAN FAITH. SEE LEPPER, *FAMOUS SECRET SOCIETIES*, P. 222; AND ALSO BROWN, "THE PRESBYTERIAN DILEMMA", P. 45.

75. ORR WAS A PRESBYTERIAN FARMER FROM FARRANSHANE, NEAR ANTRIM AND WAS BOTH A FREEMASON AND A UNITED IRISHMAN. ORR WAS ARRESTED IN 1796 FOR ADMINISTERING UNLAWFUL OATHS AND WAS HANGED. HE WAS GIVEN A MASONIC FUNERAL AND INTERRED AT TEMPLEPATRICK. ROBINSON, "HANGING ROPES AND BURIED SECRETS", P.5.

76. THESE WERE THE FORERUNNERS OF THE ORANGE ORDER. FOR EXAMPLE, SEE A. BOYD, "THE ORANGE ORDER: 1795-1995", *HISTORY TODAY*, 45, 9(1995), PP 16-23.

77. LEPPER, *FAMOUS SECRET SOCIETIES*, PP 251-4.

78. A. MCCLELLAND, "ORANGEISM IN COUNTY MONAGHAN", *CLOGHER RECORD*, IX, 3 (1978), P. 385. IN COUNTY WESTMEATH THERE WERE ONLY THREE ORANGE LODGES FORMED: LODGE No. 1404 IN ATHLONE (29 AUGUST 1823); LODGE No.462 IN MOATE (22 AUGUST 1823); AND LODGE No. 419 IN CASTLEPOLLARD (8 NOVEMBER 1828). FROM THE GRAND ORANGE LODGE OF IRELAND, REGISTRAR OF WARRANTS (1795-1830).

79. THE ORDER DID NOT INITIALLY APPEAL TO PRESBYTERIANS ALTHOUGH OVERTURES WERE MADE, BASED ON DEMONSTRATING LOYALTY TO THE CROWN AND THE PROTESTANT RELIGION. BROWN, "THE PRESBYTERIAN DILEMMA", P. 43.

80. *REPORT OF THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS INTO THE STATE OF IRELAND IN RESPECT OF CRIME*, 4 VOLS (LONDON, 1839).

81. ROBINSON, "HANGING ROPES AND BURIED SECRETS", P. 4.

82. T.E. MCNEILL (ED.), *ORDNANCE SURVEY MEMOIR FOR THE PARISH OF TEMPLECORN* (BELFAST, C. 1971), P. 46; SEE ALSO ROBINSON, "HANGING ROPES AND BURIED SECRETS", P. 8.

83. MCCLELLAND, "SOME ASPECTS OF FREEMASONRY IN THE LATE 18TH AND EARLY 19TH CENTURY", PP. 24-5.

84. DR. WADE WAS A CELEBRATED IRISH BOTANIST, WHO FOUNDED THE BOTANIC GARDENS IN DUBLIN IN 1790. HE WAS ALSO DEPUTY GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND BETWEEN 1794-1799.

85. LEPPER AND CROSSLE, *HISTORY OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED MASONS OF IRELAND*, PP 292-306.

86. CROSSLE, *IRISH MASONIC RECORDS*, PP 24-96.

87. SMYTH, "FREEMASONRY AND THE UNITED IRISHMEN", P. 173.

88. LEPPER, *FAMOUS SECRET SOCIETIES*, P. 236.

89. SMYTH, "FREEMASONRY AND THE UNITED IRISHMEN", P. 173.

90. THE EARL OF DONOUGHMORE WAS ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL ADVOCATES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC EMANCIPATION SINCE 1782. HE WAS GRAND MASTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND, 1789 TO 1812. THE EARL OF DONOUGHMORE WAS APPOINTED REMEMBRANCER OF THE COURT OF EXCHEQUER, IRELAND, IN 1764 AND WAS COMMISSIONER OF THE CUSTOMS, IRELAND, FROM 1785 TO 1802. HE WAS ALSO M.P. FOR THE BOROUGH OF SLIGO, 1778-83.

91. BETWEEN 1798 AND 1850 THE NUMBER OF MASONIC LODGES IN MEATH FELL FROM 9 TO 1 AND IN WESTMEATH THE NUMBER FELL FROM 14 TO 1. THESE FIGURES DID HOWEVER GRADUALLY INCREASE AS THE NINETEENTH CENTURY WORE ON.

APPENDIX A

MASONIC LODGES WARRANTED IN COUNTY MEATH FROM 1739 TO 1850

LODGE No. 107 GRANTED TO NAVAN IN MAY 1739, CANCELLED 7 OCTOBER 1815.

LODGE No. 161 GRANTED TO KELLS 7 JULY 1808, TRANSFERRED TO SLANE 4 FEBRUARY 1819, CANCELLED 4 FEBRUARY 1836.

LODGE No. 197 GRANTED TO OLDCASTLE 4 OCTOBER 1749, CANCELLED 5 NOVEMBER 1801.

LODGE No. 297 GRANTED TO THE 5TH ROYAL IRISH DRAGOONS, CANCELLED 2 JULY 1818, TRANSFERRED TO DRUMCONRATH 5 SEPTEMBER 1822, CANCELLED 6 NOVEMBER 1845.

LODGE No. 494 GRANTED TO TRIM 7 MAY 1772, COMPOUNDED FOR ARREARS 7 JULY 1811.

LODGE No. 509 GRANTED TO CROSSAKEEL 4 NOVEMBER 1773, CANCELLED 7 JULY 1825.

LODGE No. 607 GRANTED TO THE 13TH LIGHT DRAGOONS (KING HUSSARS) 5 SEPTEMBER 1782, TRANSFERRED TO KELLS 1 JANUARY 1789 AND REMOVED TO NAVAN 24 JUNE 1821. NO RETURNS TO GRAND LODGE AFTER 1832.

LODGE No. 862 GRANTED TO TRIM 1 MARCH 1798, DUPLICATE ISSUED 1805, ORIGINAL WARRANT HAVING BEEN DESTROYED BY ACCIDENT CANCELLED 7 JANUARY 1830.

LODGE No. 898 GRANTED TO THE MEATH MILITIA 7 MAY 1801 AT KELLS, WARRANT SUSPENDED 1 MARCH 1849.

MASONIC LODGES WARRANTED IN COUNTY WESTMEATH FROM 1733 TO 1850

LODGE No. 22 GRANTED TO WILLBROOK, NOW MOYDRUM TOWNLAND NEAR ATHLONE, 1733, CANCELLED 5 NOVEMBER 1801.

LODGE No. 50 GRANTED TO THE WESTMEATH MILITIA 5 DECEMBER 1811, REMOVED TO THE 4TH DRAGOONS, 5 JANUARY 1815.

LODGE No. 101 GRANTED TO ATHLONE 10 MARCH 1739, "THE SHAMROCK LODGE", CURRENT.

LODGE No. 162 GRANTED TO CASTLEPOLLARD 7 FEBRUARY 1811, WARRANT NOT USED.

LODGE No. 304 GRANTED TO MOATE 2 NOVEMBER 1758. PETITION TO REVIVE LODGE No. 304 REJECTED BY THE GRAND LODGE OF MUNST 4 4

SEPTEMBER 1800. ON THE REDUCTION OF THE LONGFORD MILITIA, THE WARRANT WAS REISSUED ON 5 FEBRUARY 1807, AND WAS TAKEN BY THE REGIMENT IN 1815, ON THEIR RETURN HOME TO NEWTOWNFORBES, COUNTY LONGFORD. THE WARRANT WAS CANCELLED 6 JULY 1826.

LODGE No. 337 GRANTED TO KILBEGGAN 4 OCTOBER 1759, CANCELLED 7 OCTOBER 1813.

LODGE No. 342 GRANTED TO ATHLONE 7 FEBRUARY 1760; NO RECORD CANCELLATION IN GRAND LODGE REGISTER; HOWEVER, WARRANT SUSPEND BY THE GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND BEFORE 1812.

LODGE No. 360 GRANTED TO MULLINGAR 4 DECEMBER 1760, CANCELLED 7 OCTOBER 1813.

LODGE No. 433 GRANTED TO MULLINGAR 4 DECEMBER 1765, CANCELLED 7 OCTOBER 1813. LODGE No. 467 GRANTED TO CASTLEPOLLARD 2 MARCH 1769, REMOVED TO MOUNTNUGENT 1 JUNE 1806, CANCELLED 4 JULY 1822.

LODGE No. 773 GRANTED TO KINNEGAD 6 SEPTEMBER 1792, CANCELLED 6 JULY 1815.

LODGE No. 791 GRANTED TO THE WESTMEATH MILITIA, IN MULLINGAR, 7 NOVEMBER 1793, CANCELLED 6 JULY 1826.

LODGE No. 874 GRANTED TO ATHLONE 5 DECEMBER 1799, WARRANT RETURNED 3 NOVEMBER 1817.

LODGE No. 885 GRANTED TO MULLINGAR 6 FEBRUARY 1800, CANCELLED 7 JULY 1825.

SOURCE: P. CROSSLE, IRISH MASONIC RECORDS, GRAND LODGE OF IRELAND, DUBLIN, 1973.

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLES OF NAMES OF FIRST LODGE OFFICERS FROM 1738-1793

LODGE No. 101 HELD IN ATHLONE 10 MARCH 1738.

EDWARD WALSH, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

JAMES FLYNN, SENIOR WARDEN.

MYLES McDONALD, JUNIOR WARDEN.

LODGE No. 107 HELD IN NAVAN FROM JULY 1739.

(RETURN OF OFFICERS FOR 1763.)

LAURENCE DONNELLY, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

WILLIAM STAPLETON, SENIOR WARDEN.

THOMAS WILKINSON, JUNIOR WARDEN.

LODGE No. 304 HELD IN MOATE 2 NOVEMBER 1758.

(LONGFORD MILITIA, QUARTERED AT MOATE)

THOMAS GEOGHEGAN, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

JOHN JORDAN, SENIOR WARDEN.

ROSS FOX, JUNIOR WARDEN.

LODGE No. 791 HELD IN MULLINGAR 7 NOVEMBER 1793.

(WESTMEATH MILITIA, STATIONED IN MULLINGAR)

THOMAS SIMPSON, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

JAMES VANCE, SENIOR WARDEN.

WILLIAM GREEN, JUNIOR WARDEN.

LODGE No. 337 HELD IN KILBEGGAN 4 OCTOBER 1759.

WILLIAM BEGLEY, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

FRANCIS WHITE, SENIOR WARDEN.

MATTHEW DONOGHUE, JUNIOR WARDEN.

LODGE No. 467 HELD IN CASTLEPOLLARD 2 MARCH 1769.

ARTHUR NUGENT, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

MATTHEW NUGENT, SENIOR WARDEN.

EDMUND NUGENT, JUNIOR WARDEN.

LODGE No. 773 HELD IN KINNEGAD 6 DECEMBER 1792.

THOMAS NUGENT ARMSTRONG, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.

**THOMAS MANION, SENIOR WARDEN.
THOMAS THOMPSON, JUNIOR WARDEN.**

**LODGE No. 494 HELD IN TRIM 7 MAY 1772.
ALEX WOOD, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.
HENRY REYNOLDS, SENIOR WARDEN.
JOHN CHAPMAN, JUNIOR WARDEN.**

**LODGE No. 433 HELD IN MULLINGAR 7 MARCH 1765.
THE HON. LORD BELFIELD, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.
HON. RICHARD ROCHFORD, SENIOR WARDEN.
HON. ROBERT ROCHFORD, JUNIOR WARDEN.**

**LODGE No. 509 HELD IN CROSSAKEEL 4 NOVEMBER 1773.
TOBIAS CHESTER, WORSHIPFUL MASTER.
EDWARD BYRNE, SENIOR WARDEN.
JOHN BYRNE, JUNIOR WARDEN.**

**SOURCE: THE REGISTER OF THE GRAND LODGE OF FREE AND ACCEPTED
MASONS OF IRELAND.**

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