



“THE PAST 90 YEARS”

A PRESENTATION BY

RIGHT EXCELLENT SIR KNIGHT JOHN MCADOREY

AT

SEVEN TOWERS COUNCIL OF KNIGHT MASONS No. 25

90th ANNIVERSARY MEETING

ON

27th SEPTEMBER 2024

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Excellent Sir Knight Allan McCullough (Scribe)

WHAT WAS IT LIKE IN 1934?

- In January Hitler declared himself absolute dictator of Germany and the first thing the Nazis done was to ban Freemasonry. They said that Freemason's rituals and work were too close to the Jews and their religion. All Masonic Lodges were suppressed and many Masons were sent to concentration camps. It is estimated that some 200,000 Masons perished in the Holocaust.
- The biggest disaster in 1934 was the Oklahoma dust storm in the USA. The Oklahoma dust bowl caused over 7,000 deaths and left over 2 million homeless. The dust went as far as New York City some 1,500 miles away.
- Alcatraz was declared a Federal prison.
- Bonny and Clyde were killed by the FBI in April. Their car was riddled by over 130 bullets. There was no Yellow Card, or enquiry in those days!
- John Dillinger was killed by the FBI in June. His partner, Baby Face Nelson, was shot dead by the FBI in November.
- The first liquor store or off-licence was opened in Pennsylvania. Bridgette Bardot was born in September, Donald Duck made his first appearance and also the Three Stooges. Five American dollars were the equivalent of £1 Sterling. One gallon of petrol in the USA cost 10 cents.

CLOSER TO HOME IN 1934

- The Duke of Abercorn was the Governor of Northern Ireland. He was Provincial Grand Master of Londonderry and Donegal for 34 years from 1913 until 1947. He was the grandfather of Lady Diana. His father was not only a Mason but was the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ireland for 26 years from 1887 until 1913.
- A gas explosion in Wrexham in Wales killed 266 miners.

- Henry Cooper was born in May 1934.
- The Loch Ness monster was spotted for the first time by Mr. Robert Wilson who took a photograph of it in 1934. He came back on the scene again in 1994, 60 years later, and admitted it was all a hoax!
- Cat's eyes were invented.
- The Prime Minister of Northern Ireland was James Craig.
- Belfast Zoo opens as well as the King's Hall.
- Ballymena United football club was founded and Syd Millar, the rugby star, was born.
- Ballymena got its first petrol fire engine. The Fire Station was in Castle Street and the fire engine was parked at the back of the station in Coach Entry. Before the petrol fire engine was introduced the old fire engine was pulled by 2 horses.
- At the Braidwater Spinning Mill there was a small room where the 'B Specials' kept all their equipment. Robert Russell was the night watchman and one night around mid-night when he was stoking the fire 6 men with blackened faces smashed the door in, bound Robert and made off with 17 rifles and 1,000 rounds of ammunition plus many revolvers and 3,000 rounds of ammunition. When Robert heard them drive off he reached into his pocket, pulled out his penknife, freed himself and raised the alarm. The raiders were never traced.

KNIGHT MASONRY

The degrees were founded in France around 1760. In those days in the Grand Lodge of Ireland and the Ancient Grand Lodge of England, which was founded mostly by Irishmen, all the Degrees were given under the Craft Warrant. It was an understanding if you received the Degree you were fit to confer that Degree. Not all Grand Lodges allowed this and some made it a rule that you had be through the Chair before you could confer any Degrees or even give the Obligation.

The Grand Lodge of Ireland and the Ancient Grand Lodge of England allowed military warrants which meant they could go anywhere in the world to receive and confer Degrees.

In the 1800s things began to settle down and everybody wanted a Grand Body of their own. Nobody wanted a Grand Council because the numbers were so small. Great Priory then took them under its wing in 1836 but Great Priory was never comfortable as it took its Degrees from the New Testament whereas the Council Degrees were taken from the Old Testament.

Now Sir Knights, Council Degrees meant very little because you were already in the Preceptory. The Council Degrees were a few shillings as Degree givers were very scarce and this money went to pay for their night's lodgings and maybe a bottle of wine thrown in!

In 1856 the fee for the Knight Templar Degree including the Knight of the Sword, Knight of the East, Knight of the East and West and Knights of Malta was settled at £2 and 2 shillings or 2 guineas for the lot. Now a shilling was a shilling and remember that 70 or 80 years later men joined the Army for a shilling!

I once read about a Preceptory that one evening had very little business and they gave 2 members the Council Degrees. This was all noted in the Minutes and there was no more mention of Council Degrees for the next 6 years. That was a Preceptory in Birr, County Offaly in the early 1800s.

There were no books in those days and the first rule was that a fine of 1 shilling was imposed for not attending the roll call. At the bottom of the Circular there was a warning printed "Fail Not."

By the 1900s there were only about 40 people in Ireland who had received these Degrees. Great Priory was very keen to be rid of these Degrees. These Degrees were going to be lost. So preparations were made to form a Grand Council. In 1922, at a joint meeting of the members of the Great Priory and the Knights Templar, who desired to form the new body was held. A motion by Gerald Black G. C. T. was passed "That pursuant to report of committee, all rights and privileges touching the Red Cross Degrees, which are at present vested in the Great Priory be transferred for these Degrees". It was a scrambling match all over Ireland to receive these Degrees. In a rather hurried form 47 Royal Arch Masons received the 3 Council Degrees in Newry in June 1923.

Great Priory gave Grand Council £50 to get it up and running and on 18th June 1923, with a total number of Knight Masons at just under 200, Grand Council was constituted and met for the first time. Gerald Black was the first Great Chief. He had received the Council Degrees on 9th January 1901 in Commercial Preceptory No. 245. In the early 1900s these Degrees were conferred by only 3 Preceptories, namely Commercial (Dublin), Sharavogue (Birr) and Shaftesbury (Belfast).

Between 1923 and 1930, 15 subordinate Councils were constituted. Over the next 4 years from 1930-1934 another 10 Councils were constituted:

1931 - 4 Councils

1932 - 1 Council

1933 - 3 Councils

1934 - 2 Councils

Travel wasn't the greatest in those days and as it was too much for the Great Chief in 1931 he created the office of Deputy Great Chief. This was filled by Right Excellent Sir Knight Edward H Burne who succeeded to become Great Chief in 1940 and passed away in 1943. Also in 1934 Provincial Grand Superintendents were introduced.

SEVEN TOWERS COUNCIL OF KNIGHT MASONS No. 25

The Deputy Great Chief, Right Excellent Sir Knight Edward H. Burne, came to Ballymena and constituted Seven Towers Council No. 25 on Saturday 29th September 1934. W W McFetridge was the first Excellent Chief of Council 25 and then became Council Scribe.

The Grand Director of Ceremonies, Right Excellent Sir Knight John Freeborn, visited Council 25. (He belonged to Bangor Council which unfortunately folded in 1994). The reason for his visit was to present W W McFetridge's sword to Council 25. He gave a wee talk about the sword but I can't remember a word about it! Every time I help setting up the room for a Council meeting I always leave the sword on the altar steps.

Jack Stevenson, Council 25 Scribe, took over as Grand Director of Ceremonies at Grand Council from Right Excellent Sir Knight John Freeborn. In 1981 Jack spoke to my mother about providing the installation supper. She said she had never catered for big numbers like 50-60 before but Jack talked her into it. The meal was vegetable soup, wheaten bread, sandwiches, sausage rolls, cocktail sausages, apple tart and ice cream with tea and coffee. It cost £3 per head - £2 for yourself and £1 for the dignitaries.

Sure for a Ballymena man you couldn't beat it. That meant yourself and 2 guests plus £1 for charity – a tenner for the night! Sam Hughes always finished the evening by singing Danny Boy and then the National Anthem.

The new Excellent Chief going into the Chair always gave everyone a wee gift like a cigar, a flip-up box of matches or a bag of mints. One man worked in Carrera's cigarette factory and he gave a little box with 2 Rothmans cigarettes in it. Now, Sir Knights, after the loyal toast to the Queen when about 40 of these boys got lit up you couldn't tell who was sitting beside you never mind who was sitting in the other side of the table!

In 1984 there were 57 members and by 1994 there were 85 members. On 28th September 1994 the 60th Anniversary dinner was in the Adair Arms hotel and 82 sat down for the meal. In the years after that there were well over 90 members.

Council 25 played a big part in the formation of the following Councils:

Steeple Council No. 5, Antrim in 1981

The Castle Council No. 75, Clough in 1992

The Thiepval Council No. 78, Broughshane 1996

Glencloy Council No. 47, Carnlough 1998

STEEPLE COUNCIL No. 5 ANTRIM

Steeple Council was constituted in 1981 and 7 of the founder members belonged to Council 25. Jack Stevenson was Treasurer, Herbie Caldwell Director of Ceremonies, John G Sutter MBE Captain of the Guard along with Jim Stirling, James Leslie, Andy Wylie and Bob Lilley. Herbie's photograph is still hanging in Antrim Masonic Hall.

Jim Burnside was Excellent Chief, Bill Cummings Senior Knight and John Morris Scribe.

THE CASTLE COUNCIL No. 75 CLOUGH

The Castle Council was constituted in 1992 with a total of 25 Sir Knights. 23 of the founder members of The Castle Council were also members of Seven Towers Council. Herbie Caldwell was the foundation Excellent Chief and his photograph and Jewel are still hanging in the Lodge room at Clough. The other 2 Sir Knights were Paddy Guidera and Jack Falconer.

One evening I went to Castle Council as there was a Degree and we went upstairs at 7:55pm. Noel Todd was the Scribe and when he opened the case he realised that he had forgotten the Signet. Now these men took their Masonry very seriously and Noel drove home, which was close to Antrim Area Hospital, back to Clough and presented the Signet so the Council could be opened.

THE THIEPVAL COUNCIL No. 78

The Thiepval Council was constituted in 1996. There were 15 foundation members with 7 being Sir Knights of Seven Towers Council. Tom McKendry Junior Knight, Robert Black Scribe, Tim Coulter Treasurer, David Johnston Assistant Treasurer, Ivan Millar Junior Warden, Sam Moore Director of Ceremonies and Robin Cherry Steward.

The main man who played a big part in Theiepval Council was Sam Moore. He was the backbone of Thiepval Craft Lodge, Thiepval Royal Arch Chapter and Thiepval Council.

GLENCLOY COUNCIL No. 47

Glencloy Council was constituted in 1998. There were 20 foundation members with 9 being Sir Knights of Seven Towers Council. James C Crawford Senior Warden, Tommy Young Scribe, Dessie Armstrong Priest, Robert McCosh Treasurer along with Johnny McCullough, Willie McMordie, Hugo Harris, R James Crawford and Joseph Pollock.

James C Crawford did Craft Degree work in the Glenarm/Larne area along with Johnny McCullough. Sadly James C Crawford died a young man.

SEVEN TOWERS COUNCIL 1984-1994

During the ten year period between 1984 and 1994 fifty-two Royal Arch Masons received all three Council Degrees in Seven Towers Council and remember we only met 6 times a year and one of them was for the Installation of the Excellent Chief. In all that time I never remember a Special or Emergency meeting needing to be called.

One man from Ghana, the Reverend Cannon Amanoo, received all four Degrees – Knight of the Sword, Knight of the East, Knight of the East and West and Installed Chief as he was going to start a Council in Ghana. This is what is known as Courtesy Degrees. The same evening Willie McMordie received his Degrees and every chance he got he told everybody that he got his Degrees along with the Reverend Cannon Amanoo. He was well pleased. Also receiving their Degrees that evening were David Ewart and Robert L Orr MBE who was Provincial Grand Master of Antrim.

The Rev Amanoo was really black and I can't think of another coloured man in Ballymena in those days. At the end of the night, well past midnight, there was only him and myself left. As he was a bit timorous about getting to his lodgings, I walked him up round to Betty Shaw's B&B in Albert Place and that was the last I ever seen or heard tell of him!

The Reverend Cannon Amanoo was made an Honorary member of Seven Towers Council and when Jack Stevenson, the Scribe, called the Roll every meeting Sam Hughes in a rough voice always shouted "Here" and that brought a bit of laughter from all of us.

Bob Lilley was the Scribe of Council 25, I think he worked in the Ambulance Service. He came to the Masonic hall most Saturdays and sat in the Lodge room from around 4 o'clock in the afternoon until about 7 o'clock just soaking in the atmosphere of the room. Well that's what he told me – maybe it was just to get his head shared from his wife!

In the 80s and 90s there were Degrees every night.

At the installation meeting of Steeple Council in 1989, Bill Heaney and John Porter presented the Council with a Tower to be used in the Degree of the Sword. Jack Stevenson, the Scribe of Council 25, was over the moon with this Tower and we had to get one. They were paid for it and the deal was done.

The meetings were all finished and the Hall closed down for the summer as there was no bar and we all forgot about the Tower. Then one Saturday afternoon in June the back door of the Hall got a knock and I ran down the stairs to answer it. As I opened the door standing there was John Porter and he said "What kept you?" Well he had a Tower on his trailer which was blocking the traffic and together John and myself moved it to the back door and away he went. The Lodge room was on the top floor in those days and I carried the Tower up to the top floor myself and I can tell you it's a ton weight.

The meetings started again in September and as I said before in the 80s and 90s there were Degrees every night. So at our first meeting in September out came the Tower and John Porter looked at it, then at me and said "What have you been doing all summer?" I said "What do you mean?" He then said "Well I thought you would have had it painted." He

wanted it painted like a castle or a medieval Tower. Now Sir Knights it's still there if anyone would like a wee painting job!

PRESENT DAY SEVEN TOWERS COUNCIL - 2024

Well Sir Knights that takes us up to the present day. We have 36 members, one Honorary member and one candidate to receive his Degrees at our October meeting.

SEVEN TOWERS COUNCIL - 1994



THIEPVAL COUNCIL - 1996

