



Freemasonry and the Military

**A Lecture Prepared for
Wineslai Lodge No 2435
April 2010**

Author Unknown

Freemasonry and the Military – A Lecture Prepared for Wineslai Lodge No 2435, April 2010

Introduction

When we first started preparing for this lecture, we thought that it would be a simple case of researching a couple of military lodges, (of which historians estimate there were close to 500), come with a few amusing anecdotes and that would be that. What neither of us realised was how much the military helped to shape Freemasonry, and how much military masons helped to shape the world as it is today.



Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley,
1st Duke of Wellington, KG,
KP, GCB, GCH, PC, FRS



Field Marshal Alexander, 1st Earl
Alexander of Tunis KG GCB OM
GCMG CSI DSO MC CD PC PC

So for this lecture we will be looking mainly at English Freemasonry from the founding of Grand lodge by four London Lodges on St John the Baptist's Day, 24 June 1717, and the role of English military masonry in the development of the craft, the growth of the Empire and Freemasonry at war. We will not be getting drawn into the debate over the place of the Templars or any of the other military orders in Masonic history, nor the speculation over earlier Masonic origins. Neither will we be looking in much detail at the role that military masons played on both sides of pretty much every revolution, uprising and war for independence that took place in Europe and the Americas throughout the history of Freemasonry¹, and nor we will be

¹ Although sometimes exaggerated. For example, of the 55 men who signed the American Declaration of Independence only 9 were certainly masons. Of the 39 who approved the Constitution in 1787, 13 were (or became) masons, 2 became masons later and only 3 were masons before the outbreak of the revolution in 1775.

producing a roll call of notable military masons, although it is tempting to look at the lives and Masonic careers of the likes of Wellington, Garibaldi, Earl Alexander of Tunis, Kemal Ataturk (the father of modern Turkey), Washington and the Bonaparte family. We believe that these are topics for separate lectures.

Early Military Masons

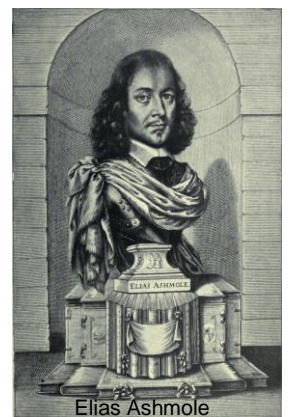
Having said that, it would be wrong to start this lecture without



Sir Robert Moray PRS

mentioning several early military masons. Sir Robert Moray was one of those fine Presbyterian Scottish gentlemen of an adventurous disposition who went to France in the 1630s and volunteered to fight in the army of the catholic King of France, Louis XIII. He fought in the Thirty Years War (France versus the Habsburg Holy Roman Empire and the King of Spain). He then returned to Scotland and fought for the Scots and invaded England, and while stationed in Newcastle he was initiated on 20 March 1641 into an Edinburgh Masonic Lodge. Sir Robert Moray is the first recorded military lodge member. He then fought on the King's side during the English Civil War (unlike most Scots). After the King's defeat and capture, Moray fled to France, but returned to England at the Restoration of Charles II, and was one of the founders of the Royal Society. He was also a friend and patron of Thomas Vaughan, the Welsh Rosicrucian.

Also, of interest is Elias Ashmole, whose collection founded the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. He fought for Charles I, and at the end of the war in 1646 he was taken prisoner by Roundheads in Lancashire. He was initiated in Warrington on 16 October 1646. His father-in-law Col Henry Mainwaring, who was an officer in the Roundhead army, was initiated at the same time. As we will see, this is not the only time



that Freemasonry unites protagonists from opposing sides.

Early Developments



John Montagu, 2nd Duke of Montagu KG, KB, PC

Military Freemasons have been instrumental in the development of the craft throughout its history. The year after the establishment of the Grand Lodge, Bro Payne was elected Grand Master, with Captain Josiah Elliot an Army officer, and Mr Jacob Lamball, a carpenter as his Grand Wardens. Mr Payne was Grand Master again in 1720, and the last commoner to hold that rank, and he proposed the Duke of Monagu to succeed him. John Montagu, 2nd Duke of Montagu was one of the great personages of the state. He had acted as High Constable at the coronation of George I, and was Colonel of a regiment of Horse Guards. He was reputed to be the richest man in England.

It might be worth mentioning that at this time, Roman Catholics were not excluded from Freemasonry (neither were Jews). They could not be MPs, army officers, or hold any public position in the state, but they would be welcome in a lodge, so a lodge became one of the very few places where men of differing religions, social backgrounds and political persuasions could meet. We believe that this is significant to the development of Freemasonry and of a more liberal society.



Frederick II (Frederick the Great) aged 68

As Freemasonry flourished and grew in England, so it did on the continent, and one of the most interesting early military masons has to be King Frederick II of Prussia, better known as Frederick the Great, who became a mason in 1738 against the wishes of his barking mad father. As well as producing one of the finest European armies, he also introduced Freemasonry into Sweden and became the Grand Master of Swedish Grand Lodge.

Naval Freemasonry

Whilst the vast majority of military masons were army men (if only because it was and still is very difficult to find the space on a fighting ship to convene a lodge, however it could be done, as these pictures from part of HMS Victory that is not on public display demonstrate), Thomas Dunkerley proves the exception. Born in 1724, he entered the Navy as a gunner and rose to become a respected Petty Officer. He became a Freemason and formed naval lodges in several ships where he served and in Canada where he was stationed. From time to time in his naval career, important people intervened and used their influence on his behalf; but it wasn't until he was 36 that his mother, on her deathbed, told him her great secret. His father was the Prince of Wales, who afterwards became George II. When Dunkerley left the Navy, George III granted him a pension and several members of the royal family helped him financially. He also banned smoking in Lodges. However, during the Crimean War, British officers acquired the habit of smoking cigars and cigarettes from their French allies (something else to blame the French for), and cigar-smoking became popular with Edward, Prince of Wales and was introduced into Lodges in the 1860s. Another Naval Mason you might have heard of is Philip, Duke of Edinburgh who was a member of Navy lodge Number 2612 (along with King George VI).



Thomas Dunkerley

And here is some further evidence of Naval Freemasonry ...

The Travelling Lodges

The spread of Freemasonry through military lodges was prolific. By 1752, there were lodges in Bengal, Gibraltar, the Americas, East Indies (with their own PGM), including Montserrat, Antigua Barbados and Jamaica. By 1802, Madras, Bombay, Quebec, Bermuda, Honduras, Upper Canada, New Brunswick, Gambia, Prince Edward Island, Ghana and New South Wales could be added to that list.



Regimental Colours, 1st Bn Royal Scots

What helped this spread was the innovation of Irish Grand Lodge, who in the 1730's introduced the 'travelling warrant', and the first of these was issued in 1732 to the 1st Bn the Royal Scots (the oldest Regiment in the British Army – comes of fighting on the right side in the English Civil War). Scottish Grand lodge got in on the act in 1747, and by 1813 had warranted 21 Regimental Lodges. In 1755, English Grand lodge finally got round to issuing warrants to two Regiments: the 8th and 57th. In total there were about 190 Regimental Lodges established between 1732 and 1813.

A member of Royal Artillery Ancient Lodge no 148 in Gibraltar in 1773 reported that, in addition to several Modern Lodges, Irish Lodges were operating in the 1st, 2nd, 38th, 76th, 56th, and 58th Regiments of Foot, and a Scottish Lodge in the 12th Regiment. More about the Ancients and Moderns later.

The Rules

Military Lodges being so much a part of Freemasonry, that the Book of Constitutions had specific rules for them. The 1815 Constitution makes it clear that the consent of the commanding officer had to be obtained before a military lodge could be

formed, and he could order the closure of the lodge. It was for the commanding officer to decide who could be admitted to the lodge, and in the eighteenth century few COs allowed other ranks to join. Grand Lodge introduced the rule that civilians could not join a military lodge, because they wished the local inhabitants to be initiated in their own fixed lodges; but this rule was often waived in practice, and many regimental lodges invited the local gentry to join. The actual wording of the rule on page 76 of the 1815 Constitution (Rule 156 in the 1895 Constitution) is quite interesting:

No Military Lodge shall, on any pretence initiate into masonry any inhabitant or sojourner in any town or place at which its members may be stationed nor any person who does not at the time belong to the military profession nor any military person below the rank of Corporal, except as serving brethren, or by dispensation from the Grand Master, or some Provincial Grand Master.

The term 'serving brethren' is interesting and a bit of typically British hypocritical compromise. Serving brethren were literally that; brethren who served, either as stewards or musicians and they normally came from the ranks. It would be fair to say that they were initiated into the mysteries, but not the privileges of Freemasonry, and while they attended meetings, they had no say in the conduct or 'management' of the lodges. All brethren are equal; but some more so!



However, despite the regulations, civilians were initiated into military lodges, and when the regiment moved on, the local residents continued to attend the meetings of the lodge, and then asked Grand Lodge to constitute them as a new affiliated lodge. An interesting example of this is Prince Hall, a freed slave working in Boston in

the 1770s. He was initiated into Irish Regimental Lodge No 441 (in 38th Foot) in 1775, and when the Regiment moved on shortly after, he established 'African Lodge', which in September 1784 was issued a warrant by the Grand Lodge of England, number 459, the last warrant granted by the Moderns to a Lodge in the United States.

With many British regiments stationed along the Atlantic seaboard (pre-American war of independence!), from Nova Scotia and Canada to South Carolina and Georgia, lodges grew rapidly in the American colonies, a practice repeated elsewhere. Another example is the first Masonic lodge in Japan, which was a British military lodge founded in 1864 in Yokohama. A quick aside while we have mentioned Japan – after defeat and surrender in 1945, the American commander-in-chief and Governor of Japan and Freemason, General Douglas MacArthur gave every assistance to the Japanese Freemasons. For the first time native Japanese were allowed to become Freemasons and Freemasonry played its part in making Japan the democratic and western-looking country that it has become since the Second World War.



General Douglas MacArthur (and pipe)

Another example of a military lodge that followed this pattern is Lord Kitchener Lodge, No 3402, which started life in Cairo in 1909, but is now in Cyprus having moved there via Suez in 1946. In 1922, it amended its original by-law covering initiates and joining members to read:

This lodge is formed for the association of Commissioned Officers, Warrant Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers of Sergeant and upwards (no Corporals here!) and equivalent ranks of the Royal Navy and (that new-fangled invention) the Royal Air Force.



Field Marshall, Horatio Herbert Kitchener, 1st Earl Kitchener, KG, KP, GCB, OM, GCSI, GCMG, GCIE, ADC, PC

Initiates had to be serving members, but ex-military could join as joining members. But in keeping with the pattern set by all military lodges, it is interesting to note that on 11 Jan 1958, a Greek Cypriot, Mr George Savvides is noted in the minutes as 'such a great tower of strength in the lodge'. In 1985, Lord Kitchener Lodge membership gives a fair representation of the administration of a

near-East garrison, with membership comprising 3 Majors, 5 Captains, a Warrant Officer

Class 1, 7 'Misters', the NAAFI Manager, the head of the Postal and Courier Unit Royal Engineers, 3 from the Dept of the Environment/PSA (i.e. 'works' dept), a Sovereign Base Area Policeman, 2 members of the Greek Cypriot Fire Service and 5 members of 'Civilian Wing, 9 Signal Regiment'.

Ancients and Moderns

Anyway, back to 1752, and 35 years after its inception, Grand Lodge faced a serious revolt. The Lodge in York, which had been taught that King Athelstan had established a Mason's lodge at York in the 10th Century, declared that they were senior to Grand Lodge in London and would not accept its authority. A number of lodges (including Lodge No 1 in London) joined with the Grand lodge in York, and called themselves the Ancient Grand lodge, and contemptuously dismissed Grand Lodge in London and its followers as 'Moderns'.



Prince Augustus Frederick, Duke of Sussex wearing the robes of a Knight Companion of the Order of the Thistle

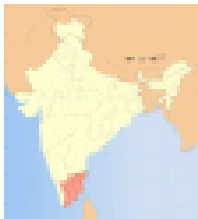
This division lasted 60 years, and was only ended when each rival group had as its Grand Master a royal brother (Duke of Sussex – 6th son of George III for London and Duke of Kent – 4th son of George III for York)



The Prince Edward Augustus, Duke of Kent and Strathearn commander-in-chief in North America (1799).

and they were able to use their royal influence to bring the two lodges together. However military lodges

also played a significant part in bringing about union and concord.



The majority of military lodges belonged to the 'antients', as they were keener to issue travelling warrants that the 'moderns' (as was Irish Grand Lodge – who started the practice), also the ancients were more numerous than the moderns in foreign

parts as they were more willing to accept members for the middling ranks of society. For instance, an ancient military lodge at Fort St George included a Tavern Keeper, Coach Maker, School master, Carpenter and Jeweller. By the time of the reunification, the batting was 108 to the ancients and 48 to the



Great Siege of Gibraltar, 13 September 1782

moderns. But throughout this period in military lodges there was a strong desire for unity, and this was for two main reasons. Firstly, division between ancients and moderns seemed less important in far-flung and potentially dangerous corners of Empire. For instance, in the interests of promoting harmony, the Carnatic Military Lodge in Arcot S India admitted ancients 'Actuated by laudable and generous views to promote Harmony

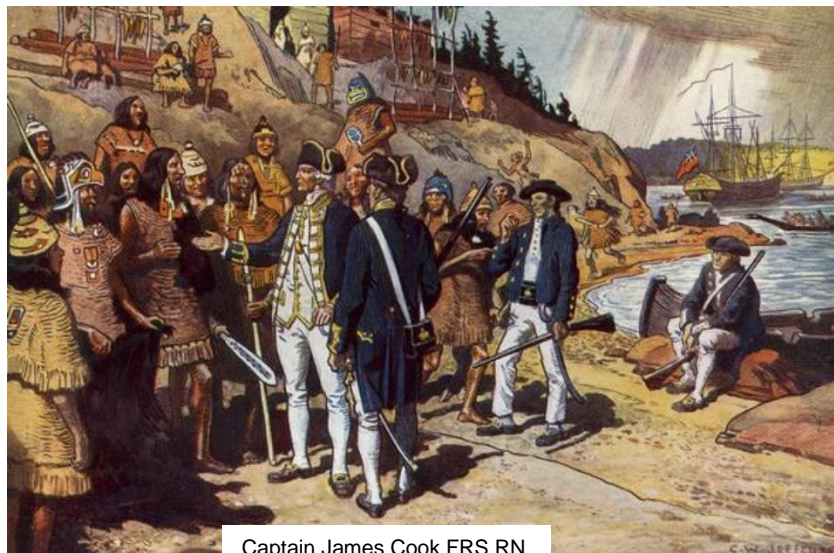
amongst the craft in general and lamenting the existence of distinctions in an order that should be universal'. Similarly, Ancient Lodge No 152, which had been established in Gibraltar for Army Officers, Ships Captains and merchants (trade!) reported to London in 1785 that 'in provinces remote from the mother country the various evils that attended the schism are experienced in a degree of which the Brethren in England can have no conception'. Ancient lodge 152 proposed a union of the craft. Similar proposals came from military lodges in Jamaica and Quebec.

The second reason for wishing to see union was to avoid the embarrassment of an ancient lodge having to turn away a newly arrived senior officer or colonial official from the lodge because he was a 'modern' mason. A bit difficult when he was the new Commander in Chief, as happened in India, or garrison commander, as was the case once in Gibraltar.

Military Masons and Empire

As with America and Canada, Freemasonry was introduced into Australia in the first years of colonisation.

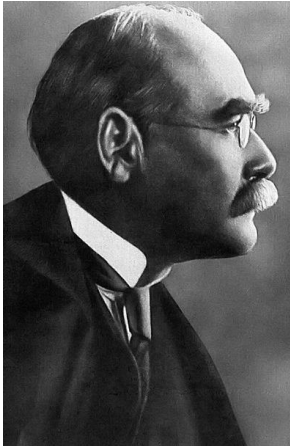
Captain James Cook was as Freemason, and military lodges were formed in New South Wales



Captain James Cook FRS RN

soon after the British first went there in 1788. A Lodge for civilians was established in 1820. In the early years, when the colony was under military government and a place to which convicts were deported from England, the Freemasons

occasionally suffered, as elsewhere under authoritarian governments. On one occasion an army unit broke into a lodge meeting in Sydney and arrested the masons, because the Governor had thought that their meetings were illegal. The first Masonic lodge in New Zealand was established in the first years after colonisation in 1842.



Rudyard Kipling

Lodges were established in India at an early stage, but they were slow in admitting Indians to the lodges. Even when the British Freemasons were prepared to admit Muslims, they still objected to Hindus, on the grounds that they worshipped many gods, not one Great Architect. It was the Duke of Sussex who intervened to order the British Lodges in India to admit Hindus. He ruled 'that the various 'gods' of the Hindus were not separate gods but personifications of characteristics of one central deity'. Before the end of the nineteenth century Rudyard Kipling, who was an especially ardent Freemason and was first initiated as a mason in India, was claiming that the religious and racial quarrels which troubled British India disappeared inside the Masonic lodges. In fact, Kipling was initiated into the Lodge of Hope and Perseverance No 782 in Lahore Punjab India in 1885, and was able to boast that he was entered by a member of the Brahmo Samaj (a Hindu), passed by a Mohammedan and raised by an Englishman. Their Tyler was an Indian Jew, and his strong belief that Freemason cut across castes and sects allowing all to meet on the level is summed up in his poem 'The Mother Lodge':

Outside – 'Sergeant! Sir! Salute! Salaam!

Inside – 'Brother', an' it doesn't do no 'arm.

We met upon the Level an' we parted on the Square.

An' I was Junior Deacon in my Mother-Lodge out there!

Of approximately 100 Lodges at work in India during the early 1870s, at least 20 included indigenous members, and in 1877,

Bro Rustonjee Merwanjee was installed as Master of Rising Star Lodge in Western India.



On a sad note, Kipling's only son, John, was killed at the Battle of Loos in Belgium on 27 September 1915, just six weeks after his eighteenth birthday. Kipling gave unstintingly of his time and effort as a member of the Imperial War Graves Commission and is credited with the

authorship of the inscription seen in every cemetery: Their Name Liveth for Evermore.

Freemasonry in the empire went through three stages: firstly, as we have seen was the introduction by military lodges. The second stage was the adoption of Freemasonry (we hesitate to say 'exploitation') by colonial officialdom as part of the glue that bound their various and varying fledgling societies together and in turn bound those societies to 'Mother England'. Throughout Empire Colonial officials recognised in the spreading of its



John Parr



Major-General Lachlan
Macquarie CB CB

ideology, practices, and social cachet the unifying power of Freemasonry. Men like John Parr, who was an officer in the 20th Foot 1745-76, Governor of Nova Scotia in 1782 and PGM in 1785, and Richard Buckeley who was an officer in 45th Foot, settled in Halifax, and founded a Lodge there and worked in the Colonial Service, and more importantly the fourth governor of New South Wales, Lachlan Macquarie.

Macquarie arrived in the aftermath of the disastrous administration of William Bligh, the Captain of *the Bounty*, who had been ejected from the Colony. Macquarie had been initiated in Bombay in 1793 when serving in the British Army, and he realized that Masonic brothers could play an important role in the

life of the colonial society. He was described as ‘One of those Freemasons who liked polish manhood and good friends more than arcane knowledge’. He restored the Crown’s authority and embarked on a thorough-going programme of reform (including banning the use of Rum as a currency and requiring church attendance) and urban development.

As in other parts of Empire, Freemasonry began taking a lead in colonial life in Australia. In Hobart Town, Van Dieman’s Land² in 1814: ‘The Governor laid the first stone for the officers, barracks; the masons attended him’. Likewise, the Sydney Gazette kept readers informed of regular lodge meetings and special occasions. At the completion of another stone-laying, ‘the brethren embarked in boats prepared for the purpose, and were saluted by seven guns from the merchant ship *Wellesley* commanded by Bro Crosset, a Masonic ensign having been displayed at the main Top-mast head’.



1852 Map of Van Diemen's Land

In India, the English, Scottish, Irish, and Indian members of Bombay’s District Grand Lodge, it claimed were ‘as good citizens, all animated by the same feeling of loyalty and devotion to our Sovereign lady the Queen-Empress.’ In 1887, the Master of Lodge Himalayan Brotherhood asserted that ‘Masonry has shown itself to be a more powerful influence for good in improving relations subsisting between the Englishman and the Indian’. It was also of great benefit to



Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught and Strathearn
Governor General of Canada, 1911–1916

the Indian Princes; although not a member of the order, the Nizam of Hyderabad protected and encouraged Masonic lodges in his kingdom because, he believed ‘it is calculated to improve

² Modern day Tasmania

good feelings and harmony among the different creeds and classes in my Dominions'. As the Duke of Connaught explained in 1890; 'We are in an exceptional position of having amongst us men of all nationalities and creeds, and I have always felt it to be a very great privilege to be enabled in any way, however small, to help in welding those different elements together in loyalty to our most Gracious Sovereign the Queen-Empress and in devotion to the craft.'

This reinforcing of feelings of imperial kinship leads us to the third stage of Military Freemasonry: The coming of age of the colonies, and their continued loyalty to 'mother England'. For the Masons of Toronto: 'Of the ties which bind us to the mother country, none are stronger than the bond which unites us to our brethren in Masonry in Great Britain'. As European events began generating concern in 1913, the Grand Lodge of Canada described Connaught as a 'link of silk stronger than forged steel in binding us to Mother Country'.

But let's look at the evolution of the British Empire for a moment. Whereas at one time Britain could afford to ignore 'colonials' in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, the emergence in the 1800s of territory-amassing rivals like Russia and the US provoked a re-assessment. Gone was colonial subservience, in came the idea of 'Greater Britain', and as we have seen, Freemasonry played a part; we would say a crucial part, in this. The proof we believe is in the colonial responses to Britain's military crises in the 20th Century. If travelling lodges planted the seeds, colonial administrators nurtured, then the wars of the last century are when we in the UK reaped the benefit of the spread of Freemasonry. For example, as *The Freemason* periodical put it in 1915, Canadian masons were 'offering themselves for the Empire'. At the institutional level, the Canadian Grand Lodges went to great lengths to promote overseas imperial service. They raised money for soldiers and their families as well as civilian victims of overseas wars. They encouraged enlistment in the armed forces and sang the praises

of Canada's sons who took up defence of empire. Acts that were repeated in all parts of the Empire.

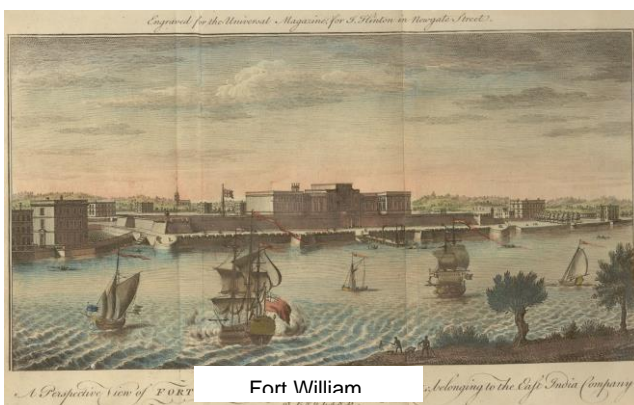
Actually, there was nothing new in any of this. Over 7,000 Canadians had volunteered for the South African War of 1899-1902. Canadians viewed the South African War as a test of their commitment to the empire, of imperial unity, and of the worthiness of their nascent nation. In a statement typical of the period, the



Canadians on the Veldt in South Africa

Grand Lodge of Ontario described the war as 'an opportunity of proving to Great Britain and the Empire the loyal attachment of our people to the Throne and their willingness to have their loyalty submitted to a practical test'. By defending the British Empire, Canadians were also proving their worth as an independent, young, nation. This idea of a fundamental relationship between imperialist and national identity was expressed by the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Ontario. The performance of Canadian soldiers proved that Canada 'had outgrown her swaddling clothes and is now a fully grown nation, about to take her station among the nations of the world'. The 'whelps of the British lion' had rallied to her side. Because of their dutiful loyalty and noble sacrifice, Canada's sons had 'placed Canada in the rank of nations'.

Military Masons at War



Freemasonry undoubtedly benefited from its connection to the British Army, but it was not all plain sailing. Transfers of personnel could be disruptive, and Commanding Officers had the power to close a lodge. Additionally, there was the inconvenience

of war. In 1784 a Mason stationed at Fort William, the Calcutta Garrison, reported that the brotherhood had 'greatly suffered under the public calamity of war'. In 1791 a brother who was soon to be transferred from Madras to Gibraltar told the Moderns that they should not expect 'our noble art' to flourish in the midst of war, given that 'many of our Brethren are with the Army in the field'. Summing up the situation for eighteenth-century lodges in the empire, the officers of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Madras regretted that 'from the Nature of our situation in this Quarter of the Globe, great fluctuations in Masonic affairs must constantly occur, as the Event of War and the Departure of Persons for Europe frequently suspend the operations of Masonry in different lodges'. Even as late as 1967, Lord Kitchener Lodge in Cyprus reported that in January its installation meeting went ahead, despite the threat of a Turkish invasion of the island, and Bro Iles was called away from the Festive Board as he was on duty – the best excuse we have heard for getting out of buying raffle tickets!

The urgency of war could lead to some incredible amounts of Masonic work being done in a short time. In 1916, W Bro Major Henry Sadler, Master of Aldershot Camp lodge No 1331 presided over 136 Degree Ceremonies; 48 installations, 42 passings and 46 raisings. The candidates were mostly NCOs awaiting transfer to the front-line. During his Masonic career W Bro Sadler performed a total of 174 Degree ceremonies. Similarly, W Bro Surgeon A. Knight Prescott, joined the Aldershot Army and Navy Lodge No 1971 in June 1886, and was elected Master the same night. While in the chair, he initiated 7 candidates, passed 9 and raised 12, a total of 28 ceremonies in 7 meetings. The Lodge Minutes suggest that each ceremony was worked separately!

Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth

Not surprisingly, there are many stories of individual acts of kindness and compassion shown by Freemasons on opposite sides of almost every war from 1700 onwards, especially in the

American War of Independence, Napoleonic Wars and American Civil War. There also cases were Freemasonry made absolutely no difference, as with Sir Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington) in Portugal. On St John's Day in winter, 27 December 1809, some British officers who were masons went on a procession through the streets of Lisbon. This alarmed the catholic and fiercely anti-Freemason Portuguese inquisition and government and many of the more reactionary elements among the population of Lisbon. When Wellington heard what had happened, he was most displeased, for it was British policy to stand united with the intolerant and persecuting Portuguese.

On 4 January 1810 he wrote to the commanding officer of the Lisbon garrison, saying 'I have to inform you that the procession, the insignia, and the existence of Freemasonry are contrary to the Laws of Portugal; and adverting to circumstances which have recently occurred at Lisbon, and to the reports in circulation of the confinement of different individuals by the government, I should have believed it impossible that it was not already known that these proceedings were illegal'.



Pendant made by French POWs during Napoleonic Wars 1790-1815

In his fascinating book 'Behind the Wire', Keith Flynn OBE gives a detailed account of Masonic activity by prisoners of war from the Seven Years War between France and Prussia (1756-1763), through to World War Two, and some of the most inspiring stories concerning Freemasonry, courage in adversity and comradeship you will ever read about. For British prisoners of war in Italy, Germany, and Japan, practicing the craft was banned, and if caught punishment could be expected (and in the case of the Japanese, barbaric punishment at that).

However, there are many stories of kindnesses shown by captors to those in their charge – including the Italian Prison Commandant who sent a bottle of brandy to the 'secret' location

of a Masonic meeting on his camp! We don't propose to quote from his book at length but would urge you to read it. However, we think that the following quote goes some way to explain why prisoners of war of the Japanese would take the risks that they did to practice the craft:

'The peace and tranquillity of those meetings stood out in great contrast against the turmoil and irritations of the day. Although it was very hot and all of us were in rags, ill, tired and dirty, yet it was possible during those meetings completely to forget our lives as prisoners of war. To sit quietly among proven friends and listen to the old ceremonies took one's thoughts very far from a prison camp and lifted the mind above the reach of petty annoyances, restored one's balance and demonstrated the possibility of mind over matter, an important factor at such a time.'

In the centre of the Changi Camp was a small, isolated hill on which stood a lone tree some 100 feet tall, so prominent that it featured on Admiralty charts. During the fighting before the fall of Singapore, sappers had been ordered to destroy the tree so it could not be used as an aiming mark for Japanese artillery. They were only partially successful, and a tall, blackened column remained. Months passed and one day it was noticed that the tree was sprouting new growth. It became a symbol of hope and a source of inspiration for the Brethren of the Changi Prisoner of War Masonic Association. Today its image forms the centre piece of the logo of Lodge Liberation, Melbourne, which was formed by ex-Changi prisoners after the war and around which are the words



Jewels made by W.Bro. J R Skipper while a Prisoner of War in Changi Jail, of material salvaged from a bombed bus. They were used in the Prince of Wales Lodge No. 1555 which met clandestinely in the prison camp.

Dissectus non Mortus – Broken not Dead

And at the risk of saying something complimentary about the French, it is worth noting that many French Freemasons played an active part in the Resistance. Of the 50,000 Freemasons in France in 1939, 6,000 were arrested and interrogated by the Germans on suspicion of being members of the resistance; 989 were deported to concentration camps in Germany or Poland; and 545 were executed or died. These included the resistance hero, Jean Moulin, who died under torture at the hands of the Gestapo in Lyons in 1943, and the German Jew, Eduard Ignaze Engel, who was known by his pseudonym, Plantagenet. After playing an active part against the Nazis as a journalist in Paris, and being Master of the Goethe Lodge, the only German-speaking lodge in France, he joined the French resistance movement in 1940. He was arrested in October 1943 and executed in Buchenwald concentration camp on Christmas Day, 1943.



Jean Moulin

To quote Keith Flynn once more:

As old as Freemasonry itself, Masonic activity by prisoners and internees, in circumstances ranging from benign to horrific, has left an indelible mark on the history of the Craft. Certainly, today the imagination finds difficulty in grasping the extent of the courage, determination, and selflessness of those who resolutely persevered to preserve the fundamental principles of the Craft. They have shown that Freemasonry is unique, that its bonds and its compassion have withstood, from its inception, the severest test that could be placed upon it. It prevailed and still prevails against ignorance, threats, torture and even death itself, its integrity is ageless and inviolable.

Footnote



Francis Rawdon-Hastings, 1st Marquess of Hastings KG PC

Following unrest in England after the French Revolution, two Acts of Parliament were enacted to deal with the situation – the Unlawful Oaths Act 1797 and the Unlawful Societies Act 1799. These acts could easily have been interpreted as applying to Freemasons, but the Prince of Wales, the Grand Master, intervened with Prime Minister Pitt. He was assisted by his Deputy Grand Master, Francis, Lord Rawdon. Initiated as a Freemason into a regimental lodge while fighting for the King in the American War of Independence, he had fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill and was later promoted to the rank of Major General. Pitt was sympathetic, and a clause was inserted into the Unlawful Societies Act that exempted masons from the ban on secret societies provided that every lodge supplied the local Justices of the Peace with the names of their members and the times and places of lodge meetings. This was only abolished in 1967.

Conclusion

As times change, so Freemasonry and the Military have both adapted. Most of the military lodges have now gone or evolved into lodges open to all free men



of mature age. The Royal Scots Lodge stopped travelling in 1949, and has now 'settled' as Lodge 316 in London, but there are still military lodges; the Guards have one for the officers, and one for the Sergeants Mess, the Royal Signals have Certa Cito Lodge No 8925, and



the Parachute Regiment No 9315, to mention some of the 24 lodges that comprise the circuit of Service Lodges.

Military masons have been instrumental in the expansion of empire and the development of modern Freemasonry, and

Freemasonry has been vital for social cohesion, development, and rule of Empire. We firmly believe that neither world today, nor Freemasonry would be as they are without the military mason. Similarly, Freemasonry has undoubtedly been of significant benefit to the serving man. In 1957, Bro Richard Parkinson wrote:

The service lodges provided a common meeting ground for all ranks. The practice of our ceremonies, the contemplation of the good, the true, the beautiful, lifted the mind from dreariness. Discipline and training made the soldier-mason particularly apt in the work of the lodge.

We give the last word to Field Marshal Stapleton Cotton CinC Ireland 1822-5 and India 1825-30:

As a military man and speaking from experience I can say that I have known many soldiers who were masons, but never a good mason who was a bad soldier.³



³ Field Marshal Stapleton Stapleton-Cotton, 1st Viscount Combermere GCB, GCH, KSI, PC (14 November 1773 – 21 February 1865)

Bibliography

As this was prepared as a lecture rather than an essay, sources have not been footnoted. However, much of the material has been drawn from,

'The Freemasons: The True Story of the World's Most Powerful Secret Society'. Jasper Ridley 2008, Constable & Robinson, London.

Builders of Empire. Jessica Harland-Jacobs. ISBN 978-0-8079-3088-8

1990 Prestonian Lecture.

The Master Mason-at-Arms. Frederick Smyth 1990. Burgess and Son (Abingdon) Ltd, Abingdon.

Behind the Wire. Keith Flynn OBE 1998 Gareth P. Jenkins, Cardiff.

History of British and Colonial Regiments and their Lodges. S.M. Jenkins 2000.

See also:

R.F. Gould's 'Military Lodges: the Apron and the Sword' 1899

<http://www.militarymasons.co.uk/>