



Provincial Grand Lodge of Forfarshire

Peter Taylor's Talks

Talk number 22

First delivered by me at Lodge Albert Lochee 448 on the 8th March 2018

This lecture was filmed and published. Number thus [1] refer to slides of the text.

Aitchison's Haven

Introduction [1]

Brethren! Before I begin let me give you a little background concerning the reasons why this talk came about. A contact of a contact of a contact, Brother Albert McClelland of the Grand Lodge of Indiana in the United States contacted me to assist him, via the

[2] <https://www.matsol.info/videos-1/aitchison's-haven>

Masonic Awareness at the Speed of Light website to "tell the world", as he put it about the "The 400th Anniversary of the Oldest Masonic Records in the World" which was first published by the late Brother R.E. Wallace-James P.M., Lodge St John Kilwinning, No 57.

For anyone who's interested, I'd recommend visiting that website you will not be disappointed!

The Oldest Masonic Records in the World is the minute book of Lodge Aitcheson's Haven and, interestingly, recorded in those minutes at the bottom of page 4, January 9, 1598, a Robert Widderspone was maid fellow of Craft and selected John Pedden as an intender: an intender is an old Scottish term for a mentor. A descendent of Brother John Pedden is Brother Patrick Pedden P.M. of Waynedale Lodge 539, Fort Wayne Indiana, USA, whose family all came from Scotland.

Obviously, the connection between the Craft in Indiana to Scotland, and Aitcheson's Haven in particular is very strong. So, the idea of giving this lecture in true Scottish style and making a short film of it is to record and publish forever the story of the minutes.

I'm eternally grateful to Brother McClelland for the opportunity to produce this short lecture and documentary. Also, to Brother Steve Robertson PM of Lodge Ubique 1192, here in Dundee, for doing his Cecil B de Mille impersonation in supplying the equipment and directing the recording.

I'd like to thank the Provincial Grand Master of the Province of Forfarshire for breaking into their busy schedule to allow his Office Bearers to be here and support this venture. And, also to the many Brethren who have also attended, I thank you for your support.

Also, I'd like to thank the Right Worshipful Master, Brother Richard Fenwick, the Past Masters, Office Bearers and Brethren of my Mother Lodge, Lodge Albert Lochee #448, on the role of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, for allowing me to use one of their Regular Meeting evenings to produce this talk.

Of course, it wouldn't be very Scottish without a wee bit of tartan and a piper, and we have one of the best in Brother Bruce Erskine, Past Master, of Lodge Albert Lochee.

I do hope we will all enjoy what we have in store!



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The 400th Anniversary of the Oldest Masonic Records in the World.

[3]

The Grand Lodge of Scotland is custodian of the oldest Lodge records in the world being those of Aitchison's Haven. The first entry in the Minute Books of that Lodge is dated 9th January 1598.

Prior to 1602 the Scottish New Year began on 25th March. By modern reckoning, therefore, the anniversary will place on the 9th January 1999. It must be said immediately that this Lodge no longer exists. The oldest records of a Lodge which is in existence still are those belonging to The Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel), No.1. The existing minutes of that Lodge commence on 31st July 1599.

(THE BOOK OF THE LODGE OF AITCHISON'S HAVEN, 1598-1764 By THE LATE BROTHER R. E. WALLACE-JAMES, P. M.

Lodge St John Kilwinning, No. 57)

From 1852, when the Lodge became dormant, the Minute Book was in the possession of the descendants of one of the last members of the Lodge. It was put up for sale by auction in July 1980 and purchased by the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

Aitchison's Haven would be searched for in vain in any modern map, and even locally the name is all but unknown. It lay to the east of Musselburgh between Levenhall and the little harbour of Morrison's Haven in the County of Midlothian. [4]

It had its origin from a Charter of King James V dated 1526 and, in all probability, the Lodge would date from about that time. By this Charter the Monks of Newbattle were authorised to form a harbour within the lands then belonging to them, for the purpose of shipping the coal won, even at that early period, from the extensive coalfields of the Barony of Prestongrange. The harbour was first called the Millhaven and it is referred to under this name in the earlier Minutes. The name was afterwards changed to that of Aitchison's Haven.

Of the actual foundation of the Lodge, however, we have no trace in the Minute Book.

The Minute Book at Grand Lodge consists of some seventy-five written pages, bound, (although the pages are now loose) in sheepskin, and measures about 15 by 5¾ inches. The edges of the leaves are more or less tattered, as might naturally be expected, and though in one or two places a few words are illegible the writing is in good condition and, from its archaic appearance, there can be no doubt of the genuineness of the manuscript being, as it purports to be, the Minute Book of the old Lodge of Aitchison's Haven.

The volume is designated as

[5a] "The Buik of the Actis and Ordinans of the Nobile Maisteris and fellows of Craft of the Ludg of Aitchison's heavine,"

and contains a

[5b] "catalogue of the names of the fellows of Craft that ar presently in the Zeir of God 1598."
"

The five earliest Minutes ante-date the famous Minute of "Ultimo Julij 1599' of the Lodge of Edinburgh (Mary's Chapel), No. 1.



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Like its famous compeer, the chronological sequence of the Minutes leaves much to be desired, the same page in many instances containing Minutes widely separated in date for instance, following the Minute of 2nd January 1600, on the same page, appear Minutes of 27th December 1669 and 27th December 1670. No doubt the clerk at that time, finding a blank half page, economically utilised the space by writing these Minutes there, and took credit to himself for so doing.

The very first Minute is particularly interesting from the fact that it contains the names of three signatories to the first of the, so-called, St Clair Charters, who signed as representing the Lodge of Aitchison's Haven namely: George Aitoun, John Fender and Thomas Petticruif. Remember these "charters" are simply letters as opposed to actual charters!

Brother D. Murray Lyon in his transcript of the St Clair Charter, or rather we should perhaps say in copying the earlier transcript as found in Laurie's History of Freemasonry, gives the name of one of the signatories as "Jo Fwsetter".

This is clearly a mistake for "John Fender" as may be seen by a reference to the Charter itself as well as to the fact being corroborated by the Minute above referred to. The Minutes of the Lodge show that this John Fender was at that date the Warden of the Lodge.

Like all other old Scottish Trade Incorporations, the Lodge was at first ruled and governed by a Warden and a Deacon with a Clerk to attend to the clerical work, an Office for which it was sometimes a little difficult to find an occupant. Later the relative position of the two principal office-bearers was reversed, the senior office-bearer being the Deacon with the Warden as second in command.

It is not until the year 1825, in a subsequent Minute Book, that we first find the senior office-bearer designated as "Master". By the fourth decade of the eighteenth century we have [6] Managers, Key-keepers and other office-bearers, including the Keeper of the Mortcloth, added to the executive of the Lodge.

[7] In the early days of the seventeenth century it was unusual in many country places to bury the dead in coffins, and the corpse on its way to the grave was covered with a pall (of black velvet or other material) which belonged usually to the Kirk Session of the Parish, though many Societies possessed their own.

The cloth was hired out for the use of the parishioners or members of the societies and this was a source of considerable income to the owners of it, the hire varying according to whether the deceased was a member of the craft or a stranger.

The meetings of the Lodge were held at various places in the neighbourhood [8] Musselburgh, Fisherrow, Inveresk Kirk, Prestonpans and Dalkeith - as well as at the home base, Aitchison's Haven. For many years, the meeting place was Prestonpans or Musselburgh. As a rule, there was only one meeting in each year, upon St John's Day, 27th December, but we have several Minutes of incidental meetings. Some of these were meetings of "a pairt of the companie", or of the Committee, and at many of them we find that members were admitted to the craft.

When, however, members were admitted at such meetings we usually find that at a subsequent regular meeting these brethren were "re-entered and passed" - for instance, under date [9] 27th Decr: 1734 "Re-entered one Adam Ritchardson entered at Dalkeith June the 24th day 1734." There seems to have been nothing irregular in such a method of entering members and from other sources we know that it was a very general custom throughout Scotland at that time.



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Continually we have instances in the Minutes of brethren adhibiting their Mason's Marks or of such marks being engrossed, while we are told that the brother had [10] "payit his cess for his buking" or "hes payit his Buiking silver" or "payit for his mark". (**"cess" being an old word for tax or charge**).

The earliest recorded mark appears under the date 28th Dec. 1603. These marks were chosen by, or assigned to, the members of the Company when they were entered apprentices and did not constitute, as we now know it, a separate degree.

At this early date there is no trace of anything but one degree, for although there are repeated references in the Minutes to [11a] prentices, fellows of Craft and maisteris, all these grades of operative workmen were present not only when members were entered, but also when prentices were admitted as fellows of craft. The terms "fellow craft" and "maister" were simply distinctions in an operative sense implying that the apprentice had served the requisite time and had thus completed his Indenture. It did not refer to any degree in a speculative meaning of the term as we now use it.

At the opening of the minutes we find that the fee payable by an intrant was twenty shillings and, in addition, he had to supply gloves to every master present. In the case of the entry of a freeman's son the fee was modified to ten shillings, though the gloves were in such a case also demanded. Of course, it must be kept in mind that the money was Scots, that is only one twelfth of its sterling equivalent, consequently twenty shillings equalled only one shilling and eight pence, but here again we must consider the relative purchasing power of these sums then and now before we can make any satisfactory comparison.

As to the material and price of the gloves the Minutes leave us entirely in the dark and we have only contemporary records available if we would proceed with our investigations in this line. We learn, however, from the Minutes of the Lodge of Melrose, that in 1695 the price of gloves presented by prentices there was to be four shillings, while fellow crafts had to give gloves of the value of five shillings per pair.

From the Minutes we find that apprentices on being admitted chose two brethren as tutors or instructors [11b] "tendars" or "intenders" as we find them repeatedly called. We may call them "mentors" these days! In the earlier pages there are many instances of the terms of service of apprentices being recorded, with the names of their masters and their cautioners:

for instance: [12] "xxvii day of Decr: 1612 Ye quhilk day befoir ye said Ludg Johne Aytoun soun to Wm. Aytoun and hes bund him self to his said father ye space of vii zeiris and ane zeir swa [illegible] and [illegible] to serve his mother [illegible] te said space gif god take his father. "

"the 27th day of December 1612, on which day before the said Lodge, Johne Aytoun, son to Wm. Aytoun, has bound himself to his father for a term of 7 years, and one year (illegible) and (illegible), to serve his mother (illegible) for the said term if God take his father"

Again under 3rd Jan. 1614, [13] "befor ye said Ludge Ninian Munguinerie son to Ninian Mungumerie hes bund himself to [illegible] ye space of nyne zeiris and shall serve his father and mother undoring ye said space."

"the said Lodge, Ninian Munguinerie, son to Ninian Mungunerie, has bound himself to (illegible) for a term of 9 years and shall serve his father and mother during the said term"



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And under the same date as the last, [14] "The quhilk day befoir ye said Ludg Johne Petticruif soun to Hendrie Petticruif and hes bund himself to his said father ye space of aucht zeiris and shall his mother during his prentischip gif his father sall inlek."

"on which day before the said Lodge, John Petticuif, son to Henri Petticruif, has bound himself to his said father for the term of 8 years and shall (serve) his mother if his father shall die"

From these entries we learn that the term of the apprenticeship varies, and also, the fact that in the event of the decease of the master to whom he was bound, his widow, or in the cases above quoted the apprentice's mother, was to have right to his services until the termination of the indenture. From this it is clearly evident that the Lodge at this time whatever it may have become later, was of a strictly operative character.

We do not say that its members were drawn exclusively from the operative class, though undoubtedly it was the case with the large majority, but we have instances of others.

For example, in 1672 [15] "Alexr: Seaton brother germane to the Right Honorabill Earll of Winton entered prenteis & fellow of Craft."

"Alexander Seaton, full brother of the Right Honourable Earl of Winton, entered apprentice and fellow of craft"

And again in 1693 [16] "Master Robert Cubie student and [illegible] to be a preacher of the Gospell hath made entered prentise & fellow of Craft and hath payd his booking silver."

"Master Robert Cubie student and (illegible) to be a preacher of the Gospel, (a minister I presume?), was made an entered apprentice and fellow of craft and has paid his entrance fee"

The fee in this case, it is interesting to note, was paid.

Robert Cubie was not admitted gratis as became the custom later, at least in Scotland, when a clergyman was admitted a member of the order.

The Earl of Winton just mentioned was George, the fifth Earl, who was taken prisoner at the Battle of Preston and was sentenced to death in 1716.

However, he managed to escape from the Tower of London and proceeded to Rome where he died in 1749.

Among the many interesting manuscripts preserved in the archives of the Grand Lodge of Scotland are the Minutes of a Lodge of Scottish Freemasons existing in Rome in the years 1735, 1736 and 1737, from which we find that the Earl of Winton was himself admitted a Mason under the name (which he assumed on his attainder) of George Seaton Winton at a meeting held at Joseppe's, in the Corso, Rome, on 16th August 1735.

(For anyone interested in this piece of history, see Hughan's, The Jacobite Lodge at Rome. 1735-37, published by the Lodge of Research, Leicester. 1910.)

Another item of interest is that in this Minute Book we have a copy of the Schaw Statutes engrossed. These [17] "Statutis and Ordinanceis to be obserwitte within this realme sett doun be William Schaw, Maister of the said Craft with the consent of the maisteris efter specifit"

"the Stautes and Ordinanceis to be observed within this realm as set down by William Schaw, Master of the said Craft, with the consent of the afterwards specified Masters"



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were drawn up by William Schaw in the year 1598 and a copy was sent to all the Lodges for their guidance. William Schaw was born in 1550 and was in the year 1584 appointed "Maister of Wark" by King James VI.

He held the appointment until his death in 1602. The copy in this Minute Book differs very little from that found in other Minute Books, and the differences may all be attributed to errors of the copyist. We find in these Minutes one or two cases of breach of these "Statutis and Ordinanceis" recorded, and of fines imposed in consequence thereof - as for example,

[18] "upon the xx day of November the Zeir of God 1599 the brither bein convenitt and find that Wm. Miler haid offendit or: actis qr: for he was convictit in xl lib conform to ye general actis and bindis him self never to haif ane prentice heirefter w'out the consent of the Maister, of the Ludg of Aitchisons haven."

"on the 20th day of November in the year of God, 1599, the brethren having been convened, and find that William Miller had (committed) and offence or act, for which he was convicted, now conforms to those general acts and binds himself never to take an apprentice without the consent of the Master of the Lodge of Aitcheson's Haven"

And again under date **[19]** "the vii day of Januarie the zeir of God 1600.

.. and fund Thomas [illegible] to haif ane cowan in his Companie... qr for it was ordinit yt: he should pay X lib for his offense."

"the 7th day of January in the year of God 1600.... And found Thomas [illegible] to have a cowan in his company.... And it was ordered that he should pay 10 pounds for his offence"

It is not my intention to write a complete transcript of the Minute Book but to give a copy of some of the earlier and more interesting Minutes.

Before reverting to the Minutes, themselves we might point out that the earliest Minute is dated 9th January 1598 and the latest in 1764, covering a period of over 160 years.

The subsequent Minute Book, the one to which Brother D. Murray Lyon refers, is said to date from 1636. This statement requires some slight explanation. It is true that the Book commences with a copy of the Falkland Statutes which are dated the 26th day of October 1636, together with a copy of the Schaw Statutes of 1599, the Old Charges of date 1666, and various other writings to which Brother Murray Lyon makes reference in his History of Freemasonry, but the regular Minutes of the Lodge only begin from the year 1769 and extend to December 1852, when the Lodge become dormant and was subsequently declared extinct.

There is thus no overlapping of Minutes in the two books as might at first be supposed. The older Book (that is, the now purchased one) is exclusively a Minute Book, while the Book to which Brother Murray Lyon refers has originally been used at one end as a Register in which are recorded various Statutes and Ordinances affecting Freemasonry, together with the Lodge finances, including bills due to the Lodge, loans granted by the Lodge, annual reports as to the contents of the box, and in general accounts and financial matters. At the other end of the Book, on turning it upside down, the regular Minutes from 1769 are found.

I'm not about to deal with all the minutes of the Lodge as there is simply too much to be covered in a presentation such as this. But there are a few entries worthy of mention and I shall now highlight the following in chronological order.

1598 **[20]**



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The IX day of Januerie the Zeir of God upon ye quhilk day Robert Widderspone was maid fellow of Craft in ye presens of Wilzam Aytone Elder, Johne Fender being Warden, Johne Pedden Thomas Pettencrief John Crafurd George Aytone Wilzame Aytone younger Hendrie Petticrief ief all fellowis of Craft upon ye quhilk day he chois George Aytone Johne Pedden to be his intenders and instructouris and also ye said Robert hes payit his xx sh. and his gluffiis to everie Maister as efferis.

The 9th day of January, the year of God (being 1598) on which day Robert Widderspone was made a fellow of craft in the presence of William Aytone Sr, Johne Fender, being Warden, Johne Pedden, Thomas Pettencrief, John Crafurd, George Aytone, William Aytone Jr, Henry Petticrief, being all fellows of Craft and on which day he chose George Aytone and Johne Pedden to be his intenders and instructors and also the said Robert has paid his 20 shillings and his gloves to every Master.

Another interesting entry:

[21] Upon ye XX day of December The quhilk day the dewisioun of ye ludg was maid betwixt Milhaven and Newbottle.

On the 20th day of December on which day a division of the Lodge was made between Millhave and Newbottle.

What is to be understood by this Minute? Was it that a new Lodge was formed at Newbottle - of which, however, there is no record in Grand Lodge archives - or was it simply a division to facilitate the entry of brethren at the latter place? Newbottle or Newbattle as it is now called, being about five miles distant from Aitchison's Haven.

Here is an interesting entry concerning the fining of Brethren:

[22] Ye brether of ye Loge of Acheson hevin convenit and hes schosin Johne Petticrowe warden and Thomas Aytoun deikin for yis zeir and James Petticrowe ye keie and Hendrie Peticrufe ye [illegible, but presumed to be "Mortcloth"] The hole brethrine of the Lodge is content yat whosoevir is absent at anie meting when the brethrine of ye Lodg is convenit shall be put in ane penaltie of ane Merk xiii sh and bot anye excuse.

The brethren of the Lodge of Aitchison's Haven having been convened, and have chosen, Johne Petticrowe (to be) warden, and Thomas Aytoun, deacon, for this year James Petticrowe, treasurer, and Henry Peticrufe the (illegible, but presumed to be Mortcloth). The brethren of the Lodge agree that whosoever is absent at a meeting when the Lodge has been convened shall be fined one Merk or 13 shillings regardless of the reason.

I wonder how that would work today? Fining office bearers for not turning up to meetings!

This entry refers to the purchase of a new Mortcloth:

[23] Upon the 7 day of July 1642 the wholle Maisters of the Lodge of Achesoun haven conveyind and did buy ane Morcloathe extending to two hundred lib Scots money and the afterwritten of the said maisters did contribute willingly for the good of the box and hes insert thair names heir in order,

On the 7th day of July 1642 all of the Masters of the Lodge convened and bought a Mortcloth extending to 200 pounds Scots money and the underwritten Master willingly contributed for the good of the box, and their name are listed below:



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[24] Thomas Aytoun 30sh, Adam Johnstoun 20sh, James Lithgow 22, Adam Calderwood 27, Thomas Petticruff 2 lb 1 4 sh, Matho Widderspon 2lb 4sh, David Low 2lb 2sh, James Petticruff 3lb, Patrick Widerspoon 3lb, Johne Hislope 27sh, Wm. Lithgow 2lb 14sh, John Pillans 3lb, John Petticruff 3lb, James Dickson 12sh, John Thomsoun 2lb 10sh, John Anderson 12sh, James Cuthbertsoun 12sh, James Steine 2lb 16sh, Wm. Bishop 22sh.

We can see from this that, what may seem as strange item of Lodge paraphernalia to us today, it was considered important enough to the Masters of the Lodge back in 1646 that they dipped into their own pockets to help pay for it.

Interestingly, here there may be an indication of some Ritual:

[25] Item it is inactit by the Master of the said Lodge upon the 28th day of December in the zeire 1646 at Invereske yat if any copies shall be found with any person keipes the said booke after this tyme be sall pay the sourn of Fourtie pounds scots money and the said person to be depryed of all Societe within the said compane.

Item: It is decreed by the Master of the Lodge on the 28th day of December in the year 1646 at Inveresk that if any copies shall be found on any person who has kept the said book after the (specified) time, he shall pay the sum of 40 pounds scots money and the said person will be derived of all (association) with the Society in the Company, (which is taken to mean expelled).

So, to what does this refer? Surely not to a Ritual! The only other alternative that occurs is that it may be to copies of the Old Charges, one of which is to be found in the subsequent Minute Book preserved in the archives of Grand Lodge.

[26] Upon the 27 day of December 1661 the whole Company being convenid they has inacted an Act to be kept and observed by all the Masonis of the sid Lodg that no enterit prentes shall be enterit bot upon Sanct Johnis day under the penultay of fourtie Scots munay Lykeways that no fellow of Craft be admitted under the pane of 3 pund Scots munay.

On the 27th day of December 1661 the whole Company being convened, have created an Act to be kept and observed by all the Masons of the said Lodge that no Entered Apprentices be entered on St John's Day, under the penalty of 40 pounds Scots money. Likewise, that no Fellow of Craft be admitted under the pane of 3 pounds Scots money.

So essentially it was enacted that no degrees would be worked at their AGM: St John the Evangelist's day.

End

[27]

Brethren that now concludes this presentation of the World's Oldest Records in the form of the Minutes of Lodge Aitchison's Haven from 1598 and I hope it has given you some information concerning the working of a stonemason's Lodge as well as raising a few questions in your own minds, which I hope you will pursue.

I hope you have found it interesting and I thank you once again for taking part in the filming of the talk. Thank you, Brethren!

Peter Taylor 2018

