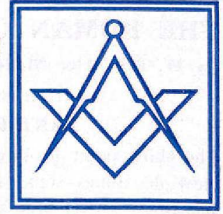


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The Lodge-room, Clyde Central Otago

THE MASONIC HALL, CLYDE, CENTRAL OTAGO

By M. S. Reid, M.M., Lodge Dunstan, No. 103

(Photograph by Robert Kilgour, Alexandra)

The masonic lodge building, in the main street of the small Central Otago town of Clyde, is well-known to visitors to the district. Built of local stone, with four massive Corinthian pillars supporting the portico and with windows and main door of Egyptian design, it stands as a tribute to the skills of the designers and the faithful workmanship of the builders.

Lodge Dunstan was formed in 1867 under a Charter from the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The Charter, which still hangs on the wall of the lodge-room, was signed by the R.W. Grand Master of Scotland, John Whyte Melville, and gave the Lodge the number 470 (SC). The first lodge meetings were held in the local school but after the new Town Hall, the foundation stone of which had been laid by the lodge, was opened on 21 October 1869, the lodge commenced an association with the Town Hall which continued until the brethren acquired their own premises in 1919.

The Town Hall was consecrated for masonic purposes at a special meeting which followed the public opening ceremony on 21 October 1869. At that meeting R.W. Bro. Vincent Pyke delivered an address which was later published in full in the local paper, the Dunstan Times. It is reprinted below.

During the period between the passing of the pick and shovel gold-miners and the start of the dredging boom, Lodge Dunstan fell upon lean times and was virtually in recess between 1878 and 1895. On 3 September 1895 the Grand Lodge of New Zealand granted a Charter to Lodge Duristan and allotted the number 103 on the Register. The re-constituted lodge continued to meet in the Town Hall but, in 1919, purchased a building next to the Commercial Hotel which served as the lodge-room until 1956. In 1954 the old Town Hall, which had been superseded by the new War Memorial Community Centre, was purchased by the Lodge and after two years of spare-time renovation work by a devoted band of speculative-turned-operative brethren, the old Town Hall became, once again, the permanent home of Lodge Dunstan, No. 103.

Lodge Dunstan is typical of many small country lodges: not a very large membership; about eighty, with at least half of those paying half dues because they live in other parts of the country. There must be many Freemasons throughout New Zealand who had their first introduction to the Craft in a lodge similar to Lodge Dunstan and who have never found, in the larger city lodges, that spirit of true brotherhood they found in their mother lodge in that small country town.

The brethren of Lodge Dunstan are conscious of their historical heritage and have preserved relics of the past in the shape of the apron worn by R.W. Bro. Vincent Pyke and the trowel used by him when laying the foundation stone of the lodge building on 13 April 1869. Also to be seen in the lodge-room is a beautifully engrossed copy of the address given by R.W. Vincent Pyke on the occasion of the consecration of the building in 1869. The writer of these notes had the honour of delivering the same address when the building was re-opened as a masonic hall on 16 February 1956.

AN ADDRESS GIVEN BY RIGHT WORSHIPFUL BROTHER VINCENT PYKE, PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER OF OTAGO (S.C.) ON THE OCCASION OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE TOWN HALL, CLYDE, AS A MASONIC TEMPLE, 21 OCTOBER 1869.

Brethren,

The ceremonies we have performed this evening are not unmeaning rites nor the amusing pageants of an idle hour, but have a solemn and instructive import. Suffer me to point out to you, and to impress upon your minds, the ennobling sentiments they are so well adapted to convey.

This hall, designed and built by Wisdom, supported by Strength and adorned by Beauty, we are first to consecrate in the name of the great Jehovah, which teaches us in all our works, begun and finished, to acknowledge, adore and magnify Him. It reminds us, in His fear, to enter the door of the Lodge, to put our trust in Him while passing its trials and to hope in Him for the reward of its labours.

Let, then, its altar be devoted to His service and its walls resound with His praise. May the eye which see'th in secret, witness here the sincere and unaffected piety which withdraws from the engagement of the world to silence and privacy, that it may be exercised with less interruption and less ostentation.

Our march round the Lodge reminds us of the travels of human life in which Freemasonry is an enlightened, a safe and a pleasant path. Its tessellated pavement of mosaic work intimates -to us the chequered diversity and uncertainty of human affairs. Our step is time: our progression, eternity.

Following our ancient constitutions, with mystic rites we dedicate this hall to the honour of Freemasonry. Our best attachments are due to the Craft. In its prosperity we find our joy and in paying it honour, we honour ourselves. But its worth transcends our eoniunis and its glory will outsound our praise.

Brethren, it is our pride that we have our names on the records of Freemasonry. May it be our ambition that they should shed a lustre on the immortal page.

This hall is also dedicated to Virtue. This worthy appropriation will always be duly regarded while the moral duties, which our sublime lectures inculcate with an affecting and impressive pertinency, are cherished in our hearts and illustrated in our lives.

As Freemasonry aims to enlighten the spirit of philanthropy and promote the cause of charity, so we dedicate this hall to Universal Benevolence, in the assurance that every Brother will dedicate his affections and his abilities to the same generous purpose. That, while he displays a warm and cordial affection to those who are of the Fraternity, he will extend his benevolent regards and good wishes to the whole family of mankind.

Such, my Brethren, is the significant meaning of the solemn rites we have just performed, for such are the peculiar duties of every Lodge. I need not enlarge on them now, nor show how- they diverge as rays from a centre, to enlighten, to improve and to cheer the whole circle of life. Their import and their application are familiar to you all. In their knowledge and their exercise may you fulfill the high purposes of the Masonic institution.

How many pleasing considerations, my Brethren, attend the present interview. While in almost every other association of men political animosities, contentions and wars interrupt the progress of humanity and the cause of benevolence, it is our distinguished privilege to dwell together in peace and to engage in plans to perfect individual and social happiness. While in many other nations our Order is viewed by politicians with suspicion and by the ignorant with apprehension, in our country its members are too much respected to make it the object of jealousy and mistrust. Our private assemblies are unmolested and our public celebrations attract a more general approbation of the Craft. Indeed, its importance, its credit and, we trust, its usefulness are raising to a height unknown in any former age.

We offer our best congratulations to the officers and members of this Lodge. We commend their zeal and hope that it will meet with the most ample recompense. May their Lodge be a happy resort of Piety, Virtue and Benevolence. May it be protected from accident and long remain a monument of their attachment to Freemasonry. May it continue to flourish! May their union be strengthened and may their happiness abound!

And when they, and we all, shall be removed from the labours of the earthly Lodge, may we be admitted to the Brotherhood of the Perfect, in the building of God, the Hall not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens.
