

## The Lodge of Dunfermline, No.26

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A Freemason will find in the study of his craft-history the fascinating process of a group of workers who began, for all practical purposes, with the Crusaders and who freed themselves to some extent from the established churchmen. They developed ideas which attracted the rich and powerful and expressed a form of democracy which may be regarded as ideal, for its ideas are spiritual.

All this can be found in the history of the Lodge of Dunfermline, St John, No. 26. The contracts, charters and minute books were, if not perfectly preserved, certainly illuminating as are the hundreds of notes, docketts, bills and receipts which deserve better preservation than the more solid records. These reveal so much more, showing that the Lodge of Dunfermline has a unique Scottish treasury in its records.

A Freemason is always interested in the beginnings of his Mother Lodge and the heritage of tradition and practice associated with it. The Lodge of Dunfermline is a Lodge which can illustrate the history of the Craft better than most for the City of Dunfermline is one of the ancient capitals of Scotland and the site of one of the most beautiful of stone buildings, Dunfermline Abbey. As we investigate the history of this establishment we are also confronted with the history of the Craft.

The first church was a small rectangular building in the fifth century, of which the stone foundation still exists. It is possible that, like Malcolm Canmore's tower in Pittencrieff Glen nearby, the walls and roof were made of wood and turf.

The second church in Dunfermline, which according to tradition was erected in 1072 by Malcolm Canmore for his Queen Margaret, was about three times the size of the first. The master mason was a Saxon named Aelbric who came from the Benedictine monastery and cathedral at Canterbury. Local tradition has it that the quondam village of Masterton near Dunfermline was the residence of the masons who built the church.

The Benedictine tradition was continued by their son, David I (the "sair sanct for the croon"), who founded the present abbey in 1128 and had it dedicated three years before his death in 1150. In a building of this size many masons must have been employed but no record of this remains as this was an illiterate age. Some light, however, may be thrown on the nature of the Craft by discussing briefly some of the royal funerary monuments. When the conventional church was finished in 1250, it was resolved to mark the place by transferring the remains of St Margaret (she was canonised by the Pope at that time) to the sepulchre (almost in the style of a chantry) specially prepared for her at the east end of the church, the foundation of which is still visible.

By the beginning of the next century we find many references to royal tombs. In 1329 a marble memorial was ordered from Paris by King Robert the Bruce while he was still alive, and a payment is recorded to the mason who erected it. In 1368 a sum of &oeil;10 Scots was paid to the exchequer for two stones for the tomb of another Queen

Margaret, the second wife of David II. For David's own tomb we learn that William Guppill and Andrew Paynton were given protection to go overseas for a tombstone, while another passport was issued to John de Walsaley and Geoffrey, masons, with three mates. In 1373, Andrew Paynton, William Clark and John O' Edinboro had permission to go through England to Flanders with four mates for certain black stones for this same tomb. At this time too, in 1377 to be exact, payment was made to Nicholas, a master mason, for making and sculpturing a tomb for Robert III, and again Nicholas gets &oeil;20 for his work the year before. This Nicholas, a Scot, is designated as of Hane (de Hana), and is described as the King's Mason or the King's Macer. (I am of the opinion that the word "macer" has a forgotten Masonic connection as it is derived from the Latin word "mateola", a little wooden mallet and it may have been a badge of office at that time.)

This Nicholas de Hana may have had his part in the recognition of the lodge of masons by John, Abbot in 1395, who confirmed also to the guild brethren the whole rights and privileges of a free merchant guildry and the houses of old belonging to that fraternity

(the village of Masterton). This was later ratified by George Dury, perpetual commendator of the monastery, on 2nd August 1549 (Chalmers History of Dunfermline Vol.1, p.388). On the next page, writing of the incorporated trades-smiths, weavers, masons, wrights, tailors, bakers, shoemakers and fleshers - he states that they each have a separate charter named as a gift, or a seal of cause, granted by the magistrates and town council by authority of the crown. To some extent this is confirmed by the Blue Blanket of Dunfermline, a huge flag which carries the coloured emblems of the crafts and dates from about this time, circa 1400.

The same author in the same book (p.496) quotes among the expenses of the funeral of King Robert the Bruce, to the mason of the tomb for his wages and a gratuity given to him by the keeper, by sure account held with Sir Walter of Twynham, &oeil;38-12s. And to Richard Barber in the preceding year for the same tomb, &oeil;134-8p. And to the workman of the tomb for freight of the said tomb and his expenses from Paris to Bruges and in England and elsewhere to Dunfermline, &oeil;12-10s. (Clerk of liberance 1329).

In 1889 the Earl of Elgin gifted the memorial brass to cover the tomb of Bruce. The tomb, which had been created to contain the re-buried body in 1818, was lined with Egyptian marble and the living Masters of the Lodges of Dunfermline cut their marks on the stone.

But the Craft was not only occupied in royal tombs: in 1303 when Edward I of England occupied Dunfermline, having destroyed every house save the Abbey, he built a house "extra magnam portam abbaciae de Dunfermline", i.e. outside the great door of the Abbey of Dunfermline

The story of the Craft is continued in Dunfermline visibly with the tomb of Sir William Schaw, 1550-1602, master of works to James VI. He succeeded in 22nd December 1583 another local worthy, a scion of both the royal family and the Bruce family, Sir Robert Drummond of Carnock. Sir William Schaw in 1590 received &oeil;400 "for reparation of the hous of Dunfermline befoir the Queens Majesties passing thairto". Schaw died in April 1602 and his tomb, near the Abbey's west door, was erected by the queen, whose chamberlain he was. It carries his own mark which he is said to have carved himself in his lifetime.

There should be no controversy over the authenticity of the Schaw Statutes save to comment that in his lifetime Edinburgh was the growing capital of Scotland and Dunfermline was in decline, and no

doubt his opinions were coloured by that fact. Suffice to say that in 1598, Warden Thomas Robertson, of the Ludge of Dunfermling and St Andros, was one of the commissioners who confirmed the Schaw Statutes.

Strangely enough, and it may be due to the Reformation in Scotland, there are few records of the Craft in the seventeenth century. Three, however, belong to the Lodge of Dunfermline and have survived, although they are difficult to read, two being made of vellum and the third a minute book. They have a common date although of different years, the first is St John's Day 1673 and the second 1688. The minute book starts with the year 1698. The two made of vellum are concerned in the first place with the attendance at the annual meeting and in the second that, "none of us shall enter or pass either fellow craft or apprentice without consent of the deacon or warden of the Lodge of Dunfermline and that each of us shall be comptable and pay for each entered or passed to the Lodge of Dunfermline six pounds".

One of the documents is a declaration for visitors and was used in the early part of the nineteenth century. It states: "I solemnly swear by god, and I shall answer to god at the great day of judgement that I was duly entered an apprentice mason within the lodge, adhibited to my subscription, and I further solemnly swear that I shall never reveal any of the secrets of masonry which I may see or hear in consequence of being admitted a visiting brother in this lodge of St Johns Dunfermline to a true brother, so help me god. " The first or topmost signatures are witnessed by the then current wardens.

The records proper start from the year 1697 when it is minuted that one John Bachop was elected to be deacon. The second minute book dates from 1713 and immediately poses a question: Where did the Lodge meet? One can guess that to begin with the Lodge met in the Abbey of Dunfermline and continued to meet there for some time, even to the extent that after the Reformation there were pews (boxes or lofts) reserved for the Craft.

It may amuse or horrify you to know that until the present church was built in 1818 there were no pews or seating for women. They had to stand or lean or, like the celebrated Jenny Geddes, bring their milking stools to church.

The next place which was probably the meeting place of the Lodge was the town house, where the other crafts had their annual meetings on their appropriate saint's day. This may explain the few vague references to meeting at the West End of B ridge Street. There are accounts for permission to use the house of "William Flockhart, wright in Dunfermline", and also "Andrew Symson, clerk of Dunfermline". But on St John's Day 1732, the Lodge decided to have its own premises and on 19th March 1733 bought a ruinous tenement on the south side of the Maygeat for two hundred and five pounds Scots.

The new building contained houses and shops which brought in some income to the Lodge, the records of which are not as interesting as the bills for monies spent, even in alterations to the new building. An estimate makes one wonder what it may have looked like, for one item reads, "four round windows -&oeil;6-0-0".. The building was insured and an insurance policy shows that the building was insured against fire for &oeil;150 and for &oeil;50 for contents on payment of "Four shillings for one years insurance in the Sun Fire Office, London."

These old bills are fascinating. There is a bill for &oeil;4-1 80 dated 20th December 1796 which reads, "To the Masters Chair including the foot stool and staining &oeil;2-2-0. To the Wardens Chairs 28/- each,

&ouml;2-16-O." (Perhaps these were the wardens' chairs which, on 28th August 1912, were given to Lodge Elgin and Bruce. Lodge St John had been their sponsors.) Certainly a hundred years before there is a bill for "making a carpet and a pillow for the Right Worshipful Masters Chair, 3/6d." Another bill reads, "Nov. 29th 1817, for one stone candle and mould, 14/10d."; also an intriguing item of 3rd December 1813, a bill from a local clock maker, "to mending a pair compass, 1/-."

The Lodge continued in these buildings until November 1920, when a new Lodge was built in Priory Lane. All went well until the latter part of 1979 when the Lodge found itself in financial difficulties, owing to the levy of very high rates; added to this was the increased cost of heating and lighting. In all of its long history the Lodge has never been a wealthy one, indeed the old records show that at one time or another various sums of money were borrowed to pay debts or make good repairs to the Lodge buildings. And so in 1980 the Temple in Priory Lane was closed, and the Lodge moved to Rosyth where, by kind permission of the Brethren of Lodge St Margaret's Hope, No. 1184, the Brethren of Lodge St John were given leave to hold their meetings in the Masonic Temple, Admiralty Road, Rosyth. Since then the well-being of the Lodge has greatly improved.

No short account of the Lodge of Dunfermline would be complete without some reference to the grand Masonic processions that took place on the evening of St John. Alexander Stewart, in his *Reminiscences of Dunfermline*, writes: "The St Johns and Union masonic lodges used to fraternise together as evening fell on St John's Day in December, when they paid a friendly visit to each other. When the brethren emerged from their lodge everyone held in his hand a lighted flambeau or torch. The torches were then consigned to the care of some of the numerous young lads who were waiting at the door to receive them. The masons then formed themselves in procession, two abreast, walking in the centre while the torch-bearers walked on either side of them. What with the merry music of the bands, the streaming of flags and banners, and the gilded insignia of the brotherhood borne along by the more prominent members of that ancient guild, it was a sight to be remembered. The spectacle was especially imposing as the procession marched along the High Street. The streets were densely crowded, thousands came from far and near to see it. Afterwards they adjourned to their lodges where, amidst much solemnity and afterwards much joviality, they spent the night." Before this great annual festival the Brethren would sometimes vie with each other as to who would have the handsomest silk sashes and aprons for St John's night. Many of them purchased their sashes and aprons in Edinburgh, but others were content to have home-manufactured ones, the production of fair and loving hands, and many were regarded as excellent specimens of taste and fine needlework. The Lodge still retains one of these home-manufactured aprons. Very little else remains except a bill of Messrs Ferrier & Waterston, Wax Chandlers, High Street, Edinburgh, dated 17th December 1819, for three dozen flambeau priced &ouml;1-16-O.

The Lodge in its long history has been responsible for sponsoring other Lodges in the area, indeed Lodge Torrie, No. 1141, in grateful thanks to the Brethren of St John's Lodge for assisting them to get a Charter from Grand Lodge adopted the colours of St John's Lodge, their then Mother Lodge. A minute dated Thursday, 19th January 1832, states that on that day a deputation went to the Green Tree Inn (Green Hotel), Kinross, at 11 a.m., to constitute and consecrate St Serf's Lodge, No. 327.

Another minute, dated 29th December 1766, deals with the Charter of the Lodge and states, "On which day the committee order the Depute Master to pay the secretary six shillings and eightpence sterling as

his fee due on St Johns Day last, as also to pay the officer ten shillings sterling as his fee due on St Johns Day for the year 1766, and likewise to pay the secretary three shillings and sixpence sterling as the price of one sheet large vellum whereon the new charter is wrote, and ten shillings and sixpence sterling for writing said charter. " This Charter is still in existence today and bears the date 1766; although not issued by Grand Lodge it is recognised by them and is borne into the Lodge on every meeting night. It may be that at one time the Lodge was in the practice of chartering other Lodges before the formation of Grand Lodge. A docket states that a member of the Lodge was given permission to go to Inverary to enlist others into the Lodge.

Charity, that virtue we profess to admire, was one of the practices of the Lodge. From the earliest records there are references in the minute books to sums of money being given to distressed Brethren or their widows. What is more illuminating than the sparse minutes are the docketts which have continued to exist in unsorted bundles of paper. Obviously the method of benevolence was that a poor travelling Mason would approach the wardens or master and be given a note to be given to the treasurer, who would assist the needy person and total his givings when he rendered his accounts. A look at these records from 1701 to the beginning of the last century illustrates what has been written.

In the minute of St John's Day 1701 we read of the payment of six pounds Scots to a poor Mason, no name is given and as the amount is the same as that for entering or passing one wonders if the story behind this entry is that of the son of a Brother's widow being admitted to the Craft to earn his living.

But a selection of the docketts makes interesting reading, viz.:

Dunfermline 1st Feb. 1792.

Sir, Please give the bearer Anthony Campbell belonging to St James Lodge, Newton of Air, one shilling and sixpence to assist him on his way home.

signed Jas Moodie.

To Mr John Eckford, Dunfermline

Kinross Sept 4th 1789.

This is to certifie that the berrer Jean Wheit is for sarton Robert Huttons widow that you need not dowt. Leikwayswe have no dowt but she is in need of suply as far as you can thinek proper to bestow: we thinck she is an object of charity, and this all from loving brethren.

David Hoggan, mason. James Brown, mason.

Dunfermline 28 Decr 1789.

The lodge order the treasurer to enquire into the circumstances of the above Jean White and to give what he thinks proper to her and the circumstances of the lodge can afford.

Bro. Ronaldson Mr.

(The Master of the Lodge at this time was John Ronald son of Birk Hall, an estate near Dunfermline and the second non-operative Mason to be Master - the first being Captain Robert Wellwood of Pitliver.)

There follows a series of notes which are interesting because they give references to other Lodges. Eighteen pence was the normal amount given- no small sum at that time as it probably has a present-day value of the same number of pounds.

4th Sept 1798 - A brother in need of Glasgow St Johns Operative Lodge.

29th Nov 1797-A brother in need of Lithgow Lodge.

27th Feb 1797-A brother in need of St Johns Lodge, Edinburgh.

Dunfermline February 1st 1798.

Mr Andrew Edey(Adie), (Lodge Treasurer).

Sir, pleas give the bearer, Alexander Louden, 2 shillings. He belongs to old Kilwinning

Lodge, a working mason 73 years of age and is travling home and fallen short of money. Robert Hutton D.M.

(The next two notes are stark reminders of the pain and poverty of the Napoleonic Wars.)

Dunfermline 1st Nov 1796.

Pay the bearers, Alex Watson and James Campbell five shillings sterling, two brothers in distress of having been long prisoners in France and wounded.

Jn. Wilson Mr.

3rd February 1798.

Please give the bearers, Alex Camble, James Smith, John Wilson, and John Brown. Camble belongs to St Johns Antigua, Smith and Wilson to Perth Lodge and Brown to Dundee Lodge, who have been in French prison for 2 years and 6 months and is on there way home, those all master massons. Give them four shillings sterling.

Robert Hutton D.M.

The financial statement of 1801 shows that eleven widows received ten shillings each. The year 1811 has a roll of twenty-two widows, nine of whom got half-a-crown and the rest five shillings.

In 1817 an item of the accounts is, "To travelling poor throughout the year, &oeelig;1-11-6d."