

Ross Masonic Club



Supporting Local Freemasons

The Craftsmen

Week Commencing 21st September 2020

Issue Number Twenty Five

Welcome to the twenty fifth edition of the Ross Masonic Club Weekly Round-Up.

A great big thank you to our two regular contributors to this issue, Patrick and Harry. I am sure we all appreciate your efforts each week. This week we have:

- Patrick and Harry continue the story of their varied careers
- A reminder of the question from Dennis in last week's 'Would I know, did I know' on the sign of Reverence and sign of Fidelity
- 'When I were a lad' - do you know who is in the picture?
- An article on Thomas Harper the renowned Freemason and Master Jeweller with a local example of some of his work.

All thoughts and suggestions for future articles welcomed. Please keep your input coming with, once again, a special thank you to all those that contributed.

Keep safe Brethren and keep in contact.



Keeping in Contact and Staying Sharp



Facebook

We have set up a Facebook Group for Ross Masonic Club. We currently have 28 members across the Lodges and Chapter. Any members of Lodges or Chapter that meet at Ross Masonic Hall are welcome to join in.

More opportunities to Zoom together



I finally remember what Zoom meetings remind me of.



If you have not previously joined in, we now have a meeting that starts earlier on a Friday at 7:30pm as well as the 8:45pm meeting for the 9 o'clock toast.

You can come and go during these times as you please.

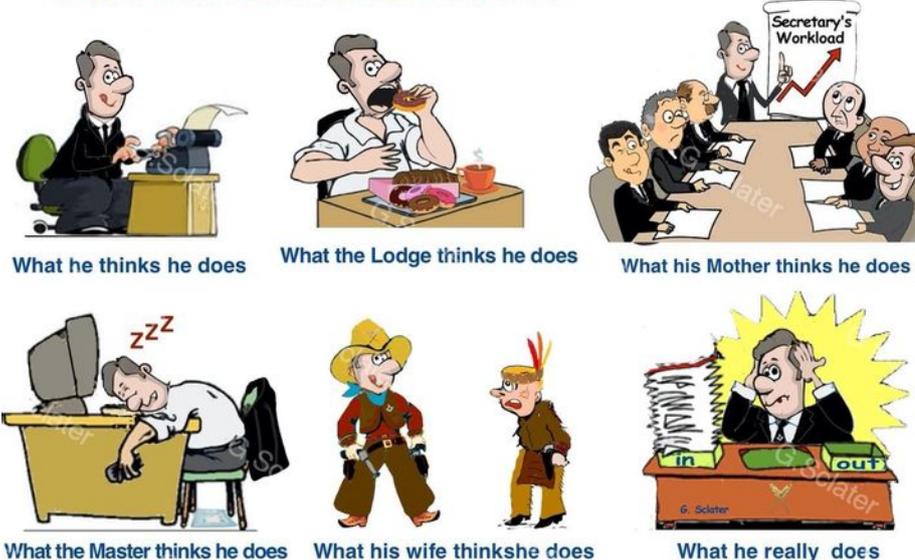
It's simple to set up and Billy can help with support if you need it.

A big thank you to our Lodge Secretaries and Chapter Scribe E for keeping us going during these difficult times.

The picture was recently posted on our Facebook group by Billy - original by G Sclater.

Thanks for all your hard work behind the scenes.

The Lodge Secretary



What he thinks he does

What the Lodge thinks he does

What his Mother thinks he does

What the Master thinks he does

What his wife thinks she does

What he really does

Would I know the answer? / Did I know the answer?

Don't forget the question in last week's issue from Dennis:

'What is the significance of Reverence or Fidelity Signs? Thumb Up or Down? What does your Lodge do?'

You can always check your thoughts by visiting 'Solomon' of course! <https://solomon.ugle.org.uk>

By Dennis Roberts - Group Leader Information and Guidance Group e-mail: roberts.greeba@btinternet.com

'When I Were A Lad'

A new feature which we hope we can run over a few weeks

Please send in your pictures of you as a child and tell us what has changed over the years. Either a scanned image or take a picture of the photo with your phone and send it in with a few words of description. Just for a laugh - nothing too serious!



This Brother has recently joined a lodge in Ross on Wye and is a regular attendee of our weekly Zoom video calls.

He says of this picture.

I have attached a photo of my younger self as requested, nothing remarkable about it, I think it was around 1947 a young working class lad growing up in Birmingham but, as you can see, already developing a degree of "sartorial elegance!!"

Who is he?

Answer in next week's Newsletter or drop me an email if you think you know the answer.

Harry's in Hot Water! (Part VII)

The further adventures of Harry Holwell

Policing Swindon

Having worked in Swindon for my two year probationary period I was later very grateful. The reason I say this is that Swindon is the largest town in Wiltshire, the hardest to police and there is always lots happening, including crime. The two main council house areas are The Parks, north and south. This area was built in the 60s for London overspill. Then there is Penhill. In the 70s this was mainly local council tenants. I worked on the Parks area when my apprenticeship started. I will come back to Swindon later in my tale.

I went to Wootton Bassett after my two years and it was totally different to Swindon just seven miles away. I lived in a large police house with about an acre of ground. I kept chickens and was able to walk to work. I remember my first day walking to work. I was lucky to get there on time as everyone you met wanted to talk to the new police officer. This was a completely different way of policing.

It was a rural station and we had to issue things like pig and cattle movement certificates, go along to farms and supervise the mixing of the sheep dip. On one of these trips I took a young cadet with me. Unfortunately having mixed the dip he stood too close to the tank. The first sheep was tipped on its back on the edge and then fell back into the tank. Well it was like a small tidal wave. Right over the cadet it went. Needless to say he didn't suffer with fleas and maggots that year. During the summer months we used to visit all the farms on our patch to inspect and sign their animal movement record books and you got to know a lot of people. It worked well for the vegetable garden when you wanted a delivery of manure!.

I learnt a lot whilst doing all these different things in policing. One of these was that a lot of the smallholder farmers are very solitary. Once there I found it very difficult to get away. They just wanted to talk to you.

The tea and biscuits would come out or if afternoon they would encourage you to have a beer with them. It was difficult to say no at times.

On one of these visits I went to a smallholding to sign his records, one milk cow and some sheep and pigs. He also brewed his own beer. Lovely it was too. I only had a half! It was excellent but rather strong. This person was in fact the retired Registrar for England who had retired from London and come to the county where he bought a large country house. It was a good time to be a section officer.

Whilst serving here I became aware of a series of shop burglaries happening in Swindon and the surrounding country areas. The difference with these burglaries was that the offenders would steal small trucks, reverse them through the windows or doors of the premises, fill the truck with goods and drive off. When I say goods, on one of these it was chain saws and the like worth around £10,000. This was apart from the damage caused to premises. Not that different from the cash machines being ripped out of premises by stolen plant machinery now.

Harry's in Hot Water! (Part VII)

The further adventures of Harry Holwell

Policing Swindon

Shortly after this offence one of our machine shops in Bassett was broken into with the same M.O. (modus operandi). Shortly before this burglary the offenders had driven onto the school playing fields, demolished two sets of rugby posts and ploughed up the pitch causing considerable damage. They had got away with a considerable amount of garden machinery from the burglary just outside Wootton Bassett.



These burglaries were being investigated by Swindon CID. Because of the local nature of this latest offence I took an interest in it. I knew from local knowledge that the school and playing fields were frequented by local youths late into the summer evenings/nights. It took some weeks but I eventually got a name of a local lad who had been there on the night the damage was caused. I didn't think he had caused the damage but he might know who did. I eventually got hold of this lad and took him in for a talk. He eventually gave me the names of two lads who had been driving the stolen truck that caused the damage.

He had actually been with them. He was just on the fringe. I liaised with the officer in the case and wangled a month with CID. We arrested three offenders for a large series of burglaries and vehicle taking. They went away for five years. I later met two of the three whilst out in Bassett and both thanked me as getting caught sorted their lives out.

At our police station we had nine officers including two sergeants. We provided cover for our area from eight in the morning through to the next morning seven days a week. We had the use of a marked Ford Escort van with blue lights and there was also an Escort car for the use of the Sergeant or other officers when not in use. If we arrested offenders they would go in the back of the van to be taken into Swindon.

I can't see that happening today with health and safety. We arranged regular social nights at one of our local hostelrys and we shared these with our local part time firemen. They also had a bar at the local fire station which was useful for liaison. At this time in the police, service regulations relating to living in your own home were changing rapidly over a short period it came down from 25yrs to zero in just 18months. In 1977 just as regulations changed Sue and I purchased our first home. A fairly modern 3 bed semi in need of modernisation. This took a couple of years to complete. It was close to good schools and we settled in Wootton Bassett for the next 25 years.

The date was now 1979 and I thought I was ready for CID. I put in for attachment and by the end of the year I was on CID. I paired up with a very experienced detective and over the next year I learnt a lot about investigation and interviewing suspects. Before I knew it I was off to Hendon in London for beginners Specialist CID course. This was very intense and we soon learnt the most tedious and difficult subjects were saved for Thursday mornings. I believe this was to test your resilience as on Wednesday night all on the course were expected to go out socialising. This meant heavy drinking in the pubs and clubs known by the local officers who were also on the course. This meant heavy days on Thursday.

I went back to Swindon brimming with criminal law and eager to commence work. I spent the next couple of years with my head down working hard. One of the cases I dealt with was an arson. A local company that rented out specialist heavy plant kept their stock in a local premises with garage. They employed a security guard.

There was an arson at this premises and damage and loss of stock amounted to some half million pounds. It turned out that the security guard had set the fire to break up the boredom and bring attention to himself. Well he did that but not in the way he anticipated? He went away at Her Majesty's pleasure for a nice holiday at no expense to himself.

During this period I was also given a specialist role to be the cheque/ fraud squad officer for Swindon division. I was apprehensive of this to start with because it is such a specialist role that you don't often become involved in this type of crime whilst carrying out general policing duties on either CID or uniform. I very soon settled into fraud and after a short time really enjoyed my work. Most of the work was relating to cheque fraud. This would involve the theft of cheque books and then cashing cheques until they were all gone. This often involved thousands of pounds. The way you dealt with was to collect all stolen cheques and submit them for fingerprinting. You would also try and obtain video footage but in the early 80s coverage was not as common. I used to travel the country picking up offenders. I did this for a year before returning to general CID duties. This had been a really good year as I was now very confident in all aspects of fraud and also in dealing with the amount of paperwork and detail required, besides the presentation of it for court.

Next time Regional Crime Squad duties.



Wiltshire Police
Proud to serve and protect
our communities

Patrick Eyre continues to recount his career moves. There's more than one way to earn a living Part 8

At last my MD had allowed me to purchase a Leyland 6 wheeler chassis/cab which I would eventually equip with the concrete conveyor, but first I needed to install a mixer/unit to carry out certain tests. On my travels around the UK I had from time to time learned of a rumour going around that these German machines were not really concrete mixers at all but were only machines that would agitate the concrete to site having first been loaded with concrete that had been put through a plant mixer. There were at least four manufacturers of truck mixer units in the UK and it was obvious they didn't like the competition from me making a dent in their market share. They were totally out of order and I had to prove them wrong.

In this country most working machines have to conform to a British standard. In other words they have to comply to a given standard in performance, and do what it says on the tin. My English competitors had that coveted BS certificate on their mixers. The only way I could shut them up was to take a 6m³ load of concrete to the Cement and Concrete Association premises based in Wexham Springs in Buckinghamshire and have the concrete tested. Driving the truck myself I collected the concrete which had been designed as a 21 Newton strength mix from a nearby dry batch concrete plant. A plant with no installed mixer, so the mixer I was driving was required to mix the concrete.

My truck was loaded with the following material consisting of sand, gravel, cement and water, and was ribbon fed into the rotating mixer drum so in affect was partially mixed. Complying with the instructions from the Association I arrived at their premises with the drum stationary. Directed to a large concreted yard I was met by several concrete technicians. Part of the yard was covered with a clear plastic material, which I was instructed to drive on to. Leaving the cab I went to the rear where the drum controls are situated and revolved the drum at a regulation speed for 5 minutes adding a little water to the mix, thus bringing it up to the correct workability.

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This was made possible by inspecting the revolving concrete through the loading area from a high platform fitted to the mixer/truck. Following instructions I then reversed the drum rotation, discharging an amount of concrete on to the floor. A technician completed a slump test which was measured at 50mm. A credit to my ability but no more than a properly trained mixer driver could achieve.

I was then instructed to inch the truck forward very slowly whilst they discharged the concrete on to the plastic sheeting observing them from the truck mirrors, and at a given distance I would be asked to stop the truck and they would take away samples for testing in the laboratory. The procedure was repeated several times until all the concrete had been discharged.

The method of sampling and arriving to a position to test the quality and strength of concrete is quite complicated but the sample will finish up in this 150x150 steel mould, and once the concrete is set, the mould will be dismantled and the cube placed in water, There will have been 3 of these cubes made from the same sample. One will be crushed at 7days, the next at 14 and the last at 28 days, by a special machine which will indicate whether or not the concrete complies with the given strength of the mix design.

The decision to have this test carried out was not an easy one to make because I realised my job and credibility depended on a satisfactory outcome and I'm not sure that my MD and German colleagues realised the significance of what I had undertaken.

My MD didn't understand the world of concrete; his background was in selling heavy earth moving equipment, and I hadn't even told the Germans !!!

When I joined the company I made sure that we became members of the Association. So the actual test didn't cost anything, all I had to do was pay for the concrete. The five weeks it took to get the results was probably the longest five weeks in my life, but every truck/mixer sold thereon carried a plate with 'This machine complies to BS 1305:1974' welded to the drum. Today's price for a mixer/unit ex-works would probably be about £25,000 and I had to keep a number in stock for immediate delivery if required. The factory demanded payment with order. I tried to order them when the Deutsche mark/pound exchange rate was favourable but the pressure was on if sales were down. They took up a lot of space in the yard with my MD referring to them as a 'herd of elephants', best get rid, we need the room which wasn't very helpful!!! No pressure then!!

Next week.....

I learned that the company was French and located in Nantes on the west coast. I also learned that the owners didn't speak English, but my secretary did, and was delighted when I told her she would be coming with me.....



Emyr Jones has done a great job at preparing the Lodge for our return when it is safe to do so. Thank you to him and all those that have helped.

Thomas Harper

Master Jeweller and Distinguished Mason

Article by Andrew Moore.

Additional reading and sources can be found here.

<https://www.freemasonrytoday.com/features/the-multifaceted-career-of-freemason-and-master-jeweller-thomas-harper>

<http://www.lionandlamb.org.uk/harper.html>



From Humble Upbringings To A Distinguished Masonic Career

Little is known about Thomas Harper's early years, but it is believed he had a humble upbringing. Thomas Harper (c. 1736-1832) was initiated in 1761 into Lodge No.24 which at that time met at the Bush Inn, Marsh Street, Bristol. It is believed this was before he set sail for America as a few years later he was in Charleston, South Carolina and was the first Junior Warden of Lodge No.190. There is also mention that he was involved in the Holy Royal Arch in this same period of the 1770s.

On his return to England he had joined Lodge No. 5 of the Antients, now Albion Lodge, No. 9, whose most prominent member was Laurence Dermott, the first Grand Secretary, and the driving force behind the formation of the Antients Grand Lodge.

During his distinguished masonic career, he was a member of a number of Lodges that met under both constitutions before the Union.

His masonic memberships therefore spanned both the Antients and Moderns Grand Lodge.

In terms of his membership of Antients Lodges: He was honoured in September 1785, at the age 50, as a Grand Lodge Officer under the Atholl Society, being made Junior Grand Warden. He quickly rose through the ranks becoming Senior Grand Warden from 1786-88 and Deputy Grand Secretary from 1792-1800, before being elected Deputy Grand Master in 1800 and serving until the Union.

He was also prominent in the rival Moderns Grand Lodge. He had joined Globe Lodge, No. 13 (now no. 23) in 1787. He served as Master in 1793 and his name was put forward as Grand Steward in 1794.

For a brief time, he was Treasurer of both Lodge No. 1 of the Antients and of Lodge No. 1 of the Moderns. This period was not without incident. In 1803 he was briefly expelled by the Moderns from all lodges under their control, however this was removed in 1810. He immediately rejoined Nine Muses Lodge and in 1814 he was elected Deputy Master a position he held until his retirement in 1827.

After the death of the Antients' Grand Secretary Laurence Dermott in 1788, Harper took over producing the constitutions of the Antients. He carried on the work of his predecessor becoming a key figure in facilitating the union of the two Grand Lodges.

When W.Bro. William Dickey, Deputy Grand Master, died suddenly in 1801, Harper was appointed Deputy Grand Master. He was therefore ideally placed as Deputy Grand Master of the Antients and a previous member of several Moderns' Lodges, and consequently played a leading part in the proceedings of bringing about the union of the two Grand Lodges.

He was also one of the assessors who prepared the Articles of Union and subsequently became one of its signatories in 1813.

Standardising our regalia and ritual.

Many of us take for granted the regalia we wear in lodges. The light blue apron with rosettes, the Master's Apron with Plumb Rules and the darker blue of Provincial and Grand Officers with standard jewels on their collars denoting their rank. But this was not always the case.

Before the Union in 1813 there was no standard Masonic Regalia with many Masons wearing aprons that denoted their rank. Infact when the two Grand Lodges of England and Wales came together on 27th December 1813 to form the United Grand Lodge of England it was decided to standardise these designs which also extended to warrants, certificates and ritual.

To do this a Board of Works was established by the Duke of Sussex, the first Grand Master of the UGLE. The first meeting was held on 7th February 1814 with Thomas Harper in the chair.

The meeting discussed the masonic jewels to be attached to the collars of the various officers. In the following weeks the coat of arms of the new Grand Lodge and the form of the aprons were discussed, with Harper present and involved in all of them. After the Union, Thomas Harper was elected annually to the Board of General Purposes or to the Board of Finance and frequently presided over the Lodge of Benevolence until 1831. He passed to the Grand Lodge above on the 25th April 1832 at the age of 96.



Thomas Harper

Master Jeweller and Distinguished Mason Continued.....

A skilled Silversmith

In business Thomas Harper was a very successful silversmith, It is known that Thomas Harper was in practice whilst in America. The South Carolina Gazette in January 1773, carried an advert describing him as a working jeweller and goldsmith.

When back in England he first registered his mark at Goldsmiths Hall on May 27th 1790. The mark consists of T.H. in a plain oblong. He soon distinguished himself as a jeweller, rising to eminence in the City of London and acting as Master of the Turner's Company in 1798, 1813 and 1829.

He made jewellery for several livery companies, but his principal output was in masonic jewels of all kinds. These are exceptionally fine and have become the most sought-after of all masonic jewels, instantly recognisable by his maker's mark featuring his initials 'TH' on the reverse.

Harper also produced aprons alongside his business in masonic jewellery. He supplied Sir John Soane's apron when he joined Grand Master's Lodge, No. 1 in 1813.

His shop was in Fleet Street in London and he later moved to nearby Arundel Street.



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A version of this hallmark is now owned by Thomas Harper Lodge 9612 whose motto is Scientia Ditat meaning Knowledge Enriches. It is used on silver objects sponsored by the Lodge and sold for charitable purposes. For example, you may see members of our local Chapters wearing jewels produced by Thomas Harper Lodge 9612 which they sell online with the proceeds going to charity.



In Vitruvian Lodge we are lucky enough to have some original Thomas Harper Jewels appended to the officers collars. The Deacons collar jewels are by Thomas Harper which is perhaps not surprising as the Lodge was founded during this interesting period.

So when you put on the Deacons collar, you are also wearing a piece of Masonic history.



Vitruvian Lodge, Deacon Collar Jewel.



And on the reverse side are the markings.



'TH' for Thomas Harper.

The 'T' in a shield for the London Assay Office hallmark of 1814 and the Lion passant (.925 purity)

As a tribute to his contribution to freemasonry and his distinguished career. It is recorded in the minute book of the Antient Grand Lodge, that an especial Grand Lodge of the Most Antient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons according to the Old Institutions, held on Thursday 23rd December 1813, the R.W.Bro. Thomas Harper D.G.M. in the chair, the Duke of Sussex, Grand Master of the other (Modern) Grand Lodge being present as a visitor, it was Resolved Unanimously

"that the cordial thanks of this Grand Lodge be given the R.W. Bro. Thomas Harper for his indefatigable, zealous and honourable conduct during a period of more than 28 years that he had been an Officer of this Grand Lodge but more especially for his unwearied attention for the last 13 years in the discharge of the arduous and important duties of Deputy Grand Master. That the members of this Grand Lodge were led to the performance of this duty peculiarly gratifying to them from the high sense they entertain of the purity of the principles from which he has acted, from their unqualified admiration of the talents and eloquence which he has constantly displayed on their behalf and from the pleasing anticipation of those happy and glorious consequences which his exertions have so eminently contributed to produce."