
The Lyceum



A Publication of
The Masonic Education Alliance



From the Desk of R.H. Johnson



History:

Started in xxxx, The Lyceum, an e-magazine dedicated to Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, has undergone a necessary evolution in order to adapt to changing circumstances. Originally a publication of the Committee on Masonic Education of The Grand Lodge of Illinois, the magazine was the collaborative effort of two committee members. However, with the departure of one member and the Grand Lodge's change in direction, The Lyceum faced the threat of going defunct. In response, all previous issues have been rebranded, removing any association with the Grand Lodge of Illinois. While previous versions may still be available on certain websites, they are no longer offered by the publisher. These changes in branding ensure that The Lyceum can continue as a free and independent publication, focused on promoting Truth and Progress in Freemasonry, regardless of oppositional forces in any Grand Lodge organization. It is important to note that the content, authors, and publisher of The Lyceum do not represent any statements or positions of any Grand Lodge, unless expressly stated.

About:

The Masonic Education Alliance, a groundbreaking initiative, has emerged as a beacon of Light in the realm of Freemasonry. Born out of the necessity to bridge the gap left by dwindling education committees within various Grand Jurisdictions, this alliance has taken on the responsibility of providing a limitless educational magazine dedicated to all things Freemasonry. Unrestricted by the restraints of any particular jurisdiction, the Alliance unites Masonic scholars, writers, and enthusiasts from around the world to create a platform where knowledge can flow freely and uninhibited.

In the past, education committees were the pillars of Masonic educational activities, disseminating knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of the Craft within their respective jurisdictions. However, due to various circumstances, these committees have been effectively gutted, leaving a void in the educational landscape of Freemasonry. Recognizing this critical need for a comprehensive educational platform, the Masonic Education Alliance was formed.

Unlike traditional Masonic publications, which are often confined by the limitations of a specific Grand Jurisdiction, the Masonic Education Alliance embraces the power of collaboration and inclusivity. Its mission is to foster a love for learning, share profound insights, and explore all aspects of Freemasonry in an unbiased and global

manner. By removing these boundaries, the Alliance opens doors for Masons and non-Masons alike to delve into the mysteries, history, philosophy, and symbolism of Freemasonry from diverse perspectives.

Through the publication of a cutting-edge digital magazine, the Masonic Education Alliance brings forth a wealth of articles, essays, research papers, and creative works that elevate the intellectual understanding of Freemasonry. Drawing upon the expertise of its contributors, the Alliance takes readers on a journey of intellectual expansion, inviting them to explore the depths of Masonic teachings and traditions.

In this rapidly changing world, where traditional modes of education are transforming, the Masonic Education Alliance stands as a beacon of progress and innovation. By harnessing the power of technology, this alliance is able to disseminate knowledge to a wide audience across continents and jurisdictions. As a digital platform, the Alliance ensures that no Mason is left behind and that access to Masonic education is available to all seekers, regardless of geographical boundaries or political constraints.

In essence, the Masonic Education Alliance is more than just a magazine; it is a revolution in Masonic education. With an unwavering commitment to intellectual growth, unlimited collaboration, and global connectivity, the Alliance cultivates a vibrant and dynamic community of Freemasons hungry for knowledge. Together, members of the Alliance strive to preserve the essence of Freemasonry while embracing the transformative power of education in an ever-evolving world.

The Seal:

The seal of the Masonic Education Alliance embodies the organization's commitment to providing rich and unbiased content to its readers. The golden hue represents the wealth of knowledge and information offered, while the borders ensure the protection of the Alliance from external influences and attacks. The Square symbolizes the Alliance's dedication to staying true to its research and providing accurate information to its readers. The presence of the All-Seeing Eye signifies the recognition of a higher power, while the book represents the Book of Nature, with a stalk of vegetation on one page and an illustration of a germ and the solar system on the other. Absent is the Compass, for the search for knowledge knows no boundaries.

R.H. Johnson

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FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Brothers all,

When I asked our Chairman, Michael Overturf, what he thought about a “theme” for the March issue of the Lyceum, he replied immediately with, “Irish Freemasonry.” When asking why, WB:. Overturf told me about how he had been Raised on St. Patrick’s Day and that the day had been special from then on.

More than our Chairman’s wish--there is so much to unpack when it comes to Irish Freemasonry, lore, mythology, and history, it was a no-brainer. Freemasonry has a rich history in Ireland. From stonemasonry to folklore to modern practices, there is so much to unpack and so much to learn about.

This month we’ve packed the issue with information on Irish Masonic Folklore from Darin A. Lahners. In it, he explores the hidden language of the Freemasons, called “Barela lagair.” We’ve also got a great article from Illustrious Bro. Steven L. Harrison, 33°, FMLR on some little-known facts about Freemasonry and St. Patrick’s Day. If this wasn’t enough, Jordan Kelly dives into his family history and tells us about Freemasonry and Irish symbols and Bro. Justus Fischer has an incredible piece about the mythologies in Irish lore and their relationship to Freemasonry and its orders.

As always, Ill. Bro. Chad Lacek is also back with a reflective article and WB:. Kevin Wheeler has another excellent book review. This issue has been curated with much care, and we sincerely hope you enjoy it.

Yours in Brotherhood,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. H. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

R. H. Johnson



From the Chairman

WB Michael Overturf, Chairman of the Masonic Education Committee



Brethren,

As we turn the corner and transition from the gray and gloom of February to the spring—the days are getting warmer. As I write this, my home town had temperatures into the high seventies one day with an upper fifties as the average! March is the start of the renewal process. It's my favorite time of the year, and for me, it's a very special time because I was raised to the Sublime Degree of Master Mason on Saint Patrick's Day in 2015.

In this issue, we look at Freemasonry in Ireland. The Grand Lodge of Ireland was formed in 1725 and is the second oldest Grand Lodge in the world (according to the Grand Lodge of Ireland.) I offer you this link to tour their Grand Lodge <https://vimeo.com/460126410>. Some of their notable members are Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie, Wills Wilde, Lt. Col Robert Blair "Paddy" Mayne, and William Joseph Dunlop.

I am also happy to announce that "Coach" Brother John Nagy allows us to use his blog post to offer further light in Masonry. I have read most of his books, and during the pandemic, I worked through his "Building Better Builders" series. I also went through Brother Juan Sepulveda's Applied Freemasonry course. I received a heavy dose of Florida Freemasonry during the pandemic since both John and Juan are based there.

I would like to also share what I have been reading--sort of a "from the Chairman's library," if you will.

Masonic Perspectives: The Thoughts of a Grand Secretary by RWB Thomas W. Jackson, a quick read but also a compelling book. Certainly, one that caught me off guard and required serious contemplation.

A Path to Providence "The Creation of the Middle Chamber Program" by Most Worshipful Brother Shaun Bradshaw and RWB Ben Wallace. To me, the Middle Chamber Program was an excellent experience, and I highly encourage you to read this text if you're genuinely interested in more profound aspects of our Masonic Journey.

And finally, *Practical Freemasonry Accessible Philosophy for Working Class Schlubs*, by Bro. Matt Gallagher. Matt offers a refreshing look into Masonic Symbolism and does it "on the Level."

Brethren, Best wishes and Happy Saint Patrick's Day

Fraternally,

WB Michael Overturf

Michael Overturf

Chairman of the Committee on Masonic Education



Featured Article

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The Guttural

by WB: Darin A. Lahners, AEO Eastern Area



Many of you may have at some point in your life found yourself in a similar situation to one I had recovered from recently. On November 27, 2018, I had to have my tonsils removed. I'm a 45 year old

man. When I wrote this, I was twelve days post-surgery and my throat was still hoarse and sore. As is often the case with me during times in my life where I need guidance, I turn to the lessons taught to us during our degrees. In the first degree, we are taught, "to be able to make yourself known among other Masons by certain signs, a token, a word and the points of your entrance which are four: the guttural, the pectoral, the manual and the pedal. These four points allude to the four cardinal virtues: Temperance, Fortitude, Prudence and Justice. "

We are further taught that "Temperance is that due restraint upon affections and passions which renders the body tame and governable, and frees the mind from the allurements of vice." It is stressed to us that this virtue, "should be the constant practice of every Mason, as he is thereby taught to avoid excess, or the contracting of any licentious or vicious habit, the indulgence in which might lead him to disclose some of those valuable secrets which he has promised to conceal and never reveal, and which would consequently subject him to the contempt and detestation of all good Masons, if not to the penalty of our obligation, which alludes to the guttural."

What is the guttural? From the Latin: "guttur", meaning throat, literally meaning, "of the throat". It's a term usually reserved for sounds which are particularly harsh or grating. Because the throat is the entrance way through which vice, (alcohol, tobacco, food) enters the body, that this would be why temperance is associated with the guttural. Allowing such vice to influence a Mason's behavior would inevitably lead

to the possibility of giving up the secrets of the Craft via a loose tongue. The old saying, "Loose lips sink ships." comes to mind. However, In this day and age, it would be as easy to write down the secrets (using the manual) on a form of Social Media, and press enter. To complicate matters, the attachment of the four cardinal virtues to the "perfect" points of entrance didn't occur in the ritual until the mid-1800's. So why then is the guttural so important to our Craft?

While thinking about it and beginning to research why temperance would be associated with the guttural, I came across something that I never thought about. Operative Masons (at least in Ireland), had their own secret language (https://www.jstor.org/stable/534860?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents).

Called "Bearla lagair", it was an artificial or technical jargon or gibberish used by Masons. Furthermore, in Ireland, this language was traced back to a character named Goban Saor or Goban Saer (Gobban the Builder). He is regarded in traditional Irish Folklore as originating in the 7th Century, as one of the Tuath De' (Tribe of the Gods), who are a supernatural race in Irish Mythology. According to myth, Goban forged their lethal weapons and brewed their magical elixirs of invincibility. (Hmmm, does this archetype of a master instructor in metallurgy sound familiar?) Historically – he is thought of as the builder/founder of many churches in Ireland and was canonized as St. Gobhan for his works. The canonization of Pagan gods was common during the early spread of the Roman Catholic Church, as many local pagan gods would become Saints in order to ease the transition from the Pagan religions to the Catholic one, and this is most likely the case

In any case, the knowledge of this secret mason's talk was known by many throughout Ireland. Like our degree system, apprentices obtained "papers" from the master-mason, and an increase of wages with each paper. The third paper (or third degree as

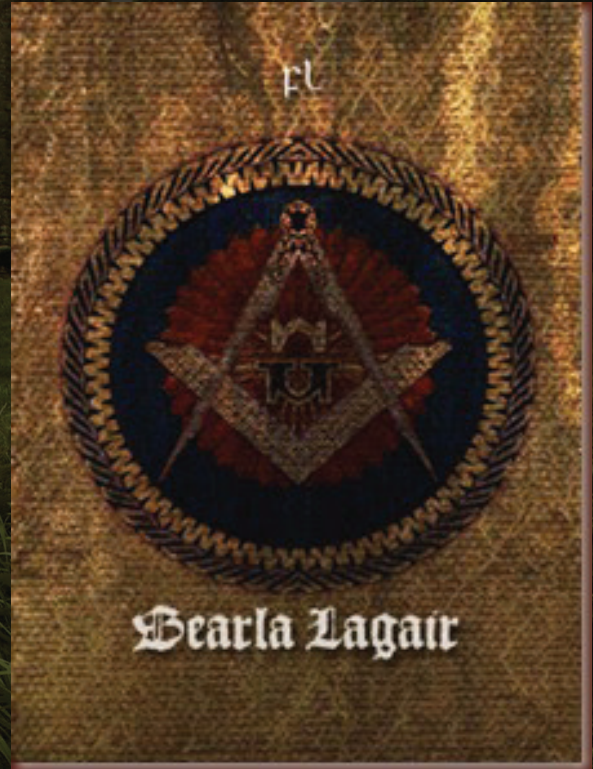
we might think of it), was called an indenture. No apprentice would be entitled to this until he was able to speak the Bearla lagair. They were forbidden to teach it any one not a mason, even to the members of their own family. They also had secret signs, methods of handling their working tools, ways of pointing, smoothing and laying mortar which would also identify them, but only the other member of their craft would pick up on these things. To the non-mason, it would have been their cryptic language which identified them as free-masons.

This being said, the points of one entrance can be thought of the precise moment that a candidate for initiation enters the lodge, or the entire ceremony of initiation. The first thing a candidate does after knocking three times on the door from the preparation room to the lodge room is to use his voice to answer a question. Without the guttural, he would never be able to enter to lodge room. As only a man who affirms that he is entering of his own free will and accord can become a Freemason. Yes, a candidate needs to use his voice to repeat his obligation, and the penalty of the obligation of the Entered Apprentice impacts the guttural, but at this point, the candidate has already vocally affirmed four times that he is entering the lodge and wanting to receive the rights and benefits of Freemasonry. It is at the point of entry, where they affirm that they are joining without being asked, invited, solicited or pressured to join.

This is also one of the most powerful arguments that one can use when Freemasonry is accused of being a religion. The custom of most religious groups is to urge people to join their religion. They proselytize actively, and during certain points in history, have persecuted people who are not of their religion. Freemasonry does no such thing. Albert Mackey when commenting on a man coming to Freemasonry of his own free-will and accord said: "This is a settled landmark of the Order," but, he did not include this 'settled landmark' among his list of Landmarks for some reason. In his article on Proselytism, He states; "Freemasonry is rigorously opposed to proselytism." And follows: "Nay, it boasts as a peculiar beauty of its system, that it is a voluntary institution." We accept men of all religious backgrounds, and allow them a forum to meet and enjoy fellowship with other men who might believe in a God that is not their own. But they must seek out us out.

Furthermore, if a Man was to join due to pressure from his father, brother, uncle, friend; and left it

might result in a family argument, or a lost friendship. Mackey states that coming of our own free-will and accord means that Freemasonry is truly a voluntary association of men, and that this is where the saying 'Once a Freemason always a Freemason' comes from, and has meaning. This is what in my humble opinion ultimately unites us as a Fraternity. Each of us, who have stood at the door of the preparation room have answered affirmatively that we are joining of our own free will and accord by using the guttural.



St. Patrick's Day and Freemasonry

by Bro. Steven L. Harrison, FMLR, 33°



Every school kid learns March 17 is the day we celebrate the life and deeds of Maewyn Succat, the second Bishop of Ireland, who is better known as Ireland's Patron Saint, St. Patrick. Those same school kids also learn Patrick's great triumph was chasing the snakes out of Ireland. It's true, there are no snakes in Ireland; however, that's more likely because there have never been any snakes on the isolated island.

Captured and taken into slavery as a youth, Maewyn, a.k.a. Patrick, escaped to the European mainland. While a slave he had converted from paganism to Christianity, and once on the continent, he sought refuge at Marmoutier Abbey, a French monastery.

There, he accepted his calling, which was to convert other pagans to Christianity. With that, he returned to Ireland and became very successful at making those conversions. In a manner of speaking, the "serpents" he figuratively chased from Ireland were the pagan Druids, not actual reptiles.

After a successful ministry, Patrick retired to County Down, where he died on March 17, 461 A.D. Although never officially canonized by the Catholic Church he is, in fact, recognized as a saint; and today we celebrate the Feast of St. Patrick, or St. Patrick's Day, on the anniversary of his death.

However, even in Ireland prior to the late 18th century, St. Patrick's Day was not that big of a deal. The same was true in North America, where the churches in Boston, with its large Irish population, didn't recognize the day until 1737.

"So, what," you may ask, "does this have to do with the Freemasons?"

About twenty years later, during the French-Indian War, a young Masonic Colonel recognized the morale among his troops was low and decided they needed what today we would call some "down time." It was March, at the end of a long, brutal winter and many of the troops were Irish. It didn't take the Colonel long to figure out the best day to declare a general holiday would be St. Patrick's day.

Several years later, that same Freemason, now a general in the American Revolution, faced a very similar problem. Billeted at Morristown, New Jersey, his troops were discouraged after a long winter of devastating fighting and losses. On top of that, the preceding winter of 1779-80 was brutally cold. That General, George Washington, again had many Irish troops under his command and once again he saw the opportunity of celebrating St. Patrick's Day to boost morale. With that, Washington issued the order giving his troops their first day off in over two years, "*The General directs that all fatigue and working parties cease for to-morrow the SEVENTEENTH instant, a day held in particular regard by the people of [Ireland].*"

The respite from the ravages of war and winter went over well with the troops, some of whom were said to celebrate with a "hogshead of rum." Washington is credited with establishing the first instances of a secular celebration of St. Patrick's day, a tradition which caught on and has grown to become a major event today, with the hogshead of rum long replaced by freely flowing green beer.



IRISH SYMBOLS AND FREEMASONRY

by WB.: Jordan Kelly, AEO Western Area



My family is steeped in Irish heritage if my name or beard didn't give it away. In fact, my father is a genealogy freak in the best of ways. He's traced our family history so far back; they're speaking Gaelic. When I was young, I never had much of

an appreciation for this history. As I've grown older and been exposed to many more facets of life, I've developed a stronger appreciation for my heritage. Through a deeper study of Masonry and Irish history, I continued to come across similar motifs amongst the Pictish, Celtic, and Irish peoples and the symbols we use in our studies. I would like to share some of my thoughts on these symbols.

I will first bring attention to the Triskele, also known as a triskelion or triple spiral. The Triskele is an ancient symbol, with the earliest found engravings dating to the Neolithic Era. Celts used this symbol to represent many things, including the Spiritual, Personal, and Celestial world. More often, it was used as a representation of the life of man. Moving forward, step by step, going through the cycle of boyhood, manhood, and old age. We see this represented in many of our steps



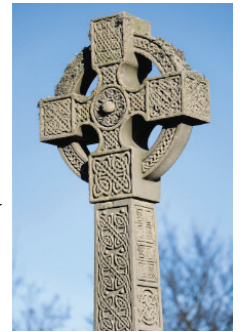
in Masonry. The Triquetra, also known as a trinity knot, is another symbol that, like the Triskele, encompasses the use of the number 3. The Triquetra is depicted as three overlapping or interlocking Vesica Pisces, often with the inclusion of another interlocking circle. The Triquetra is a sacred symbol that also has many interpretations. It is used to signify life, death, and rebirth, the family of father, mother, and child, and the cycle of life shared with the Triskele and Freemasonry.



In Irish Christendom, it is often used to symbolize the Holy Trinity. I do not need to discuss at length the use of the number 3 in Freemasonry, although we can find some direct correlations to our ritual and what these symbols represent.



The number 4 is often represented by the Celtic Cross. The cross in Ireland predates the Christian conversion of the island, possibly by thousands of years, and its representations both then and now have strong correlations to many of our tenets. The Celtic Cross, in ancient times, was represented as an equal-sided cross, encompassed by a circle, sitting upon another section of stone, as pictured. The four sides of the cross expressed the four cardinal directions, the four seasons, and the four elements of earth, fire, wind, and water. A study of Masonic teachings and the addition of the four cardinal virtues finds a strong connection to the teachings represented by the Celtic Cross.



The five-fold knot was often used to represent many of the same teachings of the Celtic cross, with another, often spiritual, connector. This 5th element was God, nature, time, or the heavens to many. We see this upon a deeper study of the 5-pointed blazing star, also representing the elements of the world, tied with the addition of a similar spiritual element bringing them into harmony.



The Ailm is an Irish symbol representing strength through endurance and resilience. We might have heard a similar teaching that time, patience, and perseverance can achieve all things. In my opinion, the Ailm shares more interesting symbolic qualities than most. The Ailm looks very similar to the tops of the Celtic Cross. The Ailm also represents the letter A in Ancient Irish Ogham writing, similar to how we use the letter G in English, or the Yod in Hebrew, in many of our teachings. The Ailm also, in my opinion, shares similarities with the point within a circle, or Circumpunct, one of my personal favorite Masonic symbols. I would like to believe many of our teachings cross similar paths, however, and unfortunately, due to the lack of



records at those times, many of its meanings are likely lost to history.

The Dara Knot is also a representation of strength or fortitude. Fortitude is that strength and courage that all Masons have sworn to abide by, and by which one Mason may know another, and that through this strength, one does not share his secrets unlawfully. The Dara Knot is



a representation of an oak tree. The name Dara comes from the Irish diore, meaning oak tree. The oak was considered the most sacred of trees by the ancient Celts and Druids. Druids held the oak tree in reverence and have been said never to practice or meet without being in the presence of an oak tree. It was believed that these trees were a connection to ancestors, living entities, and doorways to other realms.

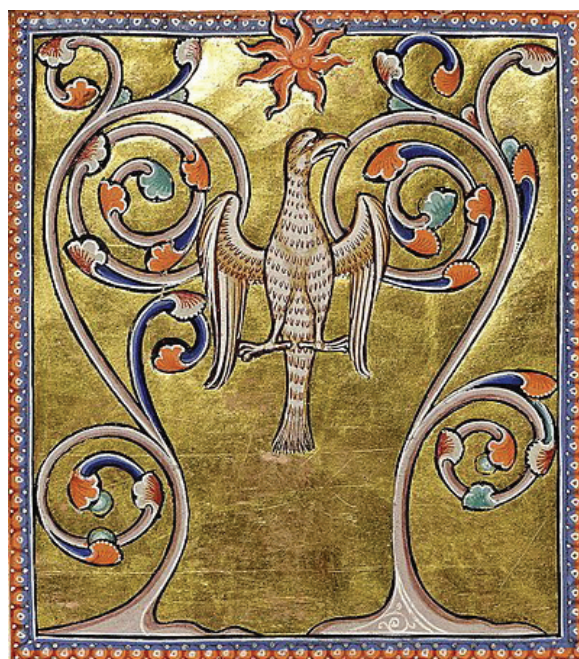
Another use of the tree is what is commonly referred to as the Tree of Life. The Tree of Life is typically represented as a tree whose branches reach to the sky, and roots spread through the earth, connecting in a circle. This symbol



is regularly used to represent the connection of the earth and the heavens. This has been often portrayed in many ways throughout time, as in, "as above, so below" or "on Earth as it is in Heaven." We see further Masonic connection through some of our most recognizable symbols, the square, and compass. The square grounded in earthly reality, the compass connected to spiritual guidance, whose light we use to show the path before us. And it would do us good to remember the plans laid down in the great books of Nature and Revelation, our spiritual, moral, and Masonic trestle board.

These symbols are only a few of the symbols used by the ancient people of Ireland. They all have multiple meanings, representations, and interpretations, not unlike the symbols we use in Freemasonry. I love seeing the connections, motifs, and shared lessons amongst cultures. Furthering my belief that as we have survived the lapse of time, the ruthless hand of ignorance, and the devastations of war, our teachings

will continue to be taught as long as man has a curiosity to make himself better.



Freemasonry in Ere, from Rough Stones to Perfect Deities

by Bro. Justus Erin Fischer



Some Masonic historians have proposed a theory that Freemasonry has its origins in the druidic practices of the Celtic people. Dating back to time immemorial, this is a fanciful claim indeed.

However difficult to prove, in my own belief on the matter, Freemasonry is similar to a vacuum that over time absorbed its various influences. It would be foolish of me to discredit the theory entirely. I, too, had come to a similar realization for myself upon receiving the third degree of Masonry. I would suggest to the reader of this article to take this information with a “grain of salt” I am not trying to make a statement or provide some interesting theory. I am merely trying to take bits of information and cross-examine them to see if there is a scintilla of a connection to Freemasonry.

The possible Culdee influence on “Operative Masonry.”

Much speculation exists surrounding the mysterious sect known as the Culdee. They were a group of peculiar monks in the region of York during the time of King Athelstan. Legend has it that these monks were descendants of the Babylonians. The Culdee initiates were said to have been well-versed in the matters of Mathematics, as well as in Architecture. Further adding to the mystique of the Culdee, it's also written that they took part in the building of King Solomon's temple. Subsequent cults grew out of the Culdee “tree,” branching off to form separate traditions. Masonic author A. E. Waite claims, “...they were Casideans, Essenes, Therapeutae, Magi, and Druids. They likely were styled as Gnostic Manichaeans at the beginning of the Christian Era. They were worshippers of the Dove or female generative power.



It came about that they adopted Christianity, but it was the Christianity of Malabar. They settled in England at York, in Scotland at Iona. In Wales and Ireland, they were called “Cali-Dei” in Hibernia.” Hibernia was the Latin name for Ireland at the time of the Roman Empire. It has been said that the early operative stonemasons were members of various Culdee branches under the guidance of King Athelstan, a staunch proponent of the Church and the stonemason's guilds during the time of his Reign.



A possible Druidic connection to Irish Freemasonry.

Is there perhaps a mystical connection between the Druidic people of Ireland and their influence on the Irish flavor of Freemasonry the world over? I will attempt to do some intellectual reaching and see what connections are to be made if any at all,

The legend of “Geoffrey of Monmouth” claims that Stonehenge was originally erected in Ireland. The wizard Merlin brought the stones to England using sorcery. Geoffrey's account of the origins of the monolithic structures dominated the understanding of what Stonehenge was to the people of the medieval period. This myth proved to be a satisfying narrative to the seekers and mystics of the ancient mystery schools in the region.

Today, members who claim to have a lineage to the Druids meet at Stonehenge and perform secret ritual dramas that they claim to date back to the time of the Atlantians. This indicates a traditional history based on the lost continent of Atlantis, which was known for being that of a highly advanced society, which was destroyed and sank to the ocean's floor.



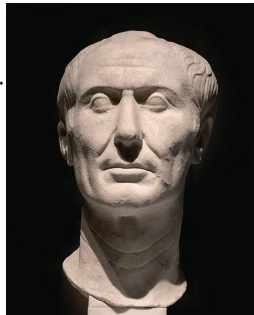
Stonehenge, in southern England, was an astronomical observatory and 56-year calendar. Did the ancient

mystics gather this evidence for the priest-rulers in Egypt, Sumer, Crete, or Mycenae? Did these civilizations send expeditions to the Emerald Isle, passing on the ancient knowledge of geometry and astronomy to the Druids?

There's not much historical evidence about the Druids because the traditions were strictly oral. The knowledge of their society was passed down to their initiates by mouth to ear. The history of the Druids and the history of their ritual drama also passed in this oral-prose manner and had been committed to memory. It's been said these people were prophets and seers of future events, in addition to being highly tactical in battle and very skilled in the art of warfare.

Julius Caesar describes the Druids, from his own first-hand account.

"The Druids are concerned with the worship of the gods, look after public and private sacrifice, and expound religious matter. A large number of young men flock to them for training and hold them in high honor. For they have the right to decide nearly all public and private disputes and they also pass judgment and decide rewards and penalties in criminal and murder cases and in disputes concerning legacies and boundaries. When a private person or a tribe disobeys their ruling they ban them from attending at sacrifices. This is their harshest penalty."

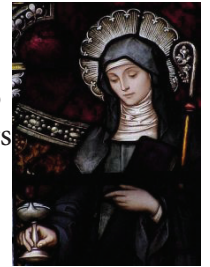


"The Druids are wont to be absent from war, nor do they pay taxes like the others; they are dispensed from military service and free of all other obligations. Attracted by these prizes, many join the order of their own accord or are sent by parents or relatives. It is said that they commit to memory immense amounts of poetry. And so some of them continue their studies for twenty years. They consider it improper to entrust their studies to writing, although they use the Greek alphabet in nearly everything else, in their public and private accounts."

~Julius Caesar

In Celtic-era Ireland, a year was divided into two parts. It was then sub-divided. The old year ended, and the new year started at the feast of "Samhain" (held on the first of November.) This marked the introduction of the dark half of the year. The second

(light) half began during Beltane, which was observed and celebrated on the first of May. Between these two significant ceremonies were two others of minor importance. "Imbolc," held on the first of February, and "Lugnasad" on the first of August. The calendar was regulated and calculated by lunar observations, the time being measured by the passing of the nights. The calendar found at Coligny is a testament to how organized Celtic astronomy was. The year, divided into twelve lunar months, was adapted to the solar year by adding an extra month of thirty days in every three-year cycle. Each month, of thirty or twenty-nine days, was divided into two halves, a light and a dark half, echoing the year's division.



The Irish Pantheon.

According to Irish mythology of the Pre-Christian era, "Tuatha Dé Danann," or the "tribe of the gods," was the pantheon of the early Celts, considered a supernatural race that dwelled in the underworld. These deities were believed to represent nature's harmful or destructive powers--each specific member representing a different aspect of the human perception of reality. There is an underlined feminine element to the culture of Ireland as noted by the Culdee interpretations of the dove. The patroness saint of the Emerald Isle is Brigid of Kildare. Brigid means "Exalted one," in Old Irish as Brigid was a pre-Christian Deity before being appropriated by the Roman Catholic Church. Saint Bridget is associated with beauty, wisdom, and poetry.

An early example of Freemasonry in Ireland.

The "Baal's Bridge Square" is one of the oldest known "Masonic" artifacts. In 1830, in County Limerick, Ireland, a new bridge was replaced over the "River Shannon." The Bridge workers made excavations, finding a metal stone mason's square roughly six inches wide and is engraved with the following phraseology:

*"I WILL STRIVE TO LIVE WITH LOVE & CARE.
UPON THE LEVEL. BY THE SQUARE."*



Dated to the year 1507, this is definitive proof of the long-held history of Freemasonry in Ireland and the people of the United Kingdom. Baal Bridge Square is in the possession of Union Lodge No. 13 of Limerick. Union Lodge is one of Ireland's eldest Craft lodges, having been warranted, in the year 1732. It is a fitting residence for this distinctly Irish artifact.

The Masonic Hoax of Oliver Cromwell.

While perusing through a random volume of "Ars Quatuor Coronati," I found a strange article about a popular folk song from Ireland containing a strange Irish legend. The folk song had "Oliver Cromwell's" alleged connection to Freemasonry and the "dark arts." A claim that is likely false considering Cromwell's staunch protestant views. His Masonic background and practice of the so-called "dark arts" is doubtful due to the lack of historical evidence. During this particular period in world history, some revolutionaries were often mistakenly considered members of the Craft. To be sure, a substantial number of revolutionary figures were initiated as Freemasons. Oliver Cromwell was not very popular in Ireland due to the violence caused by his own doing in battle during Great Britain's conflict with Ireland during his lifetime. However, I never let the facts get in the way of a good story...



"Cromwell and Freemasons - Irish Popular Belief. - "The Popular Songs of Ireland," collected by Thomas Crofton Croker, was first published in 1839, but I give the following quotations from the edition in "Morley's Universal Library" (Routledge), 1886.

O ! Blarney Castle, My Darling.

Verse 2.

*Bad cess [1] to that robber, Old Cromwell, and to all his long battering train,
Who rolled over here like a porpoise, in two or three hookers, [2] from Spain !
And because that he was a Freemason, he mounted a*

*battering-ram,
And he loaded it up of dumb-powder, which is at its mouth he did cram*

Verse 6.

The old Castle, it trembled all over, as you'd see a horse do in July.

When just near the tail in his crupper, he's teased by a pestering fly.

Black Cromwell, he made a dark signal, for in the black art he was deep ;

So, though the eyes In the people stood open, they found themselves all fast asleep."

Croton Croker remarks that the song originally appeared in the South Cork Reporter newspaper, about April, 1827, under another title Among other observations he gives this explanation: -

"Upon the allusion made to Oliver Cromwell in the second and sixth verses, it is necessary to remark that, according to the popular belief of the Irish peasant, Cromwell was endowed with supernatural powers; and that the fraternity of Freemasons, which was said to be founded by him, were supposed, from the secrecy and ceremonies observed by them, to be dabblers in the black art.

Among the pieces of magical skill that Cromwell is asserted to have acquired, was the knowledge of a powder for throwing balls from (a) cannon without making any report, and hence termed

"dumb-powder,' in distinction to gun-powder. It is also traditionally asserted that a spell, of which Cromwell was master, could make his opponents become powerless as statues."

Coker's final comment is as follows: - *"In a curious French work, entitled 'L'Ordre des Francs-Maçons Trahi,' printed at Amsterdam in 1754, it is stated that 'Cromwell was the first who gave the name of the Order of Freemasons. Willing to reform mankind, and exterminate princes and kings, he proposed to his party the re-establishment of the Temple of Solomon.' Whether this account be true or false, the coincidence between it and the tradition current in Ireland is remarkable."*

-HARRY SIRR

1. A common malediction in Ireland, originally importing "heavy taxation,"
2. A description of fishing or pilot boat peculiar to the

southwest coast of Ireland. “

This is a particular example of how the myths and legends about Freemasonry over time could sometimes be unfavorable to the membership of the fraternity. The telephone theory of lie snowballs, bigger and bigger, and over time, it negatively intertwines with popular Irish culture. I think that this is a slight glimpse into what the common people's perceptions were about Freemasonry in Ireland during this era. [9]

The Irish tradition in the United States.

Irish Freemasonry can be seen and felt in the United States by strict invitation only. In the “Allied Masonic Degrees” and the “Knight Masons,” we have some examples hinting at Celtic mysticism. The Allied Masonic Degrees contains an honorific conferral of the “Red Branch of Eri.” It is a set of Degrees or honorifics bestowed upon the candidate for service to the A.M.D. Council to which they are a member.



“This remote Order is said to be derived from a very ancient Order in Ireland, consisting of Freemasons and said to have been erected and patronized by the Kings of Ireland, for it is claimed that in early times Erin (Ireland) possessed a literature and history equal to that of the most highly developed of ancient nations.

The American body uses the rituals as used by the English body under the stewardship of Bro. John Yarker. The degrees of Knight Commander and Grand Cross are not exemplified or practiced as there are no subordinate bodies of this Order in the United States. The Minor Psalter of the English body is not used either as it pertains to peculiarities of English Freemasonry and their Order. The Red Branch of Eri may be conferred upon any member of the Allied Masonic Degrees, by the unanimous decision of the member's Council, for outstanding and meritorious service to the Allied Masonic Degrees. It is limited to no more than two members per Council per year.” [10]

The Knight Masons are relatively contemporary in comparison to their Masonic counterparts in the York Rite of Masonry. For example, the United States did not officially form its council until the



60s, despite Knight Masonry operating in the United States, under the auspices of The Grand Council of Ireland, in the 1920s. Knight Masonry consists of three degrees plus one honorific degree. Familiar variations of the “Knight of the Sword” can also be found in the American “Knight Templars” and the American Scottish Rite (A.A.S.R.).

“Formed on June 18, 1923 in Dublin, Ireland and May 20, 1936, in North Carolina, U.S.A. Its purpose is to govern and superintend the degrees formerly considered the “Green Degrees” by chartering Councils for conferring the same.

Degrees and Honors : 1. Knight of the Sword 2. Knight of the East 3. Knight of the East and West. 4. Installed Excellent Chief.

History: The Order of Knights Templar in Ireland relinquished control over the “Green Degrees” after holding it for more than eighty years. In England and Scotland, these degrees are also conferred but up to the time of the formation of the Grand Council of Knight Masons in Ireland, they were not conferred outside the British Isles, Great Chiefs Council and Sharavogue Council, No. 1, were chartered on April 9, 1924, and constituted the same day. Up to the end of 1949, fifty-four Councils have been chartered with a combined membership of approximately 1,750 Knights. All of the Councils are in Ireland excepting five, which are in the United States - with which we are concerned herewith.

The first Councils in the United States were chartered by the Grand Council in Ireland on May 20, 1936, as follows:

- St. Patrick's in America No. 26 Monroe, N.C.
- Shamrock, Thistle and Rose, No. 27 Raleigh, N.C.
- Harp, Cross and Eagle, No. 28 Wilson, N.C.”

Carrying on tradition.

Whenever I think about Ireland and all the myths and legends concerning its people, we can easily understand the cultural significance of mysticism as it pertains to any semblance of it contained within the Masonic ritual. In Royal Arch Masonry, there's a connection to the holy trinity of the Judaeo-Christian Epoch and the triple deities of the Celtic pantheon. I will note that this is my interpretation, and I can only speak for myself regarding the matter. Freemasonry is full of mystery and intrigue, with its unknown origins. Ultimately, this leaves the idea to one's interpretation to dig deeper into our symbolism. To avoid

any confusion, I suggest that we only admit worthy seekers of this sage-like wisdom to observe our ancient mysteries, and we should guard the West gate with zeal. For example, in 1744, Dr. Filfield D'Assigny, inquired about the Grand Lodge of Ireland to implement such a practice. Dr. D'Assigny voiced the idea of creating an inspection committee to investigate potential candidates, stating:

"I cannot help expressing my concern to hear of so many idle and trifling disputes as lately have happened amongst some of the Fraternity, occasioned, as I must imagine, by the unfortunate and inconsiderate election of their members; the examples of whom ought highly to engage us in a strict examination of the temper, disposition, and conduct of each candidate. as the old Proverb alleges, "One scabby sheep may infect a whole flock." (Enquiry, pages 28-29.)

Twenty-four years later, D'Assigny's ideas were adopted by the Grand Lodge of Ireland to be used in Dublin, it was added, as Rule XII, in the Regulations of the year 1768 [12]

In conclusion, my aspiration for writing this research paper is to piece the larger mosaic of this deep reservoir of Irish wisdom in Craft Freemasonry together. These traditions--secretly passed down through the ages, initiating people into the mysteries. Freemasonry, in itself, could be connected to this reservoir of knowledge. My goal with this short article is to bring you some fanciful anecdotes and try to maintain some credibility in my statements. Ultimately, this is an attempt at trying to convince myself to think deeper into the symbolism and allegory of Freemasonry.

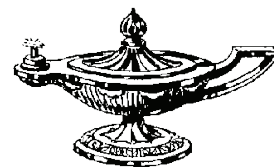
The Masonic journey is completely up to the individual's unique interpretation of the experience. Considering the hardships that we endure every day, as spiritual beings having human experiences, a little dose of mysticism and a little bit of luck from the Irish could help us get through the hardships that we all endure. It certainly helped our Irish ancestors during times of uncertainty, and with that said, my brothers, I will say a fraternal salutation to our brethren.

Slainte'

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What's New In Masonic Education?

by RWB: R.H. Johnson

The committee on Masonic Education is proud to announce multi-faceted approach additions to what we have begun to offer.

We have secured a password protected area of il.mason.org/masonic-education which will host information / educational resources that may be more for the members than the profane world. This is the number one.

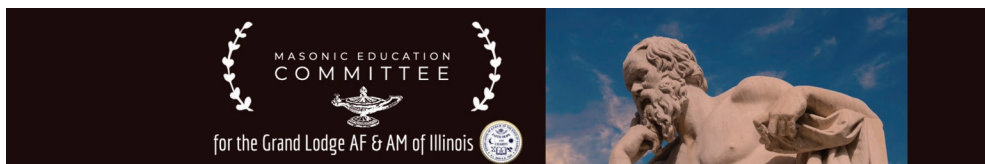
Number two is that we are crating awesome short video content on a variety of topics. A video on Masonic Etiquette is soon to be released. We've also begun to put together a series of videos designed to go a little deeper into the things we focus on within the Intender Program. We're calling this, "Intender+".

This leads to number three, Intender+. Intender+ will feature short video clips explaining terminology or even philosophical concepts we allude to in our ritual--however, we will decode this for a contemporary audience. And all this will be available on the Grand Lodge of Illinois Education Committee YouTube Channel.

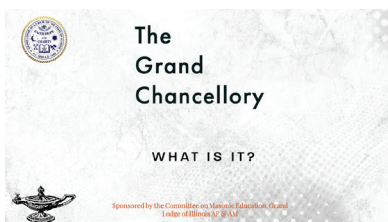
With the addition of this resource, our Chairman has decided to also schedule Sunday afternoon Zoom calls with educational presentations and special speakers. These calls will be open to all Master Masons and they will be recorded and uploaded to our YouTube channel for all of us to learn from on demand.

In fact, the first Zoom call has already happened. We had a special talk with RWB John Loayza, the Grand Chancellor of Illinois. In this presentation, he explained his role to us, introduced us to some of his counterparts in Brazil, Italy and beyond. They took our questions as well.

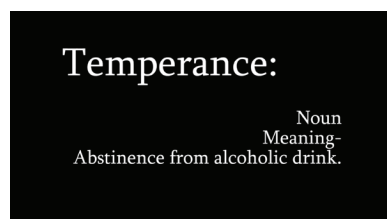
With the changing world, men are busier than ever before with things they need and want to do. We wanted to make Masonic Education something that was self serve--that is, provide content that is ready to be consumed by our membership, when they want it. It's in this future landscape that we will paint our future.



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INTERVIEWS



INTENDER+



ETIQUETTE

How Rare is Comfort?

by RWB.: Chad Lacek, Member Committee on Masonic Education



As the long-serving Secretary of my Lodge and a Past District Deputy, I get to speak with lots of prospective candidates for Freemasonry. My first step is usually to invite them to the Lodge before the stated meeting and introduce them to the Brothers in attendance. I think it's an excellent way for them to see the variety of different men that make up a Masonic Lodge.

I have recently noticed a common reaction from these visitors. They all mention their surprise relating to comfort. Here are a few actual examples: "It was an awesome experience to feel so comfortable around everyone." And, "I saw how comfortable you guys were with each other."

Is comfort really that rare? Perhaps I've been going to Lodge for so long that I take it for granted. You might notice this in your own life when you pass by pictures hanging on the walls of your home or office. How often do you actually see them? Maybe the closeness we feel in Lodge really is something rare and special.

The Masons I see most often are a 'hands-on' bunch. Never satisfied with a basic handshake, a greeting always includes a big hug or the clapping of the shoulder. If you have experienced that kind of welcome, you know how good it feels. The embrace of a Brother Mason is more than a show of affection; it represents permission to be exactly who you are. Laugh when you feel joy, cry when in sorrow, and extend your arm any time you need a hand. That's comfort. I can't imagine

my life without that feeling. Can you? Seeing the reaction of these outsiders, as they glimpse what we have from a distance, should make us realize how lucky we are. It also demonstrates that the future of our Fraternity is not in jeopardy. The need to feel accepted, respected, and needed will never go out of style.

It's odd that sometimes it takes the perspective of a stranger to show us what we've had for years. That comfort we have, and share between us, is rare. Let's enjoy it while we can.



District Education Talking Points

Overview of the Intender Program - Prior to the First Degree

“Prior to the candidate’s first degree the Intender explains that he will be expected to learn a catechism, informed of the long and short form catechism, and gives the candidate his choice.”



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Reader's Corner

The Mystic Tie

by Bro. Alan E. Roberts

A Book review by
WB.: Kevin A. Wheeler



The Mystic Tie, written by Brother Allen E. Roberts, is yet another example of this great Masonic Author at work. In this book, Brother Roberts does a beautiful job explaining what the Mystic Tie or

Masonic Brotherhood is and what it truly means. He does this using a unique approach, whereas he examines Masonic Philosophy, History, and Biographies of famous Masons by using his speeches and written papers.

In this book, Roberts reminds us of everything Masonry does but does so differently than other Masonic authors. When Brother Roberts speaks and subsequently writes, he gives the reader a sense of understanding as if he were speaking to the reader. Rather than being fed Masonic facts, he tells true and entertaining stories to deliver his points. Brother Roberts covered many topics, and due to its abundance, I will only cover the ones that I enjoyed most.

In the first section, Brother Roberts covers Masonic Philosophy. Thus, in the chapter entitled "He plucked off his shoe" Roberts discusses the importance of charity and the importance of the Masonic Service Association and the impact that President and Brother Harry S. Truman had on Masonry and the MSA. Throughout this book, we learn of various stories where Freemasons were assisting each other during the Civil War and how although those acts of charity were considered treasonous at the time, they were acts of Masonic Charity extended to both fellow Masons and humankind.

In other chapters, Roberts reminds us of the importance of Masonic Education and of learning the meanings behind the ritual and the need for Masons in Masonry to step out of the norm, create change, and do things differently. In the subsequent chapters, we discover the importance of conducting Masonic outreach programs for the community and our families and women. In the chapter dealing with Universal Freemasonry, we are reminded that Masonry stretches across both religion and color and that "universality; brotherly love; kindness toward all God's creates. This is what Freemasonry personifies." (p. 55)

In the history section of Brother Roberts' book, he tells the stories of various individuals throughout history that exhibited Masonic Acts of Charity, most of which dealing with acts that took place during the American Civil War. One such act includes Union Soldiers helping a wounded Confederate Soldier and Brother Mason, while under heavy sniper fire and upon being discovered, explained that they were attempting to help their enemy and fallen brother and were allowed to do so under a temporary cease-fire. In another chapter, Bro. Roberts introduces us to Prince Hall Masonry, in whereas he tries to clear up some common misconceptions of Prince Hall Masonry is and how it began. Mainly being that Prince Hall is not irregular or clandestine and had a Charter to operate in the United States before the United States being formed and that although mutual recognition and collaboration is merited, Prince Hall

