

Twelve Talk

04.07.20

Issue 132

Meetings 2019-20

*07.01.20

Lecture by Bro. Alan D. Beck PM
(Mozart, Freemasonry and the
Magic Flute)

* 21.01.20

No meeting – Inverclyde Music
Festival

* 04.02.20

Passing

* 18.02.20

Entering and PGLRW Annual
Visitation (715 pm)

* Saturday 29.02.20

Annual Charity Burns Supper (630
for 7pm)

* 03.03.20

Raising

*17.03.20

Passing – **Cancelled**

*07.04.20

Raising - **Cancelled**

*21.04.20

Mark – **Cancelled**

*06.06.20

Special Summer Meeting
Entering by the Lodge Past
Masters - **Cancelled**



Lodge Greenock Kilwinning No XII
The Saloon of the Town Hall, Greenock
Regular Meetings – 7.30pm 1st and 3rd Tuesdays – September to April
Summer Meeting – 1st Thursday in June
Burns Supper – Last Saturday in February

RWM Bro J Robert Crossan 22 Dungourney Drive Greenock PA16 7UW (07788923074)
Secretary Bro Ken McDougall PM 8 Mount Stuart Drive Wemyss Bay PA18 6DX (07810270787)
Treasurer Bro David Stevenson 5 Broomberry Drive Gourrock PA19 1JY (07887904910)

COVID-19/Corona Virus Pandemic (2)

“Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose!”

I was never the best at French in my days in the High School, but I do remember that phrase very well. It has stuck with me through the years and maybe describes the Covid-19 situation as far as the Craft is concerned. There have been many announcements from the Governments – Scottish and UK. Things have changed in some ways in terms of what we, as citizens, are permitted to do. However, as far as the Craft is concerned, there is no light at the end of the tunnel as far as us holding our regular meetings is concerned.

That is but right because what we know as a Masonic Meeting would surely endanger the health and wellbeing of all those attending. If we were allowed to have a meeting tomorrow, I, for one, would not be there and I am sure that this view would be shared by the vast majority of our Brethren.

However, this does not mean that Masonic activity has ceased. In actual fact, as I said in the previous edition, in some ways this is bringing out the best in the Craft particularly with regard to the three Grand Principles on which our order is founded, namely brotherly love, relief and truth. Countless numbers of brethren, and I am sure all Lodges, are involved in acts of kindness and support which transcend all human boundaries. Many of these are random; in many cases we do not know the people who will benefit; those benefitting very often do not know that the Craft is involved. This is happening at local, Provincial and Grand Lodge level. If one thing comes out of this Covid-19 crisis for the Craft I hope that it is that we shall become still more active in our local communities, helping and supporting those in need whoever they might be. We should see

the whole of humankind as our Brethren in the way that Bro Robert Burns described in his poem “A Man’s a Man for a’ that”:

*For a’ that, and a’ that
It’s comin’ yet for a’ that
That man to man the world o’er
Shall brithers be for a’ that”*

I suppose it’s a bit like that iconic statement around what used to be the big window in the East in Lodge Greenock St John’s No 175:

“All the world a Lodge and every man a Mason”

For this to ring loud and true, we should continue the supportive acts to our fellows and exhibit unconditional brotherly love. The Craft has no boundaries in terms of class, creed or race. By our actions, we can, and do, demonstrate this.

In so doing we can provide relief of a tangible, and intangible, nature across society and do so in truth – being true to our principles, who and what we are and what we all aspire to be.

Our watchwords going forward should, I believe, be brotherly love, relief and truth - in their widest sense.

Reflecting the present situation, No XII had an informal get together a couple of weeks ago using Zoom and the wonders of modern technology. We had 18 Brethren online and were delighted that the RWPGM, Bro Robin McIntyre, accepted an invitation to join us. We spoke about a number of things relating to the supportive works by the Brethren at the moment, the position of Lodges and meetings going forward, further support that could be given to the community and one or two minor items of No XII business. It was nice to see the faces and hear the voices of No XII’s ‘usual suspects’ and to keep in touch. RWM Bro Bob Crossan plans a similar get together in due course.

Iain White PM

Since the last Twelve Talk, another of our Honorary Members has passed to The Grand Lodge Above.

Bro John Davidson Turpie HM
24th May 1942 – 9th June 2020



We were all very sad to hear of the passing to The Grand Lodge Above of Bro John Davidson Turpie on 9th June. Bro Jack had fought a monumental battle against illness for many years. A wee while ago, I saw him at the dentist, and we had a blether. He was telling me that all the doctors and consultants could not understand how he was still alive. He said that, almost 20 years ago, he was told that he had but a short time to live. Jack battled on but finally passed to his rest and reward on 9th June.

From memory, Jack was made an Honorary Member of No XII around 1992 when Bro Hector Macphail was in the Chair. The honour was bestowed because of his tremendous visiting record at No XII. This continued until he was prevented by ill health.

Bro Jack was an enthusiastic member of his Mother Lodge, Firth of Clyde Gourock No 626 and took the Chair in 1991; he was active in other orders. He had an intense interest in the history and development of the Craft and did much research to further his knowledge about Freemasonry. This is amply demonstrated by an article in the Masonic Journal, *The Lodgeroom International Magazine*, which may be seen by following this link:

http://lodgeroomuk.net/intblog/download/Lodgeroom%20Magazine/lr_mag_2006/08August06.pdf

Therein, Jack sheds some light on the history of Freemasonry in Port Glasgow. His interest was triggered by two old letters that he found in the archives of Lodge Mother Kilwinning No 0 when researching another topic altogether – the history of Lodge Mount Stewart Kilwinning No 111, a lodge now dormant which had been based in Greenock. He gave many Lectures within and beyond the Province, some in No XII.

Out with the Craft, in his youth Jack was a talented cornet player in the Silver Band of the 3rd Gourock Boys' Brigade Company, which was an excellent ensemble that, amongst other performances, used to hold concerts in Cragburn. He was a senior Civil Servant in the DHSS and was based in Greenock having worked in London in earlier years. Jack was also a fisherman and a member of the Dunrod Angling Club. He was also very keen on the life and works of Robert Burns and, like his Masonic activities, he researched Burns in great depth. I heard him deliver the Toast to the Immortal Memory on several occasions in a most interesting and informative manner.

On 24th February 2020, Jack's Mother Lodge 626 held a Past Masters' Degree, and he was well enough to be there. On that evening he was proud to be presented with his 50 Year Jubilee Diploma by his RWM Bro Graeme Wallace and RWPGM Bro Robin McIntyre. The photo above was taken on that occasion.

Jack is survived by his wife Elspeth, brother Jim (who followed him into the Chair at 626 in 1995) and the wider family. Our thoughts and prayers are with them all at this sad time.

Bro. Dr Alexander Starritt – Lodge Greenock Kilwinning No XII
13th October 1914 – 25th April 2001
Initiated 9th October 1945
An Eminent Mason (1)

This is a very interesting story which comes to us because of the initiative of our Senior Warden, Bro. Brian McFadyen. Like me, Bro. Brian has a great interest in the Lodge history.

Preamble by Bro Brian McFadyen WSW

Like everyone during the Lockdown owing to Covid-19 I was looking for something to keep me busy. In the early part of April, a message popped up in my inbox that grabbed my attention: On eBay, someone was selling a copy of the Greenock Kilwinning XII Bicentenary Historical Sketch, published in 1928.

Knowing that we already have some of these in our archives I nonetheless decided to ask Iain White PM, (Lodge Archivist), if we should try to purchase it. Iain said to go ahead and, due to the following story, I am delighted that I did.

Always looking for a bargain I contacted the seller and requested a Buy It Now price explaining that I was WSW of Greenock Kilwinning XII and that we were interested in purchasing the sketch. I received an email from the seller who turned out to be Dr David Starritt, the son of Dr. Alexander Starritt a member of Greenock Kilwinning XII, and who was hoping that someone from our lodge would purchase it. Dr David also explained that his father would always make the journey back to Greenock for our Annual Installation.

I informed him that if we managed to buy the sketch, we would be able to include the Back Story of his father in *Twelve Talk*. After a couple of emails back and forth Dr David Starritt very kindly decided to gift the bicentenary sketch to the lodge. I informed Dr David that in turn I would make a further donation to our charity drive in aid of the Belville Community Hub to assist in purchasing Isolation Food Boxes for the Inverclyde community. A few days later I received an unsullied bicentenary sketch from Dr David and shortly thereafter I was emailed a short, and in parts amusing, biography about his father [Bro. Dr. Alexander Starritt] which is printed below.

It transpires that Dr David Starritt is also an active Freemason and is a PM of Sure & Stedfast Lodge No.8991 Cardiff, PM of Lodge Strathdon Forbeston No,1358 Strathdon and is Past Grand Superintendent of Aberdeenshire. Bro. Dr David now resides in Tarland, Aboyne, Aberdeenshire. Bro Dr David told me that it has long been his intention to visit Greenock Kilwinning XII and I sincerely hope that he is able to do so in the not too distant future. I have assured Bro Dr David of a warm No XII welcome if he can manage down.

Finally, and on behalf of the Lodge I would like to thank Bro. Dr David for his kind gesture and hope that this article provides a nice memory of his father.

Bro Brian McFadyen WSW (PM The Lodge of Erskine No 1566)

The Man Himself

Now the letter (slightly edited) that Bro Brian received from Alexander's son, David, outlining his father's Masonic journey.

Dr David R Starritt
B.Sc.(Hons.),M.B.,B.S.,D.R.C.O.G.,M.R.C.G.P.

Dear Brian,

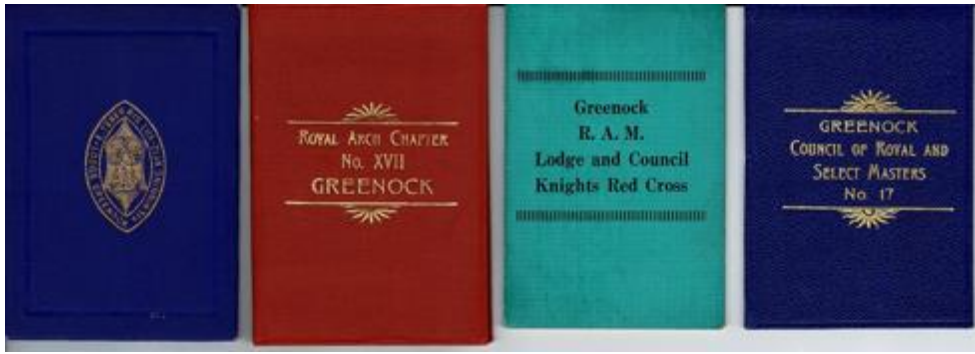
You asked for some information about my father. Here goes:

Alexander Starritt was born in Greenock in 1914. His father (David Starritt) was from County Donegal and his mother was a local, Margaret Sharp. He was born in Queen Alexandra Mansions in Greenock, but the family home moved to Brisbane Street. As his father was a marine engineer crossing back and forth to New York, as a teenager he lived for some time on Staten Island.



He went to Glasgow University and qualified in medicine and went on to become a consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist. He joined the RAF during the war and was not yet back in civvy street when the NHS was set up in 1948. So, the new consultant posts had been filled by younger men who had not been in the services and for promotion, he was waiting on dead man's shoes, and those men were young and healthy! In desperation, he took the family (Alexander shown left with baby David in 1954) to Australia (£10 poms) in 1960, but didn't like private medicine, and we returned to the UK a year later. He eventually got a consultant post in the South Wales valleys – a place renowned for being challenging. Needless to say, he shone there, and was eventually rewarded by being made a Fellow of his Royal College (FRCOG).

Alexander was initiated in 1945, just 4 days before his 31st birthday. His career and moving about kept him from achieving much at Greenock Kilwinning, but once he got settled in South Wales, he took up Masonry again there, and became very involved. He joined the North Glamorgan Lodge No.4055 in Merthyr Tydfil and became WM there in about 1975. Five years later he was given the Chair for the evening in order to initiate his two sons.



Bro Dr Alexander Starritt's Life Membership Books from Greenock



He went on to become a Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden in the Province of South Wales (Eastern Division), a Province that had about 150 lodges. He was denied Grand Rank as he was by then over 75 years old. UGLE had, at that time, a rule against older Masons achieving Grand rank, a rule which they subsequently had to abandon.

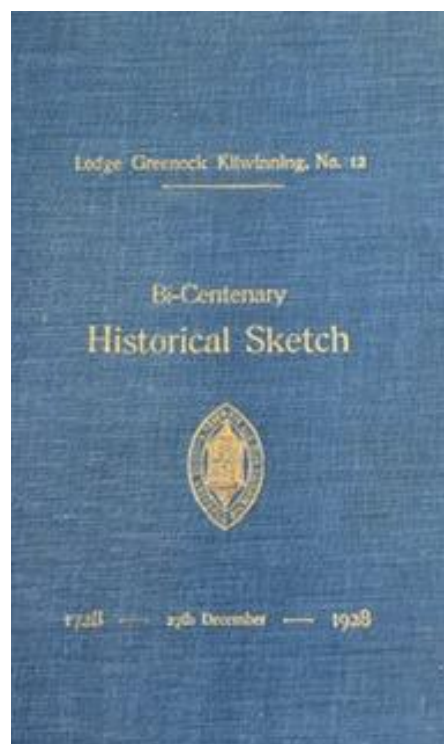
He also went on to the highest ranks in almost every Masonic Order you can think of. His last honour was in late 2000 to go to London to be awarded Grand Rank in the Royal Ark Mariners. On that trip the first signs of his illness appeared, an illness that was to take him to higher service beyond the veil in 2001.

Despite his busy life at work and in Masonry, he tried very hard to get back to Greenock for installations at each year end. There he enjoyed meeting up with old friends but, as time went by, these became fewer, and he eventually stopped making the journey. He was awarded his 50-year diploma in 1995.

Bro Dr Alexander Starritt in his Regalia in South Wales



The 50th Jubilee Diploma of Bro Dr Alexander Starritt – unfortunately the image was truncated, awarded when Bro James S Adams was RWM

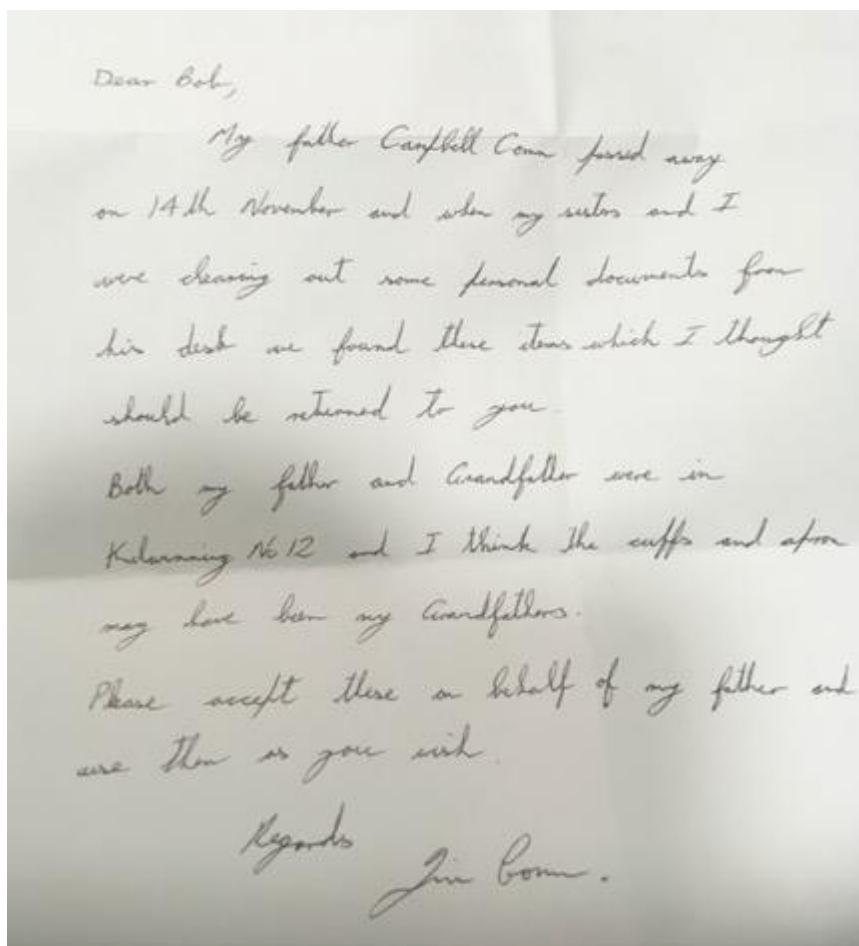


Bro Dr Starritt's copy of the Bicentenary book that started the story!

Bro James Conn PM and Bro Duncan Campbell McLean Conn WSW Eminent Masons (2)

Bro James Conn was initiated into No XII on 29.03.1910, Passed on 12.04.1910 and Raised on 26.04.1910. His son, Bro. Duncan Campbell McLean Conn followed in his footsteps being Initiated on 10.01.1956, Passed on 21.02.1956 and Raised on 13.03.1956. Bro Conn the elder progressed through the Lodge Offices and was placed in the Chair of King Solomon on Tuesday 2nd December 1930; his son almost followed suit, reaching the rank of Worshipful Senior Warden. However, in 1969 he demitted office owing to business commitments and, sadly in some ways, did not emulate his father by reaching the Chair. Bro Alex More who was in the Chair between 1973 and 1975 remembers Bro. Campbell Conn as a very capable floor worker and conscientious mason. In a conversation we had on the phone, Alex said that he would have been a good Master for the Lodge. Sadly, Bro Campbell Conn passed to The Grand Lodge Above in late 2019 aged 90.

It was earlier this year that our RW Master, Bro Bob Crossan, received a bag of Lodge memorabilia from a friend who had been given the artefacts by Bro. Campbell Conn's son, Jim. Like his father and grandfather, Jim is an engineer by profession and now resides in California. I have pasted a letter from Jim (below) that accompanied the bag.



Of course, we were grateful, as always, to receive memorabilia and artefacts for our growing collection. However, in this case we were especially happy because they had come from a family with such a lengthy connection with the Lodge. As well as James and Campbell, other Conns have been members of No XII over the years and given the uncommon nature of the name we can hypothesise that they may have been related in some way: John Conn (Pawnbroker) Initiated 29.09.1910 age 25; Ian Gordon Conn (Medical Practitioner) nephew of James; George Hart Conn (Toolmaker) Initiated 06.12.1962 age 22; John Hamilton Conn (Marine Engineer) Initiated 15.10.1963 age 29; George Hart Conn (Electrician) Initiated 06.10.1964 age 59.

Bro James Conn was an engineer to trade and progressed through the ranks in Scotts' Shipbuilding and

Engineering Company to the position from which he retired, that of Assistant Engineering Manager in the Fitting Out Department. After his retiral, he worked as a consultant and it was whilst on a job on the River

CONN—Suddenly, at Wallsend on Tyne, on 16th January, 1957, James Conn, husband of Margaiet M'Lean, 36 Brougham Street, Greenock. Funeral private. No flowers or letters, please.

Tyne that he suddenly passed to The Grand Lodge Above on 16th January 1957 at the age of 69. He was one of the stalwart Past Masters of No. XII and served as an Installing Master often. A Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden, he had been awarded Honorary Grand Rank of Marshal from the Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1954.

Noted Greenock Engineer's Sudden Death

THE death took place yesterday at Wallsend-on-Tyne of a well-known Greenock man, Mr James Conn, who was employed with Scotts' Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. Ltd., for 50 years before his retiral four years ago.

Following his departure from Scotts', Mr Conn took up a post with an English firm of consulting engineers and was employed supervising the building for foreign owner of ships in the Clyde area and the North of England.

He was on business at Wallsend when his sudden death took place.

Following in the footsteps of his father, who had been with Scotts' for 40 years, Mr Conn joined the firm in 1902. Eleven years later, as head foreman engineer in the fitting-out department, he supervised the building of the first submarine ever to be built on the Clyde.

WENT TO PORTSMOUTH

In 1937, still in the employment of Scotts', he was appointed manager in charge of fitting out cruisers at HM Dockyard, Devonport. From 1939 until 1942, he was in Portsmouth in connection with the fitting-out of a cruiser.

Shortly after returning to Greenock he became assistant engineering manager in the fitting-out department, a post he retained until his retiral.

Besides being well-known in marine engineering, Mr Conn was widely known in Masonic circles. He had held practically every office in Lodge Kilwinning No. 12 before becoming RWM in 1930-32, and was the oldest active PM of the Lodge. A regular attender at its meetings, he officiated as Installing Master on many occasions, the last being in 1955. He was a Past Senior



Mr JAMES CONN

Grand Warden of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Renfrewshire West.

Mr Conn, who resided at 36 Brougham Street, was one of the senior elders in the Gaelic Parish Church.

He is survived by his wife and two sons.

Last Tributes to Well-Known Local Engineer

The funeral took place to Greenock Cemetery yesterday of Mr James Conn, the well-known local engineer who died at Wallsend-on-Tyne last week.

Mr Conn was employed for 50 years with Scotts' Shipbuilding and Engineering Co., Ltd., before he retired four years ago with the post of assistant engineering manager in the fitting-out department. He was widely known in local Masonic circles.

Principal mourners were Mr Arthur Conn and Mr Campbell Conn (sons), Mr George Conn (brother), Dr Ian Conn (nephew), Mr D. Fraser (brother-in-law), Mr W. L. Montgomery Mr A. Miller (RWM of Lodge Kilwinning No. 12) and Mr A. C. Fletcher (representing the Gaelic Parish Church)

MASONIC BRETHREN

There was a large representation of the late Mr Conn's Masonic brethren, among whom were Sir Guy Shaw Stewart, RWM of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Renfrewshire West, and Mr John P. Hutchison, Provincial Grand Secretary.

Past Masters of No. 12—Mr Conn was himself the senior active Past Master of the Lodge—included Messrs. P. R. Jacobs, W. W. Buchanan, T. P. McIntyre, D. Stewart, C. McKinnon, A. M. Campbell, D. M. Holmes and R. J. Drainer.

Among the current office-bearers of the Lodge present were:—Mr R. W. Heatley and Mr J. M. M'Ewing (Deacons), Mr D. M. Leith (Treasurer), Mr A. Lang (Secretary).

Mr T. K. Young represented the firm of consulting engineers with which Mr Conn had been employed since his retiral from Scotts'.

The funeral services were conducted by Rev. H. A. M. Maclean, minister of the Gaelic Parish Church, of which Mr Conn was one of the senior elders.

Above is the death announcement from *The Greenock Telegraph*, the report of Bro Conn's sudden, sad passing and the report on the funeral. These three cuttings had been very helpfully placed in the Minute Book at the appropriate place by the Secretary in 1957, Bro Arthur Lang.

Bro Conn's passing was recorded in the Lodge Minute book in the following terms:

At a meeting of Lodge Greenock Kilwinning
No: 12, held in the Saloon of the Town Hall on
Tuesday 5th February 1957 at 7.30 P.M.

Present as per Attendance Roll,
Brother Archibald Miller, R.W. Master in the Chair.

The Lodge having been constituted the R.W. Master
made sympathetic reference to the death of Past Master James
Conn. Brother Miller said:-

tribute to
the late Bro
James Conn

Since our last meeting the Lodge has suffered a severe
and sad loss through the death of one of our most
distinguished brethren, Past Master Brother James Conn.

His sudden death at Wallasey-on-Lyne has come as
a great shock to us all. Brother Conn joined the Lodge
in 1910, and after occupying various offices he was
elected R.W. Master for the years 1931-1932. He was
a Guide, Philosopher and friend to all the Masters
who followed him. His services to the Lodge and
Provincial Grand Lodge was such that 1954,
Grand Lodge conferred upon him the office of
Honorary Grand Marshal, a distinction which
brought great credit to himself and honour to his
mother Lodge. He was very jealous of the high
reputation of the Lodge and was a stern critic
of all Offic-Beaters who failed to maintain
that very high standard. Bro Conn found true
happiness in the consciousness of a life well spent.
He had now laid aside the working tools and
our temple has been beautified by his craftsmanship.
Of him it can be truly said 'Well done Thou

Good and faithful Servant.

The R.W. Master along with eight Past Masters and several Officers. Bester attended the funeral and a floral tribute was laid on the grave by the R.W. Master.

Many tributes and expressions of sympathy were received from Sister Lodges and there was also one from our oldest Past Master Bro Robert Steele now living in Hampshire.

A letter of sympathy and condolence had already been sent to Mr. Conn.

It was resolved to record in the minutes our appreciation of the distinguished services rendered to the Lodge by Bro Conn and our deep sense of loss at his passing.

The brethren being upstanding reverently observed a minutes silence.

He was obviously held in very high esteem. His name is not one that has been spoken very often in the Lodge of late with his contemporaries having joined him in The Grand Lodge Above along with those who followed, and remembered, him. However, that has changed dramatically with the contact from his Grandson. When RW Master Bob Crossan opened the bag, it was a veritable treasure chest of Lodge Memorabilia. Some of it obviously belonged to James, but some, from their age, must have belonged to his son Campbell.

The principal treasure was the Past Master's Jewel that was presented to James after he left the Chair. It is a magnificent specimen, being one of the old style, with the enamel badge on the front surrounded by the Lodge name and motto. We have a few of these still but this situation begs the question, "How many of these are out there, somewhere, 'lost' in a drawer or desk and never seeing the light of day. We are so grateful to the younger James Conn for recognising the historical value of this Jewel to No XII. It will be passed to another Past Master in due course, but James Conn's name will remain on it in perpetuity; the recipient will have his added on a

small bar. Nowadays in the Lodge, it is stressed to the recipients that these Jewels remain the property of the Lodge and must be returned upon their decease – or before.



The engraving on the reverse says, “Presented to Bro. James Conn by the brethren of Lodge Greenock Kilwinning No. 12 as a mark of esteem of his service as RWM 1930 – 32.” The jewel is a thing of rare beauty.

The rest of the contents of the bag are shown in the photo on the following page. While there is no intrinsic monetary value to any of them, they provide an insight into the history of the Lodge which is invaluable and the fact that they have been owned, and held by, our forebears in No. XII gives them a great deal of Masonic significance and sentimental value. The history of the Lodge is, of course, as I always say, a significant part of the social history of Greenock, and now Inverclyde, and, as such, articles associated with it are priceless.

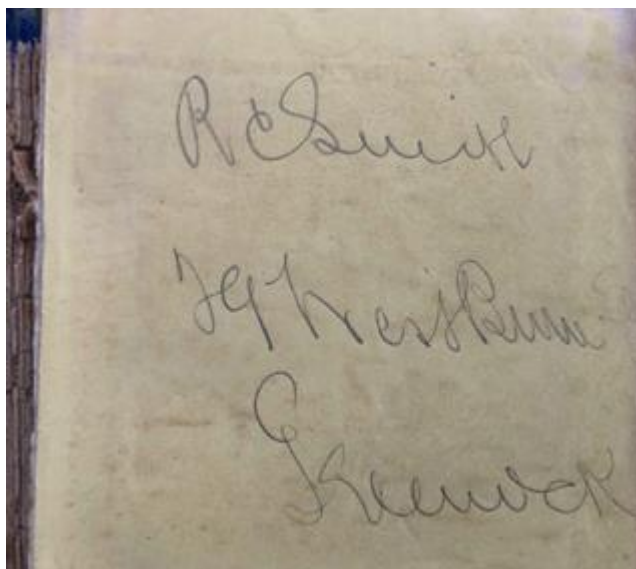


Top Row (from left): Scottish Craft Ritual Book (George Kenning and Son, 9 Howard Street Glasgow); Question Card Passing (Kenning); No XII 250th Rededication Ceremony Programme 1978; set of 4 ritual books (no publisher).

Middle Row: Gauntlets and Past Master's Apron

Bottom Row (from left): No XII Installation programmes of 1969, 1970, 1971 and 1972

The Ritual Book on the far left is a copy of one which is pretty close to the way that we work in No XII. It is one of several that are in our possession and may have been the 'go to' for members of the Lodge at one time. Making it yet more interesting, it had a previous owner in the person of Bro. RC Smith who was RW Master of the Lodge between 1912 and 1914. Smith's position as a ritual worker in the Lodge is the stuff of legends. After leaving the Chair he was an Installing Master every year between 1918 and 1940, being Principal in 1918 and 1919 and each year from 1928 to 1940. He may have done more. These are simply the years that I have researched, and I am limited at the moment to look beyond that because I have no access to the safe in the Town Hall where the Minute Books are stored. This phenomenal record is matched, and perhaps surpassed, by RC Smith's involvement in Mark Degrees as Conductor. Such was his prowess and longevity, that the Lodge presented him with a special jewel in 1939 after he had been Conductor 30 times! The detail of the Minute may be found later in the newsletter.



That the ritual book belonged to Bro RC Smith is indicated by his name appearing inside as may be seen in the photograph (left). The address (29 Westburn Street) was that of his business. He was a boot and shoemaker and some of you may remember this shop. It was there when I was a boy in the 1960s before moving to larger premises in West Blackhall Street. Many of us visit it these days on at least an annual basis to use the hire department!

The address of the firm is confirmed in the extract from the Post Office Directory (below) for Greenock for 1911-12.

Smith Peter, grain and flour merchant, 10 Cross-shore st.
Ho. 32 Robertson st
Smith R. C., boot and shoemaker, 29 West Burn st. Ho.
14 Union st
Smith Robert, company sergeant-major, Royal Engineers,
Fort Matilda
Smith Richard, aerated water manufacturer, 20 Sugarhouse
lane. Ho. 3 George sq

The two **Question Cards** – were these the ones used by Bro Campbell Conn when he had his degrees in 1956 or later when he served as a Deacon?

The **250th Anniversary Programme** may have been picked up by Bro Campbell if he attended. I shall try to find out more when I get access to the Sederunt Book in the Town Hall after the lockdown.

The **Set of 4 Ritual Books** – from their condition they look to be newer and therefore belonging to Campbell. However, their usefulness would be limited as they do not bear a great resemblance to the workings of No XII.

The **Past Master's Apron and Gauntlets** were obviously those of Bro James Conn. They have been very well looked after. In fact, the gauntlets arrived wrapped in aged tissue paper.

The **No XII Installation Programmes of 1969 – 1972** are presumed to have been Bro Campbell's. Did he attend these Installations after demitting Office before the 1969 Installation? Again, I shall try to find out more when I get access to the Sederunt Book in the Town Hall after the lockdown.

So that is the story so far. Isn't it amazing what can spring from a plastic bag dropped off at the RW Master's house? Aren't we so lucky that Jim Conn and his sisters were thoughtful enough to return these to No XII recently? His Grandfather and Father in The Grand Lodge Above will be justifiably proud of Jim and his sisters for their actions.

Of course, these artefacts will be labelled and stored in perpetuity.

St Valery 80 – 12th June 2020

The Province Pipers in Action Again

Remembering the ‘Forgotten Heroes’ of the 51st Highland Division

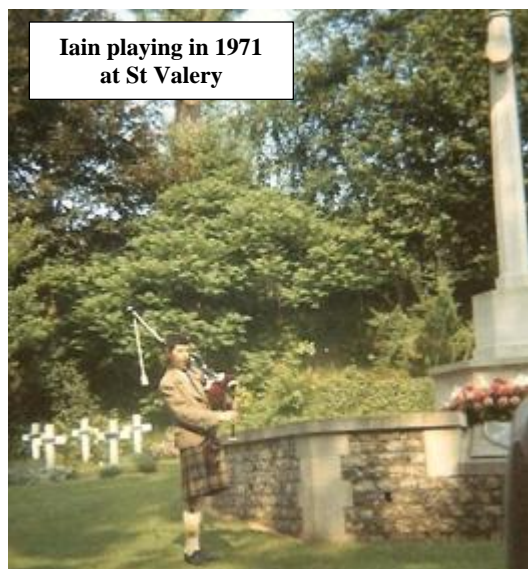


Bro Iain White playing at home for St Valery 80 (photo with permission of George Munro)

Some of the Province’s Pipers played again (as they did for VE Day in May) in memory of the soldiers of the 51st Highland Division and their French comrades who were left at St Valery-en-Caux, fighting a rear-guard action, after the liberation of the BEF at Dunkirk. Bros Iain White PM (XII) Billy Mooney WSW (68), Donald McRae Secy. (1121) and Billy McCready (1121) all played on 12th June to remember the Fighting 51st. The tune was “The Heroes of St Valery, a 4 parted Retreat March in ¾ time. It was written by Pipe Major Donald MacLean of Lewis and the Seaforth Highlanders. He was taken prisoner at St Valery and made to march, along with almost 10,000 comrades, to PoW camps in Germany and Poland. The privations were apparently indescribable. Over 1,000 had been lost in the battle and over 4,000 wounded.

This was a kind of reprise for Bro White. Whilst a pupil of Greenock High on the *Greenock Telegraph* sponsored schools’ exchange to Veulettes-sur-Mer and Cany in 1971, he played the lament the whilst a wreath was laid on 12th June in the cemetery at St Valery. The photograph (below) shows him on the day, 49 years ago, and he hasn’t changed a bit!

The flowers in this year’s photo were arranged and supplied by Iain’s friend Janice Cannon (nee McGovern) who was on the 1971 visit with him and another dozen or so local pupils . Many of the young people on the visit have kept in touch over the years and they had a reunion a few years ago when not quite so young! Jan brought the flowers over when she and her husband Graham joined us for the commemoration – socially distanced of course!



Iain playing in 1971 at St Valery

The story of St Valery follows, taken from the Poppyscotland website.

“On the 12th June 1940, just days after the successful mass-evacuations at Dunkirk, thousands of British troops still remained on continental Europe under French command. Largely comprised of men from the 51st Highland Division, they fought almost continuously for ten days against overwhelming odds until eventually surrounded at St Valéry.



However, a combination of fog and the proximity of German artillery above the town prevented the awaiting flotilla of ships from reaching shore. Those who were not killed in the fierce fighting or fell to their deaths from the cliffs trying to escape, were captured and marched hundreds of miles to PoW camps in Eastern Europe, where they endured appalling conditions for five long years. The 51st Highland Division, initially about 20,000 strong, comprised nine battalions of the Highland infantry regiments with supporting arms and services, including elements from England. They had been detached from the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) and therefore managed to escape encirclement around Dunkirk. Instead, from 4 June they were conducting a fighting withdrawal West from the Somme under French command. The speed of the German advance was such that they, and part of the French army, were cut off, despite hopes that they would escape through Le Havre.

Part of the Division did get to Le Havre to secure it for evacuation and escaped, but the remainder were cut off and surrounded at the little fishing town of St. Valéry-en-Caux. Not unlike Dunkirk, a flotilla of 67 Merchant ships and 140 small vessels were organized and despatched from British Ports but the inclement weather and the German artillery overlooking the town meant any evacuation on the night of the 11th June was impossible.

General Fortune commanding the Division considered all the options – a counterattack, further resistance, retaking the town but against this there was no possibility of evacuation or support. The men had been fighting almost continuously for ten days against overwhelming odds. They were exhausted and virtually out of ammunition, with no artillery ammunition at all. Shortly before 1000hrs on the 12th June General Fortune took the most difficult of decisions – to surrender.”



Pipe Major Donald Maclean (front, centre) and the pipers of the 2nd Battalion Seaforth Highlanders in Aldershot in 1939. To Donald's immediate right is P/M Donald MacLeod. 'Wee' Alex Craig is second from the right standing. All 3 were taken prisoner at St Valery-en-Caux. There were probably more. Donald MacLeod subsequently escaped on the march and got home via Spain and Gibraltar. When questioned by the Germans en route, he answered in Gaelic!

Expect the Unexpected

In the last edition I mentioned a film, which may be seen at the link below, which concerned itself with the James Watt Dock

<http://inverclyde-tv.com/stories/5388-the-boy-who-lived-in-the-mansion>

The film starred Billy Cooper who had lived in Garvel house and worked in the Garvel Drydock. Of particular interest to the brethren of No XII was the footage where a memorial bench erected at the Garvel Drydock to remember workmates who had passed away is shown. One of the names on the bench is our much-loved and respected Past Master Bro James S Adams who died so suddenly and unexpectedly on 26th April 2013 aged just 58. Jim was a Storeman at the drydock. His name can be seen 12 minutes and 08 seconds into the film.

Strange thing life ...

Still stranger, I asked if any of our readers knew the said Billy Cooper. I had a response from our Architect, Bro James McGregor the Elder to say that he knows Billy. He worked beside him for many years in the Joiners' Shop of The Greenock Dockyard Company and still sees him on occasion at Cappielow. On following up, Jim told me that Billy isn't in the Craft.

From the Old Minute Books

This extract refers to the occasion in 1939 when Bro RC Smith PM was presented with the token of appreciation for being Mark Degree Conductor on 30 occasions. It is to be noted that Bro James Conn PM spoke in appreciation of Bro Smith.

Meeting on Tuesday 7th March 1939

RWM Bro William W Buchanan in the Chair

Mark Degree

The Mark Degree was conferred upon twenty-six brethren, twenty-five of these are members of this Lodge and one by requisition from Lodge Crawfordsburn No 1121.

Presentation to Bro RC Smith

The Lodge was then reduced to the EA Degree when the RW Master called upon Bro RC Smith PM to accept a Past Mark Master's jewel from brethren of the Lodge, and a few from Sister Lodges, who wished to join with us in the form of tribute to Bro Smith's unique record. Bro Buchanan stated that Bro Smith was made a Marks Master in March 1903 and from 1906 he had carried out the duties of Conductor at the Annual Mark Meeting with the exception of three occasions. A letter was read from Bro DC Kerr PM – who is presently in Larkfield Hospital – extolling the zeal with which Bro Smith carried out his duties as Conductor and congratulatory remarks were made by Bros RA Clapperton-Stewart and Donald Main of Provincial Grand Lodge and also by Past Masters John J Park, Owen Dewar, John W Turner, James Conn and AFR Caird.

Bro Smith suitably expressed his appreciation for the gift, of the pleasure he got in taking part in this Degree, and of his hope to be able to continue as Conductor in future years.

Test Fees now Overdue!

If you do not pay your Test Fees by standing order, they are now due to be paid to our Treasurer, Bro David Stevenson. Similarly, those Brethren who are Life Members and support the Lodge by covering the Annual Capitation Fee to the Grand Lodge of Scotland should also speak to Bro David about payment as soon as possible. It is important that we all meet our financial obligations to the Lodge. Test Fees are now £45, and the Annual Capitation Fee is £35.

Lodge Memorabilia

In my role as Lodge Librarian, I am still very keen to have any documentary or other links to the past – installation programmes, Orders of Service, postcards, flyers etc. etc. If they are lying in a cupboard or drawer at home, please get them to me to enhance our understanding of No XII's past.

Lapel Badges

For many years, the late Bro Henry S Tibbles PM sold anniversary lapel badges in aid of the Grand Lodge Benevolent Fund through the West Column, the monthly newsletter of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Renfrewshire West. Recently, he passed the mantle on to our Treasurer, Bro David Stevenson. Bro David asked me to start to publicise the badge availability through *XII Talk*. This will now be a regular feature.



Lapel Badges for 25, 40, and 50 years' service are available at a cost of £5.50 each. A special "gem" set badge for 60 years is also available at £10. **All prices are excluding postage.** For every badge sold, £2 will be donated to the Grand Lodge Benevolent Fund. All cheques should be made out to *David Stevenson*

Badges, may be purchased individually by qualified Brethren, or in bulk by Lodges who may wish to make presentations to deserving Brethren, for meritorious service. All enquiries and orders to treasurerno12@aol.com. Please make cheques payable to *David Stevenson*.



Grumpy Past Masters badges are also now available from David at a cost of £5.50 each, excluding postage.

Iain White PM
04.07.20

Views expressed by individuals within *Twelve Talk* do not necessarily represent the views of Lodge Greenock Kilwinning No XII. Unless otherwise stated, Bro Iain White PM is the author of all material.