

2012/3.0

'From Oscar Wilde to Jim Daniel: Reminiscences of Oxford Masonry'

W.M. and Brn.:

Not long ago the former Bishop of Worcester, the Right Rev. Robin Woods, died, and for those who knew him there was some amusement to be derived from reading between the lines of his obituaries in the papers: he was a figure of considerable 'grandeur' and was the butt of numerous anecdotes; one that I recall, which did figure in the obituaries, was a reputed remark of his: "If there's one thing that the Queen Mother and I have in common, it's that we can neither of us stand name-droppers!" Now, Brn., if any of you share that particular prejudice of the late Bishop I suggest that during the next few minutes you read a good book or do the crossword or something similar, because there is going to be a fair amount of name-dropping. The subject of my talk is my own early Masonic experiences and the unexpected differences between Masonry as practised in Oxford and that which we are accustomed to here.

My late father was one of five brothers who were all Masons, as their father and grandfather had been before them. They all belonged to different lodges, two in High Wycombe in prov. Bucks, one each in Corsham and Trowbridge, prov. Wilts, and one in Oxford, that being my father. When I was twelve I was awarded a small annual bursary by a fund rather like the Leslie Pountney Memorial Fund, and every year I had to present myself to report on my studies to the chairman of trustees, who was the Senior Tutor of St. John's College, Oxford. This gentleman, whose name was William Conrad Costin, took a kindly interest in my progress and our meetings usually took place over lunch or tea in College. It had always been my desire to go to Oxford University and this now crystallized in an ambition to go to St. John's in particular. In the course of one of these pleasant social occasions my patron (for that was how I came to regard him) said something about attending a Masonic Lodge that evening. I remarked, "Oh, my father's a Mason" (in my mid-teens I really knew next to nothing about it except that Masonry was a bit of a family tradition). "Oh yes, which Lodge, do you know?" I said, "I think it's called the 'Alfred'—does that ring a bell?" Yes it did: it was in fact the senior of the eight or nine 'town' lodges in Oxford; Costin was a member of the University Lodge, which was called the 'Apollo'. He was also, as I was to discover, one of the great Oxford 'characters' around whom anecdotes gathered. Anyway, he made contact with my father and a Masonic friendship was formed between them.

So it was that, when I duly went up to St. John's College in October 1956—just when the Suez crisis was coming to the boil—I had absolutely no doubt that I wanted to be initiated into the University Lodge; and in that same month, 52 years

ago, I was proposed by my patron, seconded by another member of the College, and initiated by dispensation, since I was 20 years old. It was the normal custom for the ballot to take place immediately before the initiation rather than at a previous meeting, so I became a Mason at literally the earliest possible opportunity, the first meeting of my first academic term. My father was among the guests.

The Lodge had a curious history. There had been a University Lodge founded in 1769, 'the Lodge of Royal Alfred in the University of Oxford', warranted by the 'Moderns', and 40 beautiful silver medals were struck to commemorate this—we've got 2 of them in our Museum—but it had folded by 1783: some of you will know the two pages in our own prov. year-book that list Worcs. lodges that became extinct, mainly in the early 1800s, but some, alas, in the 21st century. Anyway, in 1814 the name 'Alfred' was revived, but this time for a town lodge, which as I mentioned was the one my father belonged to; it is one of, I think, two or three lodges that claim the distinction of having the first warrant issued by the *United Grand Lodge of England* after the Antients and the Moderns kissed and made up. Not long afterwards some 'Alfred' members decided to revive a University Lodge, and in 1819 the 'Apollo' was consecrated. Why that particular name of a pagan divinity was chosen, I do not know, nor do I know anyone who does; but it is far from unique among older Lodges, as the national Masonic Year Book shows. It was only relatively recently, in the 1960s in fact, that the lodge bothered with a banner, a magnificent affair embroidered with a figure of Apollo modelled on classical Greek sculpture, and dedicated with a brilliant oration by Canon Bobby Milburn, whom some of the senior Worcs. Brn. here will remember: he was at that time a Fellow and Chaplain of Worcester College, and had been Master of the Apollo in the late 1940s, and later (quite coincidentally) became Dean of Worcester. The Lodge No. was 711, though as happened with most of the older lodges, that was twice revised downwards and it ended up with its present no., 357, a truly 'magical' Masonic number ('three rule a lodge' etc.). If lodge numbers are ever revised again, we can be sure that the Apollo will guard that wonderful number with all the force it can muster. The first list of Lodge officers includes, as I.G., a Bro. William St. Aubyn (of the family that owns St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall), and the Tyler had the splendid name of **Hiram Holden**.

In the nineteenth century the Lodge had very many distinguished members, but to keep the list short I shall mention just five, or rather four-and-a-half: the half being Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, the future King Edward VII. While paying an extended visit, with Princess Alexandra, to his in-laws in Denmark in 1868, they took a week off to stay in Sweden, during which time the Prince was initiated by the King of Sweden, and as soon as he was suitably qualified he was given the title of Past Grand Master of England (in 1875, he became G.M. for real). Queen Victoria was shocked

to receive the news: she did not approve of Masonry; she associated it with her 'wicked uncles' King George IV (the Prince Regent) and the Duke of Sussex, who were successive Grand Masters of the 'Moderns'; her own father, the Duke of Kent had died when she was less than a year old, and perhaps she didn't know that he had been briefly Grand Master of the 'Antients', and, for a while, deputy to the Duke of Sussex under the Union. Anyway, the Prince of Wales was rather dubiously elected an honorary member of the Apollo in the spring of 1872: I say dubiously, because his connexion with Oxford was very slight; in fact he kept just four terms as a student and was never a member of any college. He lived in private accommodation and merely had some hand-picked tutors giving him special lectures alongside some even more hand-picked companions. In later life the prince was often heard to regret that his father Prince Albert had not let him be a normal member of a college; though it must be said that, whether as Prince or King, he never showed the slightest aptitude for academic study. Be that as it may, the Prince was unanimously elected W.M. of the Apollo in the autumn of 1872, but a glance at the minute books shows that he was never installed and in fact never attended the lodge at all! Now of course, WM, the Book of Constitutions is your daily reading, and you will recall that rule 110 says that 'should a Prince of the Blood Royal honour any private Lodge by accepting the office of Master, he may appoint a Deputy Master, qualified in compliance with the provisions of Rule 105'—but you know that already. In the event the Apollo's IPM continued as Deputy Master. Just one thing, however, the Prince of Wales *is* recorded as doing, and that was to propose (needless to say, by proxy) the Benjamin of the family, Queen Victoria's youngest and favourite son, HRH Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, for initiation. He actually was a resident undergraduate at Christ Church. In company with his tutor he was initiated in 1874; he went up through the degrees and in 1875 was made Senior Warden directly after being raised; the following year he was installed as WM and one day later was installed as Provincial Grand Master for Oxfordshire—think on! Could such a thing happen today? Well, suppose Prince Harry, say, were initiated into the Old Etonian Lodge ...need I go on? Prince Leopold was apparently very active both in the Lodge and the Province, while also acting as Queen Victoria's confidential secretary—she would never trust her eldest son!—but sadly died at the age of 30, a great loss to the country, the lodge and Masonry in general. He was one of several of the Queen's descendants who was a victim of haemophilia.

Thirdly, in 1875 the Lodge initiated Mr. Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde, who was in the course of a brilliant undergraduate career at Magdalen College, and was a friend of Prince Leopold. In 1876 Wilde also joined the University Rose Croix chapter, and an account survives with a local jeweller in Oxford, showing that Wilde's

extravagant habits were acquired early in life. Rose Croix millinery was then much more elaborate than it is now, but Wilde evidently had the best of everything, his apron & collar, jewel, sword belt, sword sling and collarette costing £11/8/-, a leather case with initials costing 29/- (of course, there were a lot of initials!), and a set of 18ct. gold studs costing 2 guineas, the total bill coming to £15/18/6, at least £650 at today's rates. Wilde didn't have that sort of money. He managed to find £10 to pay on account, but more than a year later the jeweller had to apply to the University Vice-Chancellor's court to enforce payment of the balance! Oxford tradesmen have always had the right to pursue bad debts through the university authorities, they can even arrange for an undergraduate to be stopped from taking his degree if there is a risk that he will 'go down' without paying, though that is very seldom invoked.

We might guess that the ritual qualities of Masonry appealed to Wilde, as well as the elements of costume drama. Whatever the reason, Wilde was quite a keen Mason who took his obligations seriously. He himself described to a friend an episode which occurred twenty years later, during his two years in Reading prison: he was walking round the exercise yard at the appropriate time, and another inmate who was actually a prisoner on remand, whom he didn't know from Adam, was similarly exercising. This fellow gestured to him with the sign (which, in *this* degree, I may not demonstrate) that says "O come to my aid, ye children of the widow!" Wilde was much moved by this, but also embarrassed, because, on the one hand, he knew that his duty as a Mason was to offer what help he could to the Brother in distressed circumstances; on the other hand, communication between prisoners in the yard (or anywhere else for that matter) was very strictly forbidden, and Wilde was nervous of forfeiting the kindly and considerate treatment that he was receiving from Major Nelson, the humane governor of Reading Gaol, who quite rightly regarded Wilde's sentence of hard labour as grossly excessive. He was on that first occasion able to have a word with the man without the warders noticing, but of course his actual ability to render aid was at that moment virtually nil. He therefore sought an interview with the governor, put his cards on the table and asked him to equip him with a pair of dark glasses to enable him to avoid such embarrassments in future—which he did.

Fourthly, in 1877, two years after Wilde, the Lodge initiated Cecil Rhodes, who was then aged 24, and ten years later made him an honorary member. When Rhodes died in 1902, at the early age of 49, a member of the Lodge living in South Africa deposited on the bier a wreath on behalf of the Apollo, and also Rhodes' apron, which was later presented to the lodge.

Lastly, this being Worcs., I must mention one initiated earlier than any of these, namely Sir Edmund A.H. Lechmere, Bart., who was made a Mason in Oxford in 1848, eight years before inheriting the baronetcy. His family seat was at Hanley Castle near

Upton-on-Severn and he pursued his Masonic career in Worcester—Rainbow Hill didn't exist then, of course, they met in what is now Waterstone's bookshop, 95 High Street, near the Cathedral—and he enjoyed promotion only a bit less rapid than Prince Leopold, since he became Prov. SGW in 1852, 4 years after initiation. He was a member of both *Semper Fidelis* Lodge no 529 and the *Worcester* Lodge no 280, of which he became WM in 1860. He was for a while MP for Tewkesbury and later West Worcestershire (he was one of 6 future MPs initiated in the Apollo in 1848) and Prov.GM of Worcs. from 1878 to his death in 1894. There are two points of interest for me in the person of Sir Edmund: one is that I taught his two great-great-grandsons at Malvern College; the other, more substantial, is that in 1884 he sponsored the Masonic Exhibition in the Worcester Guildhall which later became the original nucleus of our lovely Museum, to which he presented several precious items from his own collection. For that, his name deserves to live for ever in the annals of Masonic Worcs.

This, then, was the Lodge in which I was made a Mason. Some of you here may have heard Bro. John Hackett's witty and informative talk on 'What every Candidate should know'—if you have not, I strongly recommend it, it was one of the lectures that raised funds for Appeal 2000, but I understand it is still available. What did I know in October 1956? Nothing, really, except two things, first, that I should wear dinner jacket and black tie and turn up to the Forum Restaurant, High Street (333 Banbury Road was still no more than a twinkle in the ProvGM's eye); secondly, shortly before the meeting, my seconder said 'By the way, at some time you'll probably be asked if you can give anything to charity. The answer's no'—and that was all. Candidates wore dinner-jacket; established members were expected to wear full evening dress and white tie; officers wore court dress, that is, tail coat and knee-breeches with silk stockings, the latter items being supplied by the lodge. The Apollo must be the last Masonic repository of that costume, unless its opposite number, the 'Isaac Newton' in Cambridge, still does the same.

I suppose every new-made brother thinks that what he experiences in his mother lodge is typical of what happens elsewhere; and, to be honest, at least 80% of the time that is pretty much the case. Differences between lodges—especially between those that follow the book of Emulation ritual—tend to be at the margins, matters of mere nuance, or sometimes individual practices in very small things that have become traditional over the years. Not so the Apollo. I was initiated, passed and raised with three others. We seldom had fewer than four candidates to a ceremony; the maximum I recall was seven. That had always been so, the throughput of candidates in the 19th century was truly formidable. The year 1874, for example, saw 50 initiates—*fifty*, W.M.! The *average* number of initiates per annum in the period 1870-1914 was 28; in 1920 there were 57 candidates, no doubt partly because of the influx of returning

ex-servicemen, and the annual average between the wars was 26. In a written memoir on this topic Costin, who was an historian, gave a characteristically dry comment: 'These great numbers inevitably led to many exclusions. On going down a number of Brethren failed to continue their subscriptions ... In this as in other respects perhaps the nature of undergraduates changes little.'

The Lodge had actually had its knuckles rapped by head office twice in the 19th century, once for assuming that it had a blanket dispensation to initiate candidates under 21—actually it had had, but some fool of a secretary had let it lapse and it was not renewed, so every dispensation had to be sought individually; the other time was for short-cutting the period that needed to elapse between passing and raising.

I assumed that it was normal form for there to be multiple candidates, until I discovered differently: in fact I have never seen more than two candidates at a time in any other lodge. The reason of course was in order to accommodate the numbers of undergraduate students who wished to become Masons during their University career; and the total membership used to run at around 300, but most of those being like me, non-resident; there are no 'country members' paying reduced sub. However that has all recently changed, since the Oxford Masonic Hall now charges capitation on numerical membership rather than on attendees, and non-residents were urged to resign but still come to meetings whenever they wanted. I complied with considerable regret. There were only six meetings a year, two per term, but we always performed two ceremonies, or a degree followed by the Installation. The Stewards were required to attend rehearsal and to practise the role of, in effect, assistant deacons. Everyone was expected to be able to slot into a junior office at no notice. This was a terrific learning experience. The only time I have suffered a complete 'dry' in any Lodge was when the IG was late (he was an athletics blue!) and at no notice I was asked to sub (I had only just been raised and was not even a steward)—and at the appropriate knocks I reported, but could not think of the words, and instead of saying "There now stand at the door of the Lodge brs. A, B, & C who have been regularly initiated into Masonry, passed to the 2nd degree" etc., I heard myself saying "It's the candidates, W.M.". Luckily someone came to my aid, probably the S.W.

It seemed to be the most natural thing in the world that the Prov.GM for Oxfordshire, Lord Rathcreedan, should have been present for my initiation; I did not then know that he, like most of his predecessors and his two successors, was an initiate member of the 'Apollo'. The present ProvGM is not, however, which may have something to do with the change of capitation fees. As a novice I was struck by the variety of aprons on show: I did not know that the Lodge had a quite disproportionate number of Grand Officers on its books. My old patron and proposer Costin was now flying very high: he was already thrice past master, and a Grand Officer, J.G.D. in

about 1947 I think; by the time of his death in 1970 he had been Master 5 times, once in each of 5 consecutive decades from the '20s to the '60s. He was soon appointed Deputy Prov. GM (he was also Prov GM of Oxford and Berks in the Mark degree and Inspector-General for Oxford Bucks and Berks in Rose Croix, and for good measure, was elected President of St. John's); but in status, our most prominent Grand Officers at that time were, first, the Earl of Scarbrough who was actually Grand Master; and secondly the Grand Secretary, Bro. James Stubbs. Lord Scarbrough was in fact an Honorary Member: the Lodge was extremely *un*-snobbish in every respect except one. In those days if you wanted to be an Hon. member, you had to be an initiate of the Lodge and then rise to be head of your Constitution. That narrowed the field a bit; but on that basis the Apollo had two Honorary members in my time, Lord Scarbrough, who attended very occasionally, and the Earl of Donoughmore, Grand Master of Ireland, whom we never saw at all. The Lodge was inclined to take rank for granted and in one respect was perhaps rather slack: we did not normally salute Grand Officers and under no imaginable circumstances Provincial Officers; at Installations we would give the Provincial Grand Master 7, and if memory serves we gave Lord Scarbrough his 11 on the only occasion that he came during my time, but that was no doubt just to say that we had done it.

Five terms before my own initiation, Lord Scarbrough's son Viscount Lumley was initiated in the presence of his father, but he was never seen in the lodge again. We all know that sort of thing happens, but not normally in such a high-profile case. It was still a bit of a talking-point two years later. James Stubbs on the other hand was a tower of strength to the lodge and seldom missed a meeting. People who did not know him used to refer to him as the Great Architect of Great Queen Street, and it is certainly true that he was extremely firm in his opinions and never left anyone in doubt as to what he thought was the correct procedure. A great friend of mine named Michael Foster Taylor was a Grand Steward in the early 1970s, and I remember him telling me of a briefing meeting that James Stubbs held for the incoming Stewards, in which, among other things, he told them that if there was a shortfall on the catering account *they* were liable to make it good—historically, of course, it was always the function of the Grand Stewards to lay on a banquet for the Grand Master. Anyway, one of those present saw fit to ask "Wouldn't it be a good idea to put up the dining fee?" In the awful silence that followed, James 'fixed him with a basilisk stare'—a look that would have turned men to stone—and informed him that there were literally hundreds of Lodges in the English Constitution and its provinces & districts overseas that would give anything to have the privilege of nominating a Grand Steward, and if the Bro. wished to waive his own Lodge's traditional prerogative there would be no difficulty at all in filling the gap. Nothing more was heard of the suggestion. When the

Counties were re-organized in the early 1970s, someone asked James what difference this would make to the organization of English Freemasonry, and he replied "Precisely no difference at all"—which is why Halesowen, Dudley, Stechford, & King's Heath are still in Worcs., and Worcs. is not merged with Herefordshire, and I am sure that this is how we all prefer it. Since the county mergers have now been unscrambled, and Worcs.' decree nisi with Hereford has now become absolute, we can see that James Stubbs had more foresight than the politicians. He died in 2000, aged 89, after a Masonic life of nearly 70 years.

But, to return to the man I knew so well, in his dealings with the junior members of the Apollo James Stubbs was the very soul of kindness and would give any guidance or help asked without ever being either pompous or patronising. He was also a repository of lodge folk-lore. To give one example, I used to visit some of the 'town' lodges as the guest of my father's friends—invitations extended in the hope, seldom disappointed, of being invited back to the Apollo—and I remember noticing that in the Apollo, but in no other lodge that I had seen, the Assistant Director of Ceremonies sat by the front left-hand edge of the Secretary's table, and certainly did very little to Assist in the Direction of the Ceremonies. I asked James why this was, and he said—"Remember this, or else the tradition will be lost". He told me that for over 30 years—near the end of which time he was himself initiated—the Lodge Secretary was V.W.Bro Philip Colville Smith, known as PC to everyone, who from 1918 till his death in 1936 also doubled as Grand Secretary in London—those were the days!—while maintaining his room in High Street, Oxford and being, at intervals, five times master of the Apollo, the last time 44 years after the first. As tends to happen he became rather dictatorial, and the duty of the ADC was to bear all messages and *commands* from Colville Smith to the WM or absolutely anybody else.

As it happens we had a dictatorial secretary at the time of my initiation; his name was Dr Clive Saxton (Ph.D., that is). He had rendered the Lodge great service during the war when the University was more-or-less shut down and there were no freshmen undergraduates to initiate into Masonry. Bro. Saxton did more than anyone to keep the Lodge alive and reasonably active during those difficult years. His reward was the secretarship thereafter. He had a successful practice in Oxford in accountancy and property management, and could call upon all the secretarial help he wanted. He was also treasurer in all but name: he prepared the annual balance sheets, which were invariably immaculate. But he did rather treat the Lodge as though he were the sole director of Lodge policy; there was no Committee, for example, and things would happen or not happen according to how Bro. Clive Saxton viewed the matter. As you can imagine, this was not too difficult with masters who were relatively inexperienced, and in any case a natural feeling of gratitude to Bro. Saxton

for having kept the Lodge afloat prevented any serious ill-will.

Matters came to a head in an unexpected way. Way back in the 1920s the Lodge had initiated a Mr. Ian Douglas Campbell, great-nephew to the Duke of Argyll. That was the last the Lodge saw of him until 1958, by which time he had succeeded a fairly remote cousin as Duke, and someone had apparently suggested to him that he might be a possible Grand Master for Scotland. He applied to become a re-joining member of the Lodge with a view to taking the other degrees. Bro. Saxton agreed to this without further ado, but the first that the Lodge heard of it was when there appeared on the summons 'to ballot for, as a re-joining member, Bro. Ian Douglas Campbell, 11th D. of A.', then, further down the page, to pass to the Second Degree two or three young Brn. 'and, if elected, Br. the D. of A.' The Lodge as a whole, including James Stubbs, was not at all happy about this. I remember James saying 'Do we really want him?' The Duke seemed to be using the Lodge as a convenience; he didn't live in Oxford or indeed anywhere near it, and there was no way in which he could contribute anything to it; and besides, his private life was rather, shall I say, colourful, though his lurid and heavily-publicized divorce case still lay in the future. Obviously this was the sort of idea that would have been killed stone dead by a Lodge Committee, but as I said there wasn't one. Anyway, when push came to shove no-one felt they could actually black-ball the Duke and he was duly elected and passed to the Second Degree. That was it. We never saw him again. He didn't even stay for the Festive Board. The whole business left a nasty taste in the mouth. However, it so happened that the Brother who was due to take the chair for the next year had to drop out at fairly short notice and the reigning master, a youngish don, had a second innings. With the confidence of a successful year in the chair behind him he grasped the nettle and relieved Bro. Saxton of the Secretaryship. Bro. Saxton took this very hard at the time, and in fact he only came to the Lodge once more thereafter, to complain about the alleged unintelligibility of the Treasurer's accounts, but the Lodge in general greatly benefited—not least because it promptly acquired a committee!

The lodge had one rule which was unwritten, but rigorously observed, namely that only Brn. living within 'Proctorial Limits' could hold office, whether WM, Warden, Steward or anything else. The rather arcane term 'proctorial limits' is a typical piece of Oxford parochialism. It meant in practice a three-mile radius from Carfax, the centre of Oxford. This rule was *unwritten*, because it would be quite contrary to the Book of Constitutions to state overtly in the bye-laws that certain Brn. who were in perfectly good standing were nevertheless barred from holding office. It simply happened that no Master-elect would ever invite a non-resident to take an office, nor would a non-resident Bro. ever be elected Master. The purpose was to ensure that the undergraduate members got a fair turn and to make it worth their while

to appear regularly. This rule sets the Apollo apart from, say, the Isaac Newton University Lodge' in Cambridge, where you get Brn. travelling in from, say, Bradford or Basingstoke to be Inner Guard or Junior Deacon. In my second, third and fourth years I was respectively Steward (invariably acting as an assistant deacon), S.D., and Junior Warden. My career then took me out of Oxford and I joined the large band of ex-Apollo officers with which Masonic England is littered.

Needless to say, the Apollo did not employ the book of 'Emulation' ritual, complete with all its split infinitives, hanging participles, and faulty logic—I can supply examples of all these on request. It was one of just three lodges that used the 'Oxford' ritual, and the book, though beautifully produced, was sometimes less explicit than it might have been. Where the Emulation book prints a whole string of initials, like t t e a, t t t o b t r etc, the Oxford book merely left large blanks, saying '&c &c' which put a high premium on the ritualist being properly taught it in the first place. This was particularly evident in the 3rd degree ceremony as it happens. It was as JW there that I first delivered the explanation of the second T.B.—the first time of dozens—and when I do that rendition nowadays the Brn. will still hear phrases from the 'Oxford' working, which will remain with me for the rest of my life.

The Apollo always cultivated good relations with the 'town' lodges, and one practical way of doing this was at the installation ceremony. There was an amiable tradition by which the Installing Master would invite three visiting Masters of the town lodges to occupy the Wardens' and IG's chairs—a gesture which was much liked. My father took the SW's chair once during my time, to mutual satisfaction. I have never seen this done in any other lodge. (The installation itself, of course, was the standard version; the 'extended' working that we are all so familiar with is hardly known outside Worcs.) There was always some curiosity among visitors to see how young men in their early twenties would get on with things like the Charge or the Tracing Board, or for that matter the WM's work—the Apollo's master would often be no more than 28 or 29—and it was a point of honour to put on a good show, but of course that is the time of life when it is easiest to memorize large chunks of material correctly and stylishly. Assuming you continued to reside in Oxford, however, you would *not* normally progress straight from SW to WM: you would be given a gap year in which to master the work in advance, while holding office as either Almoner or ADC. This worked very well and made obvious sense for young and relatively inexperienced Masons. One such was Bro. Sam Barnish, the elder son of the Rev. John Barnish who was a member of Fort Royal, the Lodge that I joined in 1976, and Prov.G.Chaplain in the Freddie Griffiths era—some older Brn. may remember him. Sam stayed in Oxford to complete a Ph.D. and was master of the Apollo before he was 30, and very good he was.

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One of the candidates initiated alongside me was another St. John's freshman named Richard Holme, an old boy of the Royal Masonic School who was already a good friend of mine. In those days he professed Socialist principles. He later became Lord Holme and President of the Liberal Democrats—such are the changes wrought by time. He died earlier this year. That, WM, is the last time that I shall touch upon the forbidden subject of politics in Lodge; though I should add that the poor fellow came in for some unwanted notoriety when it emerged that he was involved in a scandal involving a call-girl or two and some spanking. In the term after my own initiation the candidates included Martin Greenwood, whose father Leonard Greenwood was present, and visited quite often thereafter, because he was actually a member: older Worcs. Masons may remember him as an Assistant Prov. G.M. in the 1970s. We have his Apollo Centenary Jewel in the Museum. It was in 1957 that I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance; little did we think that we would once again become members of the same Lodge, because unbeknown to me he too was a member of Fort Royal.

So much for the lodge meetings—what about the festive board. These tended to be very light-hearted occasions. Of course the formalities were observed, the toast list was worked through, but during the formal toasts at any rate, after the Master had submitted the toast, he would point to a junior member more or less at random, to give the time for the 'fire'. You can imagine that the style tended towards a brisk light-infantry pace. But the taking of wine before the toasts was unpredictable and often quite funny; though there were some regular landmarks. If the WM was a Don, he would express the wish to take wine with his own pupils, past and present; in the summer term any WM would take wine with those Brn. who were taking 'Schools', that being Oxford's parochial term for Finals. After the taking of wine the D.C. would announce 'Brn. you have the WM's permission [or, sometimes, 'command'] to toast one another'—I would rise to my feet and call out 'Brother Greenwood', let us say, and Bro. Greenwood would rise and the two of us would take wine with each other. The etiquette was strictly that no-one could 'challenge' any bro. *superior* in rank to himself, but between equals or from a superior to a junior it was perfectly acceptable. It was said that Grand Lodge rather disapproved of 'cross-toasting' and had actually caused it to be stopped in some London lodges because it got too rowdy. It would be hypocritical to suggest that it was always entirely muted in the Apollo either, but amidst the fun there was an effort to maintain some decorum too. Suffice it to say that Grand Lodge never attempted to stop the practice with us because we had too many friends at court in those days; it seemed to some that Masonic England was run by a kind of Apollo Mafia, not only the Grand Master and James Stubbs at Great Queen Street, but the then President of the Board of General Purposes had a son in the Lodge

(who himself later became President of the Board of Benevolence, Sir John Welch, Bart.), and at least four Prov.G.M.s were Apollo initiates. After the departure of James Stubbs from the Grand Secretaryship, head office succeeded in killing the practice of cross-toasting. The immediate past Grand Secretary who took over on the enforced retirement of Cdr. Higham and did such a brilliant job, namely Bro. Jim Daniel, is an Apollo man, but even under him the the practice was not revived. There, I thought, the matter sadly rested, but in July last year I fell in with the then Grand Secretary, Bro. Bob Morrow, who is a joining member of the Apollo, and he told me that he had sanctioned the re-introduction of cross-toasting, provided that due decorum was maintained. Bravo! (Sadly, he has since lost his job!)

Everyone who has ever been to the 'Apollo' says that it is unique and I think it probably is. It continues to this day its historic function, of introducing quite large numbers of young men into the world of Masonry, and while always being a body that it was fun, and enjoyable, to belong to, it has never lost sight of those cardinal principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, & Truth. Long may it continue.

Such, WM, was the highly privileged environment in which my long and chequered Masonic career began.

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