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Tel. 0272-833759

85 ALLERTON ROAD,
WHITCHURCH,
BRISTOL,
BS14 9RE

20th. March, 1982.

Dear W.Bro. Grounsell,

I was very glad to have had a telephone conversation with you a short while ago and I have pleasure in enclosing description of the Moira Apron which came into being in 1811 within the Province of Bristol. I was most interested to hear that you have one in Worcester.

I am a member of Moira Lodge No. 92 (London) and also of Moira Lodge of Honour No. 326 (Bristol) both of which I attend regularly as well as Moira Chapter in London. As I think you gathered I have particular interest in Francis Rawdon, Earl of Moira and 1st. Marquess of Hastings and we in the various Moira Lodges pay tribute to the Mason who probably did more for Freemasonry than any other man. I have done a certain amount of research, not only into the life of his Lordship but also the Lodges that bear his name.

There are five Lodges in existence bearing the name Moira or Francis Rawdon and there is a remarkable fraternal bond between them. Particularly the Moira Lodges have long histories whilst the Francis Rawdon Lodge is a daughter Lodge of the Moira Lodge of Honour. They are :-

Moira Lodge No. 92 - London	Constituted in 1755
Moira Lodge No. 91 - Belleville, Canada	Constituted in 1801
Moira Lodge No. 324 - Stalybridge, Ches	Constituted in 1806
Moira Lodge of Honour No. 326 - Bristol	Constituted in 1809
Francis Rawdon Lodge No. 6726 - Bristol	Consecrated in 1948

There is considerable interchange of visits and in fact in May 1980 a party of eight (4 from Moira, Bristol, 3 from Moira London and 1 from Francis Rawdon) paid a visit to Moira Lodge in Canada to commemorate the 125th. Anniversary of the Grand Lodge of Canada Province of Ontario. In the past members of Moira, Canada have paid visits to Moira, London even as far back as 1924.

There is a remarkable history in the form of the Minute Books of the Lodges all being existent in Moira Bristol, Moira Stalybridge, Francis Rawdon and only two missing in Moira London. Moira Canada have lost some of theirs over the years, particularly in

the very early days of their existence and mainly due to fires in wooden buildings.

In Moira Lodge No. 92 we have several of the Earl's Aprons and other regalia including the magnificent Jewel presented to him by the Society of Free and Accepted Masons of England at the Moira Festival on 27th. January, 1813. The special Jewel that Moira Lodge No. 92 ^{grace him} in 1804 is in the Birmingham Masonic Museum.

As you probably know he distinguished himself as a Soldier, Statesman and Mason. He was very prominent during the American War of Independence, was a Peer of the Realms of England, Scotland and Ireland, a very great friend of the Prince of Wales (later George IV) and his Royal brothers, was probably the chief creditor of the Prince of Wales, Governor General and Commander of Forces in India where he suppressed the Gurkhas and made a peace with them that has never been broken and they are, in fact, today ~~are~~ a unit of the British Regular Army. He also put down other bands of brigands. Soon after relinquishing this office he was appointed Governor and Commander in Chief of Forces, Malta where he died (en route for Naples, due to ill health) and was buried on the ramparts.

Masonically he held the office of Acting Grand Master (today "pro") in England, Scotland and India. He succeeded in getting Freemasonry exempted under the Act of 1799 for the suppression of secret societies and was the principal architect in bringing about the Union of the two rival Grand Lodges in 1813. He "made" the Duke of Clarence, Prince William of Gloucester and HRH. Ernest Augustus (afterwards the Duke of Cumberland and King of Hanover) and proposed HRH. Duke of Sussex into Holy Royal Arch Chapter.

I believe I am right in stating that the Worcester Lodge No. 280 is the only existing Lodge whose Warrant is signed "Rawdon, A.G.M." and the remaining existing Warrants including Warrants of Assignment are signed "Moira, A.G.M.". Moira Lodge of Honour meet under a Warrant of Confirmation "issued" by Earl of Moira indicating that the original was destroyed by enemy action during World War II. It was he who issued their original Warrant when the Lodge made direct approach to him in 1809 and they took over the Warrant of a Lodge that had become defunct.

I hope the foregoing is of some interest to you and of use to your Museum which, unfortunately, I was only able to see a small part when I attended a Lodge at the Masonic Hall in February. What I saw was most impressive.

With kind regards, I remain,

Yours sincerely & fraternally
Norman J. B. Coburn L.G.R.

THE MOIRA APRON

In 1813 the Moira Lodge of Honour No. 326 (Bristol), then No. 606, adopted a distinctive Apron known as "The Moira Apron. It was of white satin, and edged with red and trimmed with gold fringe. It had neither fall, rosettes, practically the whole front being covered by a well drawn allegorical picture, engraved by G. Johnson of Bristol from a painting by William Hobday.

The first figure nearly under the Abraxis represents Enoch in the attitude of adoration near him, in the centre of three stands Moses with the tablets of the law in one hand, and in the other a sceptre with a dove resting on top of it holding a crown in her beak, which she appears presenting to him as a reward for his labours. On the one side of Moses stands Aholiab with the plan of a temple in his hands; and on the other stands Bezaleel holding the golden candlesticks, which when symbolically united with the seven eyes of the Masonic Abraxis: at a distance from Bezaleel, nearly in line with him stands St. John the Baptist with the lamb by his side, and a cross and flag on his shoulder: thus much for the first five for the figures every way form a five, seven.

In the foreground we have Solomon King of Israel, and Hiram King of Tyre on a throne between two pillars, in conference about the temple of Jerusalem a plan of which is presented to them by Hiram Abiff: near them in the foreground stands St. John the Evangelist with the Holy Bible open upon the Altar of the censer of incense, one hand rests on that sacred volume, the other is elevated towards heaven, proclaiming the truth of every word recorded in the consecrated book. The next figure is Haggai the Prophet steadfastly kneeling to the Abraxis, he has on the Breastplate of Truth, and with his hands joined appears to be supplicating the assistance of heaven in the building of the second temple; Zerubbabel the Prince of the people, has his eyes also elevated towards the Abraxis, to which Joshua the high priest points with his hand (and which when properly explained contains some of the most important secrets far the most impressive beauties in masonry), at their back are some of the ruins of the former temple. This Historic Engraving is surrounded with a laurel wreath, on top of which in a medallion is a portrait of the EARL OF MOIRA intertwined with laurels as a reward for his labours: and at the bottom are the following words: "If wisdom in council, eloquence in debate, valour in battle, steady patriotism and universal benevolence, be deserving of record in the page of history, and archives of masonry, so subject in the British dominions possesses more genuine claims than the Right Honourable the Earl of Moira A.G.M. of England, whose memory this Masonic Badge is designed to perpetuate."

In acknowledging this tribute the Earl of Moira wrote :-

"The very obliging compliments which you have been pleased to pay to me to have had earlier thanks. But you will readily comprehend how incessantly my last hours in London must have been engaged; and I trust you will think I have made allowance for me. Accept, now, my best acknowledgements. AS EVERY MASON'S DUTY REQUIRES HIM TO BE AWARE OF HIS OWN WEAKNESS."

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In the foreground we have Solomon King of Israel, and Hiram King of Tyre, seated on a throne between two pillars, in conference about the temple of Jerusalem, a plan of which is presented to them by Hiram Abiff: near them in the centre stands St. John the Evangelist with the Holy Bible open upon the Altar near the censer of incense, one hand rests on that sacred volume, the other is elevated towards heaven, proclaiming the truth of every word recorded in that consecrated book. The next figure is Haggai the Prophet steadfastly looking to the Abraxis, he has on the Breastplate of Truth, and with his hands extended appears to be supplicating the assistance of heaven in the building of the second temple; Zerubbabel the Prince of the people, has his eyes also elevated towards the Abraxis, to which Joshua the High priest points with his hand; (and which when properly explained contains some of the most important, and by far the most impressive beauties in masonry), at their back are some of the ruins of the former temple. This Historic Engraving is surrounded with a curtain, on top of which in a medallion is a portrait of the EARL OF MOIRA, intertwined with laurels as a reward for his labours: and at the bottom are the following words: "His wisdom in council, eloquence in debate, valour in arms, steady patriotism and universal benevolence, be deserving of record in the page of history, and archives of masonry, so subject in the British dominions possesses more genuine claims than the Right Honourable the Earl of Moira, A.G.M. of England, whose memory this Masonic Badge is designed to perpetuate".

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I have the honour, Sir, to be your very
Humble Servant and Brother,
Portsmouth April 11th. 1813. (signed) MOIRA

"From the purity of the principles which our fraternity profess, inculcate and practise, there can be no doubt but every Member of our truly ancient and truly honourable Society, will feel anxious to express the high sense he entertains of the obligations due to his Lordship, for his indefatigable exertions to promote the welfare of the craft generally and individually, and therefore

as a testimony of respect, and manifestation of Brotherly love, he will clothe himself with this truly appropriate and comprehensive badge, (containing all the most eminent G. and A.G.M.) or decorate his house with one of the Prints.

They are printed on Satin, Leather could not be procured large enough to take them perfect, the Engraving being 18 by 16 inches, and from the very great expense the Painting and Engraving hath cost, the price of 5s.6d. on Paper, 6s. on Jean, 10s. on thin, and 12s.6d. on thick Satin, will not, it is hoped, be considered as acting otherwise than on the square between Brother and Brother. There are a few proofs worked off on Paper at 11s. each, and any of them on Paper or Satin may be had, properly coloured, at 2s.6d. each extra.

No. 2 Lower College Street. - Bristol, April 11, 1813. "

The Moira Apron was adopted by several Lodges, but its use did not become very general, as shortly after the union of the rival Grand Lodges a uniform style of Apron was prescribed by the Book of Constitutions in 1815.

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