

Origins of Scottish Masonry

& in particular those of the

Lodge of Melrose St. John 1bis.

A lecture to be delivered to the assembled brethren within Lodge 3201 The Caldwell Lodge, March, Cambridgeshire on 17 January 2012 by invitation of the Worshipful Master Bro. David Lea and with the permission of The Grand Lodge of Scotland and those in amity with it.

W.M. thank you for your invitation to present this lecture to the assembled brethren

The topic of the history of the Lodge of Melrose is one that has fascinated me since affiliating (or joining) the lodge in 2004 and one that I am passionate & enthusiastic about.

However before I start let me please make it clear that I am not a qualified historian or researcher and I am using a considerable amount of material available to anyone for the asking or buying as well as the efforts of many an illustrious brother who has gone before me.

So were to start?

Firstly it is known that Masonry has existed in Scotland since the 16th Century and there is evidence that it has existed from the early ages of the 12th Century.

Lodge Edinburgh Mary's Chapel holds the oldest recorded minute of a lodge still in existence dating from July 1599 and from which the lodge holds a continuous record of minutes.

Lodge Aitchisons Haven held the oldest recorded minute from 9th January 1599 but the lodge is no longer in existence. The place of Aitchisons Haven is a small port between Mussleburgh & Prestonpans. This was probably a neutral place which would not invoke the envy of various Burghs from which it drew its members.

Lodge Kilwinning is harder to pin down although minutes are recorded from 20th December 1642. The Lodge however claims to have had jurisdiction on the west since time immemorial and links its origins to the consecration of the Abbey of Kilwinning giving the date 1140.

Lodge Aberdeen has the oldest recorded document referencing the Masons Lodge in the Aberdeen City archives and dated 1480, but this is a civic record and not a Lodge document.

Then of course there is Melrose who, though only having minutes continuously from 1674, claim anecdotal evidence in the form of references and buildings to have existed from time immemorial and link their establishment from the consecration of Melrose Abbey in 1136.

So where does this leave us you might ask?

Generally squabbling!

Often having little digs and asides at after dinner speeches and toasts mostly!

But in all seriousness a review of all the various claims needs to be approached but with caution. It is all too easy to take stories and myths as facts and, as in most other cases, very little written evidence or documentation exists from the 16th Century and earlier. In order to look at the early history of Masonry in Scotland I will try and give a brief recount of the history and claims of the main three ancient lodges to being the oldest in existence.

So first comes 'Nothing'!

That is the Lodge Mother Kilwinning number nothing on the Roll of The Grand Lodge of Scotland.

The ancient Lodge of Kilwinning claims that the town of the same name is the cradle of Masonry in Scotland but has never held any proof to support that claim relying solely on the interpretation taken of the words and wording of old manuscripts and in particular those of the Schaw Statutes of 1598 & 1599.

What they claim is that many working masons must have been brought across from Europe to assist in the building of the great cathedrals and abbeys erected particularly in the early 12th Century. This is not contested but there Abbeys consecrated in the borders at Kelso and Melrose 12 and 4 years respectively before Kilwinning.

These 'sair sancts' of buildings were constructed under the principal benefaction of King David I who had Holyrood Palace and around 10 Abbeys built throughout Scotland as validation of his piety in the hope that in using his wealth to the glory of god in this world he would be well received in grace and glory in the hereafter. Kilwinning was not one of King David's Abbeys but was founded by Hugh de Morville in the same vain line of thought sometime between 1140 and 1157.

With the consecration of the Borders Abbeys being of an earlier date than Kilwinning, which for clarity is on the Ayrshire coast, how then could they exercise control of masons who have already been hard at work in Kelso and Melrose? Considering the logical route even of transient workers like the masons of old it is likely they moved from mainland Europe east to west across

Scotland. Kilwinning may have a claim to exercising control in the west coast area which seems to be backed up by the geographical area allocated under the Schaw Statutes, but it is not likely to have extended eastwards beyond the central Lothian's at that time. It was in the context of exercising that control in its given area that it was to be known as a 'heid lodge' or head lodge and along with the implications of calling it a head lodge and on the interpretations of the words and wording of the statutes you are drawn into the argument that they should then be given precedence as the Mother Lodge; but it is only the Mother Lodge of those daughter lodges it chartered as Edinburgh and Melrose would both refute any claim that Kilwinning had anything to do with their establishment. It is therefore the operating as a head lodge that makes Kilwinning unique as no other lodge in history is recorded as operating in such a way although it is known that Melrose did charter daughter lodges. We cannot argue too strongly about Kilwinning using the date of consecration of the abbey in determining its history as this is principally the same argument that we at Melrose use for our date.

In stating that the establishment of the lodge is synonymous with the consecration of the Abbey Kilwinning states that this as a fact is obscured by the loss of early records but it is generally supposed that the builders of the Abbey did so around 1140. This date is open to question even in the book of their Lodge history which I have used for reference. Firstly because they originally put it to the reader that it is false history for a Lodge to take the action of creating this match of date's yet one chapter later seeks to do so in its own right to validate its claim to precedence. Secondly, the reference is made to a document in the Register at London Register No. 279 being a document found in the possession of the estate of the secretary of the lodge who also held the post of Barony Officer of the Eglington Estates (being the

major feu holders and senior family of the area at the time). This document clearly states "... was founded by Hugh de Morville, High Constable of Scotland, in the year 1157. He was the son of Hugh the founder of the Convent at Dryburgh". The account of the Abbey was given "In the year of King David the Great of the year 1129 and reigned 29 years" giving the date of the document as 1158.

The history of Kilwinning is also intertwined with what is accepted as the being the beginning of Masonry as we know it in the last years of the 16th Century and the early 17th Century. This was when the Kings Master of Works, William Schaw, wrote his rules and regulations for the governance of the trade of Masons. The manuscripts are known as the Schaw Statutes to which I have previously referred and in the first statute of December 1598 he lays out the instructions for the proper operation of a lodge and the requisite records it must keep of initiations and bookings and passing to Fellow of the craft. It also stipulates the rules a master must follow in the employment of apprentices and the management of his site of work confirming the fines that will be imposed on those found to be breaking the rules. The second statute concerns itself more with the order of precedence he has allocated in the management of the lodges and is particularly addressed to Kilwinning. It clearly puts Kilwinning as the second lodge and Edinburgh as the first and principal lodge. It is also this second statute that calls Kilwinning the head [and second] lodge of Scotland and this combined with the item stating *'that the whole and ancient acts and statutes made of before by the predecessors of the masons of Kilwinning be observed faithfully and kept by the craft in all time coming'* combine to form the principal claim that Kilwinning is the cradle of masonry in Scotland; their argument being why impose our acts and statutes that are acknowledged to have existed in control of masons in the west to all of the

lodges in the whole country and then deliberately call the lodge a head lodge, as well as deliberately seeking to give Edinburgh lead in the organisation because Schaw lived in Holyrood Palace and an Edinburgh base would be convenient.

This act of words and wording clearly to them and convincingly in their eventual argument to Grand Lodge allowed them to argue seniority to all lodges and win the title of Mother Lodge.

It was perhaps an acknowledgement that from their unique position of being a controlling lodge they already had rules and regulations that could be used and emanated to all other lodges and in appeasing their complaint about the first Schaw statute not giving clarity to precedence that in noting they were the head lodge it has been misinterpreted as being **the** head lodge.

Whilst dealing with the Schaw Statutes it is interesting to note that Schaw never mentions any other Lodges in Scotland except Edinburgh, Kilwinning and Stirling which he places third in his roll call of lodges. This does not mean that as some would have you believe that they didn't exist at all.

It is perhaps now that you can see how complicated the early history and primogenitor of the lodges starts to become especially when including all of the emotions that these historical documents and claims invoke.

However onward we must go – to the creation of Grand Lodge of Scotland in 1736.

1599 to 1736 is a massive jump in time I know however and mainly through the rough wooing of Scotland and the reformation having laid waste to most of the glorious buildings with which Masonry had become associated this period was about the restoration, re-establishment and organisation of the Mason craft.

Edinburgh had then become not only the capital city of Scotland but through Schaw the centre of masonry with Mary's Chapel claiming precedence in its hierarchy. Kilwinning continued to act as an independent Grand Lodge and issues charters and warrants during this period of time including reaching its influence into the capital city when it was beseeched to provide the charter to Cannongate Lodge whose members had split from Mary's Chapel and in being a separate Burgh did not want to be under the influence of the City Burgesses.

Although it is not clear if Kilwinning was actively involved in the formation of Grand Lodge it is accepted that they acted by proxy. However by 1743 the issue of precedence had reached an insurmountable level and in seeing no future in what was an Edinburgh centric Grand Lodge, Kilwinning withdrew and took no further part.

As we jibe – they threw their toys out of the pram because they weren't getting what they wanted.

With no opposition to their claim and no other lodge able to produce contrary evidence Mary's Chapel laid claim to being distinguished as Lodge Number 1.

Kilwinning was to carry on as an independent Grand Lodge again for the next 60 years again erecting lodges and issuing charters. Unity with Grand Lodge was eventually agreed in 1807 with the principal term being that Mother Kilwinning was to be placed at the head of the roll of lodges. Mother was used

because it had daughter lodges and demanded to be distinguished from them as being superior and in placing their argument before the commission from Grand Lodge convinced them that their interpretation of the Schaw Statutes meant they were the Lodge from which Schaw insisted all other lodges used the rules and statutes for all time coming as they had been by the masons of Kilwinning – [my paraphrasing]. To place the Lodge at the head of the roll Grand Lodge had to come up with a number superior to 1 and therefore created the number nothing.

As we say in Melrose – Kilwinning is nothing!

So ends a brief history of Kilwinning but as you have heard the history of one ancient lodge cannot be told without overlapping the history of the others.

So let us now consider Edinburgh Mary's Chapel holding of Number 1 on the roll of the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

As I have intimated already its claim to precedence rests in the minutes of the lodge from 1599 to present along with the Schaw Statutes declaration that Edinburgh will be the first and principal lodge. As Kilwinning had withdrawn from Grand Lodge this left Mary's Chapel unopposed to request and be granted the rank of Number 1 based on the above testimonials when the numbering of lodges first took place in 1737. However, this simplifies matters a great deal.

The lodge stems from an historical co-existence with a Burgh Guild or Incorporation which itself met in Mary's Chapel on Niddry Wynd – hence it was to become known by the name of Mary's Chapel.

The Incorporation of Masons and Wrights [carpenters] was granted a seal of charter in 1475 and although these trades would have existed for hundreds of years previously this date is the formal regularisation of the trades under the control of Burgesses of the city who wanted to control the work and pay of the trades themselves. When the co-existent lodge was actually formed is unclear as there are no records with this specific information, but they met in the same premises of the Incorporation of Mary's Chapel and was separate in its structure to the Incorporation. What is known is that by 1599 they met in the same building which was now owned by the Incorporation and their mutual existence was probably achieved through the acquiescence of the lodge in having the Deacon of the Incorporation as the presiding official of the Lodge. It is generally accepted that the separate Lodge was formed to show that Masons had control of their own trade and skills protected by time served apprenticeships, secrets, words and skills that could only be communicated by them. The Incorporation was on the other hand concerned with the management and control of all trades within the Incorporation including the Masons and endeavoured to exercise authority over them whilst working within the boundaries of the Burgh. The overlap of Lodge and Incorporation was to take an entered working apprentice of the Guild and initiate him into the lodge. He would then progress after serving his Lodge apprenticeship to fellow of the craft or master by proving his skills in architecture and building as well as the skills of memory. Meanwhile having become a Journeyman mason he would then eventually be invited to become a Master of the Guild and perhaps eventually become a Burgess of the Incorporation.

The Brethren should note that there only existed two levels of membership with a Lodge in those days as the creation of a separate third degree was to

happen in its fullest during the Victorian era when most of the Lodge workings, rituals and secrets were re-written into the format which we recognise today.

Also, it did not stand that every member of the Incorporation was a member of the Lodge. The Lodge was created as mentioned previously to give a separate body solely of Masons who were in control of their trade and any who transgressed the rules and regulations of the order. The irony of this existence was that the lack of official power was to cause a rift between the Incorporation and Lodge as the Lodge had to refer back to the Guild in order to access Burgh Council or Courts to enforce the rules and implement its penalties.

This situation was then compounded by the expansion in the building trade, the employment of a high number of apprentices by Masters and no hope of the Journeyman becoming a master because those already in position of power wanted to keep it and reap the financial benefits from having the work under their control. This eventually led to the break-away of the Journeymen from what they saw as an impotent and ineffectual Lodge to create their own Lodge of only working masons. Their request to create and manage a benevolent fund of their own for the benefit of Journeymen and their dependants being refused also added to the feeling of discontent. The Lodge of Journeymen Masons was created as a result and it is the only Lodge to be created by law in the Court of Session under a decret arbitral dated 8 January 1715. This allowed the Journeymen to meet together by themselves, and to give the Mason word but who could not be concerned with the regulation of the trade. The Lodge and Incorporation originally refused to recognise the new lodge but as the furore died down so the journeymen were allowed back into the lodge. The Journeyman lodge was quite unique in that although it only

existed as a lodge of operatives it was in fact working entirely as a speculative lodge because it had been banned by the same decret in being concerned with the management of the trade.

As Cannongate Kilwinning now also existed the strength of control over the towns masons became more tenuous and the masons of South Leith also broke away along with some masons of Cannongate to create yet a further new lodge to be called Cannongate and Leith, Leith and Cannongate indicating that the lodge did not want members of either area to take precedence over the other. Thus by the early 1700's Edinburgh had gone from being the only Lodge of the Burgh with Aitchisons Haven being the closest of any other Burgh to being one of four lodges; Edinburgh Mary's Chapel, Canongate Kilwinning, Journeymen Masons and C&L, L&C which today are Lodge number 1,2,8 & 5 respectively.

As part of the development of the New Town of Edinburgh, Niddrys Wynd and Mary's Chapel where to be demolished in 1787; The Lodge met in various premises during the ensuing years until it purchased Number 19 Hill Street in 1893. The Lodge then purchased number 17 Hill Street in 1911 and embarked on a redesign of the Lodge rooms within the two buildings and it is this that still exists today.

In confirmation that it was the 17th Century that saw the start of the changes to Freemasonry, Edinburgh also holds the oldest record of the admission of gentleman to membership of the Lodge. These gentlemen where in all probability allowed to become members to ensure that proper records were kept and the funds were maintained properly this being one of the demands of the Schaw Statutes. No doubt the membership served to satisfy the curiosity of those who knew of the existence of Lodges and wanted to know the secrets of

the Mason word for themselves. Also it would have given the lodge legitimacy and authority in having squires and nobility in their midst as they emerged into separate entities from their Burgh controlled counterparts and themselves became more involved in the speculative elements of lodge membership.

Mary's Chapel consistently claimed precedence based on its historic records which was granted in 1737 when Lodges were numbered on the Roll of Lodges. In all subsequent numberings entered into by Grand Lodge in 1771, 1816, 1822 and 1826 Mary's Chapel was never to relinquish its position as Lodge Number 1. However, as we can see with Kilwinning & Melrose this was not prevent Grand Lodge inserting Ancient Lodges into the Roll by quite inventive numbering – Kilwinning at Nothing and Melrose as 1bis.

So what is 1bis?

Number one with a raised or superscript 2.

It is the distinguished number of the second lodge Number 1.

So how was this to come about?

Melrose is listed in the Grand Lodge of Scotland Year Book in the list of historical dates not by name but by the reference to being 'The last Ancient Lodge to join Grand Lodge' in 1891.

So how does this entitle it to Lodge Number 1 designation especially when by this time many other lodges had been given a charter from Grand Lodge.

WELL!

It was exactly this point exemplified by trying to prove existence time immemorial that was to cause a great deal of the friction that existed between Melrose and Grand Lodge for over 100 years before being resolved to our satisfaction. Melrose was only able to present written minutes from 1674 but had strong anecdotal evidence in proof of its much earlier existence including the consecration and building of a magnificent Abbey that was to become one of the most endowed in the country. Grand Lodge insisted on only accepting the written evidence and also required the submission of all funds of the Lodge including that of the Benevolent Society which was as in most cases of Lodges in the 17th & 18th Centuries their *raison d'être*.

Given that Grand Lodge had acceded to such similar anecdotal evidence from Kilwinning in creating its union in 1807, Melrose continued to press its case for being recognised for its antiquity and in compromise agreed that the Lodge funds only would be relinquished but the Box Money of the Benevolent Society would be returned to its members according to the tickets therein. Grand Lodge conceded to the agreement by accepting evidence that Melrose was of antiquity and as Kilwinning was already Number 0 and Edinburgh was Number 1 the only way to appease Melrose was to enter it on the Roll of Lodges as the second Lodge Number 1 or 1bis. Because of the difficulty in proving the exact date of inception for these Lodges of antiquity Grand Lodge lists the lodges as being formed before 1598 in its published Roll of Lodges contained within the Year Book thereby diffusing any contention involved in published precise dates that might be contested.

So what are the claims of Melrose to such antiquity?

Put simply; The Abbey; The settlement of Masons as land owners; The Old Lodge; the written records.

The Abbey was consecrated in 1136, four years before the earliest date assigned to Kilwinning, but 8 years after the consecration of Kelso Abbey. However this was not the earliest church to exist as Old Melrose as it is now known was a settlement founded 2 miles further down the River Tweed & the town name derives from the Old Scots. This language was commonly used in the Borders and Lowlands describing settlement locations which can still be seen in town names e.g. Kaulk Hill, [chalk hill] becomes Caulk Ho becomes Kelso. In this sense Mull Rhos becomes Mailros becomes Melrose, where Mull Rhos is translated as bare promontory. This aptly describes the land captured within a horseshoe shape turn of the Tweed upon which the original town and church was built. The play on the words so popular in Edwardian society gave leave to the rebus of a masons mall with a rose as emblems of the name and of the town and which have been adopted in the Towns crest.

As far as can be ascertained, Oswald King of Northumbria established Melrose in 635 as a priory of the Episcopal See of Lindisfarne. Its priors were to number amongst them St Boisil who was to give his name to the nearby village of what is now called St Boswell, and St Cuthbert who took the office in 664 on the death of Boisil. It is of course this St Cuthbert after whom the walk to Lindisfarne from Melrose is named in honour of his pilgrimage.

From 1098 to 1136 Melrose which was rebuilt after its sacking by Kenneth II in 839, was a dependency of Coldingham. After inviting the Cistercian Monks of

Riveaulx to establish a monastery in the area King David 1st exchanged the Church of St Mary in Berwick, which was still a Royal seat, for the land of Mailros and attached to his house of Mailros in 1136. The Monks found the land mass of Mailros too small to build an Abbey worthy of the stipend vested upon it by King David and in their search for suitable lands settled upon a small farm known as Little Fordel; it is this land which was to prove so fertile that allowed the newly consecrated abbey to prosper. The Abbey begat the town in which the commoners who serviced the Abbey and its lands lived and have subsequently grown into the town we now know today.

The masons brought to Melrose to construct the Abbey would have moved from Kelso and consisted of masons of European origin as well as itinerant workers of varying skills. They would have settled in the nearby village of Newstead located not more than one mile along the river from the site of the Abbey. This village which claims to be the oldest continually inhabited village in the country began as a remnant of the occupying Roman army which had as its largest garrison settlement in the north called Trimontium taking its name from the three hills of the Eildons. This would have been the only inhabited village as it is thought that Old Melrose had already been abandoned and new Melrose was yet to be built.

Through their skill and assiduity in the building of the Abbey over the next 50 years and also in its rebuilding on 4 occasions over the next 300 years, some of the masons and their families settled permanently in Newstead and were given lands of their own to farm and keep by their Overlord. One of the most prominent families of this ilk is that of Mein or Meyne and it was on their lands that the old lodge building existed from 1613 to 1891. It is at the remnant stones of this building, now located in St John's Wynd, that we assemble in full

regalia on the third Saturday of June to receive the Mall of the Lodge [the Masters Mall] from a descendant representative of the masons who built the abbey and also to receive the newly made Melrosian [or town representative] on his tour of the Town Ceremonies or boundaries.

Although the exact date that the Mein's became involved is not known it is recorded that *Petrus de Mein* architect and mason was employed to work in the rebuilding of the Abbey by Robert the Bruce in 1322. The descendant Mein's were a numerous family and by the mid 17th Century had signed themselves in various trades including maltman and Ostler [innkeeper] as well as portioners. It is this latter term meaning proprietor of a small portion of land that confirms their settlement in the village and the gratitude felt by their Overlord for the services they had provided. This is even confirmed by James VI in 1606.

Parts of the old lodge building including engraved lintels and marked stones were given in to the possession of the lodge. It is from the door lintel engraved *RM 1613 M with a representation of a gavel and chisel* that gives us the probable date of this building which was built correct to the masons compass for the purpose of the lodge meetings. RM is thought to be the initials of Richard or Robert Mein, M being for Master along with the symbols of his trade.

Further evidence of both our early existence and of the influence of the Mein masons can be found in the known and written history of the Chapel at Fairknowe in the East Lothians where in 1309 the Monks of Melrose assisted in the erection of a shrine dedicated to the Holy Mother in veneration of the healing of Black Ann The Countess of Dunbar Commander of the Kings army whose injuries where healed by the drinking of the water from the well at

Fairknowe and the many miracles performed at the chapel and chantry she built. The Monks would not have performed the physical task of building the shrine which would have been done by masons they would have trusted and taken with them. It was throughout the subsequent development and enhancement of the shrine that it is noted in 1439 that the new Choir built all arched with stone agreeably to the design of Peter de Mein. In other words they copied his designs in the South transept of Melrose when building the choir at Fairknowe giving his period of activity sometime from 1322 to 1439 although likely to be more of the earlier years within the range.

The family name of Mein is further recorded in charter *Liber de Melrose* of 1537 and in the Boundary Charter of Newstead in 1564 with 7 men of the Mein family listed covering at least 3 generations.

When the burial grounds of Melrose Abbey were levelled in 1889 to provide a better aspect to the building and to re-erect the many fallen headstones, a tombstone was found with an inscription to *Andro Mein Meaysonne of Neusteid sometimes Deceissit 1624 at the age of 63 & showing finely cut square and compass emblems*. The date and age of Andrew Mein are important in regaling this anecdotal evidence as deducting one from the other would give 1561 as his date of birth and therefore his initiation into masonry as an apprentice is likely to be a decade at least before the 1598 date used to distinguish the Ancient Lodges.

Furthermore it is certain that the lodge was long established and flourishing by 1675 as upwards of 80 masons as members of the lodge signed in agreement to the adoption of the rules entitled *The Mutual Agreement* which is recorded in its entirety within the minute books of the lodge.

Although the Mein's were a long established family prominent in the lodge, it should be noted that the Lodge was known as St John's Lodge Melrose AD1136 and its Master was referred to as The Grand Master; indeed even today there are many local residents that still call the master of the lodge the Grand Master. The lodge room has a painted oak board panel depicting the coat of arms of the Masons of Melrose as *Two compasses Or in Saltire on a shield azure[blue] set with three trefoils vert stems uneven*. Written above the shield is the motto *In Deo est ominus fides* [In God is all our trust] and written below the shield is *John Morrow First Grand Master St Johns Lodge Melrose Anno Domini 1136*. This has been replicated as a painting to clearly show the detail which on the old board is near obliterated by tar seepage from the wood.

John Morrow or Murdo was a Parisian born master mason active around 1400 and he worked on Melrose Abbey, amongst others, being responsible for the fine detailing in the South Transept and the elaborated or lattice windows therein. An inscription on a door lintel in the Abbey reads; *John Morrow sum time callit was I and born in Paris certainly and had in keeping all Mason work of St Andrews Ye High Kirk of Glasgow Melrose and Paisley of Nyddysdayl and of Galway I pray to God and Mary both and the sweet Saint John to keep this Holy Kirk from skathe[harm]*.

Although no evidence is available to show that either of these master masons were members of the Melrose Lodge meeting at Newstead they would undoubtedly have had to work with those Masons that were and attended their meetings even as honoured guests. Evidence or not I ask?

Coming back to our earliest minutes of 1674 & onwards these in the early days mainly record the transactions of the box money as the Lodge then existed principally as a Benevolent Society. The Brethren where mostly concerned with the dispensing of benevolence and the new regulations approved in the minute book for 27th December 1796 for the Brotherly Society of Masons of Melrose Lodge Roxburghshire confirm this.

Although there are many amusing entries throughout the ages in our minute books it is not the intention of this discourse to detail them otherwise we could be here until your next meeting and still not finished!

Noteworthy exceptions to bring the history of Melrose up to date and in the bosom of Grand Lodge are those of 27th December 1745 which is the earliest recorded reference to the procession known as the Masons Walk. It does not however establish when this was started as part of the celebrations of St John's Day which was the day of the annual meeting of the Lodge and of which many references are made as far back as 1685 to the enjoyment of a feast. Although the walk is likely to have taken place for some considerable time before the minutes entry which reminds brethren to attend the Grand Master in procession in white apron and glove as previous; we have conducted that walk every year continuously since including during the years of both wars moderated from a torchlight procession to a daytime one to prevent the torches being used a locating lights by night time raids. An interesting addition to the entries referring to the Masons Walk is that of 1813 where it is noted that the French brethren of the Lodge of Benevolence formed by French prisoners of war taken during the Napoleonic Wars joined in the procession. This procession is always in full regalia and is quite a spectacle to behold & I know Worshipful Master that you and a few other brethren of this Province

have experienced the walk which is now held after our ceremony of installation and before the feast of St John.

The second exception is the minutes relating to the Grand Lodge of Scotland leading eventually to our union with them in 1891. It is recorded that the four Lodges of Edinburgh wrote to Melrose to invite the brethren to a meeting of all lodges to discuss the formation of a Grand Lodge in the year 1736; although no member of Melrose attended the meetings.

The first reference to Grand Lodge is in 1787 when David Kyle Past GM was requested to obtain the rules and regulations of the Grand Lodge for the consideration of Melrose and a committee was also to be formed for the purpose of procuring a charter from Grand Lodge provided it *lets Melrose stand in seniority according to its vouchers and minutes we have to show*. The committee reported that after making enquiries into the nature of the charter issued to other the Lodge of Melrose would be better without it and no more enquiry is to be made.

Despite not being a member of Grand Lodge Melrose accepted an invitation from Lord Buchan to attend Dryburgh Abbey for a ceremony of dedication for the Temple of the Muses in 1812. Grand Secretary noting Melrose was not in the bosom of Grand Lodge urged Lord Buchan to make application to the Lodge to consider applying to Grand Lodge which would be looked on favourably by the present Officers to which the lodge at its annual meeting held on 28th December 1812 decided unanimously that *no notice be taken of the present application*.

Despite various meetings at which notice of motions were proposed by senior brethren of the lodge to apply to Grand Lodge and voted down by considerable

margins, attitudes eventually softened no doubt hastened by the ostracising of the members by Provincial Grand Lodge from other lodge meetings or visitations to Melrose. In fact this actually led to the Lodge of Galashiels coming to Melrose to work a Lodge – what an affront!

During this time Melrose continued to act as an independent lodge issuing charters to form other lodges not least of which was Melrose St Johns Lodge Glasgow as previously detailed.

Eventually a committee was to report to the lodge at its annual meeting of 1890 that after meeting with representatives of Grand Lodge terms have been proposed which the brethren may find favourable. The vote was carried 69 for 20 against and the committee instructed to proceed with the consummation of the union on the following agreed terms:-

- 1) That Grand Lodge does not interfere with the funds or property presently belonging to Lodge St John Melrose but that these remain as formerly the exclusive property of that lodge. In the event of the union being affected, however, it would become necessary that the funds of the Masonic body and the benefit society should be conducted as separate accounts.
- 2) That a fee of one pound one shilling be charged for a charter of confirmation
- 3) That a fee of two shillings and sixpence be charged for a Grand Lodge Diploma to each member on the roll of the Melrose Lodge on the date of the union
- 4) That after the date of union the members of the Melrose Lodge shall observe and be bound by the Constitutions and Laws of Grand Lodge as then existing or as these may from time to time be altered or amended

5) In consideration of the documentary evidence of the antiquity of this Lodge, that the position of 1bis be assigned to it on the Roll of Grand Lodge

The union was affected at the meeting held on 25th February 1891. *So ended the history of this grand old lodge as an independent body. It was its pride of long descent that prevented it from ranking itself along with other Lodges in the country, and a fear that justice might not be done to its claims that made it hold so long aloof.* Bro Fred Vernon, historian of the Lodge whose work when presented to Grand Lodge held sway in ensuring Melrose was respected with an honourable position on the Roll of Lodges – he was subsequently made an Honorary member of the lodge at the next meeting immediately after the consummation of the union.

Brethren I have tried to be as concise as possible in trying to recount with any alacrity the history of these Ancient Lodges to give you a knowledge of the origins of freemasonry and the claimants to being its oldest active lodge; as you have heard even being concise is long winded although I sincerely hope not too boring.

We can deduce from the information given that these lodges most certainly existed before 1598 in some form or another but it was the Schaw Statutes that appear regularly as the turning point in the move from operative to speculative masonry and the formation of control and operation of lodges which we still recognise. The 17th Century records that do still exist therefore afford us an insight in to how these working masons start to allow gentlemen to become members and then how these gentlemen influence the changes of the Lodge to speculative masonry not least of which by the re-writing of ritual to form the degree work we all recognise.

The craft of freemasonry is richer for its history and despite the creation of many stories and fables about its foundation there is a background in Scotland of being able to show the bond between the old operative lodges founded for the purpose of the management of men and materials at the building of many great edifices and superstructures, and the new speculative lodges.

Perhaps the lesson for Melrose was that it should have participated earlier in the move towards the foundation of the governing body of Grand Lodge and shouted more about its antiquity to ensure its proper place being assured from the outset. However with the usual Borders stubbornness and stand alone spirit not greatly assisted by the attitudes shown to it by those in early office of Grand Lodge it persevered as an independent lodge.

It is however the future of all these lodges that now counts; that lodges consider their relevance to the society within which they exist ensuring they have a part to play and are seen playing that part enthusiastically but with sincerity. We need to give worthy men the opportunity to lead their lives through the moral rectitude of Masonic teachings, in harmony and as equals the world over; this surely is of greater importance than worrying about who is the oldest and by what means of proof despite it being a fascinating pastime investigating and knowing the history of the lodge of which you are a member.

Our history has made us and our lodges what we and they are but what we do today will make the history of tomorrow and that is all of our responsibility.

I am indebted to a number of brethren of old and also reference books on the old lodges and early freemasonry written by non-masons – without their work as reference material I would not have been able to put together the details used in the Lecture.

I would like to make it clear to those assembled and those that may read the transcript of this Lecture at any future time that I have expressed my personal opinions and interpretations of the material referenced.

I am again indebted to the W. M. Bro David Lea for his invitation to present this lecture but would add that a little more than three weeks notice would be nice if there is a next time!

Brethren thank you for your kind attention.