

# The Ailsa Craig

## HMV

*(His Master's Voice)*

Brethren

• In my capacity of RWM of Lodge Ailsa I attended the District Grand Committee Meeting in KL this month, together with Bros Chang Pinang and Romani.

The RWDGM is pleased that the Scottish lodges in Singapore have at last settled the income tax position and has encouraged Lodge Ailsa to actively pursue membership to ensure the continued strength of the Lodge.

• We also attended the Installation of Bro Clifford Standley as the Most Excellent Grand Superintendent for the District Grand Royal Arch Chapter of the Middle East, as well as the Installation of Bro Wong Yow Seng as the new RWM of Lodge Tullibardine in the East

• Bro Peter Sidwell has eventually been discharged from Changi General Hospital after a hip operation. At 76 he is considering a career change from teaching to editing – he could teach us all a thing or two!

Yours Fraternally

Bro. Colin Macdonald RWM

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## Fixtures and Fittings

*(Lodge Activities)*

• This month's meeting will be a 3<sup>rd</sup> Deg and the Duties are as follows:

Lights	Jerry/Rinaldo
Symbols	Bruce/Swithun
Trestleboard	Chy Seng/Kurup
Charge	Bill/Chang Pinang
Links	Salvi
Investiture	Andrew/Krishnan

• We have established the sequence of Workings for the next few months as follows:

<del>Mar</del>	<del>Installation</del>
<del>Apr</del>	<del>2<sup>nd</sup> Deg</del>
<del>May</del>	<del>2<sup>nd</sup> Deg</del>
Jun	3 <sup>rd</sup> Deg
Jul	3 <sup>rd</sup> Deg
Aug	3 <sup>rd</sup> Deg
Sept	3 <sup>rd</sup> Deg
Oct	Mark Deg
Nov	1 <sup>st</sup> Deg
Dec	L. of Instruction
Jan	2 <sup>nd</sup> Deg
Feb	3 <sup>rd</sup> Deg

The sequence of workings will be refined or changed as necessary, as the year progresses.

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## Home and Away Games

*(Visiting Brethren, Visits and Invitations)*

• Last month's meeting was well attended and we welcomed the return of Bros. Julian Brown and Anthony Lee. We hope to see more of them in the near future.

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## Tinkers Corner *(The latest gossip)*

• The Consecration of a new Lodge Mt Fabre Research Lodge will take place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2002 in Johore Baru to coincide with Lodge Singapore's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration banquet. A coach service will be available from Coleman Street.

Lodge Ailsa has been asked to supply the VSI for the Lodge and Bro Romani will organize an antique Bible from Scotland.

As this will be a major event in the masonic calendar this year, all brethren are requested to make every effort to attend.

The consecration service will commence at 9:30 am followed by a talk about the development of the Scottish Constitution by an eminent (non-mason) author who will be in Singapore just for this occasion.

All members of Ailsa should attend and bring any potential members to the talk, which will be open to the general public.

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## Ask, Seek, and, Knock

(Everything You Wanted to Know about  
Freemasonry, - But Were too Afraid to Ask.....)

### LODGE AILSA MENTORING PAPERS

#### 1. Lodge Etiquette

1. Etiquette and Decorum
2. Dress, Regalia and Jewels
3. Forms of Address
4. Entering and Leaving the Lodge
5. Signs, salutations and Risings
6. Altar, lights and Tracing Boards

For further details please refer to handout given at the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2002 practice and posted on the [LodgeAilsa.org](http://LodgeAilsa.org) web-page

#### 2. Officer Requirements

1. What are the residence requirements?
2. When can the principal officers resign?
3. What is the procedure if a senior lodge position falls vacant?
4. Does a presiding master who is elected for a second term need to be re-installed?

For further details please refer to handout given at the 18<sup>th</sup> April 2002 practice and posted on the [LodgeAilsa.org](http://LodgeAilsa.org) web-page

#### 3. Our MacBride Ritual

1. Why does Lodge Ailsa work this Ritual?
2. Who was A. S. MacBride. How did he become so influential as to write his own ritual, and why?
3. How should a MacBride Lodge be governed?

All these and other "mysteries" will be mulled over by "The Antients" after the 20th Jun 2002 practice meeting.

**All Brethren should attend!**

## Post Script

(The Last Word in Masonry)  
**THE HORSEMAN'S WORD**

*Brother Lt. Commander David Currie Past  
Master, Lodge Canongate  
Kilwinning No. 2*

Between 1959 and 1962 my naval duties found me in H.M.S. Condor, Arbroath, where I was first introduced to Grampian Television. At that time I knew little of Scotland north of Stirling, but Grampian TV, often derided in the press as being parochial, proved a most adept teacher to anyone wishing to learn. Such northern terms as 'Loons and Quines', until that time a foreign language, soon became familiar and among a host of other items I learned a great deal about both life in days gone by.

The television station in Aberdeen was a force to be reckoned with in explaining the area's culture to outsiders such as I, and on one occasion they showed a play entitled 'Speddum'. This word was new to me, but recourse to a dictionary of north-eastern dialect filled the gap and I watched the play with interest. This incident led me to watch further plays and eventually to see one which had only three characters. These were a crofting farmer, his general labourer and a wandering youth who arrived at the farm seeking employment. He was taken on, and it soon became apparent that between the farmer and the labourer there was some sort of secret - an understanding which kept the boy outside their communion. The atmosphere built up as the play progressed, becoming more and more menacing, until one night when the lad had retired to his bed in the byre his two superior came for him, dragging him across fields until they came on a small group of men gathered round a fire. The boy was stripped naked above the waist, and was put through a ritual which had some echoes of freemasonry. Eventually he was held fast while one of the group advanced on him with a red-hot iron. There was no allegory about this he was branded, and

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afterwards made to take great draughts of whisky, which presumably dulled his agony. When the three characters went to work the following day, it was apparent immediately that the boy was no longer an outsider. In various subtle ways it was made obvious to him that the days of his boyhood and youth had ended, and that henceforth he would be treated as a man.

Having been introduced to various members of Lodge The Bruce, at Friockheim, I turned to one of their number for enlightenment, and learned that what I had been watching was the induction of a boy into the Society of the Horse, sometimes referred to as 'The Horseman's Word'. I endeavoured to discover more about this society, eventually learning that it was a sort of camaraderie or trade union among those who worked with the great shire horses. The society is virtually extinct today, though men are still living who were put through the ritual in their younger days. In the Library of Grand Lodge, about 1986, I met a gentleman who had recently returned from the south of England to the place of his birth in the Borders. When he mentioned that he had gone to the south to work with horses before he was twenty-one years of age, I asked if he had the Horseman's Word. He had indeed been through the ceremony - perhaps not quite as barbaric as that depicted on TV - and he was very interested to learn how I had come to hear of it.

Some months later, again in the Library in George Street, I met an elderly freemason who had returned to visit Scotland after having left before 1939. He stated that before leaving Scotland he had left a copy of the Horseman's Ritual with the Grand Secretary. In my capacity as Curator I searched the archives, but never came across it.

Some years later one of our own members submitted to Grand Secretary a copy of the Horseman's Ritual as used in Angus, and this is still (or should be) in the archives in Freemasons' Hall.

A few years ago Hollywood produced a striking film starring Robert Redford, entitled 'The Horse Whisperer'. Redford portrayed a man who loved horses, and whose working life had been spent among them. This familiarity had given him an uncanny acquaintance with the animals, and he was able to demonstrate kinship with them in many ways.

In January, 1987, the Scots Magazine carried an article by the renowned Archie Kerracher in which he explained the mysteries of the Horseman's Word. Mr Kerracher gave examples of the wording of the ritual, but the greater part of his article was concerned with an explanation of the way of life in which the Society of the Horse had its origin, and the immediate after-effects that possession of the word had on its initiates. It is worth noting that not all workers with the heavy farm horse were inducted into the society, and here we can draw a parallel with the ancient stonemasons. Many competent and highly skilled craftsmen were never admitted into the fellowship of the Lodge. Such men were known to Lodge members as cowans and the Lodge member was obligated, under the threat of severe penalties, never to work with them under any circumstances. Young masons are often advised that a cowan was a dry-stone dyker but it is my view that a better definition is that a cowan was a 'mason without the word'. As far as the horse workers were concerned, those 'without the word' were not privy to certain trade secrets handed down within the Society. Most of these secrets were concerned with the welfare and control of the horses. Members of the society were extremely proud of their ability to control even the wildest of horses, their services always being used when, for some reason or other, the horses were proving troublesome.

The members of the society considered themselves an aristocracy among farm workers. The society dictated to farmers the amount to pay their horse workers should receive. The men themselves felt that membership of the society made them great lovers, a belief which often led them into trouble. Writers on this

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aspect of membership, who are much better qualified to judge than I, have often expressed the opinion that the horse-men's power over the farm ladies came from the great confidence induced in them by being members of the society.

Young men were usually initiated into the society once they had passed through their teen years. Customarily they lived in bothies with the other bachelor farm workers, and various methods were used to indicate that the time had come for them to join the society. The novice was dragged across fields to the gathering, a daunting journey as he was blindfolded and (often) stripped. Arriving at the scene of operation, he stood shivering whilst the opening ritual proceeded. The ritual varied in different parts of the country, but the obligations were normally lengthy.

Parts of one such obligation are as follows:

I will always hele, conceal and never reveal to father or mother, sister or brother, wife or winch, or the babe that sits on my knee, any of the secrets or vows of horsemanship that may be revealed to me this day or any other day hereafter.

I further vow and swear that I will not give, or see them given, under the sum of one guinea or jewellery to that amount, and a bottle of whisky, being paid down as I do now. (From this we can see that the entrance fee to the society could be paid in three ways, and it was customary for the intransigent to meet this cost when being entered.)

I further vow and swear that I will not give it, nor see it given, to a fool, nor to a liar, nor to a madman, nor to a revealer of secrets, nor to anyone intoxicated with drink, nor to anyone I am suspicious of, nor to anyone I would suspect would bad use horses with it. I further vow and swear that I will not give it or see it given to any man under eighteen years of age, nor to a man over forty-five years of age, nor to a woman at all.

I further vow and swear that I will not give it to a farmer, nor to a farmer's son, unless they are as distant as ourselves and are

working horses, nor to a griever who does not work horses, nor to a tradesman, nor to anyone who does not work horses, unless blacksmith or a horse-shoer, and to no Veterinary Surgeon whatsoever.

Now if ever I break any of these commandments, may I stand before the meeting of horsemen, met for that purpose there to confess to them that I have broken the oath that I most solemnly took upon myself before God and man, punished by them as I deserve, and my right arm cut off at the shoulder, and my innards torn out by two wild horses, that my body be taken to the sands of the sea-shore, and hung up there, until the wild birds eat the flesh from my bones, and may it be a solemn warning to others and show them that I have been a deceiver of God, of man and of myself, and made myself a fit companion for the Devil and his angels.'

The oath, or obligation, ran into many paragraphs, all designed, to instil fear into the candidate, who was then informed that he must always hide and never reveal the Art and Parts of horsemanship, this instruction being followed by a lecture in which he was given the history of the secrets of horsemanship. In this lecture the candidate learned that the first captured horse was caught in the desert sands of Arabia. The individual who caught her, and who was therefore the world's first horseman was one Juble Cain.

The ritual whereby one horseman tested another was long and complicated, being a mixture of 'secrets' and practical questions and sayings. Examples are as follows:

(Q = questioner and C = candidate)

Q. Are you a man?  
C. Yes.

Q. Who made you a man?  
C. God made Man and a man made me and the Devil had no hand in it.

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Q. How do you know you are a man?  
C. It has been revealed to me that never was revealed to boy or woman. I have been tried and re-tried, and I am willing to be tried by you.

Q. Where were you made a man?  
C. In the Horseman's Hall, or any other place fit for the occasion.

Q. Where is the Horseman's Hall?  
C. In yonder three cornered field, where the foot of woman never trod.

Q. Your horse needs a shoe.  
C. It will be a long time ere it wears to the knee.

Q. Your horse's shoe is slack.  
C. The smith's not dead yet.

Q. Your horse is blind in one eye.  
C. He will see as far over the brae as you will see through it.

Q. How many sides has a horse got?  
C. Eleven. Inside, outside, aftside, nearside, backside, foreside, plainside, roughside, upside, downside and hairierside.

Q. Where were you made a man?  
C. Between the brechem and the hems - a damned fight fit.

The business of the meeting being ended, the assembly settled down to a steady night of drinking and singing the various songs of horsemanship. This in itself shows that meetings were not held frequently, probably only once in the year, just before the annual fair at which workers hired themselves out to farmers. They had their own traditional songs, accompanied by draughts of liquor, one example being:

Here's to the horseman and the  
horseman's bairns,  
There's not a maid with her lovely charms

But what-likes to lie in her horseman's  
arms

Here to the mare with the jet black tail,  
And here's to the cords that bind her,  
And here's to the brother that meets  
brother  
And to the bottom sounds him.

Here's to the H and;-the-M and the O,\*  
Reveal that to me in three small words  
And I'll trust you to all that I know.

As the horseman grew older he learned numerous secrets' concerning the ailments of horses and how to cure them, also learning the many traits of horses' characters and how to combat them.

From the short extracts quoted in this article we can see numerous items similar to some of our Masonic traditions, and there is a strong case for considering that the whole system was based on that of masonry. The Horseman's Word seems to have made its first appearance early in the eighteenth century, the Society reaching its heyday about 1850. It is interesting to note that it was strong in Scotland, though it hardly existed at all south of the border. The reasons for this must surely be in Scottish masonry, whence its ritual, in great part and with embellishment, was taken.

\*I am not aware of the words indicated by these letters.