

BRO. ANDREW SOMMERVILLE MACBRIDE
HIS WORKS AND INFLUENCE ON SCOTTISH FREEMASONRY

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(slide one) One of the most influential Masons in Scottish History

Ladies and Gentlemen and Brethren All,

About 138 years ago (in 1866), one of the greatest figure in Scottish Freemasonry was initiated into lodge Leven St. John No. 170, Renton near Glasgow in Scotland. Tonight we will talk about the location which he came from, how he developed, his publications and how it affects us (as Lodge Ailsa) today

(next slide) Acknowledgements

I humbly acknowledge the assistance I have received from the works of the following brethren

(next slide) Bro. Andrew Sommerville MacBride

Bro. Andrew Sommerville MacBride was,

- Justice of the Peace,
- Provincial Depute Grand Master of Dumbartonshire,
- Past Master of Lodge Leven St John No. 170
- Past Master of Lodge Progress No. 873 in Glasgow.
- The author of the MacBride ritual,
- The author of the MacBride Installation ritual and
- The author of the still much sought-after book – “Speculative Masonry”.

(next slide) Orientation

(next slide) Dumbartonshire Scotland

Lets begin by looking at how MacBride developed along the path to becoming one of the most influential Masonic figures of Scotland.

(next slide) The Vale of Leven

(next slide) Loch Lomond to the Clyde (Cutty Sark QEI and QEII)

(next slide) Renton 1867

(next slide) Renton at the Turn of Last Century

MacBride was born in Sterling Street, Renton, in December 1843.

His father, John MacBride, was a cooper at Dalquhurn Works, who died during a cholera epidemic in 1846. *(Dalquhurn was later renamed as Renton after the daughter-in-law of Dr Tobias Smollet who was a well known poet and writer in the late 1700's)*

His mother, Catherine Douglas, was a native of Bonawe, Argyllshire, *(in the Highlands of Scotland)* and as Andrew was a child of only three years when he lost his father, it was she who had undoubted influence on the boy's mind, for she was a born Gaelic speaker, and like all

highlanders of those days, a veritable mine of highland tradition and folklore, told in her soft and melodious native tongue.

As a very small boy Andrew would sit himself, on summer evenings, near the old worthies of the then very small village of Renton who used to range themselves on the seat round the oak tree which stood in front of the Old Tree Tavern, and listen to their anecdotes and reminiscences, and tales of smugglers and illicit stills in the Poachy Glen. Murdoch's smiddy, beside the inn, was another of his haunts.

MacBride's only formal education started at the old school in Dalmonach Hall which still stands today on the left side of the entrance to the Mechanics Institution founded in 1834.

In due course of his studies MacBride became fascinated by other people's writings and amassed a considerable personal library which included books from Milton, Shakespeare, Dryden, DeQuincy, Carlyle, Burns' "The Old Makars" as well as Young's "Night Thoughts," which undoubtedly eventually influenced his ritual and later works and he had developed a fascination with the oral traditions of the highlands through the influence of his mother's poetic Gaelic.

(next slide) North British Railway Company

At the age of about 8, MacBride worked as a Half-timer for the North British Railway Company running between Balloch and Bowling in the early 1850s. He then went on to become a bricklayer and study building construction and drawing.

(next slide) MacBride worked in the Local Dyeing Industry

At about the age of 18 he worked as a cloth salesman for William Sterling and Sons who were among some of the most prominent indigo dyeing and bleaching industries the early 1860s along the Clyde.

Eventually he went on to become the president of the Vale of Leven Liberal Association (which were known to be pretty radical in those days) and wrote many poems and treatises on local political policy.

As he was also the close friend of Brother Bennett of "The Dumbarton and Lennox Herold" (who was also a Past Master of Lodge Killwinning), to whom he sent many Masonic articles and reports for publication. Some of these can still be found in the files of the Lennox Herold including:

"A Poetical Address to the Brethren of Lodge Leven St. John,"

"Ode to Burns," - a verse of which is inscribed on the walls of his mother lodge,

"The Tale of the Crofter's Wife - dealing with the Highland Clearances of last century,

"The Bawbee Brig"

(next slide) The Bawbee Brig (built at Bonhill in 1836 and pedestrians had to pay ha'penny toll to cross)

Besides these poems, he wrote two plays, both of which were performed in Renton –

"An Extravaganza" and

"The Masons."

A number of his Masonic hymns and poems were also published in "The Master Mason," which was an American publication, in March 1924.

Masonic Career

MacBride's Masonic career commenced on the 13th of July 1866 when he was proposed and seconded as a fit and proper person to become a Mason and member of Leven St John Lodge No 170 in Renton, and was initiated on that same evening.

The Lodge Leven St John had been constituted on April 9th, 1788, by several members of the craft residing in and about the towns of the Leven in Dumbartonshire. As stated in the charter it was granted "for holding a lodge in the said towns of the Leven." That is, it was moveable charter, and the old minute books which are preserved in fairly good order and which go back to the 6th November, 1788, show that meetings are held in various places from the river Fruin and on Loch Lomond side, to the bridge over the river Leven at Dumbarton.

His mother wept bitterly at the thought that her son was on the straight road to ruin (as many Lodges operated from public premises in those days and work was usually hurried through to get to the refreshments table.)

(next slide) Thirsty Work

Things haven't changed much since those days

The lodge held meetings upstairs, in the old Black Bull Inn, and as MacBride himself is quoted as saying "The beauty and truths of masonry were often drowned in a Bacchanalian flood"

On Friday 9th November 1866, four months after his initiation, he was elected Secretary of the Lodge, and a few weeks after that, on the 27th of December he met his future wife at a Masonic Ball and was married two and a half years later. So it was all happening for MacBride around 1866-7

On the 8th November 1867 it was moved by the lodge that the Chair Degree be conferred upon a brother. This Degree was from an old ritual handed down since the lodge had been established in 1788, but was now contrary to Grand Lodge law. Brother MacBride moved an amendment that no authority had been given to the Lodge by its charter to confer that degree.

After a vote was taken and a motion carried MacBride and several others left the meeting in protest. (At that time and the lodge was authorized to hold meetings on the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason degrees only.)

Due to MacBride's stand on the constitutional correctness of the Installation and eventual vindication of his actions, he was elected Master of the lodge two weeks after that, on the 22nd of November 1867.

MacBrides installation ceremony in December 1867 is described by himself graphically as follows:

(next slide) Masonic Procession (In previous time there seem to have been regular processions by the local freemasons in their community)

The ceremony was preceded by a torchlight procession through the village, and carried out in the Old Black Bull Inn, in a room that was very plain and dimly lighted, it was 16 feet broad by 24 feet long, about a quarter of the area of the present hall.

(next slide) Old Black Bull Inn

Down its centre ran a long deal table reaching to about four feet from the Master's chair. Long benches were set on each side of the table, and they were packed with about sixty Brethren, amongst whom were many gray heads, including six or seven Past Masters.

Many of them had 30-50 years' standing as Masons. They had come from the surrounding district to spend a few hours together, some having had to walk five or six miles, as there was no other means of transport then.

And this on a mirky, stormy, Scottish December night.

In the upper window of the inn was placed a coloured transparent picture of our Patron Saint, the Venerable St. John, complete with beard, and several candles had been placed behind to make his features clear and life-like to the passers-by outside.

(same slide) The Venerable St John (Typically done to indicate to any Mason who may be passing that there was a meeting in progress at the establishment)

The Installing Master, the Immediate Past Master, was a man of about fifty, of average height, dark, stout, and somewhat round shouldered. He had no great store of knowledge, and still less of the gift of expression, yet he had a rough dignity of manner, and the knack of giving parts of the ceremony an expression of mystery and importance, due, of course, to the very nebulosity (vagueness) of his phrasing. This was Bro. William Stratton.

(next slide) Burns's Inauguration (This is about as close a scene that I can get to that described at his Installation)

The Master-Elect was Andrew S. MacBride himself, a lad of twenty-three years of age of medium height, fair, and spare of figure.

By fortuitous circumstances he had been unanimously elected to the chair. He feels like a Pretender being crowned without the slightest claim to the throne, and he feels uncomfortable and perplexed. His only claim is a popularity that attributed to him virtues that he wishes he really had.

He then remained in chair for seven years, until 1874, and was re-elected, holding office until 1884, he was elected again in 1887 and occupied to the chair until 1896, so that in all, he was the Master of Lodge Leven St. John for 21 years.

(next slide) Bonhill-Alexandria Lodge 321 Office Bearers 1867 (a few miles away)

Later after moving to Glasgow he affiliated to lodge Progress (a tea-total lodge) on the 13th April 1900 and was elected as Master on the 9th of November 1900 for one year.

He held successively the offices of
Provincial Grand Secretary,
Provincial Grand Junior Warden,
Provincial Grand Senior Warden, and
Provincial Grand Depute Master and he was installed as the
Provincial Grand Master of Dumbartonshire on the 14th of December 1901.

He also became a member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge of research in 1893.

(next slide) MacBride - President of the Scottish Football Association 1875-76

MacBride also had a sporting side to him, and between 1875 - 1876 he was the President of the Scottish Football Association which had been founded in 1873

As the second president Of the Scottish football association, the then secretary, Mr J. K. MacDowall, was quoted saying of MacBride "He was one of the ablest and most respected gentlemen who ever adorned the position."

In the season 1876 - 1877 the two greatest football matches up to that time were played. The defeat of Queen's Park by the Vale-of-Leven in December 1876, and the defeat of the Rangers after three matches, and the consequent winning of the Scottish Cup by the Vale-of-Leven in the same season.

(next slide) Various Documents

In 1901 MacBride became the president of the Society for the Preservation of Gaelic Culture and Literature. He had obtained the position of a Bard - which in Celtic tradition required seven years of memorising of the laws, histories, traditions, poems and prose which were not allowed to be written down. This close association with the Celts, and his knowledge of the ancient method of preserving and handing down tradition, influenced MacBride in his eventual clearing the older Masonic ritual of the irrelevant interpolations and his development of the MacBride Ritual.

Management

His approach to Masonic Management is evidenced in the way he overcame the "refreshment" problem referred to earlier. Although he was not a tea-totaller, he realised that with many of the brethren, that "refreshment" had priority over "work", so that something had to be done to prevent the real work of Masonry being sacrificed for refreshment.

It was moved at a meeting that, at the refreshment table, each member should pay sixpence, and that the limit should be set at two refreshments. (It must be remembered that at that time, more than ninety years ago, a bottle of whisky cost less than half-a-crown.)

The custom was to place the refreshment on the table for everyone to help himself, with the result that some members got more than they paid for, and others less.

The new proposal to limit the refreshments was strongly opposed, and a heated discussion followed. MacBride as Master did not take part, for he made it a rule not to intrude in any

discussion, as in his view, the Master ought to keep himself free from debates as long as the members were keeping to the point at issue.

But on this occasion, without showing any bias, he broke in and pointed out to the wrangling members that, as Masons, they must apply the square to the refreshment table as well as to the work. His suggestion was ultimately carried.

(Next slide) The Lodge Building at Renton (1)

Up until November 1892, Lodge Leven St John met in a well equipped Lodge Room in the house of Bro. William Murray, but greater and more suitable accommodation was found to be necessary, and the members expressed a desire to have a hall of their own.

To achieve this, Bro. MacBride inaugurated a scheme whereby members took out shares in the construction of the new building, to be paid up in twelve installments. Sufficient money was raised and a start was made. To keep down expense, MacBride, making use of the skill he had obtained as a bricklayer and the knowledge he had acquired during his study of Building Construction, drew out plans and specifications, thereby saving the cost of an architect and master of works. He superintended the construction until completed and it was he also who was responsible for the interior decorations.

(Same slide) The Lodge Building at Renton (2)

During the building operations, which were carried out by the members in their spare time, MacBride used to march round amongst them playing his pipes to give them encouragement. In these operations he was ably assisted with both advice and work by Bro. William Sinclair and Bro. Robert Watt, both of whom wrought night after night along with many other members at their labour of love.

The foundation stone was laid in November 1892, and the completed hall was consecrated in December 1893.

(Same slide) The Lodge Building at Renton (3-4)

Later on it was found necessary to extend the hall. The alterations were commenced in 1914, the first meeting in the enlarged premises taking place on 22nd November 1915. The interior decorations and design were still those of Bro. MacBride.

During the period of reconstruction, from October 1914 to July 1915 the Lodge meetings were held in the Masonic Hall, Dumbarton by the kind courtesy of Lodge Dumbarton Kilwinning. As in 1892, this work of reconstruction was accomplished by the voluntary labour of the members. Such is the Lodge tradition, brought into being by Andrew S. MacBride.

Metaphorically speaking he states in his book *Speculative Masonry*:

The work of building the ideal Temple never ceases and is never completed. It is progressive, realizing, yet never realized. Material things compete themselves on a level circle. They have their beginning and their ending, birth and death, morning and evening, foundation and copestone.

But the spiritual ever rises on the plumb spiral, never resting, ever aspiring and growing upwards into the infinite Heavens.

(Next slide) The MacBride Ritual (1947 Reprint)

The ritual used in Leven St. John up till about 1870 was based on "Preston's Illustrations of Freemasonry," published about the middle of the eighteenth century. It had been copied down in a large notebook about three quarters of an inch thick, which had been handed down from one generation to another. It probably fell into MacBride's hands when he became Master in 1867. In it he found much to criticize.

Coarse and vulgar methods had crept in due to the previous users not having studied the symbolism deeply enough, and their having but small conception of its real beauty and meaning.

His criticism brought him into conflict with many of his fellow-members, but by his tact and patience, he was able to modify and influence those views adverse to his conception and so gain the respect and admiration of those who initially opposed him.

When revising the older ritual, he used to spend hours on end wandering over Carman Hill, pondering over the best ways of presenting the ideas it contained, rejecting tautologies and interpolations which had become embedded in it throughout the years, and devising a ritual that would teach what it was meant to teach, without ever departing from the spirit and truth of Masonry.

He first of all directed his attention to the office-bearers under him, for they had to be leaders, as was proper, and together they studied the Ritual, Symbols, and Ceremonies of the craft. Later on he extended his teachings to other members. But those who had no sympathy with the real work of Masonry soon dropped out and only those remained who had a genuine love for the craft.

The result was that during a period of thirty years, Lodge Leven St. John (and Lodge Progress) established a reputation for their high standard of work and knowledge of Masonry.

In 1899 it was suggested that a degree of Most Excellent Instructor be conferred on those members who had shown satisfactory knowledge of the craft through MacBride's teaching, but that idea had to be abandoned as it was deemed to be a violation of the charter.

MacBride then published his "Masonic Instructor," (which I am still trying to get a copy of) which was very highly commended by the then Grand Secretary, Bro. D. Murray Lyon, and by the secretary of Quatuor Coronati Lodge, who, comparing it with those used in England, said "In all respects yours is superior.

His specification books in the various degrees were published next, which enabled not only his own, but also other Lodges to beautify and adorn their work. They were an example of what Masonic ritual should be, and have been known ever since as "The MacBride Ritual."

(Next slide) The Standard Scottish vs The MacBride Ritual

This slide shows the structural analysis which I made about 10yrs ago, to compare the MacBride Ritual to the Standard Scottish. It is deliberately a bit fuzzy as tonight it is only meant for comparison purposes, but clearly shows the tightness of composure which MacBride managed to draw up compared to some of the sections of the Standard Scottish Ritual.

Before making his Ritual, MacBride had a clear knowledge of the Craft by studying its early origins. The old Charges, as they were called, dated from the fourteenth century (1390), and were read by the Lodges to the Candidate as part of his initiation. These are the origins of the

Charges we give the Candidate today. From his study and interpretation he did not believe, as many do today, that Lodges were only operative in those times, but that they were also speculative. His judgment was based on the circumstantial evidence and on the Regulations contained in the Charges of the old Lodge.

They all differed but the basic principles were universal in the way they related to the conduct of Masons. "They are of a Moral and Religious character and are therefore more speculative than operative in their purpose." In every case the Mason is first of all charged to be true to God, the King and to his fellows. Stealing and vice are explicitly named to be avoided. Falsehood and deceit are condemned. This element in them, apart from and above the operative work that refers to conduct and morals more than anything else, shows their relationship with modern Masonry. After all, what is the purpose of our Speculative System but to shape life and conduct to noble ends.

(Next slide) MacBride's "Speculative Masonry"

(Next slide) MacBride's "Speculative Masonry"(2)

The Rev. Bro Joseph Fort Newton writes of MacBride in his book in 1924:

Masonry has great teachers today, many of them, but no one more worthy of the honor of his Brethren of every land and rank than Brother A. S. MacBride, of Lodge Progress, Glasgow. More than once we have said that his lectures on "Speculative Masonry" is one of the best Masonic books ever written, and we are ready any time to give a reason for the faith that is in us.

MacBride's series of lectures given at Lodges of Instruction were revised and published in book form under the title "Speculative Masonry." This was his last and greatest work. It found a ready sale not only in the United Kingdom, but also in the U.S.A., Canada, India, Germany, Australia, and New Zealand. It was selected as a textbook for the Colleges of Instruction under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodges of Pennsylvania, GL of Main, GL of Texas, GL of Iowa, GL of Ontario, etc, etc.

Rev. Bro Joseph Fort Newton, of the Grand Lodge of Iowa, in his foreword to the 1924 American Edition said, "It was one of the best Masonic books of our generation. Its style is the native speech of Masonry - simple, lucid, aglow with moral passion and poetic beauty, in which Masonry is shown to be a wise clear-seeing practical Moral Idealism - a classic of the Craft."

"Everywhere in the West of Scotland there has been of the late years a marked improvement in the work of masonry. The atmosphere of the Lodges has been purified and elevated to the very considerable extent, and the larger and closer knowledge of its symbolism has been defused amongst its members; and brother Macbride rejoices at having been able in some degree have contributed to this beneficial result."

For Example:

MacBride, in his book "Speculative Masonry", explains the Mission of Masonry and endeavours to give us a clear conception of the meaning of the words Sent or Thrown as being handed you your "Mission" to attend Lodge to respect and obey, in order to better yourself. - Mission comes from the Latin word "Missu" - I send, I throw.

Are you Off/On

In the old lectures and these forms of renunciation and preparation were quaintly and neatly expressed by the words "off" and "on".

The latter is complete when, in the person of the initiate, ignorance and obedience, sincerity, fidelity and humility are conspicuously and symbolically declared. He is taught to put off the rank, power, and wealth of the outer world and to put on the symbols of his true condition – his ignorance and obedience, sincerity, fidelity, and humility.

What is the Ideal Temple?

The primary meaning of the word Temple is a space cutoff or marked cut.

In common use it means a building that has been, or is, dedicated for sacred purposes. It is often misused and particularly by the Masonic fraternity. A vulgar and blatant spirit of ostentation has been predominant recently here and elsewhere, particularly in the United States, so that every little bothy of a building is magnified and distinguished by the name of Temple and, consequently, the true meaning and significance of the word is apt to be lost.

The shell of stone, however ably designed and beautified, does not make it a Temple. It is the spirit that dwells in it.

Bro. Rev. Joseph Ford Newton, carries on - "Though not a great scholar he was a man of rich learning but his artist eye, his sense of the fitness of things, together with his spiritual insight and sound common sense, made him an ideal leader."

And quoting from "The Builder," (an American publication), commenting on the same book. "The author was one of the most famous and best beloved Freemasons of his generation - a Craftsman to whom the world was a temple, a poet to whom the world was a song." In all, he left a permanent impress upon the Masonry of his native land, and was responsible to a great degree for having contributed to the better understanding and clearer knowledge of the symbolism of Masonry.

Also of note is the comment that:

It has been a practice from 1788, at least as shown by the Minutes of the Lodge, to appoint instructors to every newly initiated member; and Brother MacBride in this respect had the good fortune to have as his instructors two of the very oldest Masons in the Lodge. He attributes his enthusiastic interest, for which he has studied the history and symbolism of Masonry for fifty years, to the quality of the instructors he received.

It was at one time the universal custom in all Scottish Lodges to appoint these instructors (or "Intenders" as they were then called) to newly entered brethren, and it is to be regretted that this good old custom has been abandoned generally.

It is still, however faithfully observed in Lodge Leven St. John.

And in November, 1900, when he was elected Master of Lodge Progress, he applied himself to the training of office-bearers in a knowledge of their duties and of the "work" in connection with the various degrees. In the succeeding ten years years as a Past Master, he applied himself to the work of instruction.

Enthusiastic instructive Lodge meetings were carried on for three or four months every winter. At these meetings lectures were delivered by him which have been revised and printed in the work entitled "Speculative Masonry." Besides this, various symbols and ceremonies were explained in detail and the students attending were also given an opportunity of "working." The

result has been that Lodge Progress stood out, not only as the strongest Lodge in Scotland, but also as representing the highest ideal in its method of "working."

It is by no accident that these two Lodges - Leven St. John and Lodge Progress, are models in the manner in which they "work" the ceremonies of the various degrees, and in the knowledge possessed by their members of the symbolism and principles of Masonry.

(next slide) MacBride Landmarks

As MacBride says in his First Degree Charge in the explanation to the Candidate the laws he is to observe - the absolute or fixed laws are called the Landmarks in Masonry - that it is his duty to obey all lawful signs and summonses, especially sent, handed or thrown to him from the body of a duly constituted Lodge - Thrown to him means his mission to respect and obey.

Landmarks is a much used and misused word. Boundary lines between different countries between the territories of different tribes and the possession of individuals are called Landmarks, and their preservation was of importance. Severe penalties were attached to their illegal removal or alteration. A Landmark is not something just put up; it had also to be recognised as such. This recognition formed the essence of its authority and the longer it remained the more sacred it became.

In the course of time, a change in the boundary line between the possession of two individuals or of two nations becoming mutually desirable, the old Landmarks were removed and new Landmarks were created.

In Speculative Masonry, Landmarks have certain established usages and customs, occupying the position which usage and custom do in a community.

Politically these are termed "Common Law".

Masonically they are termed "Landmarks".

As in common law no usage or custom can overrule the fundamental principle of the square. Common Law in a community has all the force of Statute Law and the Landmarks in Masonry have all the force of Grand Lodge Law. While a Landmark must be an established usage or custom, it does not follow that an established usage or custom is a Landmark.

As far as I know MacBride was the first man to give us a list of Realistic Masonic Landmarks. He grouped them into four main divisions, each of which contains three sections, as follows:

1ST DIVISION (Usages that mark the Masonic from the Outer World):

Section A: A mode of recognition by its members.

Section B: The Tying of its Lodge Meetings.

Section C: The qualifications of its candidates.

2ND DIVISION (Usages that mark the Degrees of Masonry):

Section A: A mode of recognising the members of one Degree from those of another. Section B: The Tying of the Meetings of each Degree separately.

Section C: The conditions of advancement from one Degree to another.

3RD DIVISION (Usages that mark the various ceremonies):

Section A: The principal points in opening and closing a Lodge.

Section B: The principal points in Entering, Passing and Raising.

Section C: The principal points in Consecration, Installation, Foundation and Funeral Ceremonies.

4TH DIVISION (Usages that mark Official Powers and Duties and Private Rights and Duties):

Section A: The Powers and Duties of the Grand Master, Grand Officers and of Grand Lodge.

Section B: The Powers and Duties of the Master and Officers of the Lodge.

Section C: The Rights and Duties of Private Members.

It is not possible here to deal with the Landmarks in all their details; for those interested I would recommend reading A. S. MacBride's book *Speculative Masonry*, where all the Sections are discussed in detail.

Basically we must understand that Landmarks are not unalterable. They have been altered in the past and no doubt will be altered in the future. The essence of real life as MacBride says is "To act that each tomorrow finds us further than today."

The following are some of the changes made in the Laws and Customs of the craft since the beginning of the eighteenth century: -

1. Altering the term of service for Prentice and craftsmen
2. Excluding craftsmen from having voice and vote or holding office in the lodge.
3. Altering the age of the candidate
4. Ceasing to appoint intenders or instructors for entered Apprentices
5. Advancing an apprentice or a craftsmen, without trial and proof of skill
6. Introducing a new form and mode of obligation
7. Introducing new pass-word and tokens
8. Altering the mode of preparation
9. Changing the knocks
10. Changing a Trestle Board of for a cushion for the three great lights
11. Changing the names of the offices and making new offices in the lodge
12. Establishing Grand Lodges
13. Establishing provincial Grand Lodges
14. Introducing diplomas
15. Introducing new degrees
16. Introducing annual contributions from members

(next slide) The Lodge Chief End

MacBride's insight into the workings and the meaning of Masonry run deep in his book. He had the ability to examine masonry on both the esoteric and practical level and combine these views into a method of teaching that could be understood by all.

Masonry today has too many members who are not Masons, because the work of too many Lodges is not masonry. If lodge work was more faithfully and thoroughly done, if more attention was given to the study of our symbols, and less to mere show and harmonies, the number of our intrants might be less, but the number of real Masons in the world would be greater.

(next slide) Installation Ceremony (Chair Degree)

Over the past few years I've had the pleasure in assisting WBro. Hugh Bryson, Past District Grand Master of the Far East, to organize and collate into the MacBride Chair Ritual, some hand written notes to what may eventually become an officially accepted version of the MacBride Chair Ritual, which is very similar to the one we use today. When he returns in November to Singapore we hope to be able to finish this work.

Summary

Andrew Somerville MacBride summed up Masonry in his own words thus:

"It presents a most fascinating ideal of humanity, adapted to meet the conditions of all classes and of all peoples, and its fundamental principles are those of peace and brotherhood throughout the earth."

The attainment of his fiftieth year as a Mason was a cause of celebration by both Lodge Progress and Lodge Leven St. John.

On 21st October 1916, MacBride and his wife were presented with a solid silver cake and fruit stand and a diamond ring by Lodge Progress, and on 9th December 1916, Leven St. John presented him with solid silver loving cups and his wife with a diamond brooch, in recognition of his dedication and contribution to the Craft.

A. S. MacBride, a true son of Renton, died in December 1923 at the age of seventy-eight, and his loss was a distinct bereavement to the Craft

The work of Brother MacBride on behalf of Masonry may be divided into three parts, as things Masonic are so often divided:

1. First, his genius as an expositor of the history, philosophy and symbolism of the Craft, proof of which may be known and read by all in the book to which we have referred.
2. Second, his mastery of the ritual, and his poetic insight and literary skill in making it not only more luminous, but more perfect as a medium through which the spirit and truth of Masonry may be conveyed to the initiate. Of this aspect of his work we may not write in detail, except to say that the ritual prepared by him comes nearer to our ideal of what a Masonic ritual should be, alike in accuracy, dignity and beauty of form, and depth and suggestiveness of meaning, than any we have ever seen. It is an unalloyed delight to eye and ear and heart--Masonry wearing a robe woven by a poet-hand, and worthy of its spirit and truth.
3. And the third part of his labor is equally important --the manner in which he uses the ritual, thus wrought out, not only to evoke the Spirit of Masonry and to promote its fellowship, but to teach the truth it was meant to teach. He is a teacher who trains teachers--following the teachers who trained him--using the ritual, keeping close to the ritual, and through it leading his pupils to the wider questions that grow out of it and are suggested by it.

(next slide) Andrew MacBride "The Younger"

His son Andrew MacBride went on to become master of Lodge Progress Glasgow No 873 in 1914, and compiled the book called "THE LODGE MASTER His qualifications, Duties, Powers and Privileges," which contained the following instructions and requirements of the Lodge Master:

His Qualifications

1. Upright Character

An upright man so directs his life that, although his work may not be great, it will be true: and if his knowledge be limited, he will use what he has for great purposes.

What we call capability is constitutional.

Knowledge is an acquirement.

Uprightness is a development

2. Sound Judgment

Will suffer present loss for future gain

His proficiency is manifested by making the heaviest work appear light and the lightest work full of weight and meaning.

3. Knowledge of Masonry

There is a kind of knowledge of degrees and ceremonies gained by having gone through them. But this kind is more an exercise of the purse than the brain, and scarcely deserves the name of knowledge. You may go through all the degrees up to the thirty-third, have a lorry load of diplomas and more jewels than your coat can carry: and yet be utterly ignorant of real Masonry.

True knowledge is the perception of the principles underlying anything; for instance the craftsman who knows the laws that govern the art of building, the lines that give strength and stability, and those that give beauty to a fabric. This kind of knowledge is power. It makes a man a Master.

The master who does not have this knowledge must stick to every word and letter of what he has learnt, for he knows merely the words and letters, not the spirit.

4. Mental Ability

Strength and skill of mind form mental ability, and is distinguished from genius in being more the product of cultivation and development than of nature.

Ability is not uncommon and can be acquired and developed.

Each point and symbol should be studied in its relation to the special truth and principle it teaches

His Nomination, Election and Installation

Powers and Privileges

Hints to Masters

Limitations of the Master's Powers

Duties of a Master

Lodge Business and Work

Which should be standard issue for every master coming into the chair.

(next slide) The Lodge Master

(next slide) Lodges known to work the MacBride Ritual

(next slide) Establishment of Lodge Ailsa in Singapore - 1918

Lodge Ailsa and was established in 1918 under the sponsorship of Lodge Tullibardien and Lodge Scotia at the time of the closing days of the first World War.

(next slide) The Lodge Ailsa MacBride Ritual Mystery

So how did it come about that Lodge Ailsa, unlike 99 percent of the other Scottish Lodges works the MacBride ritual?

To date I have been able to uncover two sources of information that can lead to further investigation:

At lodge Ailsa's consecration some of the founding members may have been acquainted previously with the MacBride Ritual and therefore requested working in lodge Ailsa with this ritual however I have not yet had a chance to track down the memberships of their mother lodges and this may require some further cooperation from KL District archives eventually.

(next slide) Extract from Bro Andrew Pryde's Letter

The other source of information comes from brother Andrew Pryde Past Master of Lodge Progress in Glasgow, who stated that in his letter of 8th April 2002 Grand Master Mason forwarded a copy of the ritual from Lodge Progress to Lodge Ailsa for their use in their workings.

This latter direction would have been noted in the Lodge history as a fairly serious change to go from the standard Scottish ritual to MacBride ritual and therefore (as I can find no documents detailing a change of ritual) I am a bit suspects of this statement

(next slide) However...

I am more apt to accept first theory with Lodge Ailsa commencing its life working the MacBride ritual

Maybe someone would like to take the study further.

(next slide) Minor Differences

To date we have been able to get hold of copies of the MacBride Ritual from Leven St John and Lodge Burnside, which show that Ailsa's Ritual has only minor differences to the original Rituals.

(next slide) Lodge Ailsa Web Page

Brethren you may read more about MacBride on the Lodge Ailsa's Web Page under the Mentoring section, where I have posted a copy of this presentation for your own use.

All are welcome to visit Lodge Ailsa's next working (which is a 2nd Degree) this Thursday – or the 4th Thursday of every month to experience the MacBride Ritual “live”.

(next slide) Sound of Masonry

(next slide) In Conclusion

Brethren, in conclusion what I would like to stress is that MacBride was a man from humble beginnings, who although he took his Masonry seriously, was able to project an enjoyment and depth of intelligence that has influenced Scottish and American masonry ever since.

So should it be with us, that we from this humble small lodge here in Singapore, should also be able to reach out and influence the course and future of masonry in our own ways.

Now as Brethren of Lodge Ailsa will note, as one of the few operating McBride Lodges, we have a great tradition to uphold. Being the bearers of the unique and "restricted" MacBride Ritual it means that we should be setting the pace in Scottish Lodges. It also means that we should be way ahead in developing our Masonic Landmarks to suit our modernised vision of the future of Masonry.

So brethren there we have it. A lodge working one of the best rituals in Scottish freemasonry, with a yet to be solved mystery and plenty of opportunity to respond to the directions of Masonry which will face us in the future.

But most of all –
Enjoy Your Masonry

and

"Act that each tomorrow
finds us further than today."

Thank you.

Questions