

On the Golden Jubilee of Apollo Lodge - a glimpse of the past and a glance toward the future

Apollo Lodge, No 7886 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of England, was consecrated 13th May 1963 in St John's School Hall, Royal Air Force Episkopi in the Western Sovereign Base Area of Cyprus. Apollo is the daughter lodge of Lord Kitchener Lodge No 3402 which had arrived in Cyprus from its birthplace in Egypt in October 1956 and was to reside at Polemidhia Camp, north of Limassol, until moving to Dhekelia in November 1962. Apollo Lodge was consecrated in order to provide Masonic facilities for the Servicemen and civilians working and living within the Western Sovereign Base Area.

On that date Apollo became the sixth lodge meeting in Cyprus under the United Grand Lodge of England and those brethren who were appropriately qualified could extend their masonic experience further by joining St Paul's Chapter No 2277 which continues to meet in Nicosia.

Fifty years later we see seventeen Craft Lodges and five Royal Arch Chapters meeting throughout the length and breadth of the Republic of Cyprus, and additional orders such as Rose Croix, Mark, Royal Ark Mariner, Knights Templar and Knights of Malta also in evidence. Nineteen eighty saw the formation of the District Grand Lodge of Cyprus and nineteen ninety seven witnessed the birth of our District Grand Chapter. We now have a District Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons and the Supreme Council 33rd Degree of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for Cyprus. The administration of these organisations depends heavily upon the time and energy given voluntarily by their members.

Apollo held its first two meetings in the premises of St Paul's Lodge in Jerusalem Street, Limassol and returned there briefly in 1974 following the Cyprus Coup and subsequent Turkish invasion of Northern Cyprus. All other meetings have been held in the Masonic Rooms in Episkopi. Initially, and until the mid-1980s, we met in the hall of St Barnabas Church of Scotland and the Free Churches premises – all that now remains of that church is the hard standing to the west of our existing building. Ironically, the Scots Guards were serving in Cyprus at this time and several of them became joining members of the lodge. The current home of Apollo had lain unused for many years and a great deal of work had to be undertaken to render it fit for habitation. Both at that time, and ever since, it has been necessary for volunteers to work tirelessly to maintain and improve the facilities that we consider to be the envy of all other lodges in Cyprus.

Of the forty nine Worshipful Masters to have previously occupied the chair of Apollo Lodge, thirty nine have departed these shores or died, and only eight remain as members resident in Cyprus (two of them having served for two years as Master). In the light of these figures we can appreciate the true value to the lodge of the joining members who have brought to Apollo a wealth of experience from many parts of the world.

Enough of the past – what of the future? Our membership numbers are more than healthy and we continue to serve the needs of the Servicemen and attached civilians posted to the Western Sovereign Base Area. We also welcome many ex-Service

applicants and those within the community who share our values. We continue to enjoy the support of Episkopi Station in that we have a secure tenancy of our current premises and, thanks to the very generous support of a member now living abroad, we have the means to find and develop a new home should the need arise.

Finally – I must tread warily when I mention the lack of a printed ‘history’ such as was compiled after our first twenty years. Brethren, we have full and detailed Minutes of our meetings, both regular meetings of the Lodge, standing committee meetings and even Lodge of Instruction meetings - and our in-house ‘Oracle’ magazine – plenty of sources to satisfy the inquisitive nature of any potential historian.

My belief is that what matters most is not what is written in minute books but what is recorded and retained in our individual experiences. I have been fortunate enough to have met, and developed friendships with, many wonderful brethren during my thirty two years as a member of Apollo Lodge. We have shared experiences that have marked us as people and which will never be forgotten. The volume that sits unread upon the bookshelf would not reflect the rue history of Apollo Lodge, but the relationships, qualities and deeds of its brethren, whether still resident on this island or long gone from its shores, will testify to the worth of the lodge and the shared joys and sorrows experienced within its walls.

May we work diligently in the years to come to maintain and promote a caring and concerned fraternity providing wonderful opportunities for personal improvement and fulfilment – and a bit of fun along the way!

Compiled and delivered by WBro Rob Cowin PJGD PDepDistGM DistGMentor at the 50th Anniversary Festive Board on 14th May 2013.