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THE MASTER'S INSTALLATION ADDRESS

"Oh Wonderful Masons!"

By WBro K J Edney, WM

On 4th August 2003

Brethren,

Tonight is an important occasion for Freemasonry in the Hawke's Bay area. Once again the H.B. Research Lodge has installed its Master and another round of discourses and discussions are in the melting pot for the coming year.

In the first degree all masons, in the charge after initiation, are exhorted "to make a daily advancement in Masonic Knowledge". These words are used extensively in and out of the Lodge, and to some extent have lost their impact.

Masons, by this statement, are encouraged to study, read, discuss, debate and discourse upon matters Masonic. Ritual, doing acts of benevolence, attendance at Lodge and visiting have been carried out to such an extent that growth and potential in the Masonic fabric have under utilised. Learning is the silent and often neglected partner to our Masonry. If you don't believe me see how many Brethren are absent when the Grand Lecturer visits to address the Brethren at Lodge. Knowledge and scholarship are the mortar that binds us together. Too often good ritual alone is seen to be sufficient for a mason's needs, sometimes closing out Brethren who, if encouraged, may have found they have a capacity to present and deliver papers and talks.

Knowledge of who we are and what we are is vital. Without these factors we are just another organisation struggling to exist in an already busy world. Masonry is a rich institution in history, customs and traditions. We have much to draw on. There have been periods of growth, stagnation and decay. Along with this have come reforms, renovations, adjustments and renewal of purpose.

By an understanding of our past we have at our fingertips the great and sure knowledge that we have the resources and the corporate history to succeed and to take Freemasonry into the 21st century and beyond.

While visiting the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey two years ago I was amazed at the extent of the Abbey buildings and the remains left standing. The length of church alone is 590 feet. While standing and admiring the stones and the mortar along with the smooth stone remaining, a Masonic companion placed his hands on the wall and said "Oh Wonderful Masons". Even in decay the grandeur of the buildings remains. The skill of the old masons is very evident.

The Abbey took hundred's of years to build and was afflicted by fire. Sometimes construction stopped through lack of money. However, the Monastic buildings were added to, until it was one of the most splendid monasteries in all of England. It boasted a magnificent library, which was dispersed at the Dissolution. Glastonbury, it has been said, had a church above the ground before there was one in Rome.

Besides the ornamental stonework, history tells us that the floors in the Abbey church were covered in elaborate tiles. Glastonbury Abbey was therefore a religious house, sustained by prayer and worship of the monks, a place of learning and a building of magnificent decoration. All these combined to form the legend of earliest Christianity in England, connected with Joseph of Arimathea, King Arthur and the Holy Grail.

In looking at the ruins of Glastonbury I saw, in essence, the whole history of Freemasonry symbolically expressed by its history, fullness of growth, wealth, influence, being ravished by fire, undergoing the Dissolution, its stone pillaged and in decay, possessing the aura of deep spiritual connection, so much so that religious festivals are held every year and the pilgrims still come, because its reality can still be discerned.

Legend says Glastonbury will rise and be rebuilt again - and so it will be with Freemasonry. As Masonry, worldwide, passes through a period of decline let us be mindful of the example of our forebears who built for

the future with their hope in faith. Therefore let Masonic Knowledge bind us together, establish our foundations anew and once again be worthy of the trust and craftsmanship they bequeathed to us.

Once more to be worthy of the title "**Oh Wonderful Masons**".