2016 Kellerman Lecture for NSW & ACT

TWO ENDURING TREASURES: WHY THEY ARE NOT ORNAMENTS

WBro Peter Bindon
Linford Lodge of Research

Gold fever in Australia

In the 1830's and 40s, well before Lawrence Hargraves was acknowledged as the discoverer of gold in Australia, at least three other men had also claimed this honour. They were John Lhotsky, Count Paul Edmund de Strzelecki, and the Rev William Branwhite Clarke. Interestingly, although no information regarding any affiliation with Freemasonry has been found for Strezelecki or Clark, it appears that Lhotsky may have been a member of Australian Lodge number 820 meeting in Sydney New South Wales, as an 1833 subscription book contains a record of a payment made by him on December 13 of that year. [55] Nevertheless, it is Hargraves who is accredited with the discovery after returning to Australia from California where he had been prospecting for gold. Hargraves discovery in New South Wales was soon followed by other equally exciting discoveries elsewhere in Australia.

An announcement in the July 7, 1851, issue of the Geelong Advertiser revealed that payable gold was discovered by James Esmond at Clunes near Ballarat. Shortly thereafter more discoveries followed at many other locations spread across a wide area of central Victoria.

At this time in Australia's history, many changes were taking place in the social structure. The first colonies had been established as Penal Settlements but once many of the convicts had served their time and had become freed, free immigrants had also begun to arrive determined to make a new and more prosperous life in this somewhat strange and exotic land far from the troubles of Europe. Announcements that gold had been discovered in the new continent accelerated this growth in population.

Victorian England manifested great strength in law and order and this was reflected on the diggings in the law enforcement undertaken generally by troopers but also later by goldfields police. There also existed a strand of lawlessness in the society at that time perhaps as a heritage from the convict ancestry of much of the populace. While the greater portions of the colony were peaceful and law-abiding, goldfields were to some extent lawless. Consequently, any government buildings were strongly constructed, perhaps we should say fortified, to reflect the power of strong government, but more to provide some sense of security for the undermanned police forces who were generally powerless and most unpopular. Laws that the police were called upon to administer, particularly the hated 'licensing laws,' contributed to the low esteem in which the police were held. No doubt many of the diggers, who considered themselves Colonials, saw the English law as disadvantageous to them while favouring the landed gentry. It is true that the licensing laws were designed partly to force the diggers back into the paid workforce, which suffered huge labour shortages as employees left every kind of business to try their luck on the goldfields. A further source of discontent was the government requirement that gold should be sold at the police station or another official depot within 10 days of its discovery when the price paid for it was also set by the government.

The numbers of diggers arriving on the Victorian goldfields was enormous; for example at the end of 1851, there were 4000 diggers at Golden Point near Ballarat. The exodus from Melbourne

---

[55] http://interactive.ancestry.com.au/60620/43970_ugl%5Ecf%5Eg%5E1813-00159/1494432?backurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.Ancestry.com.au%2fcgi-bin%2fsse.dll%3fgst%3d-6&ssrc=&backlabel=ReturnSearchResults#?imageId=43970_ugl%5Ecf%5Eg%5E1813-00159

was so great that Governor Latrobe complained that gold mania had resulted in men abandoning their jobs, families, that towns were being emptied and ships deserted. By early 1852 there were thousands of diggers on the Victorian fields.

The rebellion at Eureka near Ballarat is the only Australian example of an armed revolt that actually lead to existing laws being changed. Although there were deaths on both sides the rebelling miners were acquitted at the trial in February 1855. Just prior to this trial, a bill had been passed giving a franchise to any digger who owned a miner's right or licence (which now cost 1 pound). Miners would now pay a tax on the gold they found instead of a monthly licence fee for the possibility of making a find. They could own the land on which they worked and the much disliked Gold Commission was replaced by a system of mining wardens.

A few months after the Bendigo goldfield opened in 1851 most of the several thousands of diggers were itinerant. Freemasons, through their membership in various jurisdictions, were all conversant with the teachings of charity, fraternity, and equality. These principles were just as important for the new lodges that would be formed on the goldfields as they were in the lodges to which the miners had previously belonged. No doubt it was partly their wish to establish a society in the new continent of Australia that embodied the principles of charity, fraternity and equality.

Using the time honoured methodologies adopted from operative stonemason's in the Middle Ages the miners were able to identify and recognise Brothers using the time-honoured system. When they had done so they then organised and attended meetings with the intention of forming their own lodges

Freemason William Scott described the method used for setting up a Masonic Lodge in the evolving goldfields town of Bendigo. Scott wrote that in 1854 a group comprising Smith, Emmett, Williams, Schulzen, Smith, and Mocklet met in a back room of the Royal Exchange Hotel, (Bendigo) and decided to form a Masonic Lodge. Subsequently, a notice was tacked to a tree reading: "Should this meet the eye of a Freemason it is to notify that a meeting of the craft will be held at Fraser's store, near the Black Swan hotel, on Wednesday night at 9 PM. Fail not on your O. B."[56]

> *"At the time and place indicated", Scott wrote, "I attended, and found a number of gentlemen representing all nations, all in full dress of the period, black flannel shirt, Yankee boots with a tassel on the front, moleskin trousers, and patent leather belt.*
> *"All the brethren, as I may term them, then withdrew except three, of whom I was one. After some preliminary inquiries as to name and number of each other's mother Lodge et cetera, I volunteered to test oath, which is usually administered when visited American lodges, and after examination, administered the oath to the others, and subsequently, one by one, to the whole of the brethren assembled. All prove themselves, very creditably, to be true masons, although belonging to various constitutions and different countries".[57]*

The decision of the men at this first Bendigo meeting was that a Masonic Lodge should be established there, to be named the Golden Lodge, which met formally and officially on 3 October 1854.

William Scott was an Irishman born in 1828 who had immigrated to Canada with his parents. He was initiated into Freemasonry at Freeport, Illinois in 1849 and not long afterwards was appointed its Master. Attracted by the announcements of the discovery of gold in Victoria he immigrated to the Colony of Victoria (recently separated from New South Wales) arriving in Melbourne in June 1853. As we have seen he took an active part in the foundation of Golden Lodge number 641 (Scottish Constitution) and became the worshipful Master of that Lodge in

---

[56] Wickham, D, 2013, Freemasons on the goldfields; Ballarat and District 1853 – 2013. Ballarat Heritage services, Ballarat Victoria
[57] op. cit., 2013:28

1855. William Scott had an illustrious career in Freemasonry as well as in civic life and was also a prominent member of the Independent order of Oddfellows being a past Grand Master in the Colony of Victoria.

Cultural and educational changes
Given that the mid-1800's were tumultuous times and the discovery of gold did little to calm the turbulent waters, it seems logical to examine the quest for stable social conditions made by groups of like-minded individuals.

Globally this was the time when to delete feudal systems, monarchies and old world social structures were in a state of collapse. Industrialism and the fallout from the industrial revolution, which had inadvertently promoted difficult and unfair working conditions, had not been addressed by either the monarchies that still existed or the new forms of democratic government that had recently come into being. But, three landmark events that took place far away from the newly settled land of Australia, contributed to the social conditions on the goldfields. These events were the American Revolution, the French Revolution and political upheavals in Ireland.

The American Revolution
The Spanish colonisation of that part of the American continent, which was to become the United States of America, took place in about the 1500's. English settlement followed 100 years later. In the last quarter of the 1770's, the original 13 colonies of the United States gained independence from Britain. The principles and rules that would form the basis of the American Nation directed the design of the Constitution of the United States of America. The first principle was that rights come from God, not from government. The second principle was that all political power emanates from the people. The third principle was a belief that there should be a limited government in the form of a representative republic. The founders of the nation distrusted a direct democracy because they saw it as a kind of mob rule and they wished to establish a system that was free of special interests and factions that might gain control of the government. They saw that throughout history, majority factions consistently tyrannised minorities, regardless of whether they were based on race, wealth, religion, geography or some other defining characteristic. The fourth principle was that there would be a written constitution that set out the rules for governance between the people and their elected representatives. Any change in this document would be through a specified process. And the fifth principle granted property rights to private individuals; in other words liberty of citizenship would never allow the government to come unheralded to confiscate an individual's property.

So the miners who hailed from the USA and came to Australia in the gold rushes of the 1860's and who were only two or three generations removed from those who had established what was seen at the time as the world's most significant expression of the principles of liberty and equality and fraternity, brought with them the same ideas and aspirations for a similar society to be established in their new home.

The French Revolution
The French Revolution began in 1789 and finally ended in the late 1790's when Napoleon Bonaparte ascended to prominence. It was a watershed event in modern European history and contributed its own specific ideas to political systems regarding the freedoms of an individual. During the turmoil of this dramatic upheaval, French citizens remade the political landscape of their country, sometimes with great violence and viciousness as they uprooted centuries old institutions like the absolute monarchy and the feudal system of land ownership.

Like the American Revolution before it, the French Revolution was influenced by Enlightenment ideals, particularly the concepts of popular sovereignty and inalienable individual rights. The revolutionary movement played a critical role in shaping modern nations by showing governments and rulers the inherent power contained within the will of groups of people.

Political upheavals in Ireland

Political transportation of individuals caught up in a harsh judicial system for petty theft and a trickle of Irish immigrants into Australia had made the continent familiar to many Irish men and women by the middle of the 19th century. From 1851 to 1860 more than 100,000 Irish came to Australia some struck with gold fever others to escape poverty and starvation. They formed about 1/5 of the people who came to the Australian colonies from Great Britain at this time. As most of the early gold found on the Australian fields was alluvial, the fact that the Irish immigrants had little or no mining skills was no hindrance to their enthusiasm. After the alluvial fields were exhausted many worked as unskilled labour for the reef mining corporations or moved into other trades and professions, where they enjoyed a higher standard of living than they had left behind. Amongst the Irish immigrants, most of whom were staunch Catholics, there were also those who were accomplished, orators and political activists. Of the diggers involved in the Eureka Stockade event about half were Irish including Peter Lalor, the leader.[58]

Fraternal organisations

In the preface to his book "Odd Fellows, the History of I00F Australia" the historian Geoffrey Blainey says:

"…for decades the lodges were far more important than the trade unions but unlike the unions, they rarely are mentioned in the single volume histories of Australia. This is partly because the lodges cloaked themselves in mystery. Their oaths and rituals and dressed belong to a forgotten era. Today, historians seem to have little knowledge of what the lodges believed in and the role they played in town and suburban life. Their role was vital. They were a major private precursor of today's welfare state and many of their welfare tasks they carried out with impressive skill and the help of a tiny bureaucracy. In all, a form and heroic chapter in Australia's history."[59]

The Tolpuddle Martyrs were on board the convict ship *Surrey* on 17 August 1834 as she sailed through the Sydney's heads towards her anchorage in Sydney Cove. They had been sentenced to 7 years transportation for establishing the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers. The sentence was designed to suppress the growth of trade unions by making the agricultural labourers from Tolpuddle an example, but they had not been found guilty of establishing a trade union, which was not illegal. They had been found guilty of administering an unlawful oath!

"The oath they took differed little from the oath is commonly sworn by the trade unions, friendly societies and Freemason's lodges of the day. It was an oath of loyalty to other society members and a promise not to disclose society affairs to outsiders. It formed part of an initiation ceremony – saying a prayer, singing hymns, and exposition of the aims of the society – which was very like the ceremonies of other trade unions and friendly societies. The suggestion that the six men had formed a criminal conspiracy was absurd." [60]

Fraternal groups and lodges exist in many forms and for many different reasons. For example, the Free Gardeners described in Cooper's account of that organisation might be considered an early form of a trade union.[61] They organised labour, controlled trade, they made payments of 'trade dues' for benevolence, and were involved in the supply and sale of plants. Their constitution indicates that they were prepared to cooperate mutually, exercise some control over their members, educate them and attempt to improve their morals.

[58] Coughlan, N., 1965, the coming of the Irish to Victoria; historical studies, Australia and New Zealand; volume 12, number 45, PP. 64 – 86.

[59] Blainey, G. 1991. Odd Fellows: a history of IOOF Australia. Allen & Unwin, Sydney

[60] Green and Cromwell 1984:3

[61] Cooper, R. L. D. (Pope, T. Editor) 2005. Freemasons Templars and Gardeners. Australian and New Zealand Masonic research Council, Melbourne

An examination of the history and the social contributions of friendly societies established in Australia would require several volumes, and still awaits research and publication. Although most Australian groups had their origins in Great Britain, some had other origins simply because many immigrants delete came from many different countries of origin.

In 1851 Victoria's population was 97,000; just 10 years later it was 540,000 and in 1865 the Victorian Statistical Register contained details of 13 societies of Oddfellows, Foresters and Druids having a combined total of 24,410 members. By 1879 there were 34 societies with 766 branches and 46,191 subscribing members. [62] Clearly, there is more to this statistic than the simple desire to belong to a group of like-minded men for social reasons, and the aspect of mutual financial support prior to the provision of any state aid for sickness or unemployment was a key factor in the high participation rate.

Two of the 34 societies listed had originated during a dispute over the control of religious education in Victorian government schools; these were the Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society and the Protestant Alliance Friendly Society. Campaigns during the early 1860's while an education act was before Parliament, led to disputes that caused great bitterness between religious factions. This resulted in drastic falls in membership numbers in one or another friendly society. While both of the two aforementioned orders were organised along lines similar to traditionally affiliated societies with their ritual and regalia bearing a superficial resemblance to that of the Oddfellows, the sentiments expressed inside their rituals and ceremonials differed markedly. Members undergoing initiation swore their allegiance not to international brotherhood regardless of race colour or creed, they declared their loyalty to one or the other religious faith.

The fraternal societies that had established themselves in Australia included contributing and shareholder groups like Manchester Unity Independent Order of OddFellows (MUIOOF), Independent Order of Rechabites (IOR), Order of the Sons of Temperance, Protestant Alliance Friendly Societies of Australia (PAFSOA), Free Gardeners, Ancient Order of Druids, United Ancient Order of Druids, Ancient Order of Foresters, Australian Order of Foresters and the Australian Natives Association among others. All of these had individual benefit lodges within their establishments. [63] Doubtless, there were numerous other societies with similar aims, but in this paper, I intend to examine briefly only the Foresters and Oddfellows after a brief sally towards the Druids and to note that a number of home-grown Australian friendly societies also existed in former times.

Druids. In 1833 and despite having the motto "Unity, Peace, and Concord" part of the Ancient Order of Druids broke away from the parent organisation to become a Registered Friendly Society and in the process renamed itself the 'United Ancient Order of Druids, (UAOD)'. With its strong membership, it soon became one of the biggest of the British benefit societies especially in the colonies where its lodges (called 'groves') formed an important support network. In the late 1800's there were reputed to be 25,595 members in Australia. A lodge of the Ancient Order of Druids (AOD) could have eventuated in Melbourne in 1851 when a Mr. Hymen, who originated from London, arrived carrying an authority from the Ancient Order of Druids in England to establish a Lodge in Melbourne, but a permanent lodge did not eventuate until 1861. Just the next year a Victorian Grand Lodge of the United Ancient Order of Druids (UAOD) was established. Juvenile lodges were established in Prahran in 1886, and later in South

[62] Royal Commission on National Insurance, 1924 – 25, minutes of evidence, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra
[63] http://www.achha.org.au/friendlysocieties.php, retrieved April 2016

Melbourne and Footscray, but had ceased to exist by 1900. The first female lodge had been opened in 1899 in Launceston, Tasmania, and by about 1925 there were fifteen ladies lodges. [64] According to Elizabeth Willis, the first home-grown Victorian Friendly Society, the Melbourne Union Benefit Society, was formed in May 1839 and by September had about 100 members, drawn from 'the congregated trades of the town'. A second was formed in 1840 when a group of men formed the Australia Felix Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Most of the early members of this lodge were self-employed. Later, wage-earners flocked to join. Nearly one-sixth of the Victorian workforce belonged to a friendly society in 1891, and by 1913 over half the population was insured by them in some way.[65]

Foresters: One of Britain's oldest and largest Friendly Societies, the Ancient Order of Foresters, evolved from an earlier organisation known as the Royal Foresters whose origins are unknown. But there is a literary reference to a gathering of Royal Foresters in Yorkshire that took place on 29 October 1745.
Somewhat later in 1790 The Royal Order of Foresters held its Supreme Court No 1 at the Old Crown Inn, Kirk Gate, Leeds, in the same room in which the Masonic Lodge of Fidelity held its meetings. This Forester's Court is the oldest on record and is generally believed to have been the founding body of the present organisation of the society. At one stage the Royal Order of Foresters was considered to be the largest and most popular Friendly Society in Britain. Interestingly, several of the founders of the Royal Order of Foresters, including its first Worshipful Master, were also members of the Masonic Lodge of Fidelity. The founders of the Royal Order of Foresters were men of high moral standards and great philanthropy and they demanded these characteristics from those who wanted to join the new order.

The early rulebook says, "… *every Forester is bound by the inherent principle of Forestry to be a good moral man; a good and peaceable subject, a good husband and a good father.*
"The object of Forestry is to unite the virtuous and would in all sects and the nominations of man in the sacred bonds of brotherhood so that while wandering through the forest of this world they may render mutual aid and assistance to each other".
Unlike many other fraternal societies, the Ancient Order of Foresters had within it a second order. In 1815, The Ancient Order of Royal Shepherds was introduced into the Order as the 2nd Degree. The Order of Shepherds was based on the religious ideas contained in the Biblical parable of the Good Shepherd and the opening words of the 23rd Psalm, which were the motto of the order "the Lord is my shepherd." The Order of Shepherds was thus an order within an order, and this arrangement made the Order of Foresters unique among Friendly Societies. This second order provided a means of paying additional contributions into the Order's funds resulting in an additional benefit being payable, the rates being about half those of the Foresters. While the Ancient Order of Foresters met in a "Court" the meeting place of the Shepherds was known as a "Sanctuary" and the Sanctuary and the Court of the same name and number usually met in the same premises but at different times. For reasons not made clear in the easily available literature, in 1817, this so-called 2ndDegree of Forestry separated itself from its parent body and became a mutual society in its own right.
Social, ritualistic and practical benefits were the reasons behind joining the Ancient Order of Foresters. The practical benefit was a Sickness Benefit Fund from which, for a specific regular contribution, payment was made in times of sickness or disablement to offset any loss in wages, thereby giving some financial independence before state sickness benefits were common; the contributory funeral fund paid out money to cover funeral costs of the member, his wife or widow, saving from many the ignominy of a pauper's funeral. Cases of distress or hardship

[64] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Order_of_Druids, retrieved April 2016
[65] http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00614b.htm, retrieved May 2016

amongst the membership were assisted with funds granted from a General Distress Fund at the discretion of the Court. Courts also had a Medical Fund from which a regular contribution was paid to the Court Surgeon for the provision of medical attention and medicine to the members in times of sickness.

Forestry rapidly spread throughout the world during the 19th century and particularly to the British colonies. The first Foresters Court in New South Wales opened in 1843 and a district was formed soon after in 1848. By 1856 there were 24 new Foresters Courts in the colonies of Victoria, South Australia, West Indies and South Africa. Between 1857 and 1864, a total of 20 new dispensations were sent to the Adelaide district, 5 to the broader Australian district, 12 to Melbourne and 3 to Otago in New Zealand (the scene of a gold rush in the 1860's). As a response to this growth in membership numbers and probably to assist with lightening administrative responsibilities, in 1864 the High Court authorised the setting up of colonial High Courts.[66]

Court Robin Hood, in Richmond Victoria, was the biggest Foresters Lodge in Australia by the early 1900's. 61 out of a total membership of 600 went to the First World War, six of whom were killed. It had maintained its membership numbers during the difficult times of the war and had combined funds of £4,565. [67]

Manchester Unity: A British Act of Parliament signed by Queen Victoria on 5 August 1850, separated the Port Phillip district from New South Wales. The act named the new colony "Victoria" (after Queen Victoria) and provided it with its own Constitution. Enabling legislation for the separation was passed by the New South Wales Legislative Council on 1 July 1851. Before that event, on 9 March 1840, the first Lodge of Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows Friendly Society had opened in Sydney when the city had a population of just under 30,000 people many of whom were convicts.

The first record of an Oddfellows "Lodge" is reputed to have been in London in 1736. Like most of the other early "Friendly Societies," the Oddfellows commenced as a result of a real need. It is believed that the mediaeval trade guilds were a part trade union and part benefit society. In the 18th century, the effectiveness and influence of these organisations were failing and their membership was declining. At the same time, there was no form of public assistance that could be drawn upon in bad times or in sickness for aid and assistance and there were no funeral or death benefits.

Members desirous of financial independence agreed to contribute a small amount of their weekly earnings into a pool, knowing that in this manner a large number of members could build up funds to assist members of the group and their families in times of need. At first, the groups were formed as a number of separate "clubs" until workers begin to travel to other towns for work when it was seen that having societies with a number of branches would be an advantage. From 1810, with Manchester Unity leading the way, these clubs begin to federate in Britain into affiliated societies, often with the wider group becoming known as an "Order" and the smaller groups being called "Lodges". Attendance at Lodge meetings was most important because at them weekly subscriptions could be paid and the mandatory current passwords that were regularly changed could be heard. A receipt for your payment and knowledge of the password demonstrated to others that you had maintained your membership in the Lodge.

Manchester Unity Friendly Society delete was established in Melbourne in 1840 when Augustus Greeves, a member of the MUIOOF in England, migrated to Australia. By the late nineteenth century, the Society had an extensive network of lodges in metropolitan and country Victoria. A

---

[66] The major part of this section on Foresters was sourced from: Cooper, W. G. 1984, The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society 150 Years: 1834 – 1984. The Executive Council of The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society, Southampton, England

[67] http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/93810791; Richmond Guardian (Vic.: 1917 - 1918), Sat 18 Aug 1917, Page 2

key feature of the governance of Manchester Unity was the Annual Moveable Conference, met at a different centre and elected the organisation's directors for the coming year.

Manchester Unity of Oddfellows in Australia has operated continuously and under the same name for over 150 years. Now called Australian Unity it was formed by the merger of the Australian natives Association-friendly Society (ANA) and the Manchester Unity Independent order of Oddfellows (Manchester Unity) in 1993. The Australian Natives' Association had been established in Melbourne in 1871, as a membership organisation for people born in Australia at a time when most of the administrative jobs in the Australian colonies were exclusively held by those born in Britain. The ANA had two aims – to act as a friendly Society giving financial support to its needy members by providing services such as sick pay and funeral benefits and to promote the moral social and intellectual improvement of its members. It placed little emphasis on the usual ritual practices of friendly societies and specialised regalia, instead encouraging public debates, presenting concerts and other social activities while promoting Australian nationalism, Federation and the establishment of Australia Day. A further merger with the Grand United Friendly Society Limited, which had similar structure and aims to Manchester Unity, was undertaken in 2005 and at the time of writing Australian Unity has 34,000 members/customers.[68]

Chinese associations. After the British the next biggest source of immigrant diggers was to become the Chinese. There were already several thousand Chinese workers in Australia before gold was discovered. They had first come mainly from the southern provinces of China to work on the sheep farms of New South Wales at a time when the declining number of convicts being shipped to Australia from British ports was creating a labour shortage. Local agents found work for young Chinese in various foreign countries during the 1840's and 1850's. These agents promised them a good future and advanced to them the cost of the ship's passage. This money was repaid by the recruits from their wages earned in the destination country. Typically Chinese labourers stayed in Australia for two or three years and it is thought that a total of perhaps half a million came to Australia at some point during the gold rushes. Many had gone first to join the gold rush in California after the news of the gold discoveries there reached Hong Kong in 1848. Some left for Australia from California, following the announcements of gold discoveries in New South Wales and Victoria, with the biggest numbers ariving in Australia after 1854. It has been said that they feared the British and mistrusted British law and it was only when mining for gold in California became more difficult and less fruitful that they turned towards Australia.[69]

At the time of the first census, Chinese immigrants made up less than 1% of the population, but by 1858 they made up almost one-quarter of the population of Victoria.[70]

Cultural cohesion was particularly strong amongst the Chinese miners and amongst Victorian towns Bendigo was unusual having a Chinese Masonic Lodge. This may not be as pertinent to this essay as it seems. John Fitzgerald acknowledges that the members used the term 'Masonic' in the name of their organisation but he suggests that the Chinese adopted this practice in an attempt to gain public status and recognition rather than using it as a formal or official connection with Freemasonry.[71] The Bendigo Hongmen Tiandihui was an association that used ceremonies, ritual and regalia to cement the bonds of friendship amongst its members but for all that, the organisation is more accurately described as a fraternal mutual benefit society than it is a Masonic Lodge. Additionally the Hongmen Tiandihui and other secret Chinese societies were essentially social in their aims, character and activities, but unlike the Freemasons they also had political objectives. The Chinese organisation in Bendigo occupied what is locally known as the

---

[68] McDermot, A. 2015

[69] Hill, D., 2010.

[70] McGowan, 2008 (online version)

[71] Fitzgerald, J. Abstract to: 'Politics and Networks in the Transition from Rural to Urban Organisation of the Hung League of Colonial and Federation Australia". Paper 2CSAA conference, Bendigo 2005 quoted in Wickham 2013, op. cit.

Chinese Masonic Temple, which is reputed to have been constructed in the 1860's. The temple, which is the only one of its kind surviving from the gold-rush period in country Victoria, was dedicated to the deity Chit Kung Tang but has an inscription above the door that reads 'Chinese Masonic Hall'. The occupants of this building belonged to the 'Hung League' which in modern parlance was a 'Triad' and which had developed from the loose affiliation of rural clubs and organisations into a far more organised social network having, as this building demonstrates a prominent urban profile. 72 We will revisit the Chinese situation in the section in this essay devoted to the Southern Highlands.

We are not drawing too long a bow if we assume that the aspirations of all the friendly societies that were established in Australia from the middle 1800's onwards were similar. Their aims can be divided into two broad streams; firstly, benevolence and charity and secondly, personal and social education and development. In broad terms, these are the same aims as those of Freemasonry and they were the goal sought by the miners toiling in the goldfields of central Victoria and the Southern Tablelands of New South Wales.

A few words need to be said about other organisations that encouraged social cohesion and educational advancements, like Schools of Art and Mechanics Institutes which when first established had the aims just stated.

Although Australian Mechanics' Institutes did not faithfully mirror their British equivalents, the pedagogical function of the Institutes was inherited along with the English and Scottish models that had launched the movement in the 19th century. They shared the same inspirational source and original aim of providing technical education, 'useful knowledge' and 'rational recreation' for working class elite. Henry Lawson in Mudgee and Ben Chifley in Bathurst, among others, recognised the part played by small town Mechanics' Institutes in their own self-education.

As an organisation with the proclaimed purpose of diffusing useful and technical knowledge everywhere, the Mechanics' Institutes by the late 1890's, had reached their zenith and began a period of decline. They had made a significant contribution to the construction of Australian culture but after the turn of the century, their influence began a gradual decline until they were eventually overtaken in their role by public libraries most of which were funded by local government. Bremer and Lyons' conclude that there was a considerable gender difference in the membership of Mechanics' Institutes, which was in any case skewed towards the middle classes unlike Freemasonry, which proclaimed fraternal equality and universal brotherhood.[73] Today these institutions are generally represented in Australia by the buildings in which these active libraries and places for personal development were once housed.

Growth of Masonic Lodges
Central Victoria
After the discovery of gold was officially announced in July 1851 Freemasons drawn from all points of the compass were among the first men who immigrated in their droves to the new colony of Victoria where it was rumoured that vast riches were being discovered. Wickham says that two months later, in September 1851 there were 560 men mining for gold on the Ballarat diggings. Before this time most of the population in the area that would become the Victorian goldfields was itinerant. However just a month later in October 1851, there were about 6000 people on the Ballarat diggings but some were already leaving to join the new rush to Forest Creek near Castlemaine that had been discovered a month earlier. The population fluctuations were such that Lieutenant-Governor Charles Joseph Latrobe was able to report in March 1852 that there were only 200 licensed miners working in Ballarat. It was the discovery in 1853 of the deep leads rich in gold that encouraged the township to grow which by 1854 contained about

---

[72] http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p97101/mobile/ch06s02.html, retrieved April 2016
[73] Bremer & Lyons, 2001:211

20,000 people. Most of these were men and women of Anglo-Saxon origin and their ages were said to be between 20 and 40. Although it's hard to generalise about the makeup of the population on the goldfields, it is clear that it also contained people of many ethnic backgrounds other than Anglo-Saxon or Europeans. In fact, there were more nationalities on the goldfields than one would normally find in other places in Australia. The goldfields communities were thus cosmopolitan, vibrant and progressive.

The Freemasons who had come to Australia to take advantage of the gold rushes were conversant with the teachings of charity, fraternity, and equality, and no doubt wished to form Lodges on the goldfields. Like their relatives the operative stonemasons in the Middle Ages, they were able to identify and recognise other Masonic men by the use of the various signs and phrases. It wasn't long before groups of them organised and attended meetings.[74]
The formation of the first Lodges took place in the typical manner described in the introduction to this essay. However, there were some interesting variations amongst the lodges that were established. "In the mid 19th century Ballarat was one of the few places in the world where a French Lodge was established in a predominantly English colonial setting. The Rameau d'Or d'Eleusis, number 103 was one of only nine Le Philadelphes (Grand Orient, Rite of Memphis) Lodges that existed outside France." Wickham states that historian Eric Hobsbawm has the opinion that throughout the period of the French Revolution, Brotherhoods such as this, especially between 1789 and1848, were of considerable importance in shaping world affairs.[75]
It is also Wickham's opinion that there was a strong possibility that some soldiers of the 40th Somerset and the 12th Regiment of Foot, both present at Ballarat in 1854, were members of Masonic lodges holding travelling charters that permitted meetings to be held wherever the regiment was located at the time. It has not been possible to ascertain whether this was indeed the case.

In the manner suggested organised Freemasonry began in the Bendigo area in 1853 when seven Brethren met in the back room of the Royal Exchange building in the newly born township. According to David Beagley, these men had diverse backgrounds coming from Britain, the German states, France, Ireland and the United States of America, but together they were 'keen to establish in Bendigo the social institution … called Freemasonry.' Their efforts to achieve this aim … is an example of people desperately trying to establish a stable, familiar social structure [amongst] that chaotic landscape of mine shafts, claims and gold fever.[76]
While attempts to establish a Freemasons Lodge in Bendigo were in train amongst the assembled Freemasons, the Provincial Grand Master of South Australia paid a visit. This is an interesting occurrence given that other fraternal societies were established in Victoria through the auspices of parent organisations in South Australia – although in this case there does not seem to be a connection between the two events. However, the efforts of the Victorian Masons who had met together bore fruit at a formal Masonic meeting on 3 October 1854 when the first Worshipful Master of the Golden Lodge was installed, a candidate was initiated, 11 more were proposed, and 10 brethren applied for affiliation. Beagley offers a view that the very first members of what became later the Golden and Corinthian Lodge, understood that "together they were strangers in a strange land" and wanted to create a community structure that was familiar and comforting to them all. The Golden and Corinthian Lodge was the first of eight lodges formed in and around Bendigo that either directly or indirectly stemmed from this first effort. In this burgeoning centre of population other lodges grew up in nearby areas to accommodate the men who also wished to

---

[74] Jones, B. E. 1961:10
[75] Wickham 2013:13
[76] Beagley, 2004: vii

be Masons but whose employment or homes were inconveniently remote from the more central lodge in Bendigo itself.

Bendigo Masonic lodges from 1854

Golden Lodge	formed 1854	number 641 English Constitution
Corinthian Lodge	formed 1858	number 770 English Constitution
Golden and Corinthian Lodge	formed by amalgamation in 1872	641 English Constitution then 7 Victorian Constitution
Eaglehawk Lodge	formed 1865	1203 English Constitution, then 55 Victorian Constitution
Zenith Lodge	formed 1866	1133 English Constitution, then 52 Victorian Constitution
Sandhurst Lodge	formed 1904	194 on the Victorian Constitution
Corona Lodge	formed 1904	195 on the Victorian Constitution, warrant returned in 1986
The Lodge Composite	formed 1922	314 on the Victorian Constitution, warrant returned 2001; affiliated with Golden and Corinthian
Bendigo City Lodge	formed 1951	number 714 Victorian Constitution
Bendigo Daylight Lodge	formed 1983	number 876 Victorian Constitution

We may speculate that from the names of the Lodges many of the miners who joined or formed these lodges originated in Great Britain. Roger Burt in a chapter entitled 'Masonic networking by migrating Cornish miners' in Beagley's book 'Gold and Blue' makes the observation that: "It used to be a commonplace that wherever you found a hole in the ground, you found a Cornish man at the bottom of it! Sadly, the recent collapse of the centuries-old industry in that country means that it is no longer true, but in the late 19th century, Cornish miners, mining engineers, and managers were a ubiquitous feature of mining districts across the world."[77] Given the economic conditions in Ireland and the declining importance of mining in Cornwall, it is not surprising that many miners with a Celtic background journeyed to the Australian goldfields.

Cornish miners had travelled from their homeland to the gold rushes in California; they came to Victoria, and later would also go to the Rand in South Africa. It is Burt's opinion that the Cornish miners and their families who moved to the new mining regions were supported by strong ethnic and community ties which had existed in their homeland and which they transplanted to every foreign mining region where they worked. The social interrelationships of this single group of British immigrants were complex and depended on relationships amongst the members of extended families, common religious affiliations, local allegiances and a common work experience in underground mining. An inheritance of some Celtic racial characteristics may also have provided an adhesive force within this group. Similar conditions may well also have been a factor amongst the Irish who came to the central Victorian goldfields as they also had a common cultural heritage which acted as a unifying force.
Furthermore, Burt also makes the point that the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, the Ancient Order of Foresters and above all, he says, the Freemasons prospered in the 19th century, Cornwall.[78] These and other groups united their members despite their varying economic

---

[77] Burt in Beagley, 2004:13
[78] op. cit.: 14

background and social class. The fraternal societies brought men together using solemn promises, conditions of mutual support and benevolence and provided regular opportunities for communal dining and socialising. He is led to the inevitable conclusion that becoming a Freemason provides a man with the spiritual support that Burt feels is a precondition for an active social life in many small provincial towns, and is a mark of respectability that may lead to economic advancement. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Cornish miners transported these ideals and aspirations with them wherever they went en masse.

It has not been possible to separate out from the British migrants who arrived in Australia those whose home was in Cornwall; this is a project for the future. However, between 1851 and 1860 about 101,540 Irish immigrants had arrived in Australia with the vast majority of them finding their way to the goldfields. In 'The Gold Finder in Australia' (published in 1853) John Sherer, commented that many of the miners on the goldfields had come from Ireland; and of course the potato famine had been partly the cause of this great wave of immigrants departing their homeland as much as did the lure of gold in Australia. While their Welsh, Scottish and English neighbours had something of a tradition of mining, the Irish had none. Alluvial mining which required little expertise suited the new Celtic immigrants but as surface deposits of gold gradually disappeared around Bendigo and deep lead mining began, the Irish were forced, through lack of experience, to resort to employment as unskilled labourers perhaps in large-scale mines. But many took advantage of the other opportunities available in the new colonies and became grocers, publicans, carriers, brewers, policeman as well as general labourers.[79] As an aside, the iconic Queensland beer, XXXX, was originally brewed by two Irish brothers on the Castlemaine Diggings.

Despite their ready acceptance of the new opportunities available to them on the Australian goldfields, political discontent, perhaps a carryover from their more or less oppressed state back in Ireland, often came to the fore. Of the diggers who took part in the 1854 Eureka Stockade Rebellion, a witness at the Gold Fields Commission reported that at least half the rebels were Irish and it is well-known that the leader of the rebellion, Peter Laylor, was Irish.
At this time in Ireland there was already considerable political discontent with the oppression of the Catholic natives by the Protestant English and only two generations after the discovery of gold in the Bendigo district the Irish in Ireland would rise against their British overlords in the 1920's, so it is probably fair to assume that the political aspirations of the Irish were much like those of many of the other diggers on the goldfields. It is worth noting that a large number of Irish names appear in the roles of the early Masonic lodges in the Bendigo district, and notably, a considerable number who belonged to the Catholic faith.

As we have seen, along with the half a dozen Masonic Lodges formed in central Victoria, quite a number of other Fraternal Societies were also established there. Collectively all these groups had a total membership that perhaps approached 2000 individuals, some of whom probably belonged to more than one association. While population growth may have been the main driver for the establishment of many of the Masonic lodges in central Victoria, the geography of the state also contributed to the proliferation of Masonry. Movement around the State was not particularly difficult and of course was facilitated by the early establishment of the river trade on the Murray River. An examination of the history of Masonry in just one centre on the Murray River, Echuca, shows that Freemasons who joined the Lodge there came from near and far within the state as well as from outside Australia.[80]

---

[79] http://www.egold.net.au/biogs/EG00091b.htm, retrieved April 2016.
[80] Rachkind, H., 1995. The Freemasons of Echuca. Self published, 20 Vines Street, Echuca

New South Wales Southern Tablelands: The districts of Braidwood and Young.

Braidwood district: Araluen Valley
After the gold rushes at Ballarat the precious metal was being discovered elsewhere in New South Wales (of which the state now known as Victoria was then a part). Scattered gold discoveries were made in the Southern Tablelands surrounding the Limestone Plains, which became known as the Australian Capital Territory with Canberra as its focus. Some discoveries were made in the farming district of Araluen Valley near the town of Braidwood. Finds about 10 km further south at Majors Creek and another 10 km south from there at Araluen were reported in a number of colonial newspapers beginning in mid-October 1851. Mrs. Baxter found gold near where she lived at Irish Corner near the current town of Reidsdale about 20 km south of Braidwood.

The Majors Creek Field was worked by small-scale mining like cradling followed by sluicing until finally dredging took over even though droughts and poor stream flow severely hampered the work. Araluen suffered from a similar situation but a few months after the discovery of gold here in September 1851, hundreds of miners had descended on the small valley and clusters of tents sprang up. By the 1870's there were about 600 residents in Braidwood but 4000 in the Araluen Valley. The initial success of the gold miners on the major creek fields who were obtaining an average of 1 ounce of gold per day lasted until about 1856 when other forms of mining took over

The township of Majors Creek grew up on Elrington's land selection quickly becoming a shantytown with miner's tents makeshift stores and sly grog shops where 2000 miners and their supporters lived. As one would imagine living conditions were rough, there were frequent fights probably exacerbated by drunkenness until miner's families tempered the frontier lifestyle and the police post was able to encourage a calmer existence. In 1866 the population had fallen to about 200 but in 1871 returned to over 1000 before declining once more to less than 600. Even by the 1860's Wesleyan, Church of England, Roman Catholic churches were operating from tent accommodation but 10 years later had moved into permanent structures. An Oddfellows Lodge was established in 1866.

Masonic Lodge Peabody at Majors Creek was working under a charter issued by the Grand Lodge of New South Wales as number eight on their register having been formed a few years earlier but it closed before the time of union in 1888 when the new Grand Lodge of New South Wales was formed. During the mining boom, there had been a Freemason's Lodge at Araluen that belonged to the Scottish Constitution, but its history is presently unknown by the author.
In the days before Trade Unions, and the welfare state the welfare of miners at Majors Creek was principally addressed by the "Rose of Australia" branch, of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows from 1863 when it was established. As it did elsewhere, the GUOOF provided sickness, unemployment, and funeral benefits for its members and took care of widows and orphans. The records of this organisation indicate that the Majors Creek Branch acted as executors for widows and orphans of the Southern District until the 1970's.
According to McGowan in his excellent publication "From Fraternities to Families: The Evolution of Chinese Life in the Braidwood District of New South Wales", Chinese miners arrived in very large numbers in the Braidwood district from about 1858 onwards. [81]At least

---

[81] McGowan, B., 2008:4 From Fraternities to Families: The Evolution of Chinese Life in the Braidwood District of New South Wales (NSW), 1850s-1890's. In Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies, Volume Two, 2008 南方华裔研究杂志, 第二卷

1500 Chinese miners worked on the goldfields at Araluen, Majors Creek, Mills Creek, Jembaicumbene, and Mongarlowe. Generally, they joined Chinese fraternal organisations perhaps with links to their native place of origin or other secret societies but in any case, these provided an extensive social network that secured their employment and took care of their needs. As miners, they were often organised into groups known as kongsi, which were economic organisations of several dozen or more shareholding partners.[82]

Chinese secret societies typically operated within the confines of the Chinese temple, as demonstrated by the existence of a subscription board for a Chinese secret society from Narrandera and a wooden sign board that once hung above the Chinese temple doors in Albury. This reads "Chinese Masonic Society". As we will see, a notable man of Chinese heritage, Quong Tart, became involved in one of these Chinese fraternal groups and knowledge of this affiliation probably delayed his acceptance into Freemasonry somewhat later.
A rather mundane observation regarding the Chinese on the Australian goldfields is that on most of them a Chinese immigrant, or sometimes more than one, operated a vegetable garden. The produce was sold to the Chinese diggers living in Chinese villages adjacent to where they worked, as well as to anyone else who wished to buy fresh vegetables. A number of the shrubs and trees brought into Australia during the time of the gold rushes were imported by Chinese miners and stand as a monument to their industry to this day.
As we will see below, the Braidwood goldfields were free of serious incidents of racial violence although this does not imply the complete acceptance of the Chinese by other miners and townsfolk with European heritage.

Braidwood district: Braidwood
Masonry was represented in Braidwood by the Lodge of Truth, which is number 26 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory. As McGowan observed, Braidwood itself was not a mining town like Ballarat or Bendigo, but more of an administrative centre like Bathurst in New South Wales. Prior to the gold rushes, it had hotels, churches, police station and the court, retail establishments and some industry such as flour mills and a sheep boiling down works. But the population in 1851, on the eve of the gold rushes, was a mere 212. [83]

Lodge of Truth, in Braidwood, No 26 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, is one of the oldest country lodges still working in New South Wales. When formed on 20 March 1860, it was given the number 1183 on the register of the United Grand Lodge of England. Subsequently, in 1863, in a 'closing-up' process that involved removal from that register those lodges which had surrendered their warrants, its number was changed to 881 EC. The means by which Lodge of Truth in Braidwood became regularised with the acquisition of a charter from a recognised Grand Lodge was rather tortuous. Earlier the Lodge number had become number 18 on the New South Wales register, but at the March Grand Communication of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales, it was noted that the Lodge of Truth Braidwood, which was formerly under the English Constitution had been granted a charter by the local body. Meanwhile, the Lodge had been operating under the auspices of the United Grand Lodge of England and gained the distinction of being the only Lodge under the United Grand Lodge of England to come over to the Grand Lodge of New South Wales. In July 1888 when the new local Grand Lodge was formed, a Lodge in Queanbeyan known as Lodge Saint Andrew was registered as number 56 in the register of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. The little town of Bungendore between Queanbeyan and Braidwood witnessed the

[82] https://chl-old.anu.edu.au/publications/csds/csds2008/4CSDS2008Ch%201_McGowan.pdf
[83] [https://chl-old.anu.edu.au/publications/csds/csds2008/4CSDS2008Ch%201_McGowan.pdf]

rise and rapid fall of the Bungendore Lodge of Australia, which was consecrated on 18 April 1885 but it ceased meeting after only five years on 3 June 1890.

Araluen is known for many things but as far as Masonry is concerned the noted businessman Quong Tart is its greatest luminary. Quong Tart migrated from Canton in China to Araluen at the age of nine in the charge of his uncle who was bringing a shipload of Chinese labourers to the Braidwood goldfields. The young boy worked in the store at nearby Bells Creek before becoming naturalised in July 1871 and in September was admitted into the Manchester Unity Independent Order of Oddfellows as a member of the Loyal Miners Refuge Lodge, Araluen. He joined the local Oddfellows Lodge and later in 1885 joined Freemasonry. He agitated for a ban to be made Australia wide on opium, which he saw was a destructive force amongst his compatriots. He carried his anti-opium crusade to Melbourne and especially to Ballarat. [84] Seemingly, Quong Tart did not become a member of the Lodge of Truth in Braidwood even though he was being considered for membership in 1871. The Lodge decided that his membership application could not proceed because of his association with "the irregular Chinese Lodge" at Jembaicumbene.[85]

Charles de Boos who had been the Mining Warden and Police Magistrate at Braidwood returned to Braidwood for two very special presentations. Firstly, on 24 June, St. John's Day he was presented with "a very handsome gold Past-Masters jewel from the members of the Lodge of Truth and other Freemasons in the district." Charles de Boos had been Worshipful Master of the Lodge from 1878 to 1880, and as is usual, the gift was "a token of esteem for his valuable services rendered to the Craft." The local paper added that the award also recognised "the great services he had rendered … in this district during his residence here." During the same visit (and possibly on the same occasion), de Boos received an even more remarkable gift from the local Chinese community, as "a token of their esteem for the very fair and impartial manner in which he always settled their mining disputes while he was warden of the Braidwood district." The Chinese miners in the district each subscribed a piece of gold, from which a medal was designed and presented to him.[86]

A preliminary meeting of interested parties met at Braidwood in March 1856 at Mr. Badgery's Doncaster Inn and decided that a Lodge of Oddfellows should be opened in the district. Their very next meeting opened the Young Australian Branch of the Grand United Order of Oddfellows, which decided that the new Lodge would be called the Loyal Friendly Brothers Lodge. It would meet fortnightly at the Royal Hotel, Braidwood. The Sydney District of the organisation received the application to form a Lodge and duly dispensed permission to do so. A medical officer was approached as was a proprietor of a dispensary and dues were fixed as a weekly subscription. A Fines Book from the time still exists recording such matters as members being fined 5/ for fighting, 10/6 for non-attendance at the procession, 2/6 for not standing for office when nominated, 1/6 for ridiculing the N.G., 6d for sleeping at Lodge, and 1/ for sitting under the emblem.

Another similar fraternal group with no ritual or ceremonial affiliations was also formed in Braidwood. It was called the Braidwood Benevolent Society, which cared for the sick and infirm prior to 1859 when the Braidwood Cottage Hospital was established. The society was financed by police fines levied in Braidwood and Araluen, unclaimed poundage fees, subscriptions and

---

[84] E. J. Lea Scarlett, Mei Quong Tart (1850 – 1903), Australian dictionary of biography, National Centre of biography, Australian National University, accessed online 19th of May 2016.

[85] Cited by E. A. Reynolds, in the manuscript of a talk "Lodges in the Braidwood District."

[86] http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibition/objectsthroughtime/de-boos-chinese-medal/

donations from the public along with a government subsidy. [87] A literary Institute was established in Braidwood in about 1871, but the purpose designed building is now occupied by Shire Council offices.

Surprisingly this goldfield did not experience the anti-Chinese riots that were a feature of other regions especially that on the north-western corner of the Southern tablelands around the present day township of Young. However, the notorious bushrangers known as the Clark Gang circulated in the area committing the typical crimes of robbery, stealing and horse theft. Noakes provides a very useful summary of the interrelationship between mining, bushranging and Freemasonry in New South Wales in a publication released in 2014. [88]

Braidwood district: Yass Valley

On the 28 May 1866 Brethren resident in Yass and a visiting brother met at the Commercial Hotel to consider the formation of a Masonic Lodge. The chair having been duly elected it was unanimously decided that a petition should be prepared and forwarded to the Provincial Grand Lodge in Sydney for a dispensation to enable the Brethren to open a regularly constituted Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons in the town of Yass under the name of "the Yass Lodge of Concord." The first regular meeting was held at Yass on 18 July 1860. The original warrant was dated 21 August 1863 and is from that date that the existence of Lodge number 980 of the English Constitution was established. When the warrant was received, a dispensation under which the Lodge had worked was recalled by the Provincial Grand Lodge. Many of the early members came from such distant places as Adelong, Granville, Harden, Gaylord, Binalong, Aurora, Gunning and Gundaroo. A number of these places went on to establish their own Masonic Lodges in the coming years only one of which, Harden remains extant. At Gundaroo, a small town south-east of Yass an Oddfellows Hall was erected in the 1860's largely due to the efforts of the Scotsman William Affleck, but Gundaroo failed to prosper after the failure of the minor gold rush at Bywong in 1895-6; Masonry was never established in the town.

Despite the zeal and enthusiasm displayed by the foundation members of Yass Lodge of Concord and those who joined in the early years, their anticipation of a prosperous and flourishing Lodge was not immediately realised. When United Grand Lodge of New South Wales was formed in 1888, Yass Lodge of Concord became number 27 on the register of the new Grand Lodge and a dispensation was received, bearing the signature of the first Grand Master, Lord Carrington, authorising the Lodge to function under the original warrant until a new warrant under the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales was received. In 1963 a century after its establishment, the Lodge had a membership of 176; Lodge membership in 2016 is about 30. [89]

Young district.

Not surprisingly and as on many others of the Australian goldfields, the miners were a rough-and-tumble lot and amongst them must have been some individuals of dubious character. In 1851, 10 years after the principal discoveries of gold around Braidwood, discoveries were made at Lambing Flat and at the series of small localities in a southerly direction towards Gundaroo and Canberra at Spring Creek, Stoney Creek, Back Creek, Wombat, Black – guard Gully and Tipperary Gully. Lambing Flat was established as a small town in 1861 but two years later it was renamed Young after Sir John Young the Governor of New South Wales at that time. The

---

[87] Back to Braidwood pamphlet produced as a souvenir for the back to Braidwood celebrations, 22nd November to 29 November 1925. Published by the back to Braidwood executive committee.

[88] Noakes, M. J. 2014. Mining, bush ranging and Freemasonry in New South Wales: the influence of mining on the spread of Freemasonry in the early years bracket 1850 – 1900) self published.

[89] MacQuillan, A. J. & VWBro P. Bindon DGIW. 2010. Yass Lodge of Concord # 27. A. J. MacQuillan, and Yass Lodge of Concord, Yass

goldfield was known as the Burrangong Goldfield and in 1863 something like 20,000 miners worked the field.

In 1860 Lodge Burrangong St John was formed under the Scottish Constitution as number 1348 at the Burrangong Goldfield a little outside the present out of Young. At the time of the formation of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales, it became number 20 on the register of the new Grand Lodge. More recently it has become Lodge Young Burrangong after amalgamation with Lodge Young retaining the number 20. It was a sponsor of a lodge at Burrowa and another at Harden-Murrumburrah. Another Lodge in the district was formed at Gundagai originally named Lodge Excelsior number 500 on the register of Grand Lodge of Scotland, uniting with Lodge Loyalty number 155 in 1895 taking the name of Gundagai United, being number 25 on the register of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales. The Lodge at Adelong has recently amalgamated with Gundagai United.

Reports of alarming racially motivated incidents on the New South Wales goldfields began to appear in local newspapers on the Southern Tablelands in the middle of 1861.

For example, on page 2 of the Goulburn Herald of Wednesday, 3 July the following story appeared:

Riots at Burrangong.

On Monday evening the following telegram was received at this office: –

"Yass 9 PM

Fearful riot today (Sunday) at lambing flat. The members of the [Anti-Chinese] League burned and destroyed everything belonging to the Chinese and robbed and ill-used them. I will send full particulars by Tuesday night."

"Captain Zouch and the mounted patrol started from here for Lambing Flat yesterday morning.

The following is from our Sydney correspondent: –

"Monday afternoon.

"I presume that you will be by this time in full possession of the news from Burrangong. A telegram received by the government announces that a 'roll up' of 2000 Europeans had taken place; that they had driven off the Chinese, burnt their tents, cut off their tails, and otherwise maltreated them; and that they had then proceeded to Back Creek and driven the Chinese from that place. The Chinamen were being rationed by Mr. Roberts, at the request of the resident Commissioner. Mr. Cloete and Mr. Zouch have been instructed to proceed against the ringleaders of immediately."

The following is from a correspondent at Burrangong, on whose statements the fullest reliance may be placed: –

"This day – Sunday, June 30 – will long be remembered. A mob of from 1500 to 2000 men, carrying among other flags a large banner with the words 'Roll up – Roll up – no Chinese,' written upon it in gold letters – paraded Tipperary Gully, then to Lambing Flat; and having gained accession to their numbers, went to the Chinese camp (about a quarter of a mile from the police headquarters) with a large band of music – burnt and destroyed everything about it, after robbing and violently ill-using every poor Chinaman they met or who came in the way.[90]

"They then proceeded to another Chinese camp on the Yass Road, where upwards of 150 huts were inhabited, and having done the same mischief, robbed and ill-treated every Chinaman they met. One lot of the Chinese, hearing of the disturbance at Back Creek had packed up their things and were departing; but the ringleaders, on horseback, pursued them, robbed them, and burned all their bundles.

"Everything is in a fearful state of confusion, and business at a standstill."

---

[90] Remarkably, this banner is still preserved in the museum of the Young Historical Society.

At the time of the riots, Yass was the centre of the Police District and the District Magistrate's Court was held in the Yass courthouse. Mounted police were stationed there and it was to Yass, where they were under police protection, that many of the Chinese fled to escape the persecution at the Lambing Flat diggings.

Discussion and conclusions

I began this study after asking myself the question 'Why was it that Masonic lodges had been founded on the goldfields rather than any other kind of fraternal association?" Subsequent research revealed that my question had been asked from a perspective of ignorance concerning what had actually happened on the goldfields. Seeing that so many other fraternal organisations were founded almost simultaneously with Freemasonry, and existed alongside them until quite recently I probably should have been asking 'Why was it that freemasonry endured into the 21st century, and not the other organisations?

The eminent philosopher Bertrand Russell began the first of his Reith Lectures by saying: 'the fundamental problem I propose to consider in these lectures is this: 'How can we combine that degree of individual initiative which is necessary for progress with the degree of social cohesion that is necessary for survival?'[91] Significantly Russell's lecture series entitled 'Authority and the Individual' was banned by the wartime British government but defiantly delivered in Russell's stead by Robert Smillie, the leader of the Miner's Federation. Russell's argument was that human life was in part inevitably governed by the community and in part by private initiative. He believed that the private portion should only be restricted when it becomes predatory, otherwise he thought, everything ought to be done to make it as great and as vigorous as possible. While historically, the provisions of mutual aid were first the responsibility of Friendly Society Health Funds and other mutual societies they have now largely passed into the realm of almost complete government control. In the decades following the Second World War the ritualised fraternal ceremonies at the lodges that conducted them have decreased in numbers alarmingly.

Masonic Lodges have not been immune from this decline in participation and membership but they too are diminishing at a rate that causes concern amongst many of the members. Humans have always been gregarious and individuals in most societies exhibit a need to socialise. The quest for direct human contact is sought by most individuals and in some instances may be sought within the religious sphere. An alternative opportunity for social contact is provided by Freemasonry, which develops into friendships that spread the light of peace, love and harmony; and this occurred on the goldfields amongst miners with varied backgrounds, languages and social position. A related concept is that we can best praise the GAOTU by giving service to our fellow humans; by being tolerant and adopting honesty as being the best policy in all our socialising.

Making masonry relevant today:

Whilst many of the non-Masonic orders and organisations were swallowed up in the social security net, or became amalgamated to evolve into the mutual societies that continue to survive today, Freemasonry remained aloof from these mergers of associations. Being a society of united and free men that seek to strengthen the social and moral sentiments of peace, practical brotherhood, and idealism, Freemasonry attempts to make those who are obedient to its precepts into law-abiding citizens who uphold the redeeming ideals of society making righteousness and

---

[91] The inaugural Reith lecture was given in 1948 by the philosopher Bertrand Russell. They were named after Lord Reith the first director-general of the BBC who maintained that radio broadcasting should be a public service designed to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of a nation.

the will of God prevail. No other institution that was established on the goldfields offered what Freemasonry did and so it endured where other organisations did not.

What were some of the traits sought by the diggers?
Respectability. The ideal of respectability was one of the most powerful forces working for social transformation among immigrant communities in pre-Federation Australia. Drawing on the work of British social historians, Janet McCalman has observed that a cluster of social traits associated with the idea of respectability (including self-reliance, independence, and self-discipline) were popularised among all classes during the British industrial revolution before being transplanted to Australia 'by immigrants hoping for dignity and prosperity in a new land'. The struggle for respectability crossed class, gender, and ethnic lines among the urban communities that staffed and ran the factories, utilities, wharves, warehouses and markets of early twentieth century Australian cities.
Immigrants who did not harbour aspirations for modern respectability before they arrived were not long in acquiring them after arrival. Children of immigrants from the pre-industrial counties of Ireland, for example, struggled to escape the stigma that attached to the name 'Bog Irish'. Incentives for achieving respectability were particularly strong in societies where migrating settlers from England, Scotland, and Ireland mixed with one another (and with the occasional Russian or Chinese) to a degree rarely replicated in their countries of origin. Opportunities beckoned not only for prosperity but also for achieving equal recognition for themselves, their families and particular religious and ethnic communities. [92]

Engendering a work ethic. Freemasonry encourages its members to consider the concept of the dignity of work and to realise one's social aspirations in a morally constructive way, thus contributing to a social philosophy that leads to overall community happiness. On the Australian goldfields and no doubt at many similar places of frantic industry throughout the world, there were numerous tempting opportunities that no doubt leads to theft, cheating, other antisocial crimes and large-scale corruption. Could it be that Operative Masons who worked with their hands were seen as a close ancestor by those Freemasons working on the goldfields with their hands, and who had the primary incentive to better themselves economically? Were those Masonic miners able to see that by shying away from the crime that surrounded them and by viewing their labour as contributing to the building of a symbolic structure of the great moral character, they were establishing what would be an earthly representation of a house not built with hands eternal in the heavens? No doubt they understood that individuals needed to use the skills given to them by the GAOTU so that they could ultimately secure a better future for themselves and for their families and the society in which they lived.

Altruism. Freemasonry makes a crucial contribution to society both through its charitable activities and by mutual support each other enabling each individual Mason to become the best person he possibly can be. Freemasonry provided, during the gold rushes as it does now opportunities in which men can look for inspiration, self-improvement, and fulfilment. Participation within the community through volunteering, donating and becoming engaged in social activities, places of worship and government – both local and regional was then and is now encouraged by Freemasonry. Strong social cohesion, in other words, social capital, is critical now as it was during the gold rushes for alleviating poverty and sustaining human and economic development. Perhaps it was the same sentiment not expressed in so many words that were the desire of the early Freemasons on the goldfields to establish Masonic Lodges within their communities.

---

[92] http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p97101/mobile/ch06.html, and http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p97101/mobile/chapter-notes.htm, accessed February 2016.

Sense of belonging. In many societies, people seem to find considerable appeal in joining an organisation that is secular, multi-faith or cross-denominational and which shares some of their own values. Freemasonry offers opportunities to make lifetime friendships, to foster personal development, to establish a framework in which contemplation can provide new insights into the vicissitudes of life and to have new experiences shared in common with like-minded individuals.

Participation in ritual. Involvement in ceremonies and ritual seems to be an important aspect of human nature. Masonic ceremonies certainly help to bring together men from diverse backgrounds with different cultural traits and even different languages. The 'work' undertaken in a Masonic Lodge cuts across social, economic, racial, religious and political lines and forges a bond between men who may otherwise not meet together. The Masonic Lodge, private in nature and closed to outsiders, provides a refuge within which members can avoid the strife and struggle of the exterior world and leave aside contentious arguments about politics and religion. The main tenets of Freemasonry have always been 'brotherly love 'and 'relief,' in more modern terms 'affiliation' and 'altruism'. Although some researchers have questioned the necessity for ritual in our lives, it is easy to find what we might call habits in our everyday lives that could easily be described as ritual behaviours.

Strengthening law and order. Freemasons on the goldfields saw that by establishing and strengthening brotherly ties, Masonry could work on behalf of law and order. Surely they recognised that only through cooperative effort is a society able to flourish and move on to better things. No doubt they aspired to build their new country into the best environment that they could for the security prosperity and advancement of all.

Egalitarianism. Large numbers of the miners that came to the Australian goldfields arrived from California where they had worked at the same tasks they were now undertaking in central Victoria and on the Southern tablelands of New South Wales. The men who framed the Constitution of the United States of America included Freemasons amongst their number and they, perhaps inspired by Masonry, had asserted the divine right of men to "life, unity, and the pursuit of happiness, to secure which governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the government." Freemasonry has always stood in support of those who wished to discard the yoke of tyranny and demanded the universal rights that belong to citizens. We have seen similar sentiments were held by other groups of immigrants (amongst whom were numbers of Freemasons) into the new colonies of Australia.

Self-advancement. Freemasons recognise that masonry tries to make them the best that they can become by refining their thoughts enhancing their dreams, broadening their outlooks and in many other ways. Dedication to high moral ideals, subduing wild passions, bringing light out of the darkness and making every hope more radiant are products of the simple faith of masonry, its solidarity, and its friendship.

Self-confidence. Participation in Masonic activities boosts an individual's self-confidence but it is hardly likely that the miners on the Australian goldfields sought this benefit as they already had the self-confidence and experience that allowed them to form an association in the first place. It is difficult to look back in time and analyse what society as a whole may have thought about Freemasonry, which at the time was very much a 'secret society'. During periods when the fraternity suffered persecution for political reasons, it was obviously prudent to be discreet about one's membership in the group; most enlightened societies are now tolerant and accepting of Freemasonry and the social benefits it provides.

References

Printed resources

Beagley, D. 2004. Gold and Blue: Freemasonry and Community in Bendigo 1854 – 2004. Holland House for the Golden and Corinthian Lodge, Bendigo

Blainey, G. 1991. Odd Fellows: a history of IOOF Australia. Allen & Unwin, Sydney

Bremer, A. & M. Lyons, 2001. Mechanic's Institute Libraries - The Readers Demand Fiction. In: Lyons M. & J. Arnold, (editors). 2001. A History of the Book in Australia; 1891-1945: A National Culture in a Colonised Market. UQP, St. Lucia

Cooper, R. L. D. (Pope, T. Editor) 2005. Freemasons Templars and Gardeners. Australian and New Zealand Masonic research Council, Melbourne

Cooper, W. G. 1984, The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society 150 Years: 1834 – 1984. The Executive Council of The Ancient Order of Foresters Friendly Society, Southampton, England

Coughlan, N., 1965, the coming of the Irish to Victoria; historical studies, Australia, and New Zealand; volume 12, number 45, PP. 64 – 86.

Fitzgerald, J. Abstract to: 'Politics and Networks in the Transition from Rural to Urban Organisation of the Hung League of Colonial and Federation Australia". Paper 2CSAA conference, Bendigo 2005 quoted in Wickham 2013, op. cit.

Green, D. G. & L. G. Cromwell. 1984. Mutual Aid or Welfare State: Australia's Friendly Societies. George Allen and Unwin, Sydney

Hill, D., 2010. Gold: the fever that forever changed Australia; William Heineman, North Sydney

Jones, Bro. B. E. 8 November 1960. Freemasonry's Debt to the Guilds. Inaugural address. Transactions of Quatuor Coronati Lodge, vol. lxxiv, 1961. 1-10

McDermott, A. 2015. Of no personal influence... How people of common enterprise unexpectedly shaped Australia. Australian Unity Ltd, South Melbourne

McGowan, B., 2008 :4 From Fraternities to Families: The Evolution of Chinese Life in the Braidwood District of New South Wales (NSW), 1850s-1890's. In Chinese Southern Diaspora Studies, Volume Two, 2008 南方华裔研究杂志, 第二卷

Rachkind, H., 1995. The Freemasons of Echuca. Self-published, 20 Vines Street, Echuca

Royal Commission on National Insurance, 1924 – 25, minutes of evidence, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra

Wickham, D., 2013. Freemasons on the Goldfields: Ballarat and District 1853 – 2013. Ballarat Heritage Services, Ballarat Victoria

Electronic resources

http://interactive.ancestry.com.au/60620/43970_ugl%5Ecf%5Eg%5E1813-00159/1494432?backurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.Ancestry.com.au%2fcgi-bin%2fsse.dll%3fgst%3d-6&ssrc=&backlabel=ReturnSearchResults#?imageId=43970_ugl%5Ecf%5Eg%5E1813-00159

http://www.achha.org.au/friendlysocieties.php, retrieved April 2016

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ancient_Order_of_Druids, retrieved April 2016

http://www.emelbourne.net.au/biogs/EM00614b.htm, retrieved May 2016

http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/article/93810791; Richmond Guardian (Vic.: 1917 - 1918), Sat 18 Aug 1917, Page 2

http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p97101/mobile/ch06s02.html, retrieved April 2016

https://chl-old.anu.edu.au/publications/csds/csds2008/4CSDS2008Ch%201_McGowan.pdf