

The quarterly newsletter
of the District Grand
Lodge of the South Island

DEGREES SOUTH

MARCH 2022



DGM THOUGHTS

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IMPORTANT DATES

- Installations
Conyers –March
Amberley–April
- Communications–May

Greetings Brethren,

It's been a disruptive few months for all of us as we've transitioned from 2021 into 2022, from Alert Levels to Traffic Lights and from Suspension into Activity once more. I have to tell you all how much I appreciate your tolerance and forbearance as we try so hard to balance the need to keep our membership safe against to constant imperative to keep our Lodges open and thriving.

When we moved into the new Red Traffic Light restriction we found that it could be possible for Lodges to meet but we subsequently took the decision to follow our host Grand Lodge into a further suspension for a few weeks until we could better understand the potential effects of the Omicron variant. MW Bro Graham Wrigley has kept in contact with me as he developed guidance for the Grand Lodge of New Zealand and I have been happy to adopt the fundamentals of this guidance as they apply to our own Lodges. Overall they are comfortably reflected in the Government Guidance for Red Light level and thus, we hope, means that there will be far less confusion as a consequence. This doesn't mean that a further suspension won't happen, but that will depend on the many unknown factors that could affect us all as Omicron continues to build.

On the positive side we can now look forward to our Lodges catching up with the backlog of work resulting from this latest disruption and I would like to take this opportunity

to thank those Masters who elected to continue in office for a further year in order to ensure a smoother transition back to regular working.

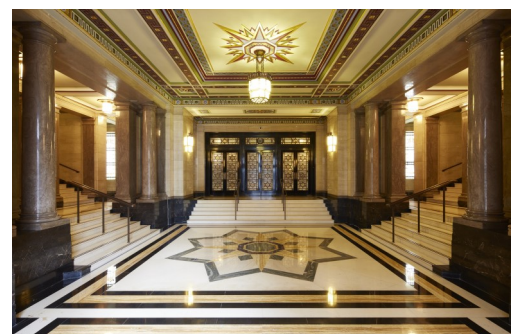
The team at Conyers Lodge continue to plan for Communications set for May 14th which will be held at the Canterbury Freemasons Centre at Shirley and, from what I hear, have one or two changes to enhance the weekend for all of us. Hopefully by then a lot of the Covid inconvenience we are now experiencing will be starting to materialise in the rear-view mirror.

Meanwhile please keep safe and well, don't attend any meetings if you feel unwell and, most importantly, if you feel unsafe. We will none of us think any less of you for opting not to attend until you feel comfortable so to do.

I do look forward to seeing as many of you as possible over the next few months.

Yours fraternally,

Richard



FAMOUS NEW ZEALAND ENGLISH MASONS



Francis Henry Dillon Bell 1851– 1936

Mayor, lawyer, politician. Prime Minister 14th May 1925–30th May 1925.

Francis Henry Dillon Bell was born at Nelson New Zealand on 31st March 1851. He was educated at the Auckland Grammar School and the Otago Boys' High in Dunedin. In 1869, he entered St. John's College, Cambridge, England, where he graduated in 1872 with a B.A. in mathematics and was then called to the English Bar in 1874.

Known to his family and friends as Harry, he worked in the Chambers of his family friend, Sir John Gorst. This connection is probably what led him to campaign for the Conservative Party in the 1874 election.

Bell rejected an offer to stay in England and set sail for Wellington, New Zealand where he took up a legal practice in 1875 as junior partner to C.B Izard. Bell and four other barristers set up the *Colonial Law Journal*, which was the forerunner of law reporting in New Zealand.

As an advocate for the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal he soon made his mark in his profession. In the 1880s, he twice refused to accept appointment as a Judge.

April 24th 1878 saw Bell marry Caroline Robinson at Christchurch; they went on to have four daughters and four sons.

Bell was involved as the leading trustee in the disposal of his late father-in-law's "Great Cheviot Hills" estate. There was a family dispute and Bell, in order to resolve this animosity, sold the estate to the Ballance govern-

ment under the Land and Income Assessment Act 1891. This led to an unexpected paving of the way for a new era in state land settlement.

Bell entered politics when he was elected Mayor of Wellington in 1891. He again won this position in 1892 and 1896. Wellington gained a modern drainage system due to Bell's determined initiative in response to two typhoid epidemics.

1893 saw Bell successfully stand for Parliament as an oppositionist. Being dogmatic and having little patience with questioners, he was inclined to lose his temper when rallied by his opponents.

He was very skilful in constructively criticising bills but he found it hard to adapt to the debating chamber from the courtroom and as such he would often address the House as if speaking to a not-very-intelligent jury. The House soon got sick of this treatment and Bell became frustrated with the House. Bell retired from politics in 1896 and returned to private practice in law. His main benefit from his time at Parliament was his friendship with **William Massey**.

When Massey became Prime Minister in 1912 he appointed Bell as the lead in the Legislative Council thus bringing Bell back to Parliament. Even though Bell had a junior rank as minister, he was soon Massey's right-hand man when it came to legislation and administration. Bell offered to stand down in order to allow the formation of the National Government but was instead retained as Attorney General.

Parliament was not in session when William Massey died on May 10th 1925. Bell was ideally suited to take up as temporary leader due to the fact that he had been the de facto Prime Minister for a number of months and was well known to have no real political ambitions. This suited him and his party.

Massey had obviously advised the Governor General, **Lord Jellicoe**, to send for Bell. Thus Bell was installed as Prime Minister on May 14th 1925 becoming the very first New Zealand-born Prime Minister in this country.

J.G. Coates was elected Prime Minister on May 30th and Bell immediately resigned to make way for him. Coates retained Bell as Attorney General. Bell died on March 13th 1936.

Francis Henry Dillon Bell was a member of **Wellington Lodge Number 1521, Wellington**.

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KEEPING OUR SECRETS

Masonic language can appear perplexing to newcomers because the words used have either dropped out of current parlance or acquired new meanings over the years.

An example is '*keeping off all Cowans and Intruders to Masonry*'.

With this in mind, let's consider the original meanings and contexts of this phrase. 'Cowans and Intruders' As Freemasons we have secrets which we are careful to hide, not because we are a secret society, but because we value loyalty and honour. One way of maintaining those secrets within our Lodges is by us all promising not to disclose to outsiders the signs of recognition that we use between ourselves. This is an important way to build trust and friendship between fellow Masons and to ensure that the privacy of Lodge activities and those of individuals is maintained.

In the phrase '*keeping off Cowans and Intruders to Masonry*', we all understand the meaning of 'Intruders', which implies not only physical intruders, but also untrustworthy interlopers and eavesdroppers, who might wish to gain access to a Lodge and its members for their own ends.

By contrast, 'Cowans' is not a word we encounter nowadays. It originated back in the days of mediaeval stonemasons. Building in stone required training and long and patient study, to understand how a building's structure and stability depended on geometry. This understanding was known as a 'secret art and hidden mystery', not to be shared by the stonemasons with their untrained and unskilled fellow workers, known as Cowans. The word was also used to refer to dry stone wallers, who built walls by piling up field stones, a technique that is still used today in many parts of the UK. These workers did not use mortar and shaped stones ('ashlars') that were used by stonemasons to build churches, castles and cathedrals. Hence, among stonemasons, a Cowan was an outsider who must be kept at a distance. In Scotland, the word was used to refer to stonemasons who had never completed their apprenticeships, but who worked alongside qualified stonemasons. They were the 'cowboy builders' of their time

Extract from Solomon

LODGE UPDATE

Amberley Lodge 2007

On Monday the 14th Amberley initiated the first of their many new members.

It was an interesting evening as it started with a number of their Brethren stuck the other side of the Hurunui Bridge because of an accident and were unable to attend.

A number of the visitors were roped in to fill the various positions and the Lodge got underway and the ritual performed to a good standard.



This will be a night the candidate will not forget.



THE QUARTERLY PUBLICATION
OF THE DISTRICT GRAND
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The views expressed in these pages do not
necessarily reflect those of the District Grand Lodge

Degrees South Deadline:
May 21st for the June Edition.

Revised District Logo

When we applied for the Charter Mark for the District website, it was rejected because the logo contained the all seeing eye and the Level and Plumb Rule.

It was also noted that the logo needed to be registered with them to ensure consistency with their guidelines.

Obviously that had not happened, 30 years ago.

Now, under the guidance of our DGM the new logo has been produced.

This means the Banner, letterhead and other items will change.



District Grand Lodge of South Island, New Zealand

Ref: #3841

6 March 2022

COMMUNICATIONS 2022

The District Grand Lodge is pleased to advise that the Conyers Lodge No 1916 will be hosting Communications 2022 at the Canterbury Freemasons Centre on the weekend of 13-15 May 2022.

The weekend will start with Meetings of the Board of General Purposes and the South Island English Masonic District Trust in the Board Room at 15:30 on Friday 13 May. This will be followed with a Meet and Greet for attendees and Partners with a light dinner provided

Saturday Morning will involve a meeting for Lodge secretaries and others for updates on processes and procedures followed by rehearsals for Opening and Closing District Lodge for all current and future District Officers at 11:00.

In the afternoon Wives and Partners will attend a High Tea at Penny Black's, the Tannery while Brethren will participate in the Annual General Meeting of the SIEMDT at 13:00 and the Annual Communication of the District Grand Lodge at 14:00. The day will wrap up with the Communication Dinner in the Canterbury Freemasons Centre

The weekend will conclude with a casual farewell lunch at a local hostellery.

Costs for the weekend are expected to be:

Registration	\$10.00
Meet & Greet	\$20.00
Ladies' High Tea	\$45.00
Evening Dinner	\$47.00

More information and Registration Forms will be circulated to Lodges later in March and the Worshipful Master and officers of Conyers are looking forward to seeing you in May

K.R. Moen CBE
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South Island New Zealand

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