

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE HOLY ROYAL ARCH DEGREE

Bro. Keith H. Thomas B.A.

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As most of Scottish Freemasons will be happy to affirm, the earliest recorded minutes of degree working originate in Scotland as records of the masons lodges at Aitchison's Haven and Mary's Chapel, Edinburgh. They are clearly dated as 16th century and refer, if somewhat confusingly, to a degree system and to certain grades within it - including 'Entered Apprentices', 'Fellows of the Craft' and 'Master Masons'.

We likewise know that the Hiramic 3rd degree does not emerge until sometime between 1720 and 1730 - so where does the Royal Arch fit in? If the secrets are lost in a degree originating only in the early 1720s when does a degree describing how the lost secrets were rediscovered come to be worked? What part does the Mark play? How does it relate to the second part of the Fellow Craft degree? In short there are many unanswered questions and many that will still remain unanswered after this paper tonight. But to address the task in hand – 'What is the Royal Arch?' It has been described as 'that sublime degree'; 'The Keystone of Freemasonry' and many other things. But each appellation involves some notion of 'the Higher Degrees'.

At a recent Lodge Hope Symposium, held in Kirkcaldy, Scotland, Dr. Ian Thomson, Past Depute GM of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, in a lecture entitled *Other Masonic Orders – the so-called Higher Degrees*, asserted that the highest degree in Freemasonry is that of Master Mason. I can see, as many of you will that this interpretation has many attractions - especially for the Lodges. However, it is a matter of record that the first three degrees in freemasonry do leave the candidate with questions still to be answered - especially the small matter of the 'substituted secrets'

Let us look now at what is the preserve of the Royal Arch. The SGRAC of Scotland is responsible for the control and administration of the following degrees;

The Royal Arch

Mark Master

Excellent Master

Royal Arch

Lodge and Council

Royal Ark Mariner
 Babylonish Pass or Red Cross
 Knight of the Sword
 Knight of the East
 Knight of the East and West
Cryptic Council
 Royal Master
 Select Master
 Super Excellent Master

In addition Chair degrees are offered in each series. SGRAC was consecrated in 1817 but it was not until 1915 with the regularising of the Cryptic Degrees (might I mention here that my Mother Chapter Prudence No 343 in Kelty was one of the 3 Chapters to petition for a charter to revive these degrees, which had originally come from the USA in 1878) that the current provision was reached.

But as with the development of Blue Lodges where degrees were worked and lodges were making masons before Grand Lodge was created, the Royal Arch degree was worked in Scotland well before the 1817 date for the emergence of Supreme. So where did it all start? To that there is no easy answer. In short, as with the origins of St. John's Masonry, it is easier to say where it does not come from. I will, however, try to give some idea as to the possible origins of 'his sublime degree'

The definitive work on the Royal Arch in Scotland is undoubtedly *The Triple Tau* by George S. Draffen, a past Grand Librarian of Grand Lodge of Scotland. Draffen, who had access to the archives of SGRAC and six of the 'senior chapters' on the Scottish Roll, asserts that 'hold that the degree is not indigenous to Scotland'. He goes on to state that 'We do not know how or when the RA Degree came to Scotland'. Draffen then goes on to describe how the degree was introduced into one of the earliest chapters, Union Chapter No. 6 in Dundee by one Edward Brereton, Grand Master of the Super-Excellent Royal Arch Lodge, No 52 held in HM 37th Regiment of Foot on 18th February 1773. The other 2 Principals who constituted the Chapter were Richard Brodly, also a member of the regiment and one Alex. Ross, Shipmaster in Dundee. The 37th held a travelling warrant from the Grand Lodge of England according to the Old Institutions (The Antients). Keep a hold of this distinction.

Draffen also quotes from a letter dated January 1818, published in the Transactions of *Ars Quatuor Coronati* Vol. VIII, a paper presented by T.A.Lindsay,

entitled 'The Arch and Temple in Dundee', that the Chapter, Enoch No.3, in Montrose, was constituted by Wool-Combers-Travellers from Ireland. The date accepted by SGRAC for this is January 18 1765. These Irish Companions are also credited with founding a Chapter in Aberdeen, which I presume was St. Luke No.11 with a founding date of November 2nd 1782. This Chapter was however erased in 1914. As you can see Brethren, the Royal Arch would appear to be a late starter in Freemasonry compared with the first 2 or later 3 degrees.

The oldest 'verified' date for the working of the Royal Arch degrees in Scotland comes from Stirling. This verification rests upon a sworn declaration 'duly attested as copied from the original record *then existing*, deposited with Grand Scribe E.' Yes Brethren and Companions, this important document no longer exists but what was believed to be an authentic notarised copy was lodged with Grand Scribe E. in 1818.

This 'lost' record tells that on July 30th 1743, in 'the Lodge of Stirling Kilwinning being met in Brother Hutchison's house, and being petitioned by Mungo Nicol, shoemaker, and Brother James McEwan, Student of Divinity, at Stirling, and being found qualified, they were admitted Royal Arch Masons of this Lodge....' (It is interesting to note the social distinction between the two candidates with only one, the gentleman, meriting the appellation of Brother). The other point to note is that the current Grand Scribe E. has publicly questioned the authenticity of the notarised document. So it may be that our seminal moment in Scottish Royal Arch Masonry may well be less secure than we would like.

Despite this we can make several safe assumptions; firstly that Royal Arch Masonry existed in Scotland prior to 1750; secondly that Royal Arch degrees were given in Mother Lodges working on their existing Charters; and thirdly that Old Mother Kilwinning was content to allow Royal Arch to be offered under their Charters. I will return to the role of Mother Kilwinning in the saga of the Royal Arch later in this paper.

Much of the information provided by Draffen is confirmed in an address given by M.E.Comp. Graham Smith, Grand Scribe E. to the Supreme Grand Chapter of Royal Arch Masons of England. In addition Smith asserts that it is his belief that The Royal Arch Degrees were introduced from both Irish and English sources often through Military Lodges and in the period covering the middle of the 18th Century.

M.E.Comp. W.Bro Trevor Stewart, Master of Ars Quatuor Coronati in his paper *Let's Go Down to the Vault Again!* Tells us that 'Symbols are redolent in the Royal Arch ceremony but if you imagine that it presents history you are going to experience frustration and bewilderment. It has no basis in historical fact, except in the very broadest outlines'.

So far so good Trevor, but now we enter an area of contention. The learned Brother goes on to say that 'The Scots.... Inherited their Royal Arch from England...'. It is at this point that I am reminded of the modern Scottish poet Robert Bolt. Most of you will not have heard of him but I am assured that Robert is one of Scotland's foremost men of letters. I was recently searching for a quotation – to answer a clue in the crossword – when my eye caught upon the name Bolt. It took me back to the days of my youth, when for my sins I played football in the Edinburgh Amateur League. One of the easy games was against the Artists and Poets XI. It was here that I first met Bolt. Fat, unfit and with a haystack of black hair Robert was the epitome of the pub team goalie. In fact Robert was totally useless in goal. But his task was not really to save the football but to guard the beer. Palettes of Export and Lager festooned the back of the Poets and Artist net. Everytime you scored the game stopped for a beer. We won 14 – 0 I think but nobody minded in fact I'm not sure that I can remember with any degree of accuracy what the score was. However, I digress. Robert has made the Oxford book of Quotations with this little gem – "Scotland – the land of the omnipotent No!" We have all seen this use of "No!" And it is all-powerful - but it isn't just a negative. It also presumes a form of question – a sort of try me and prove me. So here goes. I think Trevor may be partly right but hasn't thought it through and to attempt a proof I would like now to broaden the context of the search – initially to Ireland – and then further afield.

The Prime Suspect – Irish Freemasonry

One of the most oft quoted references to the antiquity of the Royal Arch concerns the Masonic procession at Youghal, Co. Cork on St John's Day, 27 December 1743. The following is an extract from *Faulkner's Dublin Journal* of 14th January 1744: 'Fourthly the Royal Arch carried by two Excellent Masons, fifthly the Masters with all his proper implements, his rod gilt with gold, his deputy on his left with the Square and Compasses'.

I must at this point acknowledge my indebtedness to V.W Brother Robert Bashford of Grand Lodge of Ireland and Editor of the Transactions of Lodge CC Irish Constitution, the Research Lodge of the Grand Lodge of Ireland for providing me with copies of the Transactions of the Lodge, where I was able to glean an understanding of some of the development of Freemasonry in Ireland.

In Transaction XVI W. Bro. R.J.W. Harvey in a paper entitled `Royal Arch Masonry in Ireland in the 18th Century` continues the quote from the *Dublin Journal* and asserts that this refers to the existence of two sets of officers in an Irish lodge/chapter. I quote: 'Sixthly two Wardens with their truncheons gilt in like manner, eighthly, two Excellent Masons one bearing a level and the other a plumb rule'. Harvey contends that the two Excellent Masons are deputies for the Wardens and that conjoined with the Master and the Depute Master form the two sets of Office-bearers that were necessary to work the degrees of the Lodge at this time. Harvey tells us that the highest degree worked at Youghal at the time was the Master Mason degree but that in order to work the Masters part – the second part of the M.M. degree – another set of three senior office-bearers were needed.

Perhaps some explanation of the legends involved in the Royal Arch might be appropriate here. In Ireland today the legend upon which the Royal Arch operates is the Josiah Legend and is based upon the story of the repair of the First Temple in 855 B.C. In Scotland the legend is based upon the return of the Jews from Babylon in 515 B.C. and the subsequent building of the Second Temple by Zerrubabel the Prince. According to Harvey, as late as 1864 the Zerrubabel Legend was imparted together with the Josiah part. Some lodges worked one, some the other, whilst yet more administered both. The Royal Arch Rite was not unified in Ireland until Irish Grand Chapter revised the ritual decisively in favour of the Josiah Legend. (This can be compared with the first attempt a revision in 1827 when the newly formed Grand Chapter tried to impose the High Priest, Zerrubabel as the senior officer but this was withdrawn following the deluge of protest emanating from the vast mass of Irish lodges, particularly country lodges.)

Harvey goes on to expound that pre-1790 there were three distinct degrees worked in Ireland in craft lodges but that these were not the same as are worked today. The first degree was known as **Entered and Crafted** and corresponded to what we would understand as the **Entered Apprentice** and **Fellow Craft** degrees. The

Second degree was known as the **Master Mason** degree and was based on the *Hiram legend*.

The Third Degree was known as the **Royal Arch** and it was given in two parts: the first part being the *Josiah legend* and would correspond to the current ritual work practised in Ireland today; the second part was called the **Super Excellent Masons** degree and was based on the *Zerrubabel legend*. Today, in Ireland much of this second part, sometimes known as **Red Cross Masonry** was imparted through the Knightly or Chivalric Orders, which if time permits I will look through the Early Grand Encampments. Harvey's work is confirmed by that of one of the most pre-eminent Irish Masonic Scholars, V. W. Bro. Philip Crossle, who showed in his seminal work *Irish Rite* that at the start of the 18th century lodges in Ireland worked 3 degrees, known usually as **Entered, Passed and Raised**, but by the middle of the century there is a sudden change to two, one called **Entered and Passed** and the other **Raised**, and it is only after this sudden change that references to the Royal Arch appear. An example is given from the Bylaws of the Royal Arch Super Excellent Chapter held within Lodge No. 524 in Carlow.

That any Fellow Craft (commonly called Master Mason) of approved good conduct as a man and mason wishing to be exalted to this sublime degree must be proposed and seconded by two of our members, but if one black bean shall appear against him He shall be rejected.

Another Irish writer, Rev. Brother D. de P. Castells in his *Antiquity of the Holy Royal Arch* states that the Royal Arch existed and was functioning as a live institution in 1725. He describes the pattern of degrees conferred under Craft Lodges as follows: (After the 3rd degree); fourth degree Past Master; fifth degree Excellent Master; sixth degree Super-Excellent Master; and then followed the Royal Arch.

If one examines the original Constitutions of the Craft in Ireland written by John Pennell confirmation of the above becomes even more clear and the 'guilt' of the Irish in creating this Masonic Monster becomes even more evident. Although based on Anderson's Constitutions, Pennell's Irish Rite was no copy but a document uniquely crafted for the Irish situation. Pennell reveals that in 1730, when it was written, that the Brethren of the time received but two degrees – that of Apprentice and Fellow Craft. The Third degree was not universally available to all; being equated today to the modern degree of Installed Master and significantly incorporating some of the ritual of the Royal Arch degree. This attribution comes from a paper recorded

in the Transactions of Lodge CC, Volume XXII of April 1993 entitled *Vowferry and the Masonic Order – The Story of Freemasonry on the Banks of the Bann* by V.W. Bro. Robert Bashford, of the Irish Lodge of Research.

Bashford goes on to reveal that Pennell significantly refers to a ‘well built Arch’ in the section of the Constitutions referring to the History of Masonry and then expresses the Degree hierarchy worked in 1730 as follows;

1 Entered and Crafted

2 Master Mason

3 Royal Arch.

This evidence would appear to corroborate the previous testimony of Harvey, Crossle and Castells. Again Bashford confirms the timing of this; By the 1720’s the three earlier degrees had expanded into the following sequences: Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason, Past Master, Excellent Mason, Super Excellent Mason, Arch Mason, and Royal Arch Mason. It was also at this time that the term ‘Encampment’ was coined to describe a subordinate lodge, that is a specialist lodge held within a Mother Lodge, which had all the furniture and regalia needed to work the Royal Arch degrees. Hold on to this term ‘Encampment’ as it has further resonance in the development of our story.

Two further series of degrees were known to be worked in lodges at this time: Mark Mason, Mark Fellow Mason, Mark Master, Link Mason or Wrestle, Babylonian Pass or Red Cross of Daniel, The Jordan Pass and Royal Order or Prussian Blue. Black Mark, Templar (4 Grades), Mediterranean Pass, Malta Red Cross of Patmos, and finally Knight Patmos.

All these degrees, including the ‘Higher’ or knightly degrees, were current in Ireland and fully within the knowledge of Grand Lodge of Ireland as V.W. Bro John Fowler, the then Grand Secretary, recorded them in the early part of the 19th century.

Since then many of these ‘Higher’ degrees have fallen into disuse – the Arch Mason, Mark Fellow, Mark Master and Link or Wrestle. The Babylonian Pass, Jordan Pass and Prussian Blue can now be found under different names in other orders, such as the Grand Council of Knight Masons. Similarly the Templar Degrees have now been downsized to the Mediterranean Pass, the Malta and Knight Templar.

If we return to Scotland and compare the structure of the Degrees administered by the SGRAC in 1817 with the Irish position we find the Royal Arch series as follows:

Royal Arch Degrees

Master Passed the Chair
 Excellent Master
 Super Excellent Master
 Arch Degree
 Royal Arch degree
 Mark Mason
 Ark Mason
 Link and Wrestle
 Babylonian Pass or Red Cross of Daniel
 Jordan Pass
 Royal Order or Prussian Blue
 High Priest

Templar Degrees

Black Mark
 Mediterranean Pass
 Knight of Malta
 Knight of the Holy Grave
 Knight of Patmos
 Knight of Constantine
 Knight Templar

The similarity of the degrees offered by both the Irish and the Scots would tend to the conclusion that the two systems are closely informed by each other, and given other evidence from the early Scottish Chapters of their founding it is reasonable to make the connection that the earliest experience of Royal Arch Freemasonry in Scotland was at the instigation of Irish Freemasons.

Some of you may remember that at the start of this paper I referred to the inauguration of the Royal Arch in Dundee. It was duly constituted by Edward Brereton of the Military Travelling Lodge held within HM 37th Regiment of Foot. This warrant was issued by the Grand Lodge of England according to the Antient Constitutions. I would now like to address the issue of Warrants.

The Warrant in Freemasonry

Military Lodges operated throughout the British Empire – from Britain’s first colony in what is now the USA, through India, South Africa, China to Australia and New Zealand. In research produced by V.W. Bro. R. E. Parkinson in his paper *Some Notes on Irish Military Warrants* published in the Transactions of Lodge of Research CC in 1957 it is established that Ireland issued the first travelling warrants. The first recipient was the First Battalion The Royal Scots who were warranted on the 7th November 1732 with warrant No. 11. The first warrant issued by the Grand Lodge of Scotland was in 1747 to the Duke of Norfolk’s Lodge in the 12th Foot and in England no regimental lodge was warranted by ‘Premier’ Grand Lodge (Moderns) until 1770. Until this time only the Antients, used this practice. As already stated the warrant used to form the Royal Arch Chapter in Dundee was issued from the Grand Lodge of England according to the Antient Constitutions. This Grand Lodge was founded for masons of Irish and Scottish origins who found their reception by the Moderns less than warm. All the Grand Masters of this Grand Lodge were either Irish or Scots, until it amalgamated with the Moderns to produce the U.G.L.E. or, as some would prefer it the current ‘Premier’ Grand Lodge, which we all know and love to this day.

One last comment on the warrant. To paraphrase the work of V.W. Bro. Bob Bashford, the warrant has always had a special place in Irish lodges. Up until the end of the 19th century it was common practice to hold the warrant above the head of the candidate to impress upon him that the degree was given “under warrant”. Indeed entries in the accounts for “glazing the warrant” would suggest that the warrant may have been more forcibly impressed on the candidates head than he or the lodge treasurer would wish.

If I may I would like to intrude a personal note here. My Mother Lodge of research, The Lodge Hope of Kurrachee, now working under Scottish Charter No. 337, was originally founded on an Irish Warrant, issued to HM 22nd Regiment of Foot, The Cheshire’s, Warrant No. 251, issued on 28th November 1754. The record states that the Lodge was formed in Col. Wedderburn’s Regiment which was composed of a Scottish Officer Corps but manned by ‘The Fighting Irish’. A duplicate warrant was issued on 6th January 1791 ‘the original having been lost on the Mississippi in 1764’. The warrant was finally cancelled on 7th August 1817.

I cite this as evidence to show the prevalence of Irish warrants, not only in Ireland but also on the mainland of Britain and secondly how masonry and the working of degrees were spread across the British Empire through the military lodges.

It is my contention that using warrants issued to Irish lodges and military lodge warrants that the spread of degrees from Irish sources was commonplace. It therefore takes no great leap in faith to accept that as Irish Lodge working developed to include the Royal Arch degrees, this development would likewise percolate through the places where Irish Mason had input. If one looks at the history of the 18th century one is aware of the movement of people in Britain and its dependent territories due to the impact of the Agricultural and Industrial revolutions coupled with the burgeoning growth of Empire. Trade was common between Ireland and lowland Scotland. Movements of labour from Ireland to the newly emerging industrial cities of the central belt of Scotland, the metropolitan centres of Manchester, Liverpool and Blackburn based on 'King Cotton', the erection of the latest municipal buildings, the 'navigation' of the Canals and the construction of the railways meant migrations of significant numbers of people. A substantial number of these were Irish and of these a substantial number were highly skilled artisans who brought with them the traditions and culture of their native Ireland. And part of that culture was Freemasonry. All of this is well documented. The growth of the Antient Lodges in England with a predominantly Scottish and Irish membership is a clear testimony to this. It is therefore logical that the development of the 'Higher Degrees' would follow the pattern set by the Mother Lodges of Ireland.

As a footnote to this I would like to offer some proof of the connection between Irish warrants and English Antient Lodges. On the Warrant register held by Grand Lodge of Ireland is Warrant 113, issued to HM 50th Foot, 1st Battalion Royal West Kent. This warrant was issued to the regiment to replace Antient Warrant No. 112 'being the nearest vacant no. on the roll'.

By 1739 100 warrants had been issued – 2 to lodges in England. No. 148 on the 24th July to a lodge in Norwich and no 247 on the 8th of May 1754 to the Lodge of Middle Temple in London, which had 8 members of the Irish bar as founder members. Closer to home a warrant was issued to 'the town of Pasley in Northern Britain'. This warrant, No. 252 of 15th June 1754, showed that by 20th June 1771 it had 46 registered members. There is no further record of this lodge in Irish sources except for its cancellation on 17th October 1813. That is of course unless you know differently! I can find no direct evidence of Royal Arch degrees being worked by them. The first dedicated reference to the RA degree is at the Grand Assembly Encampment No. 41, later No. 23 of the Royal Grand Conclave, at Kilmarnock. The

warrant was issued in 1807 but the Encampment became dormant in 1837. It was never chartered by S.G.R.A.C.

To conclude with the issue of Warrants, it may be possible to throw some light on the origins of the Royal Arch in Stirling. During the 18th century Stirling was involved in the silk trade. Also involved in that trade were Norwich and Beziers in France. We know that an Irish warrant was issued to Norwich and that a warrant was also issued to form a lodge in Beziers. I think that it is probable that sufficient Irish masons were working in these places to form and constitute a lodge. In the case of Stirling a lodge was already extant. It would be nice to conjecture that Irish masons travelling in the silk trade would also carry the latest in degree work – the Royal Arch to these loci. I must stress that this is only a fanciful connection that would require some diligent study to see if it holds water. I hope brethren and companions that at this stage I have made a clear connection between the Scottish lodges, which were to become the earliest Royal Arch Chapters and the development of `Higher Degree Freemasonry` in Ireland and presented you with credible evidence to support the argument. However I would like to move on to consider some other likely suspects in the introduction of Royal Arch Freemasonry to Scotland.

The Royal Grand Conclave

As you may have noticed Brethren, the title of this paper is *Some Observations on the History of the Holy Royal Arch*. Believe it or not, this title was chosen with some care. Firstly it allows me to miss out the bits I know nothing about; secondly to skirt round difficult areas; and thirdly it enables me to avoid any original research and merely re-interpret the work of others. Companions should have picked up the error in the title – ‘Holy’. In Scotland we only have the Royal Arch, but if we have time I would like to look at some of the work of Rev. Bro. Neville Barker Cryer on English Royal Arch so I took a liberty with the title. For those Scottish companions please accept my apology.

If I can return to my first reason – terminal ignorance and/or fear of giving offence by talking about difficult areas – I now plead ‘Mea culpa’. Of the 10 Chapters founded before 1780 the furthest West in Scotland is Stirling, the furthest North is Banff, and the furthest South is Edinburgh. The Lodges in these towns were, I submit, influenced by connections with either military lodges held in garrisons or had access to trade and fishing ports or were venues for the burgeoning trade that was being

shaped by both the Agricultural and Industrial revolutions which were shaping the Britain as it emerged as the worlds first superpower.

The first real West Coast town to offer the Royal Arch is Greenock. First chartered in 1789, Greenock offered the Royal Arch through the Royal Grand Conclave, which was at that time the Templar Grand body. At the founding of SGRAC in 1817, 41 Royal Grand Conclave Encampments were in existence, which could offer Royal Arch degrees and of these 21- joined S.G.R.A.C.

That Brethren is all I plan to say with regard to the part played by the R.G.C., in early Royal Arch because opening up the Templar issue is like opening up Pandora's Box - all sorts of terrible but wondrous things are liable to pop out – and never go back.

Likewise, although I will touch on the Holy Royal Arch in England I do not yet have enough research on the early chapters, especially 'Land of Cakes', which was co-incidentally Robert Burns' Mother Chapter, and operated under a charter or warrant from England. I propose therefor to leave this area blank and return briefly to Ireland to examine the issue of the Early Grand Encampments.

The Early Grand Encampment

I may seem somewhat strange, when the main focus of this paper has been to look at the earliest origins of the Royal Arch, to examine an organisation which was not conceived until 1779, but it is my contention that the EGE is of importance in tracing the introduction of the 'Higher Degrees' to areas of Scotland where, to paraphrase the Heineken advert, 'other R.A. institutions don't reach'.

When I looked at the data assembled from the earliest Chapters and the links they had with Irish Freemasonry, I was struck with the geography of it. In Ireland, the spread of the Royal Arch and the Higher Degrees across the country would appear to be quite uniform. The same projection cannot be said to apply to Scotland.

The early Royal Arch chapters are to be found in an area which could be described as the land of the Southern Picts, stretching from Fife all the way up the East Coast to the Cromarty Firth and beyond. All the towns involved are either ports or garrisons or were on the mail and freight packet lines on the East Coast of the North Sea. Even Stirling was navigable and was of course a major garrison town.

But the West Coast – well within sight of Ireland was a veritable Bermuda triangle for early Royal Arch. This does not mean that there were no lodges or proto-

chapters offering these degrees it just means that as yet I can find no written records of them.

This anomaly is all the more puzzling in view of the fact that Renfrewshire, Lanarkshire and Ayrshire were hotbeds of Freemasonry. So the question began to shape in my mind – what happened in the development of ‘Higher Degree’ masonry in these areas?

The main source for R.A. degrees on the West Coast was through the Templar Grand body, but it was another Templar organisation that was to prove its main rival, and that body was to emerge from Ireland even although it had a claim to a Scottish parenthood. The following advert appeared in the Hibernian Journal of 20th June 1774;

The Knights Templar of Ireland, Royal Arch, Excellent and Superexcellent, Free and Accepted Masons Lodge No. 506, intend dining together in their Lodge Rooms at the Thatched Cabin, Castle Street on Friday 24th instant to celebrate the Festival of St. John.....

J.O., Early Grand Scribe

This shows the interest of Lodge 506 in conferring the Higher Degrees and that these degrees already existed in Dublin. In the following year Lodge 518 was warranted and began to confer RA and Templar degrees. Previously in this paper I have referred to the work of Robert Bashford who identified the term ‘Encampment’ as that of a subordinate lodge, which worked within a Mother lodge, which was equipped with both the ritual and furnishings to confer the ‘Higher degrees’. It would appear that both Lodge 518 and Lodge 506 were in that position and that a rift occurred between the ‘Encampment’ and its Mother Lodge. In the case of 518 an alternative approach to giving regularity to its workings was sought.

Taking the name ‘High Knight Templar Lodge of Ireland’ the members of the ‘Encampment’ petitioned Mother Kilwinning for a Charter and was even prepared to pay 5 guineas over and above the regular fee for a charter. This was done by letter on 26th April 1779.

April 26th 1779.

*To the Grand Master and Brethren of the Mother Lodge of Kilwinning:
“Brethren, - Studious to follow freemasonry on the justest principles of the Ancient Craft, and willing to derive an authority from the First Source, a regular lodge of Free and Accepted Masons, held in Dublin, have been long*

desirous to obtain a character from their esteemed Brethren the Ancient Lodge of Kilwinning, as they are fully satisfied of their just title of primogeniture. Anxiously solicitous after the attainment of this much desire, object, but a loss to whom to turn for advice or where to apply, they count it a fortunate aera their meeting with their much beloved Brother, George Cunningham, Esq., whose friendship has pointed out a clue to lead them out of their labyrinth of doubt. Under this auspices therefor they apply for a charter from you to hold a lodge to be called the High knight Templars Lodge of Ireland, and hope ever to walk worthy of their vocation and the high favour you will confer on them by granting it.

We remain with the greatest respect, wishing you the salutation of peace, love and harmony, your truly affectionate Brethren.

It is signed by Henry Wheeler, Master, Peter Grant, S. Warden, Robert Colville, J. Warden, and Richard Gaudry, secretary and dated April 1779, Dublin.

The petition was viewed favourably by Kilwinning, no doubt helped by the willingness of the Dublin Brethren to pay additional 5 guineas over and above the normal fee and a Charter was granted on 27th October 1779 with the accompanying letter.

*We, the Right Honourable Archibald Earl of Eglintoun, Grand Master of the Mother Lodge of Kilwinning, having taken into Consideration the Request of certain Masons of the City of Dublin, praying our authority to be formed into a Regular Lodge or Society. Being well assured of their moral character and of their inclination to promote the Good of Masonry: We, with the consent of our Wardens and other Brethren, do Constitute and Erect them into a regular lodge, by the name of the **High Knight Templars Lodge of Ireland, Kilwinning Lodge**, and we grant them all powers and privileges, which now are or for any time past may have been enjoyed by any other lodge of our creating. The same to be always holden of the Most Worshipful Grand Master of the Mother Lodge of Kilwinning and his Successors in the Office, upon the yearly payment of One Merk Scots at the anniversary of their Mother Lodge in December and the attendance of one of their members if required at the said meeting. Given at Kilwinning, the eighth day of October 1779.*

Signed by Robert Laughlen, Secretary, Eglintoun GM, Nixon Farris, SW and Thomas Muir, J.W.

The first meeting of the High Knight Templars of Ireland Kilwinning Lodge took place on 27th December 1779. The new lodge did however retain some features of the old. The name `Encampment` was retained and the Master of the Lodge was styled `Early Grand Master`. So while they were anxious to obtain the approbation of `the most ancient lodge in Britain` they did not wish to do away with the `Early Grand` prefix – presumably the extra 5 guineas assuaged any hesitation or reluctance on their part!

Much could be said about the role of the Early Grand Encampment but this may need to be the subject of another paper. It is certainly too much to include in this preliminary essay. Suffice to say that E.G.E. of Ireland did not confine its activities to the Emerald Isle but expanded across the sea to Scotland using that well-established procedure of the Warrant.

Warrants issued by the E.G.E. of Ireland show that Encampments were established from 1794 including the Grand Assemblies at Maybole, Kilmarnock, Muirkirk, Cambuslang, Edinburgh (the Deuchar Encampment), Moira Union at Kilmarnock, the Grand Assembly at Glasgow, St John Shettleston, St. John or Josiah at Castle Douglas, St Paul at Ayr, yet another in Kilmarnock but very short lived, the Grand Assembly at Paisley, and yet another at Kilmarnock, St. John at Aberdeen, St. John at Prestwick, Stewarton, St. James at Peterhead, Newmilns, Saltcoats, Evening Star at Dalry and lastly Galston.

Following this successful incursion the Early Grand Encampments went further. The Grand Assemblies at Muirkirk, Ayr and all three at Kilmarnock petitioned EGE of Ireland for full autonomy. This was granted 4 years later and the Early Grand Encampment of Scotland was set up. It was to go on to issue a further 25 charters under its own authority before amalgamating with S.G.R.A.C. for the Royal Arch degrees and Royal Grand Conclave for the Templar series, later becoming the Great Priory of Scotland.

I realise that time is wearing on and that I should really bring things to a close but I cannot finish without some reference to England. I promise to keep it brief so no mention of Neville Barker Cryer and the Arch degree or the Grand Lodge of England at York. Maybe I can cover that some other time.

I started this paper with a famous quotation from Youghal in Ireland. I would now like to conclude it with one from England, which I believe, sums up the position of the Moderns Grand Lodge with regard to the development of the Higher Degrees.

An approach was made by an Irish freemason Brother William Carroll of Dublin, in 1759, for relief from Grand Lodge of England. The reply by Samuel Spencer, the then Grand Secretary was unequivocal: "Our society is neither Arch, Royal Arch nor Antient so that you have no right to partake of our Charity.." This for me at least demonstrates clearly that although the Premier Grand Lodge of England knew of these degrees it was not prepared to entertain them. Clearly they had no part in the establishment of the Royal Arch in Scotland. So Trevor Stewart's assertion is wrong at least as far as that Grand Lodge goes.

I trust, brethren that I have made a clear and irrefutable case for the blame for the introduction of the Royal Arch to be laid at the door of Irish freemasons – both from the Grand Lodge of Ireland and the Grand Lodge of England according to the Antient Constitutions.

I was, however, always taught that you should leave your audience with something to reflect on. No presentation by a Scottish Mason could ever be complete without some reference to Rosslyn Chapel. While doing some research on the Internet I came across a reference to Royal Arch on a site run by Gilles H. Nullens, an expert brother. Nullens claims that examples of the symbols used in Royal Arch are found in the carvings on the walls at Rosslyn. Please remember that Rosslyn was completed by 1497.

The principal pillars in the East of the building form a Triple Tau, the badge of the Royal Arch. William Sinclair arranged the pillars to show to those that can see it that it represents the Temple of Jerusalem, and that a treasure is concealed within it. The pillars at Rosslyn form an exact seal of Solomon.

Nullens also claims that at the village of Temple, sometimes known as Ballintrodach, the headquarters of the Templars prior to their dissolution, are many Masonic graves, many with the Royal Arch symbol of the Pick and Shovel, together with the Skull and Crossbones, the Templar symbol of resurrection and their battle flag. So see all that stuff about Youghal!?

May I add that not all the sites on the web are accurate. Nullens also tells us the Templar fleet sailed up the Firth of Forth to Argyll, I would have liked to watch

them skull the 40 miles over dry land, so perhaps some caution is required with the evidence of this particular scholar.

Brethren and Companions may I thank you for your courtesy, forbearance and patience. I trust that you will now do the honourable thing and admit your guilt – it is your fault that the Royal Arch Degree came to Scotland. If any of you have any really easy questions I will try to answer them and I can promise you that I will be brief.