

Irish Lodges in England **Robert Bashford**

Middle Temple Lodge No 247 I.C. Middle Temple, London.

Warranted by The Grand Lodge of Ireland on 8 May 1754, the Lodge Warrant was issued to Thomas Knox Gordon as founding Master; and Charles Bruce and Joseph Kane, respectively Senior and Junior Wardens. The membership comprised eleven other Irishmen and the newly constituted Lodge met at The Kings Head tavern at the corner of Chancery Lane, London. No other members appear in the Register of Grand Lodge.

Thomas Knox Gordon was also a founder member of True-Blue Lodge, No 182, Belfast. He was a successful merchant and went to become Chief Justice of the colony of South Carolina (1771-75).

Captain John Anstruther Fitzgerald, a soldier, was one of the founder members of the Lodge. He is not mentioned in the English Army List of 1755 and was probably on the Irish establishment.

Eight of the fourteen founder Members were or had been members of the Irish Bar, admitted to King's Inn in Dublin: Thomas Knox Gordon, Charles David Bruce, Joseph Kane, Andrew Span, John Tunnadine, Richard Power, Thomas Naughton, and Thomas Kingsbury. Five of the six other members were Irish merchants based in London: Doctor Richard Brouncker, Michael Barrett, George Hart, Samuel Close and Thomas Nicholls.

One interesting feature in the membership register is that most members have a prefix or affix (Esq.) indicating their relative rank in Society at that time. Bearing in mind the relatively lesser social standing of many members of the Grand Lodge of the Antients in London, it is possible that these fourteen Brethren preferred to take their Warrant direct from The Grand Lodge of Ireland, which they may have believed gave them a greater social cachet and social standing.

The First Warrant on English Soil – Norwich Lodge No 148 I.C.

On the 24 July 1745, eight silk weavers from Norwich applied to The Grand Lodge of Ireland for an Irish Warrant. The request was granted and they received Warrant No 148. The eight Brethren were Jacob Brooker, John Aunger, Thomas Blumfield, Thomas Throw, Thomas Briggs, Dominic Coppen, Clerment Jermy and John Reeves, at least some of whom appear to have been Huguenots.

Norwich's weavers specialised in silk bombazine, a fabric that corresponded closely to Dublin poplin, and this may explain the link with Ireland, since skilled weavers often found employment in other cities. The Lodge became the first in England to possess a Warrant, a document that would not be introduced in England until the 1750s by the Grand Lodge of the Antients. Lodges working under the Grand Lodge of England (Moderns) received warrants from the 1760s.

There is no further references to the Lodge in the surviving records of The Grand Lodge of Ireland. The records, if such exist, would have been preserved in the early Minutes of The Grand Lodge of Ireland, and sadly these were taken by Seton in 1804 at the time of his breakaway from The Grand Lodge of Ireland and the short-lived creation of The Grand East of Ulster. Despite a protracted court case in Dublin, the records were never recovered.

Cf., Registers of The Grand Lodge of Ireland; *AQC* 8;