

## **CONTENTS**

Chapter One:	The Foundation Stones
Chapter Two:	A New Home
Chapter Three:	Another First
Chapter Four:	Lodge, Nation and World
Chapter Five:	A Christmas Change
Chapter Six:	Link with the Beginning
Chapter Seven:	Another War
Chapter Eight:	Master's Extra Term
Chapter Nine:	Benevolence
Chapter Ten:	Over the Border
Chapter Eleven:	Centenary

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The RWM and office-bearers wish to thank Bro. M.R. Smith (Junior Warden); Bro. John Hislop; Bro. Alexander D. Pirie, P.M.; and Bro. Colin Mailer for their assistance in the preparation of this, the Centenary History, and especially Bro. William Smith, P.M. Secretary, without whose research and indefatigable efforts, the history could not have been written.

## **THE FOUNDATION STONES**

It was a cold winter's evening when William Black made his way to the schoolroom at Brightons. As Depute Provincial Grand Master of Stirlingshire, he had agreed to chair a meeting to discuss the formation of a Masonic Lodge in the Polmont district. Such suggestions had to be treated with caution. It was not unknown for that first flush of enthusiasm to wither, others being left to try to breathe life into an abandoned idea. There was also the risk that a new Lodge would thrive, but at the expense of destroying another Lodge nearby. But every healthy and thriving organisation had to have a beginning: could this be such a beginning?

With all these thoughts in mind, Bro. Black arranged to have the minutes recorded, and a sheet was headed with the date: "Wednesday, February 15, 1893." Below this was listed the names of those present: James McKillop of Polmont Bank, and from Lodge St John No. 16, R. Borland, Robert Crawford, A. Gillespie, James Haddow, H. Johnston, Angus Mc Ewan, W. Marshall, Dan O'May, P. Ronald and John Taylor.

Perhaps they were conscious that the population of this district was set to grow shortly. Recent improvements in road and rail communications (the Forth railway bridge had opened four years previously) would make Polmont, lying on the Glasgow/Edinburgh line, a convenient location. An expanding population would demand, among other things, a Lodge closer at hand than either Falkirk or Grangemouth. Each of those present would have his own reasons for voting in the way he did. Whatever those reasons were, all but one voted in favour of forming a Lodge, and a steering committee was constituted.

The debate now shifted from the philosophical to the practical. One of the first questions to be addressed was the matter of premises in which the new Lodge would meet. Fortunately, a nearby cottage was available to rent, and on the following Saturday, the committee went along to inspect it – in particular, the attic. Satisfaction was expressed, and it was agreed to take the house for a year. Thus the first address of the new Lodge was “~Glendale Cottage, Quarry Brae, Brightons.” As the meetings were held on the upper floor, it became known locally as “The Lodge in the Garret.”

Ten days later, a full meeting was held in the schoolroom to appoint office-bearers, and to complete the petition to be sent to Grand Lodge. Since the foundation of Grand Lodge in 1736, each average year has seen only two people become the first Masters of Lodges in Scotland. A mention in the New Year or Birthday Honours List is statistically easier to attend. Bro. Hugh Peden was therefore extremely proud to be elected the first Master of the Lodge. The other office-bearers appointed were:

Depute Master – James Mackie  
Subst. Master – Daniel Rankine  
W.S. Warden – Andrew Baxter  
W.J. Warden – W.G. Cockburn  
Secretary – John Findlay  
Treasurer – James Baxter  
Sen. Deacon – John Maxwell  
Jun. Deacon – Robert Thomson  
Inner Guard – Hugh Kerr  
Tyler – Henry Cowan

As the date of this meeting was Wednesday, March 1 (St David’s Day), the name suggested for the Lodge was “St David’s, Polmont Station.” Four weeks later, however, on Wednesday, March 29, at a meeting held in Glenedge Cottage, the proposed name of the Lodge was again discussed. It was unanimously decided that the Lodge should be named “Lodge Polmont,” the corporate colour to be Oxford Blue.

In a period of some seven weeks, all the arrangements had been completed. The hard work and determination of those pioneers was rewarded on Tuesday, May 4, 1893, when the Grand Lodge of Scotland granted a Charter to Lodge Polmont, numbering 793 on the Roll of the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

The granting of the Charter signalled the happy conclusion of one set of efforts and the beginning of another period of industry and organisation. A busy summer ensued in preparing the new premises,

gathering together furniture, fittings and equipment, and training the crew of the newly-launched ship.

Summer was on the wane when the historic day dawned. The first meeting was held on Wednesday, September 20, 1893. An air of excitement prevailed when Bro. Hugh Peden, Right Worshipful Master Elect, brought the meeting to order. A ballot was taken for the first Petitioner for Initiation. It was declared clear, and it was with great pleasure that Hugh Peden announced that Mr James Maxwell had passed the first stage of becoming a member of the Lodge.

Bro. John Taylor presented a Mallet to the Right Worshipful Master, and was given a hearty vote of thanks for his service to the Lodge since its foundation. Bro. John Maxwell then presented to the Lodge a square, compasses, chisel and plummet. The meeting proceeded to a practice of the First Degree, in preparation for the following week's meeting. The Master Elect then brought the meeting to an end with a satisfactory crash of the John Taylor Mallet, and Lodge Polmont was well and truly under way.

The Lodge was no longer an idea which could be abandoned in the face of difficulties: it was a living and breathing reality. People had "signed on" for it, had made a commitment, and could not be let down. A spirit of mutual support prevailed, on which was based the rapid progress that followed. It must be remembered that at this stage of his life, Lodge Polmont had no "identity". Questions of procedure, style and policy could not be settled by reference to the Lodge Polmont "way". In taking the decisions it did, the first committee gave form and regularity to the shapeless mass of stone.

The second Lodge meeting took place the following week, on September 27. Hugh Peden was unable to attend, so John Taylor took the chair. The successful petitioner of the previous meeting, Mr James, Maxwell – a grocer from Redding, was initiated in the First Degree. Two other gentlemen were proposed for membership, and it was decided to hold weekly meetings until the consecration of the Lodge, scheduled for October 18. This meeting was brought to a happy conclusion when Bro. W.G. Cockburn presented a sword and 24-inch gauge to the Lodge.

The meeting held on October 4 is distinguished in that no Degree ceremony was carried out. A letter from Provincial Grand Lodge confirmed that Bro. George Christie, Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, would arrive at 6pm on Wednesday, October 18, 1893, to carry out the ceremony of the Lodge. A copy of the Lodge Bye-Laws was also received. A ballot was taken for two candidates and declared clear, and three gentlemen were proposed for membership.

The following Wednesday a ballot for three candidates was declared clear, two gentlemen were proposed for membership, and five candidates were initiated into the Lodge.

The consecration of the Lodge took place at the next meeting on October 18. Bro. George Christie duly carried out this most important ceremony in the attic of a modest cottage. He could now know what would develop from such humble beginnings.

The "Lodge in the Garret" held regular meetings in October and November. Five Entered Apprentices were passed to the Second Degree (Lodge Polmont's first ceremony at this level) on November 1. The Lodge now found itself having to work two Degree ceremonies in one evening and on November 29 the Lodge carried out its first Third Degree on six brethren. It was also proposed at this meeting to send a letter of thanks to Bro. Barr of Lodge 16 for his gift of a Bible.

After the installation meeting, on December 27, the Lodge held its first Festival of St John. Bro. Hugh Peden was supported on his right by Andrew Baxter, and on his left by James Taylor, the first Honorary Member of Lodge Polmont. They must have paused to reflect on a momentous year drawing to a close. To put it in its historical perspective, it was 12 years since Billy the Kid was shot by the Sheriff in New Mexico, Robert Louis Stevenson was still alive, and there was a four-year-old toddler in Austria called Adolf – but more of him later. This was the year in which Mrs Innes, of Redding, died at the age of 100 years. Through 16 children she had nearly 200 descendants. Lodge Polmont determined to set off with equal courage to weather the hard and happy times.

## **A NEW HOME**

The year 1894 was barely a few weeks old when the nation was plunged into a ministerial crisis over the Irish Home Rule Bill; Gladstone resigned as Prime Minister in favour of Lord Rosebery. There was industrial unrest, with mine-owners vigorously opposing an eight-hour day. This was a matter of major concern as Polmont was a mining area. More sharply focused, however, Lodge Polmont had a new problem to address.

Only a year after the first meeting, it was found that Glenedge Cottage was too small to accommodate the growing number of members of Lodge Polmont. A committee was set up to determine ways and means of raising funds to erect new Lodge premises. Bro. Black (Lodge 16), an architect, was asked for his professional advice.

Plans were submitted for new premises at an estimated cost of £800. This was seen to be an expensive and lengthy operation. New plans for a building costing about £500 were requested.

The plans were duly produced and approved and the decision to proceed given. Time was of the essence. Glenedge Cottage could not cope for much longer with the high numbers attending. At one particular meeting, the Installation meeting of 1894, a total of 69 people were present. The cottage is still standing it is interesting, when passing this cottage 100 years later, to look at the upper storey and speculate who they managed to squeeze 69 people into it!

As the Management Committee had complete confidence that the members would raise the necessary money, they accepted a loan of £400 at 3¼% interest, arranged by Bro. Mackie, a Stirling solicitor. This means that builders could be instructed immediately. Contractors were appointed and work began. Preparations would be completed for the foundation stone to be laid on June 8, 1895.

The basic “shell” of the lower part of the building had been constructed, and preparations had been made for the foundation of the Lodge (the upper floor) to be laid. The morning of Saturday, June 8, saw a great deal of activity in the vicinity of the Co-operative Hall, Reddingmuirhead. Gathering together there were representatives of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Stirlingshire and Lodge Polmont, accompanied by members of Lodge Nos. 16, 17, 30, 69, 76, 139, 176, 391, 484, 588 and 598, from within the Province. From outwith the Province, there was representation from the Douglas Lodge 409 Bo’ness, St Clair 349 and Rifle Lodge 405, both Edinburgh, and St John 60, Inverkeithing.

After much consulting of pocket watches, positions were taken and the Laurieston Brass Band struck up a stirring tune. The procession marched through Redding village and Blairlodge to its destination in Brightons. In that year, Marconi first sent a message about the same distance by wireless telegraphy.

It was a grand occasion for the village of Brightons. The road was thronged with spectators, and there was even a ladies' choir in attendance. To a rousing cheer, Bro. George Christie, Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, laid the foundation stone with due ceremony. A photograph was taken of the occasion, and now adorns the wall of one of the Lodge rooms.

The Lodge was built as an upper-storey building, having two houses below it. The site of the present centre window on the ground floor lounge is the location of the original two front doors of the houses. The Lodge doorway opened on to a stairway leading to two upper ante-rooms adjoining the Lodgeroom. In October 1895, Bro. Joseph Hunter successfully applied to rent the house nearest to the Lodge front door. The other house was also rented out shortly afterwards.

Work progressed rapidly on the building and the new Lodge premises were consecrated on November 20, 1895, by Bro. George Christie, RWPGM. Whatever doubts and reservations Bro. Christie may have had when he carried out the consecration at Glenedge Cottage the year before, had disappeared by this time, as he entered the new Lodge Polmont premises. Here was the solid proof of a Lodge in good heart and determined to succeed. Twenty-one months had passed since he instructed his Depute to chair a meeting of local Masons who had some sort of an ideal about forming a Lodge. The single-minded determination of Lodge Polmont members, the support of Provincial Grand Lodge, and the willing assistance of members of sister Lodges, had proved to be an awesome combination.

## **ANOTHER FIRST**

In that year, Lodge Polmont also admitted its first member to affiliate from another Lodge, Bro. Rev. John McKenzie of Polmont Parish Church. The "firsts" continued during 1896. The first rejection of an applicant by ballot occurred. The first church service of the Lodge was held, and the balance of £4.50 from that church service was used to start the Benevolent Fund of the Lodge. Honorary memberships were conferred on Bros. Black and O'May of Lodge 16, and Bro. F. Mitchell of Lodge 391, for services rendered during the building of the new Lodge premises.

Throughout the following year, 1897, progress continued to be made in the Lodge – although nothing to match the excitement of gold being discovered in the Klondike, Canada, and Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee celebrations.

In 1898 the average industrial wage was £1.70 per week – less than £90 a year. The Lodge was generating sufficient income to meet its running costs, and had found £100 cash to put to the £400 loan to build the new premises. By the Spring of 1898, about £20 had been raised towards the repayment of this loan. To the members of Lodge Polmont, this was slow progress! It was decided to hold a three-day fund-raising bazaar, in an effort to clear the loan.

The "Action Committee" did not spare itself in achieving maximum publicity and sponsorship. Neither did it spare others to assist, the Rt. Hon. Lord Saltoun, Most Worshipful Grand Master Mason of Scotland, agreed to open the proceedings on the first day. Bro. George Christie, Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, opened the second day, and the third day's proceedings were opened by Bro. William Black RWPGM Depute.

When the balance sheet was presented it was found that £328.19/- had been raised – about 4 ½ times the average industrial wage. It is worth pausing at this point to consider what sum is arrived at today if the average annual industrial wage is multiplied by 4 ½. The present committee would welcome any suggestions which would raise that sum for the Lodge! The members involved on that occasion spent less time in self-congratulation than they did in making further efforts to realise the remaining £50 required to discharge the £400 bond. Needless to say, this was also achieved.

On May 10, 1899, an Illuminated Address was presented to Bro. John Taylor, Immediate Past Master, in recognition of the many and lasting services he had rendered to the Lodge during his four years as Master; in particular, his untiring efforts in clearing the debt incurred in building the new Lodge premises.

The Boer War, which began on October 10, had little impact on the district at this time. The Installation and Festival of St John went ahead as usual on December 27. Bro. Taylor, in his address to the brethren, announced that in the six years since its inception, the Lodge had admitted 101 entrants, it owned its own building, with as good a Lodgeroom as any to be found in the Province, was clear of all debt and had a balance of £57 in the funds. With this proud record, he urged all to look forward to the start of the new century with increased vigour and determination. Above all, he counselled, the Lodge members should maintain the principles and guidelines of Freemasonry. In this way, the Lodge would be assisted in passing from its infancy into its period of youthful endeavour.

The year 1900 saw the launch of the British Labour Party, the "Daily Express" and Count Zeppelin's airship. It also saw the launch of organ music to enhance Lodge Polmont's degree ceremonies. On March 7, Bro. Sneddon, director of music, played the new Lodge organ at a degree ceremony for the first time. It had been recently purchased at a cost of £100, which was a very substantial sum of money to invest, reflecting the courage and confidence which prevailed in those heady days.

The organ having been installed, the next discussion centred on arrangements for an excursion to Loch Lomond. Typically, the committee did not think "small". On August 1, 800 members and friends went away for the day. This would have virtually emptied the district. Travel was relatively rare in the days before motorised road transport. For the vast majority of people, a day's outing by train would be considered too expensive. By embarking on such a large-scale expedition, the Lodge secured favourable rates, which it passed on to members and friends. This was a unique opportunity for many people, not only to travel by rail for the first time, but also to make the longest journey of their lives. Parents, proud to be able to give their children this treat, pointed out the scenery on the way to the "Bonnie Banks".

The year closed with another "first". Bro. John Loudon was installed as Right Worshipful Master, and was the first Master who could refer to Lodge Polmont as his Mother Lodge. Lodge Polmont was now no longer simply a "product" – the creature of others. It had also become a "producer". The

Lodge had a home-grown Master. The seven-year-old brainchild was now walking unaided. The founder-members watched this installation ceremony with the mixed feelings of the bride's mother at a wedding.

Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901. There would be few who could remember a time when she wasn't Queen.

In a reign of 63 years, she had presided over the wealth-creating days of Empire and Industrial Revolution, but there had been poverty in the midst of plenty.

During this year, the Lodge joined the Eastern District Bowling Trophy Competition. Enthusiasm for bowls has remained in the Lodge ever since, although competition results have been mixed.

The outing that year was to Tarbert, Loch Fyne. The Lodge guaranteed the railway company 500 persons, and the outing took place on August 7. It was a particularly successful day, at the end of which a balance of £8.45 remained after expenses.

A fortnight later the Lodge suffered a great loss. Hugh Peden, the first Master, died. It was of some consolation that he had seen his efforts bear fruit before he died.

On December 10, the first Nobel Prizes were awarded. Lodge Polmont's connections with Nobel are evident 100 years after the birth of the Lodge. People have remarked that the slippers kept within the Lodge are exceptionally large for the sizes that are stamped on them. They are in fact over-slipper, used to cover the shoes of workers in Nobel's explosives factory at Redding. The inventor of Dynamite wasn't keen on the idea of sparks coming from boot-tacks! The factory closed in 1964.

Early in 1903 there was a great deal of discussion in the Lodge as to whether an extension would be built. Eventually, it was decided by 26 votes to 9, to go ahead with the extension. News had been received from the Southern Hemisphere that the Boer War had ended, and a new spirit of confidence prevailed. The original extension plans had an estimated cost of £200 and when tenders were received, costs had risen to £380 (with further alterations and increases to follow). The tenders were approved, and again it was decided to borrow money. The Ancient Order of Shepherds Friendly Society advanced to the Lodge the sum of £350 at 3 ½%, demonstrating that not only did the Lodge have confidence in its ability to service the loan, but that a reputable financial institution also regarded the Lodge as a sound investment.

The two-storey extension was built to the left of the front door, and consisted of a house on the ground floor and two ante-rooms above it. The Lodgeroom was decorated, and a fence was erected at the back gardens, to protect the children of the tenants. Casement windows were fitted at the rear of the building. The upheaval caused a great deal of inconvenience to Joseph Hunter and his family. He was given £1.50 as a compensation payment!

The premises were in great demand to be hired for various occasions. On September 28, 1903, the hire charges were reviewed as follows:

	1901 Price:	1903 price:
Lecture	5/- (25p)	6/- (30p)
Social (no dancing) until midnight	12/- (60p)	

Social with dance until midnight	12/- (60p)	14/- (75p)
Dancing until 1 am		£1.00
Marriages, Balls etc.	15/ (75p)	£2.00

An idea of the lettings can be gauged from the fact that the income from hall lets ran at about £50 per year.

That year's annual excursion was to Lamash, and again a guarantee of 500 people was given to the railway company. This time, however, the trip made a deficit of £3.10.8. This was nothing to the shock felt when the death of Bro. George Christie, Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, was announced. He had been a true friend to Lodge Polmont, risking his reputation in supporting the risky venture of Lodge Polmont's foundation. He would be sadly missed. His framed photograph, presented to the Lodge in 1897, still hangs on the wall of one of the Lodge rooms.

Four months after the Coronation of Edward VII, Bro. Alexander W. Gray-Buchanan was installed as Right Worshipful Master of the Lodge. The following month, January 1903, he was appointed Depute Provincial Grand Master of Stirlingshire. Bro. Gray-Buchanan was a force to be reckoned with. He paid a visit to the County Assessor and had the Masonic Hall valuation reduced from £18 to £12.

The Lodge was now becoming heavily involved in the affairs of the Province. It assisted Lodge Callander 588 with its bazaar in aid of a Masonic Lodge room. A deputation also attended the consecration of the new Lodge room of Lodge Carron 139 in Stenhousemuir on December 11, 1903.

The Lodge continued to prosper, and the annual social had become established as a regular event, starting at 8pm and finishing at 4am, although the Lodge was unable to obtain a special drinks licence for the annual social on February 10, 1904. Nothing daunted, the guests brought their own drink, which gave them even more freedom than the special licence would have done!

The Masonic Bowling Trophy was won by the Lodge for the first time in 1904. In this year, the Lodge also made a donation towards the building of the new premises of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. The Lodge also bought the feu (title to the tenure) of the land on which the Lodge was built. It was during this period that the extensions to the Lodge, eventually costing £600, were completed.

## **LODGE, NATION AND WORLD**

Alexander Gray-Buchanan, Immediate Past Master, had bought the mansion house and policies of Parkhill, Polmont, in 1885, and his family were the last to occupy it as a private estate. Members of the Lodge and their families were entertained in the grounds of Parkhill, in celebration of the recent achievements of the Lodge.

The progress continued during the years 1904-1908, with a three-day bazaar held to raise funds for the Lodge. A sale of work, held in September 1907, raised £10, and the sum of £60, borrowed by the Building Fund from the Benevolent Fund, was repaid. Gas lighting was installed in the Lodge at this time.

At the Provincial Visitation in October 1907 it was announced that the Lodge was once again clear of all debt. The icing went on the cake the following month when Bro. Gray-Buchanan was appointed



Right Worshipful Grand Master of Stirlingshire. Not only was the Lodge now standing on its own feet, it had made its mark in the Province and come to the favourable attention of the Grand Lodge of Scotland.

Sadly, Bro. Gray-Buchanan reigned as RW Provincial Grand Master for less than two years, as he died suddenly on July 31, 1909. Perhaps, if his guiding hand could have been continued for another year, an unfortunate incident might have been averted.

Traditionally, photographs of Past Masters of the Lodge are displayed on the walls of the Lodgeroom. In ancient Egypt, a cartouche, or oval box, containing a royal name, was inscribed on monuments. It occasionally happened that after a Pharaoh's death, a change in politics would render that king unworthy of such immortality and his cartouche would be obliterated. In 1910 the Right Worshipful Master, Bro. Alexander Walker, was expelled from the chair by order of Provincial Grand Lodge for slander against another officebearer. No photograph of him was allowed to adorn the wall of the Lodgeroom. He was written out of history; his cartouche was chiselled off the obelisk. Bro. Walker emigrated to America, and died in 1955 at Mento Park, California, USA. He was succeeded as Master of Lodge Polmont by Alexander Malcolm, who, at 29 years of age, was the youngest to achieve that honour during the first 100 years of the Lodge's existence.

Edward VII died, to be succeeded by George V. During the "quiet" years which followed, a great deal of unrest was fermenting beneath the surface. The Suffragettes were insistent in their demands for voting rights, the Irish Nationalists were a growing problem to the Government, and there was international disquiet over the ambitions of the German Empire.

These times were also marked with distressing occurrences in national and international scenes. Captain Scott died in Antarctica, having been just beaten to the South Pole, the Titanic had sunk with the loss of over 1500 lives, and Emily Davidson made many pause for thought when she threw herself under the King's horse at the Derby, to draw attention to the Suffragettes' cause.

Then it happened. The heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire was assassinated in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Events snowballed and five weeks later, Britain declared war after the German invasion of Belgium. Every town and village felt the repercussions. Thirty-three members of Lodge Polmont served with the armed forces. Three Brothers never returned. In all, some eight million people perished in conflicts. The major battles were indecisive (Somme: 1 million killed for ten miles of ground. Gallipoli: ¼ million killed for the engagement to be abandoned). A Roll of Honour, designed and presented by Bro. A.S. Webster of Lodge St John 16, was unveiled years later. It featured the names of the 33 who served.

Because of the War, it was decided not to celebrate the Festival of St John in 1914. In response to suggestion from Provincial Grand Lodge, the Lodge charged no membership fees to serving members of the armed forces. The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Dr Dyer, was serving at the Front as a Medical Officer.

As far as possible, however, it was business as usual for the Lodge during the War. In October 1915 it was decided to start a school of instruction for officebearers. Two months later, a current account was opened with the British Linen Bank. It was also decided to purchase a safe, "price not to exceed £5..."

The War brought about cultural and social changes. The appalling physical condition of many of the urban poor was recognised, eventually giving rise to the National Health Service and Welfare State. It became a serious offence for the wife of a soldier serving at the Front to be found drunk, and new liquor regulations were introduced. This meant that when Provincial Grant Lodge visited on February 9, 1916, the deputation could be offered only coffee and sandwiches. A fortnight later, James Jarvie, a colliery fireman, was initiated into the Lodge. He was later to prove instrumental in saving lives at the cost of his own.

The propaganda war hotted up. In September 1916, a letter was received from Grand Lodge, banning enemy nationals, or those born in enemy lands, from attending Lodge meetings during the period of hostilities.

On January 10, 1917, it was agreed that the Lodge representatives would be paid their expenses incurred in attending the annual Grand Lodge Installation ceremony, at that time amounting to 7/6d 37 ½p. This has become a tradition, continuing to the present day, although the costs have altered somewhat. The cost per delegate for the Grand Lodge Installation and Festival of St Andrew held a few months before Lodge Polmont's celebrations was £26.

In February 1917 a letter was read in the Lodge, telling of the death of Bro. James Johnstone in France. The Lodge was spurred to take out a £300 War Load, with a further £100 being committed in April 1918. The Lodge also gave £20 to Falkirk Royal Infirmary to endow the "Lodge Polmont 793 Bed". Two days after the Armistice was signed, the death of Bro. Gabriel Carmichael in France was announced in the Lodge.

After the War, the Lodge experienced a tremendous demand for membership. Applications flooded in. In March 1919, 26 candidates were initiated at the same time. The highest number of candidates to simultaneously receive a degree (other than the Mark Degree) was 27, who received the Second Degree on November 12, 1919. On December 1, 1919, a new Grand Lodge law was introduced, restricting the number of such candidates to seven at a time. The records show that the highest number of such candidates to receive a Mark Degree at the same time in Lodge Polmont was 62, on April 23, 1947. Nine days later, a further 58 candidates received the Mark Degree – a total of 120 in a fortnight.

Bro. Andrew Leishman completed 25 years' service as Tyler in September 1919. He was presented with a monetary gift and granted the honour of having his photograph displayed with those of the Past Masters.

At this time, the Lodge gave a loan of £150 to assist the formation of the Gray-Buchanan Royal Arch Chapter No. 502, which has met in Lodge Polmont's premises ever since. At that time, the new Morris Cowley was on sale for £165, women over the age of 30 were given the vote, and the Commons passed the Irish Home Rule Bill.

## **A CHRISTMAS CHANGE**

Between the years 1920 and 1968, meetings were held on Christmas Day on five occasions. The minutes of the meeting held on Christmas Day 1968 are the only ones to make any reference to the

fact that it was the festive season. No Christmas Day meetings have been held in the quarter-century from 1968 to the Centenary. This is some tangible evidence to support the view held by many that, over recent years, Christmas has gained in importance in Scotland.

Another change which has taken place over the years is that meetings have become less controversial than they once were. This may, in part, be an indication that the Lodge has found its identity. There is now an established and acknowledged Lodge Polmont "way". While modern Masters and managements committees are obviously content to know that their actions reflect the wishes of the members, it does mean that there is no longer the drama and passion which occasionally surfaced in days gone by.

There was some excitement at the meeting held on December 28, 1921. An argument developed over whether certain newly-elected office-bearers should be installed into office. Points of view were vigorously exchanged, until one Past Master could stand no more. In a fit of pique he tore off his apron, threw it to the floor with a grand gesture, and strode purposefully towards the exit. Bro. William Fleming, the Inner Guard, was not a man to be trifled with. He refused to allow the Past Master to leave until he had received the Right Worshipful Master's permission to do so.

In 1922, the year the BBC began its first regular programme, Mussolini took over as Dictator of Italy, and Bro. Fleming was installed as Lodge Treasurer. On December 28, 1955, he received a Distinguished Service Diploma for 32 years' service as Treasurer. He died suddenly on October 24, 1956, still Treasurer of the Lodge. The Lodge books were found to be up to date, including transactions made the evening before he died. Over the years, there have been, and no doubt will continue to be, stalwarts whose enjoyment of Freemasonry is derived from the fruits of efforts put into the organisation. Bro. Fleming was such an example.

The efforts of such people did indeed bear fruit. At the Provincial Grand Lodge visitation on November 8, 1922, it was announced that Lodge Polmont's membership had reached 444, of whom 270 were life members; a record for the Province.

Rumblings across the world were heard in 1923 when the first Nazi Party rallies were addressed by Adolf Hitler. There were also ominous rumblings to be heard much closer to home. In the early morning of September 25, 1923, there was a sudden inrush of water at Redding Colliery. It took 40 lives, eight of them members of the Lodge.

There was known to be a geological fault in the Wallacestone area, on one side of which was a large accumulation of water. On the other side was the mine. A subsequent inquiry found the management to be at fault in failing to leave a substantial barrier between the water and the mine. Bro. James Jarvie, a fireman at the pit, had received a note, warning of high water levels. When the water rushed down the main haulage road, Bro. Jarvie persuaded men to push through the water to the pit bottom, where there were stairs to higher workings. The men escaped by the winding cage. Bro. Jarvie did not take this opportunity to save himself. Instead he went back to warn others, and was never seen alive again.

The members who died in the disaster were John Baxter, David Bennie, Andrew Brown, Thomas Brown, James Jarvie, Archibald McNee, Robert Thomson and John Wright. At the Lodge meeting held on November 14, 1923, Bro. John Donaldson was received with acclamation on being present

after his trying ordeal of being entombed for 10 days in the disaster. Bro. Donaldson went on to become Master in 1927, and in 1950 was made Honorary Grand Jeweller for his valuable services to Freemasonry.

The year 1925 saw a Lodge excursion to Dunfermline by "Mr Alexander's Charabancs" at a cost of 4/11 (24p) each. In that year a piano was bought and immediately put to work earning money in hire charges at £1.5s for an all night (!) dance, or 7/6d for a concert. The Lodge membership had increased to 560, of whom 352 were life members.

A tremendous spirit of commitment and tenacity prevailed in those days. Bro. Fleming served 33 years as Treasurer. Bro. Rev. J.B. McKenzie served 30 years as Chaplain. On April 27, 1928, Robert Watson (Secretary) was presented with a Secretary's jewel and cheque for £15-15/- on his leaving for Canada. He was replaced by Alexander Fraser, who in turn was presented with a gold watch in 1949 to mark 21 years' service as Secretary. He received a Distinguished Service Diploma in 1955, was made Honorary Grand Marshall in 1961, and finally retired from the Secretary's post in 1972, an impressive record of 44 ½ years' service as Lodge Secretary. He, in turn, was succeeded by William Smith, who has continued in that post at least until the Centenary of the Lodge. It should be borne in mind that the administrative offices of Secretary and Treasurer are active posts. The office-bearers mentioned have remained at their posts through bad times as well as good times. They have played their parts in implementing plans and policies with which they have not necessarily personally agreed. This is the definition of duty.

The first minute recorded by Alexander Fraser was the record of the Funeral Lodge in respect of the death, on July 14, 1928, of Andrew Leishman, Tyler since the beginning. This meeting was held in the Schoolroom, Brightons, as extensions and alterations were again taking place at the Masonic Hall.

Estimated building costs of £850 finally rose to £1900 and the Lodge received authority to overdraw its account with the British Linen Bank by £300. The building was at that time valued at £3500. These extensions and alterations largely turned the building into what it is at the time of the Centenary.

The entrance hall was widened and lengthened. The staircase was constructed and the upstairs bar lounge was built, as were the ladies' rooms. The two ground floor houses below the Lodgerooms were converted into the "Lesser Hall" and the hallkeeper's house, to the left of the front door was extended back.

The year 1929 opened with the Secretary writing to the Rev Father Murphy, complaining that he had allowed card-playing to take place on Lodge Polmont premises on a Sunday, the Lodge hall having been let to him. Father Murphy wrote back, testily, pointing out that as he had specified that the hall let was for a fund-raising whist drive, card-playing must be expected! In reading this letter, one can almost hear the exasperated Irish brogue.

A garden fete held in August in the Westquarter estate, organised by the ladies' committee, realised £80, reducing the bank overdraft to less than £200. Later that year, Mrs Maxwell, the hallkeeper, was given the use of the Lodge house as an addition to her pay.

Whilst work continued in and on the Lodge during the 1920s, work generally was becoming scarce. Scotsmen John Logie Baird and Alexander Fleming with their introductions of television and penicillin, were brief shafts of light in an otherwise dark period. From the General Strike of 1926, to

an unemployment peak of over two million by 1930, opportunities were created for unsavoury forces to gain power. Stalin, Mussolini and Hitler were all establishing themselves. As the Western world teetered towards the Stock Market crash, many Lodge members left the district to seek work. Some emigrated to USA, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. In this way, the influence of Lodge Polmont was spread over the four quarters of the globe.

A letter from Hillsborough Lodge No. 25, Tampa, Florida, tells of Bro. George Taylor, a member of Lodge Polmont. He had acted as Master in Hillsborough Lodge when a fellow Scot, Glasgow-born, was initiated. All the office-bearers that evening were Scottish, and wore kilts. George Taylor was a founder-member of Holyrood Lodge No. 257 and became its Master in 1933 and 1938. He went on to become Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Florida in 1942. He died on August 22, 1948, and a statue of him was erected by the Grand Lodge of Florida in the cemetery in Tampa.

Lodge Polmont members in those days played active roles in the Lodge, and were associated with success and progress. When home economic conditions precipitated their migration, they took with them their enthusiasm for Freemasonry. As it also took courage and initiative to take the drastic step of emigrating, it is not necessarily surprising to learn of the achievements of Lodge Polmont's expatriates.

The Lodge was also pleased to confer honours on distinguished visitors. Bro. Dan Fowler, Standard-Bearer of Lodge Callander 588, had honorary membership conferred on him in November 1931. Lodge Polmont won the Scottish Masonic Curling Association Trophy in 1936 and had a replica of the trophy presented to it by Bro. F.W. Fell-Clark, President of the Association, and R.W. Provincial Grand Master of Argyll and the Isles. In turn, Bro. Fell-Clark had honorary membership conferred on him. Bro. Edmund Dyer, R.W. Provincial Grand Master of Stirlingshire for 21 years, also received his honour, as did his successor, Bro. Dan Robertson, in 1942. That evening Bro. George Rankine received a presentation to mark his 21 years as Senior Steward. A few months later, Bro. Thomas Pitcairn, R.W. Provincial Grand Master, was also honoured. It is not possible within the confines of this book to name every person who has been honoured by the Lodge. The above names are mentioned as representative samples.

Benevolence was also dispensed far and wide. Money was sent to unemployed sick members in New Zealand and Canada. A local widow with five children, one of whom was seriously ill, tried to make ends meet on £1-7/- per week. She too was given a grant.

Money for the Building Fund was needed, but this was not plentiful in the 1930s. There had been hunger marches and city riots. President Roosevelt promised a New Deal for the poor. Lodge Polmont stoically continued, raising £147 from a garden fete, and £80.42 from a Free Gift scheme, and other means, enabling a loan of £200, the average annual income of a tradesman, to be repaid to the Benevolent Fund. The Lodge also managed to decorate the premises, inside and out, in 1931.

### **LINK WITH THE BEGINNING**

On January 13, 1932, Alexander Dickie Pirie, a 21-year-old motor mechanic, was initiated into the Lodge. He took office in 1936, progressed through various offices and became Master in 1947. His employment meant a move to Oban in 1951, causing a brief break in what was otherwise continuous

office from 1936 to at least the Centenary Year. Alex is a link with the beginning. He knew some of the founder-members, and now joins in the centenary celebrations of the Lodge. He tells his own story.

“Five of us were initiated together. Richard Baxter, one of the five, became Right Worshipful Master 1941-43. He became Senior Deacon within two years of joining the Lodge – you could do that in those days. I never had any burning ambition for high office. It wasn’t until 1936 that I took office, as Inner Guard. Among the older Past Masters still alive were James Johnstone (1898-1900), John Louden (1900-1902) and James Baxter (1904-1906). John Louden was the first Master of the Lodge to have been initiated in Lodge Polmont. The other two were founder-members.

“I remember the funeral of James Johnstone. On November 25, 1933, we went to Little Kerse, Old Polmont, and conveyed the remains to Polmont churchyard. Among the pall-bearers were two Past Masters, Robert Brown (1914-1916) and William Rhind (1921-1923), and there was Thomas Matheson, who was to become Master 1939-1941.

“My father, who had been a regular attender for years, affiliated to Lodge Polmont in 1936. He became Bard the following year, and held that office for 15 years.

“I was appointed to the Jubilee Committee in 1943 and 50 years later, served on the Centenary Committee. On Tuesday, May 4, 1943, we celebrated the Jubilee in the upstairs hall. Some of the older members who were there included Thomas Louden (initiated March 28, 1894), William Ritchie (initiated January 23, 1895) and William Scott (initiated September 25, 1895). Alexander Fleming, a founder-member, sent his apologies as he couldn’t attend through illness. I was Senior Warden, and acted as croupier/assistant chairman for the evening. Thomas Hart, R.W. Grand Senior Warden, proposed the toast to Lodge Polmont, William Ritchie replied.

“I worked on my first degree, a Fellow-Craft, on February 1, 1947, on six candidates. I became Master later that year. It was during 1947 that Grand Lodge further restricted the number of candidates at a time to five, other than for the Mark Degree. They also banned the working of more than one degree in an evening, and imposed the rule that the number of Emergency Meetings cannot be allowed to exceed the number of regular meetings in a season. All this had the effect of considerably reducing the number of initiates. Forty-two were initiated in my first year out of a maximum permissible of 45.

“The only bar we had then was upstairs. The serving area was the walk-in cupboard, and we had a counter across the doorway. During social functions men only were allowed in the bar room as women were served in the ladies’ room via a hatch cut in the wall. In 1949 ladies were allowed into the bar room during functions.

“Since retiring as Right Worshipful Master, I’ve headed deputations of Past Masters to work degrees in 1961 (when the candidates included my son, Roy), and in 1968, 1979, and 1980 – a Mark Degree. I formed part of a team of 14 Past Masters of the Lodge in April 1951. Alex Malcolm headed that deputation. He had also been Depute Provincial Grand Master. Later that year we had a social function to celebrate our winning of the Eastern District Bowling Trophy. I proposed the toast to Artists and Stewards.

“On My 20, 1964, 11 of us from Lodge Polmont watched the Grand Master Mason lay the granite plinth for the erection of the statue of Robert Bruce at the Borestone site of the Battle of Bannockburn.

“Another occasion I can easily recall is when Lodge Camelon 1456 worked a Third Degree at Lodge Polmont in 1967. There were 140 present, which was a high number at that time. It was a proud moment for me, as I was a founder-member of Lodge Camelon. I could have been Master of that Lodge, but it would have conflicted with my office in Lodge Polmont. In 1989 I attended the dinner and concert laid on for senior members of Lodge Camelon. More recently, Lodge Camelon worked a Degree at Lodge Polmont in 1992.

“I served ten years as hallkeeper. Living and working in the premises, as well as holding office and being a Past Master, certainly gave me a sense of belonging. This applied to my wife as well as she donated chairs and new curtains for the ladies’ room.

“I received a 50-year Diploma in 1982. Two years later I was presented with a carriage clock on retiring from the post of hallkeeper. Lodge Polmont has been part of my life for over 60 years now. I’ve seen good and difficult times in the Lodge and it’s clear to me that the Lodge is built on a solid foundation. It’s heartening when I see young men being initiated – they represent the future of the Lodge.”

In April 1932 the Lodge received a letter from Dr Ross Hardy, Master of Mento Park Lodge, California, USA. He said that a member of his Lodge, Mr Alexander Walker (56) claimed to have been Master of Lodge Polmont, and was therefore entitled to a seat in the East of the American Lodge. Almost a quarter of a century had elapsed since Bro. Walker had been expunged from the records. Investigations proved the claim to be correct, and this was conveyed to America. Thus was Alexander Walker restored to the honour of Past Master, albeit an ocean away from his mother Lodge.

Some rather interesting coincidences must be mentioned here. The Walker case centred around a statement he had made about Bro. Robert Raisbeck. The details are not given, but the letter of his expulsion from the chair of Lodge Polmont went on to say that “the aspersions on Bro. Raisbeck’s veracity were found to be entirely without foundation.” In other words, Bro. Walker had accused Bro. Raisbeck of lying. Robert Raisbeck followed Alexander Walker’s successor to the chair of Lodge Polmont. He was also a founder-member of Lodge Solomon 1209. Bro. Raisbeck also travelled across the Atlantic. He settled in Vancouver and died on September 8, 1946, aged 79. Bro. Walker died in the same continent in 1955, also aged 79.

Back at the continent of Europe, Hitler had been appointed Chancellor of Germany. George V died, to be succeeded briefly by Edward VIII, then by George VI. By the late 1930s, Hitler was openly defying the terms of the Versailles Treaty. Despite the peace-making efforts of the West and the concessions of the East, there was a sense of foreboding abroad.

In December 1932, Past Master James Johnstone (1898-1900), who was not fit enough to attend Lodge meetings, sent a donation of 10/- (50p) to the Lodge. A letter of thanks and congratulations on his 84<sup>th</sup> birthday was sent to him. He died peacefully at home 11 months later. To better understand the value of that donation, some other references to money made in 1933 are noted: on

September 13 an electricity bill of £7-0-1d caused uproar in the Lodge. The Secretary was instructed to write to the Electricity Company requesting a reduction in the charge of 2 ½d per unit.

As Mrs Maxwell, hallkeeper for 25 years, was obliged to retire through illness, her post was advertised in the "Falkirk Herald" offering a salary of £26 per annum.

A benevolent grant of £5 was cabled to an ill member of the Lodge, who was in Ontario, Canada.

It was also in this year that Bro. George Rankine, of Lodge Polmont, was installed as Master of Lodge 359, Grand Lodge of Queensland, Australia.

By 1934, the fence erected at the rear of the premises 30 years previously was in need of repair. It was decided to replace it with a brick wall, at a cost of £13-15/-. That year, a bole window was fitted between the bar and the ladies' ante-room.

On February 18, 1937, Alexander Anderson, a founder-member, died. The minutes sadly record that there were now only three founder-members still alive. In May of that year, Alexander Carmichael, who had been hallkeeper for four years (replacing Mrs Maxwell), also died. His widow continued in post for a further two years, and was then obliged to resign through ill health.

There was at least one piece of good news in 1937. The Treasurer was able to announce that the Lodge was once again clear of all debt.

## **ANOTHER WAR**

Two years later, the nation was plunged into war. The young family man was naturally reluctant to leave his family, but he also knew that the best protection he could give them was to go and fight the Nazis. The young Lodge members therefore answered the call to duty. It would be expected that Lodge activities would be reduced, if not suspended, during time of war. Far from it. Survival of the individual in war often depends on the survival of the group. For this reason, a tremendous sense of comradeship develops among soldiers. Masonic Lodges are also founded on concepts of comradeship and brotherhood, and applications for membership increased.

Looking back at the minutes, it is difficult to suppress a smile at the record of September 13, 1939, when the Right Worshipful Master, in answer to a question from an anxious member, assured him that he would adjourn the Lodge in the event of an air raid warning being sounded!

Whilst many of the younger members were abroad, the older members took care of the Lodge. In 1941, Bro. George Todd constructed the panel which holds the photographs of Past Masters.

The district had a great influx of British, Canadian and American forces, many of whom were keen to join the Lodge. Some of the young men from overseas were descendants of early Lodge Polmont members. A degree was worked on a Wednesday, and two degrees were worked on Saturdays, with seven candidates at each meeting. Candidates included British soldiers, sailors and airmen, members of the Seaforths of Canada, the Canadian Black Watch and the Argylls of Canada. The descendants of the victims of the Clearances had visited "home".



The year 1943 saw an all-time record of 103 initiates into the Lodge. There were so many admitted, most of whom were passing through the district, that it has been impossible to compile a Roll of Honour for those members who were killed in the Second World War.

In March 1944 a gift of ten shillings (50p) was sent to every Lodge Polmont member serving with the armed forces. Other gifts of tobacco, etc., were also sent. Bro. James Livingston donated two Deacons' rods to the Lodge in 1945.

The Rods were surmounted by the doves of peace, and the War ended shortly afterwards. The "star" light in the East of the Lodge was installed in March 1946, and in the following year repairs and alterations were made to the lesser hall (ground floor lounge). A bathroom was installed in the hallkeeper's house.

The Lodge received the gift of a keystone and the six-volume "History of Freemasonry" from the grandson of the late Bro. John Taylor (R.W. Master 1896-1898).

On January 5, 1949, the death was announced of Bro. Robert B. Sneddon, who was Lodge Organist 1898-1933. Another stalwart from the early days laid to rest.

As a result of the Free Gift scheme, the Lodge was in a position to send £100 to Grand Lodge, in addition to the usual annual contributions. New office-bearers regalia was purchased, and Bro. Robert Taylor, Director of Ceremonies, presented an electric wall clock to the Lodge.

Among the deaths of Lodge members during the 1950s were eight Past Masters, a reigning Master (Bro. James Corbett), Bro. John Brown (W.S. Warden), Bro. Rev James Williamson (Chaplain for many years), and Bro. A. McAulley (Architect for the past 20 years).

The Lodge room was redecorated in 1951 when eight new lights were fitted. The ceiling was replastered, and the platform was extended on both sides to form a rectangular shape. For good measure, the piano was tuned, and the spoon found entwined around the strings of Middle C was returned to the kitchen! A new carpet was purchased, Gray-Buchanan Royal Arch and Lodge Polmont each contributed £22.80 towards the cost. It has since become the property of the Royal Arch.

On February 6, 1952, the death of King George VI was announced. He had been Grand Master Mason of Scotland, resigning this position on his accession to the throne. His position was temporarily filled by Sir Ian Colquhoun until Brig. Sir Norman A. Orr-Ewing, our R.W. Provincial Grand Master, took the post. Sir Norman had followed in the footsteps of Alexander Gray-Buchanan of Lodge Polmont. After Sir Norman left Provincial Grand Lodge for Grand Lodge, another Past Master of Lodge Polmont, Alexander Malcolm, became the Depute Provincial Grand Master. Thus were the links forged between the Lodge which began life in a garret, and the throne of the United Kingdom.

Later that year Lodge Polmont donated £20 towards Lodge Camelon's efforts to obtain premises. Mount Everest was conquered in 1953, Queen Elizabeth was crowned, and it was also the year that the Lodge took action on behalf of abandoned ladies at our social functions, by imposing the rule that members could not drink in the bar during a social function. Drink had to be consumed in the function room. The whole of great world events, and the social functions of the Lodge, can give a misleading impression of affluence. Rationing remained in force until 1954 and up to 2000 people

per week emigrated from Britain. The following year saw the Lodge install extra radiators in the ground floor hall entrance, ante-room and Lodge room. The old Lodge carpet was presented to Lodge Kinneddar No. 1239.

The "Rock Around the Clock" film and song of that name appeared, old age pensioners got a rise to £2 per week, and MPs voted to raise their salary by 50% to £3500 a year. Meanwhile, Roger Bannister ran the first sub-four-minute mile (in 1954) and an even faster pace was set the following year when Donald Campbell set a new world record, on water, of 202 mph in July 1955. British troops were being sent to Cyprus, Soviet tanks rumbled through the streets of Bucharest, and the youngest winner ever of the Derby was a lad called Lester Piggott. Apart from all this, things were relatively quiet in the Lodge. The scratch of the Secretary's pen was replaced however by the tapping sound of the new typewriter, and the monthly dances were started in the Lodge. In April 1959 a letter from Grand Lodge was received, expressing disapproval of Masonic Lodges using Housey-Housey, or Tombola, as fund raising events, and with this admonishment ringing in their ear, the Lodge members raised £218-18/- in the following August at a garden fete which was held in the grounds of Wallacerigg, the home of Bro. William H. Wilson, a member of Lodge Dolphin 911. Bro. Wilson became an Honorary Member of Lodge Polmont, as did Bro. David Kennedy, a Past Master of Lodge St Andrew 176. The money raised from the free gift scheme, altogether, £400, was partly spent on laying marbled tiles in the main entrance, stairway, and upper stair landing, with the motif Lodge Polmont 793 set in the centre of the main entrance. At that time it was described as "money well spent", and 34 years later that floor shows no sign of wear and tear. Bro. John Hislop was presented with a dress apron for his services to the Lodge as Almoner. The 1950s were certainly years of change in all aspects – floodlit football at Wembley, West Indian migrants began flooding into the country, in the USA people went crazy for a new pop star called Elvis, and to the annoyance of motorists, parking meters were introduced, and worse still, traffic wardens were proposed. It was certainly a new age dawning.

Britain's first nuclear power station was opened, and the Prime Minister announced that "You've never had it so good". Still record numbers queued to emigrate. 1950 also gave us the Teddy Boys, who battled it out between themselves, while black and white raged war in London's race riots, and tried to tell us that cool jazz was the "in" music.

Two-thirds of the population had a TV set, and a new £500 car tipped to be a winner was called the Mini. Many changes were made in the 1950s, some good, some bad, all depending on your outlook to life, but Lodge Polmont still worked away quietly, fully aware of the changes happening around it, but always teaching that the fundamental things in life never change, or at least shouldn't change, and if the principles of Freemasonry were followed, what a tremendous effect that would have on people, not only around us, but all over the world.

Painting the Forth Railway Bridge is a never-ending job, just like the work of maintaining the Lodge premises and its furniture. The 1960s started with the purchase of 100 stacking chairs, modernisation of the Lodge kitchen, the building of a new bar in the downstairs hall, and after all the discussions in committee, and hours of work, we were still not satisfied. Why not convert the downstairs hall into a lounge? This became a reality when the Lodge installed ventilation, new lighting, spot lighting on the central column and laid vinyl tiles on the floor. The hours of hard work

by the office-bearers and brethren began to show results, both pleasing to the eye, and of course the treasurer.

Always think of the future seemed to have been the continuing thoughts of the brethren of Lodge Polmont as the work carried out by Bros. David Mathers, John Prattis and Kenny McNeil, just to mention a few, testified. Talking of having the future in mind in Lodge Polmont brings the reminder that the Decca Record Company did not think too seriously of the future, as it rejected as unsuitable a new pop group called "The Beatles". Tam Dalyell became an MP and Marilyn Monroe was found dead. In mentioning those two names we mean no political inference at all. Mr Khrushchev warned that World War III would see 800 million people die, Jim Clark became the youngest motor car racing driver champion, and President Kennedy was assassinated. The Great Train Robbers nicked a few million, Nelson Mandela got life imprisonment for treason, Winston Churchill died, and David Steel became the youngest MP at 26 years of age. As in every decade, there are always moments of happiness, and of course sorrow. Sadness at the deaths of Bro. John Walkinshaw, Lodge Auditor for 40 years, and Bro. John Miller, the last survivor from the Redding Pit Disaster. Bro. James Strudwick, who affiliated to Lodge Baldred 313, became a Past Master of that Lodge, and on April 28, 1965, received the honour of the rank of Hon. Grand Almoner of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Present of the ceremony were P.M. Tom Mathison, P.M. Alexander Henderson, and Bro. William Marshall (Founder Member and Past Master of Lodge Camelon) who, on that evening, represented our Lodge.

At the installation meeting in December 1965 a pedestal Bible was presented to the Lodge by Bro. David Laing, who over many years has been a wonderful ambassador for Lodge Polmont 793. When it became necessary for him to move to the Kingdom of Fife, it was not long before he was a frequent visitor to the many Lodges in that area, and without, so much so that when he was presented with his Fifty Year Diploma on February 25, 1987, he was an honorary member of the following Lodges: Union 250, Dramatic and Arts 757, Dolphin 911, Elgin and Bruce 1077, Canmore 1175 and Kinnedder 1239. He was also Proxy Senior Warden of Lodge Imperial Brotherhood No 1041, Bombay, India. Bro. Laing was also presented with a Distinguished Service Diploma on March 26, 1975. A Brother who has shown to others the way we should act to our fellowmen, and an example to us all. In November 1965 the spirit measure in the bar was reduced from quarter-gill to one-fifth of a gill, a near-disaster according to some members, but another disaster befell the village of Aberfan in Wales.

The breath test was introduced, pay and prices were frozen, but in the Lodge it was the opposite. All fees were increased by 50 per cent in October 1966. At this time the appeal from Grand Lodge was launched for the Masonic Homes at Dunblane and Lodge Polmont supported this appeal with a donation of £200 and the promise of a further £100 by the start of Masonic season in 1967, which was in due course made. The brethren of the Lodge can be very proud of the fact that Lodge Polmont has always in some way responded to any appeal made to it. Not only did Grand Lodge launch an appeal, the QEII was launched, Celtic won the European Cup, and the first transplant of a human heart was carried out by Dr Christian Barnard.

Bro. John (Ian) Angus of Lodge Polmont, a founder member of Lodge St Andrew 1587, was installed as RWM of that Lodge on November 24, 1967, Bro. William Jack, also of Lodge Polmont, who had emigrated to Australia, was installed as RWM of Lodge Penwernying No 227 of the Western Australian constitution on May 11, 1968. During the 1960s it had been suggested that the Lodge

Annual Dance be taken outside the Masonic Hall, but this was resisted until Bro. William Smith was installed as RWM and the Annual Dance was held in the Inchyra Grange Hotel, with 173 attending, and a profit shown of £14-3/-. While the members of the Lodge danced the night away in 1968, it was not such a happy year for the people of Warsaw, as Russian tanks were sent in to crush the Polish rising, and in America, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were assassinated. The church near the hall, Polmont South, decided to demolish the old church hall and build a new one on the site. Lodge Polmont offered the use of the Masonic Hall for church activities, e.g. Sunday School, meetings, etc. an offer which was gratefully accepted, and for the use of its premises by the church, the Lodge made no charge whatsoever.

It was also during the 1960s that Bro. John Y. L. Sandilands presented 200 hymn cards to the Lodge. In turn they were encapsulated in plastic by the Depute Master at that time, Bro. William Smith, to ensure the long life of the hymn cards. The heating was improved in the lounge again by the office-bearers and brethren and changes were made to the Lodge bye-laws. These changes mean that the annual balance sheet, and the recommendations of office-bearers would not now be posted out to brethren, but would be available on the night of the AGM.

New curtains were hung in the Lodge room, and tea and sandwiches were made available at the close of the meeting on September 11, 1968. These would be supplied by the office-bearers for a period of six weeks – and in response of the brethren in the collection plate at the end of the kitchen table would be, or should be, sufficient to cover the costs in future. New crockery for the Lodge was ordered (144 cups, saucers, plates and bowls). Bro. James Rushford, number 630 in the Lodge Roll Book, received a Fifty Year Lapel button from the Master of his affiliate Lodge, King Hiram Lodge No 366 Toronto, Canada. Bro. William Mck. Glegg, the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of Stirlingshire, received honorary membership of Lodge Polmont, and another prominent Freemason landed on the moon. Tony Jacklin won the Open Golf Championship, and Concorde took off to break the sound barrier many times.

### **MASTER'S EXTRA TERM**

There was also another barrier to be broken in the Lodge. Due to the resignation of Bro. John Brown, Depute Manager, and the illness of Bro. James McCaulley, the Past Masters and the General Committee recommended that Bro. William Smith RWM should take the chair for a third term. He was duly installed on December 24, 1969. After the Installation Ceremony, when he addressed the brethren, Bro. Smith intimated that it was his intention, and with the help of the brethren, to change the bye-laws of the Lodge, especially the Installation, as it was his desire to see that no future Right Worshipful Master of Lodge Polmont would be installed during the Christmas Period. The bye-laws were changed, so that the dates of the financial year were altered, dates of committee recommendation of office-bearers were also changed, the date of the AGM changed, and the Installation changed from the fourth Wednesday in December to the fourth Wednesday in November. Sweeping changes indeed, but as always, these decisions were taken in the best interest of the Lodge and its members.

Provincial Grand Lodge sent letters to all the Lodges in the Province, asking for a donation of £20 to buy new regalia for its office-bearers. Lodge Polmont duly sent the appropriate sum. The Lodge at

this time held a prize draw, and the money raised, £403, was to be spent on new regalia for the office-bearers. Accordingly, a deputation from the Lodges, W.C. Bloy I.P.M, W. Smith R.W.M., and R. I. Gray, Depute Master, made their way to the premises of Messrs Toye Kenning and Spencer in Glasgow, and there ordered new aprons, sashes and collarettes. A new jewel for the R.W.M. was also ordered. With the surplus the Lodge purchased a die for Mark pennies, and so the first Mark pennies of Lodge Polmont came into being. If the 1970s were memorable years for the Lodge, the same could not be said for other parts of the world, as 150,000 died in a tidal wave in Pakistan, 66 people died in the Ibrox disaster, and in 1971 the first British soldier was killed in Ulster, and the Misses Gray-Buchanan, sisters of our late Past Master and Provincial Grand Master Bro. Alistair W. Gray-Buchanan, presented to the Lodge the chain of office he had worn as RWPG Master. The Lodge decided that the proper place for this chain was on the shoulders of the Provincial Grand Master, not in some showcase, and on October 13, 1971, it was presented to the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master of Stirlingshire. Bro. John Baxter, Marshal of Lodge Polmont, presented a framed copy of his poem, "The Marshal's Prayer", which is also included in his book of poems entitled "Humble Efforts". The framed copy still hangs in the Lodge room today. The Christmas prize draw realised £358.25 and the parcels for our elder brethren and widows were delivered. The gratitude and appreciation shown by them was certainly worth all the effort made by the brethren who not only sold raffle tickets and gifted prizes, but parcelled up the goods and delivered them, such was the feeling of brotherhood in the Lodge. The need of brotherhood and the feeling of belonging were certainly needed before long as the three-day week was introduced, and 14 athletes were killed at the Olympic Games. Princess Anne married Capt. Mark Philips, and Jackie Steward, the most successful motor car champion, retired.

The Lodge Room and the stairway were redecorated and Bro. John Prattis was the recipient of a dress apron, sash and case for his many services to the Lodge. A portable bar was purchased from Bro Donald Gordon, Red Lion Inn, Redding, for use during social events upstairs in the Lodge. A most enjoyable meeting of the Lodge was held on Wednesday, April 5, 1972, as Bro. Ian Angus, Lodge St Andrew 1587, Bro. Alex Davidson, the Lodge of Dunblane IX, Bro. William Marshall 1456, Bro. Alex Munro 1456, and Bro. William Smith 327, all initiates of the Lodge, and Past Masters of their affiliated Lodges, were present on that evening.

Carpet tiles were purchased and laid in the lounge floor, and a rota for bar duties for the office-bearers on a Friday and Saturday nights, as well as monthly dance duties, was drawn up. In 1973 the first change for more than 40 years took place. Bro. William Smith, the retiring I.P.M. was installed into this office. His proposer was Bro. Alex Fraser, the Secretary for no less than 44 ½ years. Repairs to the building were once again required. Part of the robing room and the hallkeeper's house were the projects, and the sum of £1350 was spent on this. On April 4, 1974, Bro. Alex Fraser, Secretary for 44 ½ years, died, Bro. John Hislop retired as Lodge Almoner after 25 years, and received a wrist watch from the Lodge at the installation meeting in November 1974. At the same installation meeting, 32 Lodges were represented and 308 brethren signed the attendance book. The robing room, the office and the stairway were full, with Bro. William Bennie, Tyler, on duty at the bottom of the stairway. Also on that evening Bro. David Laing (already mentioned in this book) presented a new chain of office to the R.W.M. and for the use of future R.W.M.s. Seven brethren of the Lodge, with a total Masonic membership of 378 years among them, were given a great ovation when they were presented with their Fifty Year Diplomas in 1975. The oldest in Masonic terms was Bro. William Paterson, initiated on January 9, 1918, and the youngest Bro. Tom Barker, initiated on April 8, 1925.

The Lodge stopped issuing Christmas parcels in 1973 and replaced them with an Easter Party, the reason being that most elder citizens were provided with Christmas dinners, concerts etc. by the church, community committees, and various other organisations. The Lodge decided on an Easter Party because elder members and widows would not need to wait till next Christmas before they met up with old friends, but would meet them in the Spring at Lodge Polmont.

In the history of many Lodges, as is the case in Lodge Polmont, many members moved away from the district and settled elsewhere. Different counties, different countries, perhaps, but still keeping up their Masonic connections. Already we have mentioned Australia in Bro. Jack, North Berwick in Bro. Strudwick, Linlithgowshire in Bro. Angus, Perthshire West in Bro. Davidson, Brothers Marshall and Munro to Camelon, and Bro. Smith to Kinross (no relation to the Secretary of 793). They all became Masters and then Past Masters of their adopted Lodges, and to add to the list there were Brothers Ronald and Eric Begg of Richmond, B.C. Canada, Past Masters of King George Lodge No. 129 which amalgamated with Centennial Lodge No 171 and is now known as the Centennial King George Lodge No 171. Letters and Christmas cards are still exchanged with these two brethren and the Lodge Secretary. Brother Wm Brown became RWM Wirralstone Lodge 8081 E.C., Bro. Brian Kennedy became a RWM of the Bowden Lodge 4943 E.C., Bro. Peter Hodson became RWM of the Concordia Lodge 4480 E.C., and he was also the Mark Master of the Lessels Lodge of Mark Masters. Bro. Thomas Forrest, who was a Past Master of Lodge St Andrew 1587, died in May 1988, aged 40 years. Lodge Polmont is very proud, and very conscious of its good name in the ever-widening circle of its Masonic connections. It is indeed clear that we belong to a worldwide brotherhood.

If the Lodge had connections, there were also connections and disconnections in other parts of the world. The United States forces left Vietnam, General Franco died, and Royalty once more reigned in Spain, Britain joined the Common Market, and a well-known football player, Pele, signed a three million dollar deal with the New York Cosmos. Getting connected, or involving ourselves in community projects, the Lodge was able to present to Mr Main, senior surgeon at Falkirk Royal Infirmary, the sum of £500 towards a colonoscopy. The Infirmary already had £1,000 in this fund, but with the publicity we were able to get from our donation, many more donations were forthcoming, and the colonoscopy, priced at £2,000, was delivered in May 1974. The Lodge office-bearers and brethren saw a demonstration of cutting equipment used by the accident unit of the Central Scotland Police Force. As there was only one van in Central Scotland with this equipment in use, such equipment became our next target. In June 1975 the Lodge decided to go ahead and on the evening of Tuesday, May 4, 1976, at a showing of road safety films in the Lodge, we presented to the Central Scotland Police Accident Unit, a complete set of rescue equipment for use in this area. Photographs of the presentation were also sent to Grand Lodge. Our Easter Party continued to be a great success, thanks to the efforts of the brethren and their ladies, who provided transport, served meals, washed and dried the dishes, in a most efficient way, very different to the chaos usually found when men are involved. The free prize draw, for some reason or another, always resulted in everyone receiving a gift. A special draw was also held, and two lucky couples were given a week's holiday in Stonehaven, with £20 to assist their spending money. Transport and lunch on the way up, and transport and tea on the way up, and transport and tea on the way home were provided. The Lodge purchased a new electric organ for £330 and the office-bearers room in the Lodge became the office of secretary and treasurer. Each member of the bar teams was given a Royal Blue bar jacket for use on duty. It was also about this time that the custom began of showing appreciation to volunteer entertainers by throwing money on the floor of the Lodge. It was all destined for the Easter party. A new front door

was fitted to the Lodge premises, courtesy of Bro. John Guthrie, and in 1978 P.M. R. I. Gray suggested that the Lodge buy the house and ground of the late Miss Laird, which on looking at the hall, lies to the left hand side. The R.W.M. intimated that he, Bro. T.H.W. Grieve would be going to Saudi Arabia in June/July. Envisaging the warmer climes that Bro. Grieve would be going to, the Lodge organised a summer outing for the children and members, and duly arrived at Burntisland, with various prizes for different age groups in races, sandcastle building, tug of war, football, and most activities enjoyed by children. The best overall boy received the Napper Thomson Cup, and the best girl received the Ruby Smith Cup. It was a great day, well organised and congratulations were given to Past Master Alex Anderson and his band of helpers. With regard to the purchase of the late Miss Laird's property, P.M. A. Henderson and P.M. R. I. Gray moved an offer of £7,500 for the house (value £7,000) P.M.W. Smith, Secretary and Bro. A. Wilson, Treasurer, moved that no offer be made for the property, and P.M.s Henderson and Gray withdrew their proposal.

In keeping with our involvement in local projects, donations were made to various clubs for the young. The Under 13 football club, Polmonthill Dolphin Swimming Club, etc, also donations to the retiring funds of two of the local doctors, and for the presentation appeal for his 25 years' service of the Rev Hugh Talman, Polmont North Parish Church, were among others made. When making donation to the various appeals, it is always a time of happiness, but all too often in 1977 the news of the day was one of sadness. Some 574 people died in an air crash in the Canaries. Elvis died at 42 years of age, but some news was brighter. Virginia Wade won Wimbledon, Freddie Laker charged £59 for a flight to New York, plus £1.75 for dinner. Would it ever be the same again?

The year of 1978 was no better as regards bad news – the Amoco Cadiz sank in the Channel, and oil polluted the French beaches. Some 913 members of the People's Temple Cult died in a mass suicide in Guyana. Iran removed the Shah, the Ayatolla ruled in 1979, and according to reports up to date, that country is still in a state of turmoil. Seb Coe broke records on the running track. Britain had its first woman Prime Minister, and Lord Mountbatten was murdered by the I.R.A. Amid all this despair, a new light shone forth when a new Boy's Brigade Company was formed in Hallglen, to be known as 4<sup>th</sup> Falkirk Company. As some of its members were the sons of Lodge Polmont members, it was decided to help P.M. Alex Anderson and the motivator of a very successful dance, and with a donation from the Lodge of £25, P.M. Anderson was able to present £205 to 4<sup>th</sup> Falkirk Company, The Boys' Brigade. In the week ending November 17, 1979, the Lodge received word that Bro. Thomas H. Bennie, 114 Civic Parade, Altona, Melbourne, Australia had died in his 81<sup>st</sup> year. He was initiated in Lodge Polmont on November 24, 1920. The entry in the Lodge Roll book is marked 'abroad'. It seems such a waste that 59 years were to elapse before this Brother and the Lodge were in a way re-united.

In 1980, there were many changes, among them a royal fiancé called Diana, Ronald Reagan became President of the United States, John Lennon was shot and killed, and shots were also fired at President Reagan and the Pope, Argentina invaded the Falklands, Margaret Thatcher was re-elected Prime Minister, Mount Etna exploded, and Torvil and Dean were ice-dance champions of the world. In the Lodge the members had other things on their mind; they held a barn dance at Parkhall Farm, Maddiston, to raise funds for the children's outing, and realised the sum of £250. Members also held a sponsored walk in 1980 and from the proceeds the following donations were made: Falkirk branch of Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (£1,000); Erskine Hospital (£200); Royal Commonwealth

Society for the Blind (eye operations in India) £100; Muscular Dystrophy Falkirk Branch (£100). A new carpet for the Lodge was purchased. The money came from the Building Fund, and the existing carpet was donated to the Royal Arch Chapter 502. After 57 years, a memorial plaque was unveiled at Redding Cross, to commemorate the Redding Pit Disaster. On Wednesday, January 16, 1980, the Lodge was pleased to receive a deputation from the Metropolitan District of Edinburgh and the Province of Midlothian, headed by Bro. D. Crombie, R.W.M. of Lodge Trafalgar 223. In the Lodge minute book of February 1980 a report by the R.W.M. and Secretary of the Lodge stated they had attended Grand Lodge and witnessed the M.W.G.M.M. carry out his first duties in that office. The record stated that the opening and closing of Grand Lodge was a bit ragged, but the speed with which Sir James got through the business, was first class. A prize bingo was held in the Lodge in November 1980 in aid of the Yorkhill Sick Children's Hospital and the sum of £385 was raised, including a donation from the Lodge of £25. The Lodge also contributed £116 to the Provincial Grand Lodge Charity Drive, accepted on its behalf by our own P.M. William C. Bloy, who was Provincial Grand Senior Deacon at that time. On May 18 a copper plate etching of the 'Blue Blanket' of the Lodge of Journeymen Masons No 8 was presented to the Lodge by P.M. Wm. Smith on behalf of Bro. Albert B. Henderson.

## **Benevolence**

Thinking back on the donations made by the Lodge, it is interesting to note, that in the period from May 1976 to October 1980, the Lodge, with its Easter party, children's outing, its various donations to other causes, disbursed £3,400 excluding benevolence. Even after October 1980 the work of community projects continued, as between 1981 and 1983 the grand total of our activities amounted to £7,750. The highlight was the presentation to Brightons Health Clinic of a portable defibrillator and vascular pump, which was accepted by Dr I. Hunter on behalf of the clinic at the presentation in the Masonic Hall. The equipment cost £3,098 and the surplus from this venture, £1,317.89, was deposited in a bank account for use by the clinic. It must also be said at this time, that not all the money raised was by Lodge members. Various local groups, when they heard what the Lodge was doing, gave assistance in many ways, and on the presentation evening many representatives were present from those groups.

The years between 1983 and 1989 were comparatively quiet, and the time was spent by the office-bearers and brethren in carrying out some decorations and repairs in the Lodge. These included the building of a new fire escape and fire alarms and emergency lights were also fitted. Oil-fired central heating gave way to gas central heating. This period was more of a consolidation within the Lodge, as the economic situation (three million unemployed) seemed to hit heavy in the area, with the result that money could not be spend in the same manner as before. The General Committee, with the full support of the brethren, would not see any of the Lodge funds transferred, or that any debt be incurred in any project which the Lodge found necessary to undertake.

As we all tend to do at times, we think back on times past, and with that queer quirk of nature, we always seem to remember more of the good times than the bad. Like the night some members of the Lodge visited the Edinburgh area, and could not find the street where the Lodge was situated. After asking two persons for directions, and receiving none, we finally asked a third, a Pakistani gentleman, who gave us all the necessary directions, right down to the door of the Lodge. Or the



night we went to Lodge Roman Eagle. As we went up the stairs, carrying chairs, members of that Lodge came down to make room for us. If memory serves the chronicler correct, some 49 of us travelled in a 50-seater luxury coach, and as many members, including some from other Lodges, have commented to the younger members 'Those were the days.' November 1984, Bro. William Bennie attended his last meeting as Tyler of the Lodge, and received an engraved plaque, a bottle of brandy and cigars to enjoy some peaceful moments in reflection in his own home. Since then however, Bro. Bennie has been invited to carry out those duties on more than one occasion, especially when the Past Masters carry out the degree ceremony. Double glazed windows were installed in the Lodge room. They certainly assist in keeping out noise, and heating in.

In October 1985 the Lodge was invited to visit Lodge St Clements 688 Aberdeen, to carry out the ceremony of the M.M. Degree. Office-bearers, brethren and their wives enjoyed the trip, with lunch in Brechin. After arrival in Aberdeen, the ladies went shopping the R.W.M. and office-bearers worked the degree, then everyone joined in at a supper dance, expertly organised by the brethren from St Clements. The Lodge Polmont party left Aberdeen around midnight for the journey home. Lodge Polmont was represented at the Grand Lodge 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations by A. Laing (R.W.M.), C.M. Guest (I.P.M.), Wm. Smith (P.M. Secretary), R. Lessels (W.J.W.), G. D. Alexander (I.G.) a, and M. R. Smith (B.B.). The Lodge Quiz Night was held for the first time in February 1987 and on February 11, Bro Wm. Dougall was presented with his scroll and jewel as an Honorary Grand Director of Music of the Grand Lodge of Scotland by Bro. Robert Hutchison, R.W.P.G. Master. This was a very signal honour indeed to a wonderful musician, renowned not only as an organist in Masonic circles, but also as the organist at Muiravonside Parish Church since 1964. When not playing the organ, Bro. Dougall played and taught the accordion. He enjoyed recalling many nights when he played in dance bands, some times for the huge sum of five shillings.

In 1987 the Lodge was honoured by a visit from some members of the Royal borough Lodge No. 3606 E.C. who arrived on the Friday. The brethren witnessed a Third Degree in the Lodge where 147 signed the attendance book. While the brethren were at the Lodge, their ladies had dinner at Inchyra grange hotel, and on the Saturday, members of the Lodge, with their ladies, joined the royal Borough Lodge members, and their wives, for a dinner dance at the Three Kings, Shieldhill. The weekend was brought to a most memorable close when some of the Lodge Polmont members arrived in Inchyra Grange Hotel on the Sunday morning to say farewell to the visitors. In August 1987 the time of opening the bar on a Friday and Saturday XXXX 7.30 to 8.00pm. At the Lodge Polmont, Bro. Shepherd an electrical engineer with G.E.C., travelled extensively for his company on various contracts, including a spell to Zambia. Bro. Shepherd also took a bottle of Lodge Polmont whisky, a Mark Penny and a Lodge Polmont tie which were put in the casket at the laying of the foundation stone of the new Masonic Temple in Harare. In the display cabinet in the Lodge, next to the items from Lodge Carrickfergus, will be found a brass plate, in the shape of the outline of Zimbabwe, plus a crocodile with a brass plate, inscribed "Presented to Bro. George shepherd, Lodge Polmont 793 by the R.W.M. and brethren of Lodge Kariba 1558." Some Lodge Polmont members took part in the Provincial Grand Lodge car run, which was as usual, very well organised. At the nomination and election meeting in 1988 when Bro. R. Lessels was duly elected R.W.M., he was also the recipient of a Masonic Bible from Bro. J. Graham, a Past Member of Lodge 180 of the Grand Lodge of Canada. They had been at school together, but Bro. Graham had been in Canada for the past 20 years. The

presentation was made that evening as Bro. Graham would be back home in Canada at the installation meeting. Bro. Lessels was duly installed, with 239 brethren signing the attendance book.

1989 was spent in usual Lodge business, seven new stewards' collarettes and jewels were purchased, a new water storage tank was fitted in the loft, and Brothers Walter Bennie and Neil Drysdale, both Past Masters of the Royal Borough Lodge no. 3606 E.C., were made Honorary Members of the Lodge on January 25. It was also with a great deal of pride that at the meeting of February 22 Lodge members approved the final payment of £2,500, the last sum due of the total of £3,900 required from the appeal from Grand Lodge for the Masonic Homes. This cheque was given to the Right Worshipful provincial Grand Master at the annual visitation on March 22, so that he could take it to Grand Lodge, at the next meeting of Grand Committee, Bro. Hutchison was made an Honorary Member of the Lodge that evening, and presented with his Honorary Members' Diploma, and of course his Lodge Polmont tie. The senior steward of the Lodge, Bro Henry Strathie, donated the Senior Stewards' Trophy for competition between the Lodge and Carron bowling Club.

Once again the Lodge held the Easter party, fast becoming a very important part of the Lodge, as not only the office-bearers, but brethren of the Lodge were asked by quite a few widows, when was it to be held. In 1989 after the visit from the Fire Brigade representative to check the emergency lights, exit signs, etc, he recommended that a new fire door be fitted. This was done, and the old doorway bricked up. In November that same year the Lodge Secretary, Bro. Wm. Smith, P.M., was admitted to hospital with a heart attack, and under doctor's orders did not attend the Lodge installation, nor the Grand Lodge installation and festival. This was only the tenth time since 1953 that Bro. Smith had not attended the Grand Lodge festival. It was announced at the Grand Lodge meeting that the Grand Master Mason had conferred the Honorary Rank of Assistant Grand Secretary on Bro. Wm. Smith, Secretary of Lodge Polmont. Bro. Robert Lessels phoned this news to Bro. Smith from the Sheraton Hotel and Bro. Smith in his own words, "went and celebrated" with a few Slimline Tonics, plus ice and lemon. Bro. Smith has witnesses to verify that statement. On January 10, 1990, Bro. R. Hutchison, the R.W.P.G.M., attended the meeting in Lodge Polmont, and presented Bro. Wm. Smith P.M., with his scroll and jewel as Honorary Assistant Grand Secretary of the Grand of Scotland.

During the time that the two Honorary Members from the Royal Borough Lodge have attended the meetings at Lodge Polmont, they were accompanied usually by other members of that Lodge. It came as no surprise when some of our English Masonic friends wished to affiliate to the Lodge, and thereby have a Scottish connection in Freemasonry. On the evening of February 9, 1990, the ceremony of affiliation was carried out on 12 members, and not content with paying the affiliation fee, were insistent that they wished to become life-members of the Lodge. Each was presented with a Lodge Polmont tie, so if ever anyone who reads this history is in the Salford, Manchester or Province of Cheshire, and see a person wearing a Lodge Polmont tie, you will know how that came about. The annual sporting events – bowling, snooker, fishing, golf – were still going strong, as were the barn dance, Easter party, children's outing. A sponsored walk, organised by Bro. Alex Laing, P.M., was held on November 4, 1990, a Sunday, in aid of Strathcarron Hospice, and after all monies were accounted for and a donation from ten Lodge itself, the sum of £1,200 was presented to Strathcarron Hospice. At various times, some members of the Lodge, particularly the new or young office-bearers, asked about a Ritual Book for the Lodge Polmont, and it was finally decided to ask

P.M. Smith, the Lodge Secretary, to prepare such a ritual, which when finished, would be discussed, deliberated on, and if necessary, changed the meeting called for the examination of this ritual.

Bro. Lessels, during his term as R.W.M., as with other Masters, had organised a few visits to other Lodges, with the result that the Lodge members who joined these visitations, made new friends, and in many cases, met old friends in the various parts of the country visited. On March 20, 1991, Bro. David Reid, P.M. of Lodge Blaiehoyle 792, on behalf of his family, presented to the Lodge a large framed photograph of Past Master John Taylor, along with his apron. These items had been in the family all these years and it was decided to return them to their original home, Lodge Polmont. Bro. John Taylor was the second Master of the Lodge in 1894-98. These gifts were received by the R.W.M. of Lodge Polmont, who was most appreciative in his reply to Bro. David Reid.

### **Over the Border**

On October 4, 1991, the Lodge members, with their wives set off to visit Lodge Royal Borough in Salford, and having arrived, the men went to the Lodge meeting, while the ladies had dinner in the hotel. On the Saturday night, all attended the royal Borough Lodge ladies' night. On the Sunday as farewells were taken members and wives voted it a most successful weekend. During the visit, and as a memento of the visit, a hand-made porcelain clock, suitably inscribed, which was made in Falkirk, was presented to the lodge by the R.W.M. of Lodge Polmont. At an earlier part in this history, mention was made of the Lodge Ritual. The thoughts of one of the young office-bearers is worthy of mention at this time.

1. The day has come, tonight's the night.  
A quick run thro – I've got it right.  
Arrive at the Lodge and sign the book,  
Who else is here? I didn't look.
2. Upstairs to robe in apron and sash,  
I have agreed – was I too rash?  
Masters there and has me in his sight,  
Inquiries? All right for tonight?
3. Mouth too dry, I can only nod,  
Director's standing with his rod,  
Checks his watch, looks around,  
Silence falls, not a sound.
4. Gladiators, matadors, before the fight,  
Never felt such waves of fright.  
Performers enter, the organ plays,  
A thousand eyes with a single gaze.
5. We take our sets, all look cool,  
The crowd thinks, bring on the bull.

The Master opens and play begins,  
I try to think of other things.

6. The degree unfolds, it's going well,  
What this means, I cannot tell.  
Encouraged by the other's toil,  
Or scared the good work I'd spoil.
7. It's close, now what's my cue?  
Better think the first bit thro.  
It's gone! I've lost the vital part,  
No one to ask, how does it start.
8. The moment's come, I'm on my feet,  
Don't recall getting off my seat.  
Fear of causing great disaster,  
As I stand before the Master.
9. Salute, turn and face the throng.  
Pause a moment, don't get it wrong.  
Drop a pin, I'd hear the noise,  
I have begun, is that my voice?
10. The candidates in a silent rank.  
Watching me with faces blank.  
Going well, so it would seem,  
As I'm warming to my theme.
11. It happens, I've lost the place,  
Over and over, my mind does race.  
The word, it's there but will not be spoken  
And new orations' chain is broken.
12. Turn to the East, hear the call,  
The I.P.M. is on the ball.  
Carry on, don't think back,  
All's well, I'm on track.
13. Finished! Done! I faced the East,  
Salute again, return to seat.  
Sitting now, still quite formal,  
Adrenalin returns to normal.
14. Degree continues, all quite deft,  
I can now enjoy what is left.

How I did, I'll never know,  
For congratulations always flow.

In voicing the above thoughts of a member possibly they will ring a bell somewhere in other minds and in every Lodge all over the world. But like all things in life, practice makes perfection, or near perfection. There is not an office-bearer who, even after years of experience, has rid himself of that feeling of apprehension when he takes the floor. If he has done his homework, as many say, the story will unfold to his, and to everyone's satisfaction.

### **Centenary**

A Sub-Committee was formed for the Centenary Year, and in due course submitted a design for our Centenary Jewel, and a price for centenary glasses, both crystal and normal types, plus a crystal decanter. It was decided to purchase sufficient jewels, glasses and crystal as the sub-committee felt would be required for the centenary.

Decoration of the main hall, stairway and entrance were completed, the vestibule at the main door were panelled, the swing doors were stripped, cleaned and new glass fitted. It was also decided to convert the Masonic house into a new Secretary and Treasurer's room, plus a committee room, hence the two rooms, formerly the bedroom and sitting room, were decorated and carpeted, and new gas central heating was installed in both rooms. This move gave more space for Lodge furniture in the former Secretary and Treasurer's room.

There was a children's outing in 1992, but with the efforts of Bro. Derek Johnston in running a disco, and bro. M. R. Smith in organising a Barn Dance, with the assistance of Bros. Jeff Johnson, Gordon Alexander and William Smith, this provided sufficient funds to hold a Christmas party for the children later in the year. What a day that turned out, the usual games, the yells and shouts that children seem to make, the magician, and finally Santa Claus. After it was all over, peace and tranquillity returned and the main organiser Bro. M.R. Smith, could relax. Being on such a high, he was asked to do the same the following year. Still suffering from euphoria, he agreed.

Bro. William Smith, P.M., Lodge Secretary, comments: "Like every other Lodge, there are fewer candidates than before coming forward, nor, it would seem, is there a willingness to take any office. It would appear that working for the Lodge has gone out of fashion. A lot of members think that if they are doing anything for the Lodge they should be paid. Is this the new way of thinking, the modern approach? If so, then I think they should read a bit of our National Bard, when he says 'O wad some pow'r the giftie gie us, Tae see oursel's as ithers see us.' It does not seem what you tell the candidate, or at least some of them, when they join, even some of the older brethren, that he welfare of the Lodge, the ideals of Freemasonry, are an essential part of community life. The sooner this message is understood and acted upon, the better it will be for all concerned."

In November 1992 Bro. H.R. H. Learmonth was installed R.W.M. and is the Master of the Centenary Year 1993. The date for the centenary celebrations has been fixed for Saturday, May 15, the re-dedication in the Lodge at 3pm, and the centenary dinner later that day to be held in the Friendly Hotel, Manor Street, Falkirk. The dinner is scheduled to start at 6.15pm.

In this Centenary Year it is nice to look back, read the old minute books, and read of the effort put in by our founder fathers when the Lodge was first formed. Their legacy of duty, of pride, of some achievement, has always shone in some way, during the years of the Lodge's history.

It is the earnest prayer of all in the Lodge today that the office-bearers and the brethren of the future, and all those in office today, will continue to uphold the proud traditions and enhance the good name of Lodge Polmont No. 793 as they endeavoured to do in the past. To the future brethren and members of the Lodge, we in 1993 have every confidence that you will not betray that trust which we now repose in you.

In the approach to the centenary celebrations, the Lodge committee, always mindful of the work and maintenance of the Lodge property, decided to complete the double glazing of the downstairs windows at a cost of £2,000. This project was finished in mid-October 1992. The appearance of the lounge downstairs was the subject of many discussions, and it was decided to have a new ceiling fitted, new seating installed, new curtains hung and the lounge re-decorated. The cost was £7,445.95. P.M. Lessels ran a very successful Race Night on Friday, February 12, at which, with the help of sponsors and donations, raised the sum of £1133.13. This money is to go towards the refurbishment of the lounge chairs. At least that is the present intention, but as we all know, the best laid schemes of mice and men...maybe something else will come up.

To write a history of the Lodge, now 100 years old, takes time, and the Secretary is indebted, in particular to Bros. A.D. Pirie, P.M. A. Laing, P.M. M. R Smith, the present W.J.W., and indeed to all the other brethren who helped to recall some nights of merriment and some nights when all did not seem to be going as it should, but finished up well. A lot of memories indeed. Over 40 years since joining the Lodge, I have many happy memories, and hope to have many more, to sit with, have a chat and a drink with the many friends I have come to know through Freemasonry.

It is quite true that once a Mason, there is no place on earth where you will not find a welcome. Therefore brethren, when the centenary celebrations have ended, it is my sincere wish that you, and all the brethren are present, will retain in your memory, the happiest thoughts, and the continued friendship, ever to be found in Masonic circles, and lastly, to present our prayers of thanksgiving to our Lord, bless his name, and render thanks again and again, for our salvation and the good of freemasonry. Amen.

*WILLIAM SMITH, Lodge Secretary*