

**Carnlough Masonic Lodge  
No. 216**

**1808 - 2008**



**A Short History**

**Presented by**

**W. Bro. Alistair Montgomery**

**At a Communication of the Lodge of Research**

**No. 200**

**In the Masonic Hall, Carnlough**

**on**

**22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008**

## **A Short History of Carnlough Masonic Lodge No 216 1808-2008**

Throughout history there is a recurrent theme of the actions of one person going somewhere and doing something which has had very far-reaching consequences.

This is particularly true of one Philip Gibbons, a native of Westport in County Mayo who was the owner/master of a sailing smack which traded into Glenarm in the late 1700s. There he met and married Anne, step-daughter of Nicholas Stewart who was the land agent for Alexander McDonnell, fifth Earl of Antrim, living in Glenarm Castle. Stewart was a man of considerable property, the bulk of which he left to Anne when he died in 1781.

After his marriage Philip Gibbons left his seafaring career and became a farmer and contractor when he and Anne moved from Glenarm and took up residence in a house in Carnlough in the townland of the Curragh or Carnlough North which she had inherited in her stepfather's will. Today, that house is No 58 High Street, not far from where we are at present. It is one of the oldest houses still surviving in the village. As a matter of interest, one of today's members of this Lodge is the son of the present owner of the Curragh farm and indeed his family name has been associated with our Lodge right from its beginnings.

As a consequence of Philip Gibbons coming to Glenarm, marrying and settling in Carnlough, we are now celebrating the bicentennial of Carnlough Masonic Lodge No 216.

He was a founder member and Secretary of Glenarm Masonic Lodge No 45 (which was originally warranted as No 917) and he was a founder member of the Masonic Lodge in Carnlough which was originally warranted as St. Patrick's Lodge No 653 on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1808. The Warrant was issued to Phill Gibbons, John Darraugh and Danl. Heaney. Warrant No 653 is one of the erased warrants on Downe's list of 1804 and it is believed that it may have come to the unsuspecting original Brethren of Carnlough from a tainted source, the infamous Alexander Seton.

It had come to the attention of Grand Lodge that Warrant No 653 had already been granted to Lodge No 653 in Barbados on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 1802, so a new Warrant, No 216, under which we still work today, was issued free of charge to Carnlough in June 1818 and the improper one was returned on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1818.

An account of this is given in the History of Grand Lodge Vol. I: “In 1802 Seton issued Warrant 653 (originally granted to Hillsborough in 1786 and erased in 1801) to a Lodge in Barbadoes and never accounted for the proceeds. Possibly forgetful of this transaction, in September 1808 he issued the same number 653 again to Carnlough, Co. Antrim. The misconduct was not discovered until 1818 when Grand Lodge provided the Antrim Lodge with a new number, 216, free of cost as well as confirming the issue of 653 to Barbadoes.”

Warrant No 653 is no longer in current use within the Irish Constitution.

Philip Gibbons was Worshipful Master of from 1809 to 1815, the year of his death. We cannot be sure of the exact date of his death but it has been recorded in the minutes of 14<sup>th</sup> March 1815 that, “The Lodge met in Due form to inter the body of our Deceased and Worshipfull and Brother Philip Gibbons.” It took place in the now disused graveyard at Templeoughter within the estate of Glenarm Castle, a testament to the esteem in which he was held.

So, a Masonic Lodge was established in Carnlough in 1808, meeting on the Thursday on or following the full of the moon. In the Irish Constitution there are 761 lodges listed in the current edition of the Masonic Diary. Of these, there are only seventeen Lodges which have this unusual arrangement for their meetings. These are shown in Table 1.

Most of them are to be found in east Antrim and they are nearly all, like ourselves, around 200 years old, give or take a few years. There were two practical reasons for this: one was that in those days there was no street or road lighting. The importance of daylight is evidenced in the very first By-law, drawn up in June 1809, which stated that the Lodge “shall meet on the evening of Thursday on or after full Moon from Octr. 1<sup>st</sup> untile March 1<sup>st</sup> at 6 o’clock and from March to Octr. At 7 o’clock – Neglect fine 6½ pence.” That extra hour of daylight in spring and summer was very significant at that time where working hours were much longer than today. We shall look at those By-laws in more detail later.

<b>No</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>County</b>
28	Royal	Antrim	Antrim
45	Glenarm		Antrim
148	Union	Cogry	Antrim
170	Rising Sun	Crawfordsburn	Down
194	Bucknaw		Antrim
216	Carnlough		Antrim
276	Straid	Ballyclare	Antrim
474	Copestone	Crawfordsburn	Down
513	Friendship	Ligoniel	Antrim
514	Magheramourne	Larne	Antrim
565	Solomon's Band	Lisburn	Antrim
625	Ensor	Loughgall	Armagh
645	Harmony	Carnmoney	Antrim
675	Donaghadee		Down
704	Ancient Blue	Ahoghill	Antrim
788	Cairncastle		Antrim
789	Tartaraghan	Tynan, Armagh	Armagh

**Table 1**

Around Carnlough then, there were few roads of good quality as the construction of the Antrim Coast Road was not commenced until 1832. Hence by having the Lodge Meeting around the full of the moon the Brethren were at least likely to have a lesser degree of darkness to go to their meetings, particularly during the winter months. Secondly, in those days many Brethren had not received much education and would not have had such a great awareness of the date as we would have today, so as the moon came up to the full, they would know that it was nearing “Lodge Night”.

Incidentally, the cost of the Coast Road which took ten years to complete, from Larne to Ballycastle was £37,000, some £12,000 over budget. Although it had been started under the supervision of Mr William Bald (1788-1857) a Scottish civil engineer from Fife, it was completed by Mr Charles Lanyon (1813-1889), the famous architect who designed many of our renowned buildings such as Queen’s University, Ballymoney Courthouse and several prominent churches.

It was he who designed the road from Ballygalley through Glenarm, Carnlough and onwards to Ballycastle, including the Glendun Viaduct.

### **The Master's Cloak**

In the Lodge Room we have a Master's cloak which dates back to the early part of 1809 when £3.15s.9d was expended by the Brethren working in Carnlough, under the Seton Warrant No. 653, to purchase a "scarlett Morion, White fur fringe and blue stuff for a cloke". A Morion is an archaic word for a hat or a helmet. In this case it was probably a tricorn hat. In 1809 that would have been a substantial outlay but the fact that it was spent shows us that the office of Worshipful Master was held in such high esteem that the Brethren wanted to ensure that their Master was suitably clothed to lead his Brethren to the biannual St. John's Day Church Service in Carnlough, Glenarm, Cairncastle, Larne or maybe even Cushendall, ten miles north from here. In those days, the Master and Officers were installed every six months. The Lodge would have met early on the morning of St. John's Day, collected outstanding Dues, Fines and other monies, installed their new Officers and even conferred the occasional Degree. The Members would then have formed into proper order, set off to the beat of Lodge drums, led by an officer called an Ensign, who was followed by the Brethren, two by two, marching in good order in front of their Worshipful Master, who was escorted by his Deacons, carrying their Wands of Office. The Master, wearing this Lodge Cloak, would have been carrying the Lodge Warrant. The Ensign would have borne the Lodge Colours and the Brethren would have been in their Sunday best, wearing their aprons. Following the service, having partaken of some refreshment and fellowship with the assembled Brethren, they would then have marched back to base again and closed the Lodge. Can you imagine that happening today?

This Cloak had fallen into very poor condition but under the experienced, watchful eye of Very Worshipful Brother David McCutcheon, Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim, it was repaired, refurbished and restored to its original, pristine condition. He presented it back to the Lodge in 2001 where it stands on proud display today as a tangible reminder of the commitment of the Brethren in a previous era where Freemasonry was central to the lives, hopes and aspirations of its Membership.

## **The First By-Laws**

A set of twenty-one By-laws was first drawn up in June 1809.

These are well worthy of a few moments consideration:

“We the Master, Wardens and Brethren of Lodge No 653 Do hereby Declare and acknowledge that the following rules are the by laws of this Lodge with whatever else may hereafter be thought Necessary

1<sup>st</sup> That the Resolved members shall meet on the evening of Thursday on or after full Moon from Octr. 1<sup>st</sup> untile March 1<sup>st</sup>. at 6 o'clock and from March to Octr. at 7 o'clock – Neglect fine 6½ pence.

2<sup>nd</sup> That in order to Difray the expence of each meeting night each member to pay 6½ pence.

3<sup>rd</sup> That when a candidate is proposed it must be by a member of the lodge by a regular petition one month before he be admitted except on Extraordinary Occasions.

4<sup>th</sup> That every member so admitted pay one Guinea & half a crown to the Lodge.

5<sup>th</sup> That no member to receive more than two Degrees in one night.

6<sup>th</sup> That no Degrees be given but on a Regular Lodge Night except on Extraordinary Occasions & then Expences to be paid by member receiving Degree.

7<sup>th</sup> That if 3 black beans appear against a Candidate he shall not be admitted.

8<sup>th</sup> That any Member absenting himself 3 nights sucessively shall not be considered as a member unless satisfactory reason be given.

9<sup>th</sup> That every Member subscribe to these our by laws.

10<sup>th</sup> That every Member behave with Due respect to the Master, Wardens & Brethren both in and out of the Lodge otherwise to be liable to Censure.

11<sup>th</sup> That every Member fined to pay his fine at the first night he attends.

12<sup>th</sup> That no Member absent himself during the Lodge hours without the Master's leave else be fined five pence.

13<sup>th</sup> That every Member be fined 5 pence for every Oath he swear in the Lodge.

14<sup>th</sup> That no Member except the Wardens address the Master without rising and no whispering to be in the Lodge else to be fined as above.

15<sup>th</sup> That no Member Drink to excess on a Lodge night else to be fined one shilling.

16<sup>th</sup> That in all decisions by vote the Master to have 2, each member one.

17<sup>th</sup> That every member shall attend if possible on the night before St. John's Day for the purpose of electing Officers and paying off fines & Dues. Those neglecting to do so be fined one shilling and eight pence.

18<sup>th</sup> That each member shall pay 2/2 for the expences of St. John's Day.

19<sup>th</sup> That exclusive of the Regular Lodge Nights this Lodge meet on the last Tuesday in each Quarter throughout the year.

20<sup>th</sup> That only a certain portion of Members not exceeding 8 shall be advanced Quarterly & that according to ability and skill in each order and at no other time except on Extraordinary Occasion. Expences on these occasions paid by the member so advanced.

21<sup>st</sup> That any member absenting himself one or more nights successively except sickness be the occasion he must pay his regular dues on the first night he attends, officers to pay double dues for each night they are absent.”

There were 43 signatories to these By-laws.

There was no summer break in those days and also a dim view was taken of absence without good reason.

## **Revised Bye Laws circa 1872**

There is an undated, revised set of Bye Laws which appears to be the handwriting of Brother John McVicker who was Secretary around 1872.

### **Lodge No 216**

#### **Bye Laws**

We they Master, Wardens and Brethren of Lodge 216 do hereby declare that the following are now our Bye Laws but that others may hereafter be added if required for the good government of our society.

#### **I**

The Lodge shall be called Carnlough Blue Masonic Lodge No 216. And shall meet at 7.30 pm on the first Thursday on or after the fullmoon.

#### **II**

Whenever it shall appear necessary to the WM for the time being, to summon the Lodge in Emergency, the business shall be stated in the summons, and no other business shall be entered upon at the meeting. All members are requested to attend such Emergency Meetings when summoned and to attend all stated Communications summoned or not.

#### **III**

In the absence of the W. M. the immediate Past Master if present shall preside but the Lodge cannot be open'd or remain open unless a Master or Past Master be present.

#### **IV**

The lodge being open'd the business shall commence at all stated Communications, by the Secretary reading the Minutes of the last Meeting, and of any Emergency meeting held since, which, on being approved of shall be signed by the W. M. and Secretary and have the Lodge seal affixed thereto.

#### **V**

In order to preserve proper Masonic discipline in the Lodge, the authority of the Master shall be supreme and the first stroke of his maul perfect order and silence shall be observed. No brother shall address the W.M. in any other than a standing posture, nor shall any brother be allowed to begin an address, or to enter an open Lodge without giving the W.M. the proper Salutation.

## VI

An attendance book shall be kept to be signed by each member immediately on entering the Lodge room as a voucher for his attendance.

## VII

No Brother shall disturb the peace, love and harmony of the Lodge by the introduction of any discussion or Conversation on disputed politics or Controversial theology or by private conversation on any irrelevant matter, or by leaving the Room without the W.Master's permission.

## VIII

While in the Lodge no Brother shall address another by any but the Masonic appellation, nor shall anyone either in the Lodge or out of it, behave himself unbecomingly towards a Brother, without rendering himself liable to the Censure of the Lodge.

## IX

No Brother shall take the name of God in vain, or utter any profane oath in the Lodge Room.

## X

No Brother under the influence of drink shall be permitted to enter the Lodge, as he would thereby be violating the principles of Freemasonry and bring disgrace on our Aincient, Honourable and Holy Order.

## XI

All candidates for Initiation or affiliation into this Lodge must be proposed and seconded by master masons in open Lodge, and the name, profession and residence placed on the books at least one month prior to ballot, but in approved causes of emergency seven days will be deemed sufficient. The ballot must in every case be with beans. One black bean excluding a candidate for Initiation, and three excluding a candidate for affiliation. The proposer or Seconder of the Candidate must be present on the night of the ballot.

## XII

No candidate shall be initiated into this Lodge for a less sum than £3 3s 0d which sum shall include the Grand Lodge certificate. Said sum shall be paid to the Treasurer before the first degree can be conferred. The fee for affiliation shall be five shillings and every candidate for affiliation must produce previous to ballot his Grand Lodge certificate.

Also his clearance certificate from the Lodge he was last a member. The brother who proposes a candidate shall be held responsible for the Initiation fees, and every candidate shall sign the rules and regulations of the Lodge on his admission and declare his willingness to conform thereto.

### XIII

Every Brother shall pay Three shillings per half year (Six shillings per year) and Initiated and Affiliated brethren shall pay from the date of their admission. No brother indebted to this Lodge for more than one half years dues, shall be eligible for office or to vote at any election of Officers.

### XIV

The Senior and Junior Wardens and Senior Deacon shall Constitute a Committee of inquiry whose duty it shall be to enquire into the character of every person proposed for Initiation, and no ballot shall take place until their report has been submitted to the W Master and by him to the Lodge.

### XV

The nomination for Officers for ensuing year shall take place at the stated meeting in October, their election in November and Officers so elected shall be installed on St Johns day the 27<sup>th</sup> December, or on the first stated meeting after that date.

### XVI

Any Brother in arrears twelve months for Lodge dues shall be summoned by registered letter addressed to his last known place of residence that he may show cause why his name should not be removed from the Lodge Roll for such fault and in the event of such brother failing to explain his shortcoming after the expiration of three months his name may be so struck off without further enquiry or discussion. (See Grand Lodge Rule No 156).

No record appears in the minutes of these having been put before the Lodge.

### **Early Degree work**

Shortly after its beginnings not only were the Degrees of the Craft being conferred but also those of the Royal Arch, Knights Templar and Knights of Malta.

Unlike today, potential Candidates were balloted for and if accepted, admitted immediately to receive their Entered Apprentice and Fellow Craft Degrees all on the same night!

The first mention of a Royal Arch Degree appears in the Minutes of the Regular Meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> August 1809. This meeting took place on 31<sup>st</sup> October when “At a Royal Assembly of Archmasons Brother Robt & Hugh Wilson past the Chair & got the degrees of Excellent & Super Excellent & Royal Arch Mason.” They were not the first members of the Carnlough Lodge to receive these degrees as Hector McNeill, David McNeill and Adam McNeill went to Lodge No 917 in Glenarm on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1808 to be made “R. A.”

On January 25<sup>th</sup> 1810 we find the first mention of the “Nights Templar” Degree to be conferred at the Quarterly Meeting in “Aprile”. Quarterly Meetings were arranged specifically for doing Royal Arch, Knight Templar and Knights of Malta Degree work. At that meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1810 three candidates received their Degree of “Nights Templar” and at the same meeting eight candidates received their “Degrees of A Nights of Malta.” These meetings were referred to as a Grand Encampment.

A manuscript for the ritual of the Degree of Pillar’d Priest dated 1841 was found within the lodge and it was passed to Quatuor Coronati Lodge of Research No 2076, English Constitution for safe keeping and consultation by interested researchers.

### **The First Jewels**

On the 19<sup>th</sup> April 1810 it was unanimously agreed that, “every Member is to pay Again next Lodge Night for the purpose of getting jewels for the Lodge According to his ability from 11s 4d to 2s 6d No Member paying less than 2s 6d.” These were the Jewels attached to the collarettes of the Officers. Only two of those Jewels have survived until today and they are those worn by the Junior and Senior Deacons depicting Hermes, the winged messenger of the Gods.

### **Name Change**

On April 2<sup>nd</sup> 1812 it was unanimously agreed that “the Couloours of the Lodge is to be changed from St Patrick to Hiram, King of Tyre,” but no further reference to this appears thereafter.

## **St John's Day**

In those early years, great emphasis was put in the celebration of St John's Day on both the 24<sup>th</sup> of June and the 27<sup>th</sup> December. St John the Evangelist was celebrated on 27<sup>th</sup> December and St John the Baptist on 24<sup>th</sup> June. As you can imagine the celebration of St John the Evangelist being held in the winter made it more of a local affair while the Day of St John the Baptist was celebrated very close to the longest day of the year with daylight available until after 10:30 pm. The Brethren would assemble, early in the morning, perhaps as early as 6:00 am, open the Lodge, collect dues and fines and sometimes confer a degree before walking in procession to such places as Glenarm, Cairncastle, Cushendall or Larne to attend a church service and thereafter enjoy some fellowship with their neighbouring Brethren before marching home and finally closing the Lodge. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1812, Belfast News Letter published a list of Masonic Lodges including No 653 who wished to thank the "Rev. Henry Kennedy" (an error for the Rev. Henry) for his impressive sermon in Connor on 24<sup>th</sup> June 1812 to celebrate the Anniversary of St. John.

From the Minutes:

On June 24<sup>th</sup> 1812 Being the Anniversary of St. John the Lodge assembled in due form in order to proceed to Connor according to invitation. Each member to pay 2/6 for the expences of the Day.

June 24<sup>th</sup> 1812

Applied to by Arthur Cunningham for a Charity. Found him to be a Black Mason gave him the small sum of 2s 6d  
Jn. McCaw Secretary

27<sup>th</sup> December 1812

Being the Day set apart for the Honour and Memory of the Holy St. John the Members assembled at 10o'clock the Lodge opened in due form and walked to Church where the Revd. Brother John Hodges explained the scripture much to our satisfaction.

June 24<sup>th</sup> 1813

St John's Day. Members assembled at 6 o'clock Robt. Mcquillin recd. The Degree of Master mason & the body went to Larne on that Day to hear a sermon by the Rev. John Hodges.

June 24<sup>th</sup> 1816

St John's Day Lodge went to Glenarm and got a very fine sermon from Revd. Alexander, Decenting Minister from Cairncastle. After sermon took a refreshment in Glenarm & returned home. Nothing of any Consiquence occurd. during that day.

The St John's Day on the 27<sup>th</sup> December 1816 is worth a mention:

Being a Day set a part for St John the Brethren met in Due form & went to Glenarm & took a glass in Dolly's & returned home to The Vale & further saith no more.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 1818, 26 members met at 6:00 am and marched in procession to Cushendall for the celebration of St John's Day. Each Member contributed 2s 1d "for the purpose of celebrating the Anniversary of St John."

### **The Committee**

In June 1813 a Committee was set up which was in effect rather like a Court within the Lodge.

Thursday June 17<sup>th</sup> 1813

The following Members are to form a Committee to settle all Disputes and also to regulate all the affairs of this Lodge for the next half year

Andrw. McGallert	Danl. Heney
Stewart Wharry	John Darragh
Charles Bamford	Hugh McNeill
Robt. Wilson	

Note that Phil Gibbons, who was the Worshipful Master, was not a member of this Committee.

The duties of the Committee were to impose fines on members for non-attendance and to conduct "Tryals" of members for Masonic misdemeanours and in some cases impose suspensions or exclusions from the Lodge or, in other cases, to establish that no evidence had been produced to tarnish a member's reputation and he would continue in good Masonic standing.

## **Masonic Funerals**

In the early 1800s when one of the Brethren died, it was not just a matter of the members of the Lodge attending his funeral. We have several records of the Lodge meeting in Emergency to inter the body of a departed Brother.

Following the death of Phill Gibbons, the first Worshipful Master, in March 1815, the Minute Book states:

“March the 14<sup>th</sup> 1815 The Lodge Met in Due form to inter the body of our Deceased Worshipful and Brother Phill Gibbons no other business Done”  
There then follows a list of those present which contains twenty-four names, with rank where appropriate.

Worthy of mention at this point is a Masonic headstone in the graveyard of Glenarm Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, which is located near the bottom of the Straidkilly Road. It is easily found by going north on the Coast Road through the village. After crossing the bridge over the Glenarm River, the Straidkilly Road is the first road going off to the left and the Church is a few yards up, on the right-hand side.

The headstone bears the Compass and Square and the inscription reads:

**Erected by the Brethren of Masonic Lodge 216 Carnlough**

**Sacred to the Memory of Bro Alexander McNeill  
Aged 45 years  
He was accidentally burned to death  
at the Lime Kills Carnlough on 20 February 1895**

**Deeply Regreted**

**“In the midst of life we are in death.”**

The “Lime Kills” were the kilns used to burn limestone from the local quarry to make lime for agricultural inorganic fertilizer. When the limestone was burned it changed its chemical composition from Calcium Carbonate to Calcium Oxide (burnt lime). Sometimes after burning, water was added to make Calcium Hydroxide (slaked or hydrated lime) The burnt lime could be ground to powder for putting on the land to reduce the acidity of the soil and to break up clay. In operation, a lime kiln would be packed with layers of wood and fist-sized pieces of limestone alternately and when the wood was fired the kiln would develop the necessary heat (about 1000 °C) to accomplish the chemical change in the limestone.

Typically the kiln took a day to load, three days to fire, two days to cool and a day to unload, so a one-week turnaround was normal.

As far as is known this unfortunate man fell into the kiln while it was still very hot and was burned to death. He received his Entered Apprentice Degree on 18<sup>th</sup> January 1870, his Fellow Craft on 20<sup>th</sup> January 1870 and his Master Mason Degree on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1870. Curiously, the Minutes of the Lodge make no mention of his death but the Secretary reported on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1898 that “the Head Stone to our late Bro. A. McNeill was up.” From the size and ornamentation on the headstone it is obvious that Brother Alexander McNeill was held in very high esteem by his Brethren of the Lodge who must have collected quite a good sum of money to erect such a memorial..

### **Charitable Donations**

Throughout its history the Lodge has always responded promptly and generously to requests for charitable donations. Such requests might have come from a Lodge seeking help for a widow or another Lodge in financial difficulties. Whether the request came from far or near, the response was always a positive one.

### **Suspension of the Warrant**

In March 1888 the Warrant was suspended by Grand Lodge for “irregular working and arrears of dues amounting to £8-3-3.”

After a lot of negotiations, it was re-issued in January 1891.

On 20<sup>th</sup> June 1891 Members of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Antrim and “a good representation of Brethren of Subordinate Lodges assembled for the purpose of dedicating this Hall to Freemasonry.”

There were 58 in attendance including Members of Provincial Grand Lodge, Officers and Members of Carnlough 216 and Visiting Brethren, several of whom came from Lodges which are still going today. If you are familiar with the size of our Lodge Room, you can imagine it would have been pretty crowded and being in June, we can be sure it would have been pretty warm!

When the Lodge got up and running again it seemed to take off with a fresh zeal with degrees being conferred almost every Lodge Night over about the next twenty years. What would we not give for that today? Also, they started to have a Supper after their Installations of Officers and even Ladies Evenings!

A Freemasons Ball had been proposed in December 1896 but on that occasion it was unanimously rejected. On 16<sup>th</sup> November 1905 it was proposed and seconded that “we have our Annual gathering of Brethren and lady friends.” This was unanimously agreed. Another innovation from this time was that the Brethren went on an annual excursion on St John’s Day, 24<sup>th</sup> June each year to such places as the Causeway, Belfast or Bangor. The fact that they continued with this would suggest that it was well supported.

### **The Connections with the Sea**

Before the Coast Road was constructed about 180 years ago, Carnlough was, like many other villages around the Glens of Antrim, relatively isolated by its geographical location. The sea provided a source of food and kelp (*Laminaria digitata*) could be harvested to be used as a fertiliser on the land or burned in special kilns to produce a pitch-like residue which was cut up into blocks and shipped off to Scotland. This substance, also known as kelp, was valuable because it was very rich in Iodine, a chemical used in the production of Aniline dyes and to make Silver Iodide for the photographic industry. Much of this kelp was shipped out of Carnlough harbour and a special shed was built to store the kelp awaiting shipment. You can see it today on the north side of the harbour, the Kelp Shed, now home to Carnlough Rowing Club. The late W. Bro. Douglas Harper wrote an interesting and detailed paper for the Glens of Antrim Historical society on Kelp Burning in the Glens. W. Bro. Douglas Harper was Master of this lodge in 1962.

Furthermore, the proximity of the west coast of Scotland offered a supply route for many things across the often perilous North Channel. There is historical evidence of this going back well over a thousand years. Many of the menfolk of Carnlough had therefore a long history of earning their living as sailors.

### **The “Enterprise of Lynn”**

The village has had its share of tragedies and triumphs connected with the sea. For example, on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1827 the “Enterprise of Lynn,” a large West Indiaman on passage from South America to Liverpool, was wrecked on Ringfad point, a couple of miles north of Carnlough. Lloyds List in London recorded that, “... the Captain and family drowned, cargo partly saved.” The size of this ship can be judged from the fact that the “Belfast Newspaper” of 6<sup>th</sup> March 1827 reported eleven of the crew lost and seven saved.

William McGalliard, a member of this lodge, was early on the scene of the shipwreck and time after time he rushed into the tide to rescue several members of the crew who would otherwise have drowned. He and his family were credited with giving those who perished a Christian burial in Nappan Cemetery close to the McGalliard homestead near Garron Tower. The McGalliard family name has been connected with Masonry in Carnlough right back to the foundation of the Lodge two hundred years ago and continues up to the present day. In fact, W. Bro. Gideon McGalliard recently received his 60-year Certificate as well as a 60-year bar for his Worshipful Master's Jewel.

### **John Montgomery**

Another tragedy occurred in September 1866 when three young men from Carnlough were practicing for a gig race along the Antrim coast. There is a long history of gig-racing around the Antrim coast. A gig is a light rowing boat and the competition around the villages of the Glens of Antrim has always been very keen. John Montgomery, Johnny Ellis and Robert Bamford drowned off Cushendall when they were caught in a storm due to a sudden deterioration in the weather. Their catastrophe was immortalised in a poem of fifteen verses entitled "Montgomery," by the local poet, Alex McKay.

The thirteenth verse records:

"To Nappan's Graveyard he was brought  
Three miles from Carnlough town  
Where there Freemasons did commit  
His body to the ground.

His soul in paradise to reign  
For all eternity  
While earth's green mantle wraps the corpse  
Of John Montgomery."

John Montgomery received a Masonic funeral as he was a member of this Lodge.

Several of our Masonic Brethren have spent their working lives in both the Merchant and Royal Navy. This necessitated long absences from home which meant that their ability to attend Meetings was severely restricted which deprived them from reaching the "Chair" in the usual timescale. For these men, although they were devoted Masons, some never had the

opportunity to become Worshipful Master or in other cases, they only reached the “Chair” when they retired.

### **William McGavock Snr. and William McGavock Jnr.**

William McGavock Snr., my maternal grandfather, was born on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1881. His working life was spent as an Engineer in the Merchant Navy and he was Initiated into Carnlough Lodge No 216 on 26<sup>th</sup> December 1901, Passed on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1902 and Raised on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1902. He did not become Worshipful Master until 1950, well after his retirement. As a Past Master he continued to serve his lodge faithfully until his death in 1959.

His son, William McGavock Jnr. followed a very similar path: He was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1909 and, just like his father, became a Marine Engineer. He was initiated into Carnlough Lodge No 216 on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1930, Passed on 25<sup>th</sup> March 1931 and Raised on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1931. Like his father, he was a very dedicated Mason who had to wait until after his retirement when he became Worshipful Master in 1972. He also gave long and unstinting service to this Lodge, especially during the major refurbishment in the early 1980s, until his death in 1988.

### **Captain Joseph Stewart**

Joseph Stewart was born in Carnlough on 10<sup>th</sup> July 1917. When he left Carnlough Primary school he went to sea at the age of 16 and joined a ship of William Robertson Shipowners of Glasgow as an Able-Bodied Seaman. From this lowly start he worked his way up to Captain and later went on to become Robertson’s Marine Superintendent. With this promotion he had to move Glasgow in 1954 where he lived until his death in February 2006. He was Initiated into Carnlough 216 on 2nd February 1942, Passed on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1942 and Raised on 10<sup>th</sup> December 1942. Although he could not attend his Lodge, he was a faithful supporter of it up to a few months before his death when he asked for his demit due to the decline in his health.

### **Captain Francis Black**

Francis Black was another Carnlough man whose career at sea began with William Robertson Shipowners. He started as an Able-Bodied Seaman and became First Officer with the Belfast Steamship Company on the Ulster Monarch. From this he progressed to become Captain of the Shamrock Shipping Company’s “Curran”. He finished his career as a First Officer on the Stranraer – Larne ferry service. He was Initiated into Carnlough Lodge on 26<sup>th</sup> June 1948, Passed on 11<sup>th</sup> September 1948 and Raised on 23<sup>rd</sup>

October 1938. Nautical commitments prevented him from regular attendance until his retirement and he became Worshipful Master in 1984.

### **Captain Joseph Wilson OBE**

Joseph Wilson was born into a seafaring family in Croft Road Carnlough in 1889. His seafaring career began in 1907 when he joined the Burns & Laird Lines sailing ship “Maroon” and later served in tramp steamers. He joined the Belfast Steamship Company in 1920 after having served throughout World War I as an officer on several supply ships and he was awarded 1914-18 Star, the British War Medal and the Victory Medal.

In 1927 he was appointed as Master of the Belfast Steamship Company’s steamship “Dynamic” and he commanded several passenger ships until the outbreak of the Second World War.

During World War II Captain Wilson had an outstanding record, commanding the “Ulster Prince” and the “Ulster Monarch” during the Norwegian campaign. Later, he commanded the “Leinster”, renamed the “Ulster Prince” after the previous ship of that name had been sunk. The “Leinster” served as hospital ship and headquarters ship in the Mediterranean. The “Ulster Prince” was used extensively by Lt. Col. Blair (Paddy) Mayne DSO and three bars, during his exploits in the Mediterranean theatre of war. Captain Wilson had been commended previously for his bravery and skilful seamanship in 1940 at St. Nazaire in the Loire Estuary when the Cunard cruise liner “Lancastria” was bombed and overturned, which resulted in the survivors being thrown into the sea which was covered with a thick film of oil. The sinking of the “Lancastria” was the worst loss of life that Britain has ever suffered from one vessel with the number of casualties being in excess of 4,000. Captain Wilson was awarded the Lloyds War Medal for outstanding skill and bravery when involved in the rescue of survivors of the Belfast-built “Warwick Castle” which was torpedoed and sunk off Portugal in 1942. He was also involved in daring rescues at Sicily and Italy in 1944. On several occasions he was mentioned in dispatches. For his skill and courageous seamanship he was awarded the honour of Officer of the Most Illustrious Order of the British Empire (OBE).

In 1953 as Senior Master of the Belfast Steamship Company, he received the honour of commanding the “Irish Coast” at the Coronation Review at Spithead. He was Commodore Master of the Coast Lines fleet when he retired in 1954.

Captain Wilson was a member of Carnlough Masonic Lodge No 216 having been Initiated on 15<sup>th</sup> January 1914, Raised 9<sup>th</sup> August 1914 and Passed on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1914, but due to his seafaring profession he never reached “the chair.”

He lived to the grand old age of 100, spending the latter years of his life in Seaview Private Nursing Home in Bangor, Co Down. To mark his centenary he was brought to Carnlough by his nephew where, at a Regular meeting of the Lodge, he was presented with a blackthorn walking stick and feted by his brethren.

His younger brother, Captain David Wilson also had a distinguished career at sea and he survived incarceration in a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp when he was captured in Singapore during the Second World War. He was Initiated into Carnlough Lodge on 9<sup>th</sup> October 1919, Passed on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1919 and Raised on 11<sup>th</sup> December 1919.

### **Our Masonic Hall**

In the days before the Masonic Hall was built, Lodge meetings would have been held in the house of the Worshipful Master or if it was unsuitable then they would have gathered in the home of a member who had a suitably large house or perhaps a barn or a Public House. Since Philip Gibbons was a fairly wealthy landowner and had a large house it would be reasonable to assume that several of the early meetings were held there.

The first mention of building a Masonic Hall in Carnlough was on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1818 when the Lodge met “to make regulations respecting the Building of a Lodge Room for the accomadation of the Brethren.” This did not come to fruition until 1870 when the Carnlough Masonic Hall was built on a site at the bottom of the Largy Road. On the 20th December 1877, the site on which the hall stands was donated to our organisation by Philip Gibbons, a grandson of the man who did so much to establish Freemasonry in Carnlough. Philip the younger (1813 – 1890) was Worshipful Master eight times between 1856 and 1868. The names on the original Title Deed were [John Craig, Thomas Nicholl and Campbell Millar.](#)

Like any other building, we find reference to minor repairs being necessary from time to time and these were always carried out promptly which, in itself, is evidence of the zeal of the Brethren.

However, in the early 1980s the hall was starting to show its age more seriously and in June 1982 the matter was raised of necessary repairs to the windows and doors both for the hall and the residence below it. After exploratory enquiries regarding the possibility of obtaining a grant from the housing authorities, a sub-committee was formed to pursue the issue. A lot of time, effort and work by this Committee were put into the planning and costing of a major refurbishment including an extension and the cost of so doing emerged as being very expensive. Consideration was given to the possibility of carrying out some parts of the job by direct labour which would reduce the overall cost considerably and this proved to be the key to the success of this huge undertaking.

By April 1985 the work had been started and it reached completion on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1987 when the Hall was re-opened. During the period of renovation and extension any time that their hall was unusable the Brethren were kindly accommodated in the Hall of Lodge No 45, Glenarm and on one occasion in Bucknaw Masonic Hall (Lodge No. 194). W. Bro. Alex Steenson, W. Bro. James C. Crawford and W. Bro. William McGavock played a major role in the project, supported in many different ways by several other Members of the Lodge.

An excellent job was accomplished which I know was a labour of love for those concerned and their legacy is a Masonic Hall to be proud of.

### **Paddy the Pigeon**

It would be remiss of me to conclude without claiming a first in a talk on Masonic history. To the best of my knowledge, I do not think anyone has mentioned a pigeon with a Masonic connection before.

This pigeon was called Paddy, Pigeon number NPS.43.9451, who earned the Dickin Medal which was awarded to any animal displaying conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty whilst serving with British Commonwealth armed forces or civil emergency services. After being the first pigeon to arrive back in England, out of hundreds dispatched, with news of the success of the D-Day Invasion, Paddy had flown 230 miles across the English Channel in four hours and five minutes, the fastest recorded crossing, for which he was awarded the medal on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1944, just under three months after his historic flight.

Paddy was trained by John McMullan of Carnlough and was the only bird in Ireland to be awarded this medal which is the equivalent of the Victoria Cross. The medal citation reads, "For the best recorded time with a message from the Normandy Operations, while serving with the RAF in June, 1944."

And the Masonic connection? Prior to his military service, he was bred and owned by a stalwart of this Lodge, W. Brother Andrew S. Hughes, a retired accountant who affiliated to Carnlough from Lodge No 131, Maryland USA in 1935. Andrew Hughes was Secretary here from 1945 to 1954.

### **In Conclusion**

I hope that this has given you a brief insight into how a Masonic Lodge came to be established in Carnlough 200 years ago and a little of how it developed to where we are today. I am sure that you would all share my hope that the next 200 years of the history of Carnlough Masonic Lodge No 216 will be just as fascinating.

### **Acknowledgments**

I wish to acknowledge the help given to me by the Members of Carnlough Masonic Lodge No 216 in the compilation of this presentation.

I wish to thank especially V. W. Bro. David McCutcheon, PPGSW for his sharing his invaluable store of knowledge and for his patience with my many queries. V. W. Bro. David McCutcheon is very widely known as something of a legend in Freemasonry and in Carnlough Masonic Lodge No 216 we are singularly fortunate to have had the ongoing benefit of his expertise for so many years.

My gratitude is also due to Rt. W. Bro. Robert Bashford for his guidance and help in the preparation of this paper.

*Alistair Montgomery*  
*22<sup>nd</sup> November 2008*