

Bridport Conclave No. 608 – Oration

Brethren

The order of The Secret Monitor is based upon the friendship between David and Jonathon during the period the land of Canaan 1037 BC, now known as Palestine, was ruled by Saul who initially, was a good king but in time fell victim of corruption, cruelty and fits of rage. In the belief music may have a soothing effect on him, David, a skilled performer on the harp was introduced to the king's court. Not only was David a skilled musician but proved to be a great warrior having been accredited with the slaying of the Philistine giant 'Goliath' and in due time a life long friend of Jonathon, the eldest son of Saul.

The popularity of David was such that Saul became extremely jealous of him. Jonathon in fear David would be assassinated by his father persuaded David to hide near a cairn (a pile of stones set on a hill as a marker) known as the Stone Ezel whilst he determined the extent he was at risk by his father. Were he to be deemed safe his skilful Bowman would shoot three arrows to the near side of the Stone Ezel but if in danger, would shoot the three arrows to the far side. The arrows fell on the far side. However, the friendship continued until Jonathon along side his two brothers were killed in battle against the Philistines after which Saul in a state of depression committed suicide. David was later anointed king and ruled over Judah and the whole of Israel for approximately forty years.

Moving onwards to the Napoleonic wars it is believed pass words of the Order were used by the Dutch resistance when French troops over-ran Holland in 1795. It is further claimed a secret branch of the Order existed during Cromwell's time devoted to the restoration of the Stuarts which languished after the death of Charles II; and of course we move to the American Civil War and one Issachar Zacharie, who born in England, served on the Federal side as Chiropodist-General and on return to England became Most Worshipful Grand Supreme Ruler from 1887 – 1894, and I understand from our Deputy Provincial Grand Supreme Ruler V Wy Bro Dennis Cutler, that Zacharie's former relationship with the United States Seventh Cavalry is the reason why we have a yellow ribbon on the Breast Jewel.

Brethren, we are all aware the Order is open to Brethren on the understanding they believe in a Supreme Being and I imagine most if not all of you have taken an obligation on the open bible during your admission into this Honourable Order – I say this because today each of you have or are about to make a further symbolic and binding commitment for the future.

Today, you have taken part in the making of history as founders at the Consecration of the first Conclave since the Constitution of the Provincial Grand Conclave of the Order of the Secret Monitor for Dorset and Wiltshire.

The fact you have chosen Bridport as your venue is, I trust, the result of a geographical study of our new Province of Dorset and Wiltshire by exposing an area to target for the promotion of the Order.

But what do you know about Bridport? Bridport dates back to the Roman era and in fact is referred to in the Domesday Book and was established by Alfred the Great as a fortified Burgh in the late ninth century and the Town made a Royal Borough in the thirteenth century by Henry III. In 1651 Charles 11 stayed in Bridport whilst in hiding from Cromwell's army.

The main industry, rope making, dates back as early as the reign of King John when it was produced for the Army and Navy. Today, the manufacturing of nets, cordage and canvass is more familiarly associated with the company established by Joseph Gundry in 1665 and from which many of the roads in Bridport have been named, such as Rope Walks, Gundry Lane, Foundry Lane and Threadmill Lane but to name a few.

The medieval church of St Mary's dates back to 1600 and there are at least a 1000 listed buildings in the town which now has a population of about 13000 and of course its own Brewery

Bridport Harbour, once a busy fishing port, changed its name to West Bay in order to promote the resort when the Great Western Railway reached Bridport in 1857. However, the rail service ended in the nineteen sixties as result of the Beeching Report. In more recent times it has been the location of television series such as Harbour Lights and the Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin.

There are 49 Craft Lodges in Dorset and 44 Lodges in Wiltshire of which only 2 are within the catchment area of Bridport; namely: St Mary's (Bridport) and Brit Valley (meeting 3 times in Bridport and 3 times in Beaminster) with a combined membership of about 94 brethren. Add Montagu (Lyme Regis) and Beaminster Manor then approximately just under 200 in total.

Today, for some it will be a new and exciting experience; for others it will bring back memories of times past such as the change of boundaries from the Province of the Southern Counties which included Devon to Southern Counties comprising Dorset, Hampshire & Isle of Wight, then Dorset and now Dorset & Wiltshire during which period we have enjoyed several Provincial Grand Supreme Rulers namely; Capt. Oswald Anderson, Major Donald Olleson, Bernard Miles, Tony Bridgeman and now Gerald Hambidge, and the introduction of several additional Conclaves

However, tomorrow the real journey begins when you will fully appreciate and realise the serious commitment and responsibility each of you have now accepted in finding suitable candidates without detriment to that of your respective Conclaves in order that this The Bridport Conclave may look forward to a successful future and one you can look back on for many years to come with pride and pleasure, ever bearing in mind the principles of the Order:- Should a Brother be in sorrow the Conclave will afford him sympathy, if in danger monition, if in distress consolation and if in poverty, whatever aid it may be deemed possible to provide.

Wy Bro Dave Willcock PAGDC

Provincial Grand Chaplain
15th October 2012