

## Oration for the Rededication of the Yenton and Central Keystone Lodge of Mark Master Masons 6th November 2023

Provincial Grand Master Worshipful Master and Brethren all.

Banners have been around for thousands of years. The first record of banners was in China in the 11 century before the common era (BC) for those not familiar with the modern parlance. It is recorded that the armies of the Zhou Dynasty carried a white banner flag before them. There is an early representation of such Chinese flags on the tomb of Emperor Wu of Han that shows horsemen bearing banners. The Zhou dynasty lasted until 2000 years BCE and during that final millennia they were used to identify army units, and had animals on them. During the years from 3000 years BCE the Egyptians utilised flags or banners the two words being synonymous, as military standards or markers representing Gods and Deities.

Banners were common in biblical times and there are in fact over 40 references to banners in the bible. Moses used banners to identify each tribe of Israel when they camped during the exodus, and those of us that are Royal Arch Masons use similar banners in the Chapter Room. The Romans too used banners as a means of identification of their units, their standards being called vexillum and hung on a cruciform pole as we still hang our banners today.

With the innovation of silk in China and the establishment of the Silk Road, Flags began to develop

in the medieval period, as we know them today. First by the Saracens who introduced them to the western world about the 9<sup>th</sup> Century in the common era (AD). Flags or banners have been used at sea since the Ancient Greeks, and over the centuries evolved firstly to communicate nationality and origin, thence into national flags as those we have today.

Banners and flags then are firstly a means of communication and a statement of identity. We as freemasons are not the only ones using them in this way. We see them in Churches, Mosques, Temples, and bodies such as trade unions and the Cooperative Society groups, political parties, the list goes on.

The Banner that we have before us this evening is a replica of a design of a previous banner by W. Bro. Barry Dolphin to whom the lodge is greatly indebted, and whom I consulted during the preparation of this oration.

The Banner is on a white background and the edges bear the crimson and blue ribbon of the order.

and at the bottom the lodge number in white on a crimson background. Immediately above the number is the top curve of a centenarian arch with the Keystone placed in the centre. As we are told in our ritual "The stone which the builders rejected has become the headstone of the corner.

Above the name of the Lodge written in Old English script, is a representation of the arms of Venton Lodge superimposed on the centrally placed Keystone and surrounded by ribbons and flourishes in blue. The top of which bear the names of the Lodge and the bottom Ribbon its number with a gold background. The arms consist of a shield bearing two lions passant depicting in heraldic terms that the lions are patrolling its territory and protecting it.

The modern French word passant means busy. These lions are in blue, representing strength and security, imposed on a yellow or gold background indicating in heraldic terms generosity and elevation of mind, something which the Lodge to aspires to. Above the shield is a helmet for an esquire or gentleman symbolising strength, protection, wisdom and security.

The scroll at the bottom bears the words Audax, Omnia Perpeti which translated means "Bold to endure all things". So far, the Lodge has lived up to that. A brave step taken in 2017 to amalgamate two lodges seems to have paid off.

This banner will I am sure be treasured by this lodge as a means of identity and to communicate what a wonderful story is told, to all who set their eyes on it or range under it for many years to come.