

THE RICHARD COLEY LODGE

A Hawkesbury Regional Museum Fact Sheet

Windsor's important role in the development of the colony of New South Wales is well-known. What is less well known is that its importance allowed it to establish one of the earliest Masonic Lodges in the country, in 1841. At the time, it had a population of just over 1,400 people, but it had three breweries, two tanneries and provided much of the food for the Sydney Region.

The three breweries supported no less than 14 hotels, one of which, The Australian Hotel at McGraths Hill, served as Windsor Social Lodge's first meeting place, before the lodge purchased the Odd Fellows Hall on Macquarie Street, Windsor in 1844.

Prominent Hawkesbury citizen, Robert Fitzgerald, was its first Worshipful Master, followed by Richard Coley, after whom the Lodge was renamed in 1888. Fitzgerald was active in local affairs, a director of the Bank of New South Wales, a judge at the Sydney races and a member of the Legislative Council.

Richard Coley was a young English attorney who came from England via Hong Kong, where he had been a Mason. He started a legal practice in Windsor in 1848. At the time of his death, the Windsor and Richmond Gazette said 'He was generally acknowledged to be a large-hearted man, who did many good actions of which the outside public actually knew nothing. He was a quiet, unassuming gentleman, who after living 40 years in this district, passed away without, perhaps, leaving an enemy behind him'. Members of the Lodge attended his funeral 'in full regalia'.

Though the Lodge had kept impeccable records, the catastrophic flood of 1867 caused great losses, including the original warrant, and



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the Great Fire of 1874 destroyed the Lodge's then home, Odd Fellows Hall. It then occupied a long list of historical buildings including both the original and the rebuilt Odd Fellows Hall, Windsor Court House, Beveridge's Pastry Shop, Mr Tebbutt's building in Windsor and the Congregational Church, which acted as the Lodge's meeting home for over 60 years.

Freemasonry's heyday in Australia was in the aftermath of World War Two, when there were around 330,000 thousand members. By 1955 one in 16 Australian men was a Freemason. Today there are just 45,000.

Freemasonry has been associated with secret rituals, such as that of blindfolding would-be members when

they enter the lodge room for the first time. A mason explains:

'It's part of the teaching that you come into Freemasonry knowing nothing. Like a child comes into the world, knowing nothing. And then, the blindfold is taken off and you understand that the people who are conducting the ceremony for you are doing it for a reason. (They) are doing it because they believe this is going to be of great spiritual value to the candidate. And it is. It is something that people never forget'.

Similarly, the chequered black and white floor runner that can be seen in every lodge symbolises the good and bad in the world, and serves as a reminder that life is full of ups and downs. One is encouraged to make

one's way forward despite those ups and downs.

Charity is one of the three core tenets of Freemasonry, along with 'brotherly love' and 'truth'. But charity, or 'relief' as it's called in Masonic terms, is considered the greatest.

Any man over the age of 18 may apply to become a freemason, with no restrictions on racial or religious grounds. Richard Coley Lodge members are involved in many charity and community service activities. Families, partners and friends are encouraged to play active roles in a variety of activities, including social gatherings.

Among the objects on display as part of this exhibition is a picnic box from the mid 19th Century. This hand crafted box was used to transport beer and snacks on Windsor Social Lodge's outdoor activities and events.

Also on display:

Richard Coley Lodge Uniform

The uniform derives from the leather aprons worn by stonemasons centuries ago.

'The uniform derives from the leather aprons worn by stonemasons centuries ago.'

The apron and collar designs are distinctive of Richard Coley Lodge and are representative of the wearer's position or office.

Minute & Presence Books

From 1872

Paper, ink, card, leather
Lodge meetings run like any other normal business or social meeting. Minutes and correspondence are read; financial statements, general business and membership proposals are considered and voted upon.

Bible

June 1910

Paper, ink, leather

Gifted to the Congregational Church Windsor by Mr & Mrs G. Greenwell
The former Congregational Church, building, now the Church Bar, played an important role in the life of the Lodge. It was purchased in 1922, and provided a formal meeting place up until 1989.

Worshipful Master's Chair

Date unknown

Gavels

1934 and 1941 The gavel is used during meetings to call for attention. One gavel was presented to Lodge Richard Coley by Worshipful Brother Prior of Lodge Antiquity on 15th November 1934. The gavel is inscribed 'Presented to Richard Coley Lodge by Lodge Antiquity to cement ties of friendship founded in 1841.'

The three Centenary Gavels were presented to the Lodge by Lodge Antiquity in October 1941.

Set Square and Compass

Date unknown

Metal

The set square and compass continue to remain necessary for skilled workers to achieve accuracy in their work. Within Freemasonry the square represents integrity, truth and honour whilst the compass represents self-control and the importance of setting personal boundaries.



Images: (above left) a box dating from XXXX containing tools with symbolic meanings used in rituals (above, right) the distinctive chequerboard floor runner, symbolising life's up and downs