



Friendly Societies Research Group

Newsletter 17 - November 2009

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the latest issue of the Friendly Societies Research Group newsletter. We are delighted to welcome images of the regalia of the Corks provided by Roy Fell and a piece about her research submitted by Sandra Marwick about the Sons of Crispin. As the list of recent theses and the news about publications indicates there is still a great deal of interest in friendly societies. We also bring you news of the funding crisis for Sheffield University's Centre for Research into Freemasonry & Fraternalism, the merger of the AFS and the Association of Mutual Insurers and the closure of the National Independent Oddfellows Friendly Society.

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

Sons of Crispin

Sandra Marwick writes:

I have recently embarked on a part-time PhD at the University of St Andrews, as I studied there for my Museums and Galleries Studies diploma. Part of that award involved the submission of an extended essay entitled 'Sons of Crispin'. The work I had undertaken concerned the St Crispin collection of 2rganizat held by the City of Edinburgh Museum and Galleries Service. For decades these had been displayed as items relating to the Incorporation of Cordiners of the Canongate (shoemakers). My research at that time established that this was an erroneous attribution and that the collection pertained to several successive Edinburgh friendly societies with St Crispin in their name, operating from the mid 18th century to 1904. One of these societies had, in 1820, 2rganizat an impressive procession through the streets of Edinburgh with subsequent events in following years. At the time of writing the essay, there appeared to be only one minute book, 1823-32, but a number of further minute and accounts books were later discovered, but only one, 1817-24 was examined in any detail, and references incorporated in my submitted work. Since then, my reading of this other material, the finding of another artefact, and a meeting with an Australian academic working in the area of fraternal studies, has led me to realise that the story is far more complicated and wide ranging than first thought. It would appear that the St Crispin Society in its various incarnations was more than an Edinburgh friendly society, and that it had at one time, daughter lodges and links with other shoemaker fraternities in Scotland.

My research will concentrate on the purpose and operation of the St Crispin Societies and their links to earlier cordiner traditions and practices. Edinburgh was a hotbed, not only of genius in the 18th century, but like other British cities, of clubs and societies of all descriptions. How 'new' was the St Crispin Society and what was its purpose? Was it an exclusive organisation for shoemakers or for certain categories of shoemakers? 18th century shoemakers were notoriously radical. How 'political' was the St Crispin Society? Some historians of 19th century friendly societies and trade unions have assumed that their uses of regalia and secret symbolism were contemporary devices invented or acquired to impart an aura of 'ancientness'. My thesis will examine the significance and symbolism of the society's regalia to establish origins and links to medieval traditions along with Masonic influences and imitation.

The 1820 procession attracted wide interest and was reported not only in Edinburgh based newspapers - *Caledonian Mercury*, *The Edinburgh Courant*, and *The Scotsman*, but also merited a mention in the *Aberdeen Journal*. The order of procession included King Crispin, Sir Hugh, the Champion, the Lord Mayor, the Indian prince, Crispianus, all suitably costumed. What was the significance of these characters and this procession and why were there processions in other years in towns such as Kirkcaldy, Dunfermline, Glasgow, Kilmarnock, Newcastle and Nantwich? What influence did a centuries' old tradition such as the London Lord Mayor's procession have?

St Crispin Societies operated in other parts of Scotland and there are a few objects relating to them, for example in the Dundee Museum collection; and archival material in holdings

such as those of Angus Council. What relation do these societies have to Edinburgh? Part of my research will be to compile an inventory and interpretation of St Crispin material across Scotland; but I will also take cognisance of English shoemaker traditions.

I wonder if anyone in the Friendly Societies research Group knows what the following letters stand for -

MGOS

LLOSH

HMG

Sandra Marwick, Learning and Access Manager, Culture and Sport, Corporate Services, City Art Centre, 2 Market Street, Edinburgh, EH11DE. Tel: 0131 529 3962. Fax: 0131 529 3977.
Sandra.Marwick@edinburgh.gov.uk

Initial suggestions

The following suggestions made to Sandra may be helpful to others undertaking friendly society research.

Consider links with other organizations such as the University (perhaps students were members?)

Ant-slavery campaigns, non-Conformists, Freemasonry (Scottish records are held in Scotland but some records in Grand Lodge, England might be useful). A link between Scotland North East was through Berwick, so keep a particular eye out for people with Berwick connections.

Benson Benefit Club, Oxfordshire

Benson 'had once the reputation of being a very rough place. Fights were a frequent occurrence during the days of the old Benson Benefit Club.. the great day was Whit Tuesday and it was a pleasant sight to see the old and young men in their blue ribbons marching behind the brass band down the village street to Church. The day finished up by a large banquet of roast beef and at Crown. A small Fair was created in the open space near the latter and here unfortunately some of the lively ones got out of hand as the day closed, and fighting (minus gloves) was the order of the day. I believe the old village police preferred to give this corner of Benson a wide berth at these exciting times.' (quote from letter of 1935 from A R Littleboy to Mrs G. E. Chamberlain quoted in her scrapbook of *Benson past and present* (1937) in Kate Tiller. *Rural Resistance: Custom, Community and Conflict in South Oxfordshire, 1800-1914*, in Owen Ashton, Robert Fyson and Stephen Roberts. *The Duty of Discontent. Essays for Dorothy Thompson*, Mansell. 1995, pp. 115-6.

Fraternity in Russia

The Centre for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism has just produced a booklet on *Freemasonry and Fraternalism in Eighteenth-Century Russia*, with an introduction by Andreas Önnerfors and essays by Robert Collis, Ernest Zitser, Tatiana Artemyeva, Anthony Cross and Natalie Bayer. Details from Donna Sommer on 0114 2229891 or e-mail: d.sommer@sheffield.ac.uk

Recent theses

Roy Fell recently completed his MA, 'Sociability and Social Responsibility: Four Friendly Societies in the West Midlands in West Midlands' at Birmingham. He assessed four different types of friendly society in the area and looked at their rules, activities, benefits and other aspects of the societies.

Here are a few other theses of possible interest to readers:

Linda Carol Hadley, Poetry and fiction from the friendly societies, 1860-1900. De Montfort University. 2006

Richard Dyson, The Nature of Urban Poverty: An Oxford Case Study c.1760-1835. Oxford Brookes University. 2007.

David Harrison, The Masonic Enlightenment: Symbolism, Transition and Change in English Freemasonry during the Eighteenth Century. University of Liverpool. 2007.

Zillah Abigail Amma Scott, The Inquiring Sort: Ideas and Learning in late Eighteenth-Century Birmingham. University of Warwick 2007

Abstracts and purchase details from: <http://ethos.bl.uk/Home.do>

In progress:

Christopher Shelley, The politics of co-operation, 1880-1921: a comparative study of Birmingham and Bristol. Birmingham M.Phil. (Hist.)

Fraternal charity

In a recent radio broadcast Andrew Prescott mentions that Freemasons' charity was 'very much on the model of friendly societies'. The relationship between charities, friendly societies and Freemasonry is also covered in Dan Weinbren's chapter, *Freemasonry and friendly societies* in H. Bogdan and J. A. M. Snoek, *Brill handbook on contemporary Freemasonry* (2010) and in Dan's *Supporting self-help: charity, mutuality and reciprocity in nineteenth-century Britain* in B. Harris and P. Bridgen (eds.) *Historical perspectives on charity and mutual aid: European and American experiences since 1800* (Routledge, London and New York, 2007). If you know of recent publications or broadcasts which might be of interest to readers, do let us know.

Battersea Friendly Societies

Sean has just made available as No.8 in his History & Social Action PDF Monographs series the paper used for his talk at the Centre for Research into Freemasonry seminar in December 2002. It is available through email by sending £2 cheque payable to 'Sean Creighton' to 18 Ridge Rd, Mitcham, CR4 2ET. For a hard copy email Sean and it will be sent at cost of photocopying and postage.

Corks and clowns

Roy Fell tells us that The Loyal Order of Caledonian Corks was a sick and dividing society which served the working-class industrial areas of the West Midlands. Formed in 1884 in Birmingham by a group of clowns in a visiting circus, it had 314 lodges within a year, 20 of which were in Walsall. The Corks survived until the Second World War and Walsall Local His-

tory Centre holds an archive of accounts from 1885 to 1895 for Lodge 322 (Walsall), rule-books and regional newsletters of November 1885 and 1901.

Corks Regalia



Industrial and Provident societies' Act 1852

Slaney's Act and the Christian Socialists: A Study of How the Industrial and Provident Societies' Act 1852 was Passed is a history of the legislation that aided the development of the co-operative movement in the UK. Written and published by David Lambourne it costs £5.75 (RRP £6.99) plus postage. Signed copies available on request. Further details from www.kaybooksonline.co.uk.

Publishers' abstract: The first industrial and Provident Societies' Act was critically important to the development of the Cooperative Movement in England. Before 1852 cooperative societies and associations were denied the full protection of the law and so enjoyed a rather precarious existence. Between 1850 and 1852 the Christian Socialists together with Robert Slaney, the MP for Shrewsbury, worked tirelessly to remedy the situation. Parliament was persuaded to set up two Select Committees and evidence was presented to these. Meanwhile, the support of co-operators around the country was organized. After a change of government and constant pressure the Act was passed and so paved the way for the rapid and successful growth of cooperative enterprise that followed. This small book,

which gives a clear and concise account of the stages through which success was achieved, should be welcomed by all those with an interest in the history of cooperation and of the Labour Movement in general. This is a study of how the industrial and provident societies' Act 1852 was passed.

The Northern Tribune

The Northern Tribune was a newspaper produced in 1854 and 1855 in Newcastle-upon-Tyne by Joseph Cowen, junior, and other radicals including W. J. Linton. It contains some items on friendly societies and benefit organisations. For example:

'The 'Newcastle, Gateshead and North of England Sick Benefit Society and Life Assurance Association,' is the name of a benefit society just established in Newcastle on a sounder basis than that on which such societies are often founded. We most sincerely wish the promoters every success in the good work they have taken in hand. They have a wide field of useful labour before them. Benefit Societies have often injured instead of assisted the working man, in consequence of their being founded on erroneous and imperfect calculations. The present, we believe, is based on correct data and in every respect deserving the confidence and encouragement of the working classes. Mr. T. N. Cathrall, 40, Grainger Street, is the manager and is indefatigable in his exertions on its behalf.' (Vol 1. No.3. 1854, p. 108) (Grainger Reprint Corporation, Westport, Connecticut. 1970)

CONTACTS AND RECORDS

Rechabites Archive At Senate House Library

Richard Temple, archivist at the University of London, writes:

The archives at Senate House Library have recently been bolstered by a significant deposit by Healthy Investment, formerly the Independent Order of Rechabites. The Independent Order of Rechabites was a friendly society, which was founded in Salford in 1835. The Order was part of the temperance movement. The archive therefore complements the Library's other significant holdings on temperance. These include material in the Goldsmiths Library, the John Burns Collection, and hundreds of nineteenth-century volumes which are in the Library's Temperance Collection.

The name of the Order was inspired by the Rechabites, who feature in the 35th Chapter of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. The founders of the Order were concerned that many friendly societies met in public houses and their members were therefore vulnerable to the temptations of alcohol. The Order spread around the world: there were branches in New Zealand, Australia, the United States and India. Branches were known as "tents" and presided over by High Chief Rulers, who were assisted by Inside and Outside Guardians, a Levite of the Tent and a group of Elders. Before joining the Order, a prospective member had to sign a pledge that they and their family would abstain from alcohol. Until July 2003, membership was limited exclusively to organizations but individuals may now join if they have a healthy lifestyle.

The archive includes board minutes, 1864-1975; minutes of districts and tents; *Rechabite Magazine*, 1864-1873, 1878-1925, 1927-1977; *Junior Rechabite magazine*, 1890-1925, 1927-

1977; conference reports and papers, 1839-1998; directories, 1887-1916; song books, ritual books, tent books, and case files. The box list for this archive is available on-line as part of the University of London Research Libraries archives catalogue, <http://archives.ulrls.london.ac.uk/>. Researchers should however give at least 72 hours notice before visiting the Library as the archive is stored off-site. A guide to Senate House Library's friendly societies' archives has also recently been added on-line, www.shl.london.ac.uk/specialcollections/archives/archivesourcefriendlysocietiesguide.shtml. Enquiries about archives at Senate House Library should be directed to this email address: shl.specialcollections@london.ac.uk.

Richard Temple, Archivist, Senate House Library, University of London, Malet Street, London. WC1E 7HU. 0207 862 8473. richard.temple@london.ac.uk

Scottish Records

Dr Phillip J Duncan of Fife, Scotland was the researcher on the SHELF project for Fife, Scotland. He has all the raw data from National Archives Scotland, local newspapers and a variety of other local sources. He is happy to search these records and provide information to members. The info includes: mort societies, bread and coal societies and the early co-op movement in Fife back to 1840s or so. You can contact Phillip via FSRG.

The Token Corresponding Society

The Society was formed in July 1971 to enable collectors of historic tokens to share information and communicate with each other. An off-shoot is the annual Token Congress started in 1982. The Society has added onto its website a page on tokens of the Ancient Order of Foresters. Home page: www.tokensociety.org.uk/index.shtml. AOF page: www.tokensociety.org.uk/articles/aof/index.shtml. Thanks to Neil Todd who is a member of FSRG and the TCS for this news.

The National Independent Oddfellows Friendly Society Closes Its Doors

Founded in 1845 after a split in the Independent Order of Oddfellows Manchester Unity, the National Independent Oddfellows Friendly Society has finally closed its doors for the last time. The split appears to have been about reform and solvency. In 1844 the Unity sought to move towards what was seen as greater actuarial security. The older lodges, which would have included older men among the members, that is men more likely to want to call on sickness benefits, rebelled and almost 16,000 members refused to comply with the new regulations. Most of the rebels were based in Yorkshire and Lancashire and some may have been Chartists (a political movement popular in the north of England) who were suspicious that the information they divulged would be sent to the Government. In 1844 a Commons Committee report made it public knowledge that the Government intercepted and opened mail and this information had been widely reported. In addition, the Unity's 1844 Annual Moveable Conference restructured the districts in a way which reduced the influence of the older lodges of the Manchester area. Directors could come from any district, not just in and around Manchester. This may have been another reason why 'the Manchester and Salford lodges threw down the gage of war [as] the cradle of the Order became a hotbed of sedition' as the Unity's official historian, Robert Moffrey put it. One of those involved in the dispute, James Burn (later a Director within the Unity) recognized that the argument was

being waged within different intellectual frameworks, that while the majority saw this as a matter of financial prudence, the 'rebels' felt that the changes were 'an insidious attempt to divert the Order from its original benevolent purposes and designs and to assimilate it in principles to an assurance company'. The new society had just over 34,000 members in 1872, of whom 33,000 lived in Yorkshire and Lancashire. It was wound up in 2008 when there were only 145 members left.

Some of the items associated with the Society are looking for a new home. In particular there is a Grand Master's badge presented to the Society by W H Ryland of Bewdley in 1876. It has a series of gold links on which are inscribed the names of each of the Grand Masters. There are also records of the Annual Moveable Conference between 1877 and 1956 and the four Executive Committee Meetings held each year and some of the records of lodges which recently closed.

CALL FOR PAPERS

Conference on Urban History. Tenth International Conference on Urban History, Ghent, 1-4 September 2010

The European Association for Urban History (EAUH) was established in 1989 with the support of the European Union. Conferences are organized every two years. These biennial conferences provide a multidisciplinary forum for historians, sociologists, geographers, anthropologists, art and architectural historians, economists, ecologists, planners and all others working on different aspects of urban history. This invitation is extended to all scholars who make urban history a distinctive and innovative subject.

Paper proposals are welcome up to 1 December 2009. They have to be submitted online at www.eauh2010.ugent.be/callforpapers

There is at least one relevant session. It is 'Replacing the family? Civil society, social relations and urban growth, 14th-19th centuries'

The idea is to link this type of research to research on kinship and family life. While most historians assume that family relations and kin-based support were less important in urban settings, only a few studies have organized on the connection between urbanization, family relations and civil society. Hence, this session will examine the possible links of associational life with domestic and private social relations.

The following questions may be tackled:

- Was membership of brotherhoods, guilds, clubs etc. limited to married men or could their wives be a member as well? Did man and wife join the same organization or not? Did members of the same (extended) family meet in the same organization?
- Was there a relationship between demographic changes (high mortality rates, migration patterns etc.) and the emergence of new (types of) organization(s)? Did immigrants join organizations more, and if so, did they form their own organizations or did they participate in existing organizations?
- How was civil society related to community life at a neighbourhood level? Can a relationship be found between the social cohesion in a neighbourhood and the emergence and activities of brotherhoods, guilds, and clubs? How did communities organize, organizations justify their social community life and how were these forms

- of sociability integrated into the city?
- Were collective activities related to hardship or the absence of strong social ties? Were they geared towards providing mutual aid and poor relief, or was perhaps community and identity building more important?
- Did sharp distinctions between different confessional cultures exist concerning the formation of an urban civil society or the influence of communities in Europe?

The organization of this session particularly invite long term and comparative perspectives (including comparisons between urban and rural settings). Abstracts of no more than 500 words should be send to one of the organization of the session (see below). After acceptance, they have to be posted at the official conference website (www.eauh2010.ugent.be) up to December 2009. Further questions can be send to Maarten Van Dijck, University of Antwerp, Centre for Urban History (Maarten.VanDijck@ua.ac.be). Organisers:

Maarten Van Dijck (University of Antwerp, Centre for Urban History)
Maarten.VanDijck@ua.ac.be

Bert De Munck (University of Antwerp, Centre for Urban History) Bert.DeMunck@ua.ac.be

Eric Piltz (Technical University of Dresden, History Department) ericpiltz@email.de

Matthew Davies (University of London, Centre for Metropolitan History)

Matthew.Davies@sas.ac.uk

NEWS

Research Centre: Future Uncertain

The Centre for Research into Freemasonry was launched at the University of Sheffield in March 2001 with a lecture by the Director of the Centre, Professor Andrew Prescott called 'Freemasonry and the Problem of Britain'. It was the first centre in a British University devoted to scholarly research into freemasonry. In 2006, the Centre moved into new premises named in honour of Douglas Knoop, the Sheffield scholar who was a pioneer in research into the history of Freemasonry. Despite its focus on freemasonry, the Centre has long had close links with the FSRG. Dan Weinbren was on its Advisory Committee from the start and there was a jointly held conference. In 2007, after Andrew Prescott left, it broadened its remit by adding the words 'and Fraternalism' to its name. This year, however, it is having funding problems. The Director who took over from Andrew, Dr Andreas Önnersfors, placed this within the context of wider university cuts and called the situation 'critical'. However, he added that 'the CRFF has not called for 9rganizat support'. He welcomed people to purchase CRFF publications and to attend its functions. There are plans to launch a Journal for Research into Freemasonry and Fraternalism. Further details from www.freemasonry.dept.shef.ac.uk

Association Of Friendly Societies To Merge

For many years friendly societies were represented by the National Conference of Friendly Societies (formed 1887) and three newer bodies, the Association of Collecting Friendly Societies, the Association of Deposit Societies and the Friendly Societies Federation and All four were represented on the Friendly Societies Liaison Committee and there was considerable co-operation and some overlap in membership. In June 1995 limited company, the Association of Friendly Societies was formed. Since that time the number of friendly

societies which have merged or folded has increased and legislation effectively prevents the formation of new societies. Some of the problems the AFS faced included:

Complex and tight regulation, much of it aimed at 10 organizations which provide financial services but are vastly different in scope and aims. New solvency rules in 2012 are likely to add to compliance costs.

Changes to the financial adviser market brought about by the Retail Distribution Review which will make sales via independent financial adviser sector more difficult in face of the big insurers sales teams.

Members' difficulties with the sale of with-profits policies. This was a result of regulatory concerns and capital issues.

Concern that the Child Trust Fund market, which is dominated by friendly societies and provides up to £500 for children born after 1st September 2002, will be amended or curtailed following the next General Election.

Concern that friendly societies have not been permitted to invest in local small businesses

Concern that the maximum amount that savers can invest in ten year, tax-free savings plans (products peculiar to friendly societies) is £25 per month (a limit set 14 years ago) which makes the scheme fairly unattractive to many savers.

As the AFS shrank in size, so some friendly societies joined the Association of Mutual Insurers which was founded in 2004. These included the Dentists Provident Friendly Society, founded in 1908 by dentists, the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity (nowadays known simply as the Oddfellows) and Healthy Investment (formerly the Rechabites). In 2009, when the number of members of the AFS had fallen to 45, the Conference voted in favour of a merger with the Association of Mutual Insurers. Subject to the agreement of an AMI EGM it looks as if a merger will go ahead in early 2010.

Fraternity On The Airwaves

A recent programme in the 'Rear Vision' series on the Australian Broadcasting Corporation featured Stephen Bullock and Andrew Prescott (currently working as a Librarian at University of Wales Lampeter), discussing the history of Freemasonry. Stephen Bullock is Professor of History at Worcester Polytechnic and the author of *Revolutionary Brotherhood: Freemasonry and the Transformation of the American Social Order, 1730-1840* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va., 1996.) The broadcast can be heard at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/rearvision/stories/2009/2704038.htm> There is also a transcript available on the site and comments. One of the comments is from Bob James of www.fraternalsecrets.org (see Fraternal Mates).

Fraternal Mates

Centre for Fraternal Studies in Australia has also had a change of name. It is now The Australian Centre For Fraternalism, Secret Societies and Mateship

<http://www.fraternalsecrets.org/index.php?pageId=7509>

It is still run by Dr Bob James and there are often updates of new pictures and research. Bob is one of the most frequently cited experts which suggests his site is popular and useful.

APPEALS FOR HELP

Consciousness

I am a Japanese doctoral student, who is researching the history of English friendly societies from the legal and social viewpoint. My interest now concentrates on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century when friendly societies started their prosperity. How people were associated with societies and how workers had their consciousness as a member of societies. Naoya Konishi of the Department of Law, Nagoya University. Contact via FSRG.

There is a discussion of the number of friendly society members in B. Harris, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: Society, State and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800-1945* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 82, 194, and in E. P. Hennock, *The Origin of the Welfare State in England and Germany, 1850-1914: Social Policies Compared* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 166-181. There is also a brief examination in D. Weinbren and B. James, 'Getting a grip – the roles of friendly societies in Australia and the UK reappraised', *Labour History*, 89, (2005).

1911 Appeal

Stefanie Börner of the Bremen International Graduate School of Social Sciences (BIGSSS) in Bremen, Germany is engaged in research about friendly societies in relation to the 1911 National Health Insurance Act and is interested in locating minutes from small local societies. If you can help her, please contact her through FSRG.

North Wales

I am trying to source some information on Friendly Societies that would have been operating in North Wales in the Late Victorian period. If you can suggest any suitable material or references please contact Sian Price - Producer/Director, *Indus Television*, on email - sian.price@industelelevision.com

Why tyler?

David Hawkes asked: I wonder if you can help me track down the origination of the term "tyler". My wife and I are both members of the Kingston Unity Friendly Society, in fact I am a Board member and my wife has acted as tyler at our AGM/Conference for many years now, but we would like to know a little more about this.

One explanation is that a Tyler is an old English word for the doorkeeper of an inn and within many friendly societies (and the Freemasons) it still refers to the Doorkeeper. The instruction 'Tyle the doors' means that nobody is allowed to enter or leave the room until the instruction to 'Untyle the doors' is issued. The title has long been used within Freemasonry where a Tyler is charged with examining the Masonic credentials of anyone wishing to enter the Lodge. It might have originally referred to a person who lays roof or floor tiles and is

thus not as skilled as the higher status masons inside the lodge. It might also be a corruption of the word 'tether', to tie the door closed. Perhaps readers have got other information about the term?

CONTACTING THE FSRG

This newsletter was compiled and edited by Sean Creighton and Dan Weinbren, mainly from items received in response to an email. To contribute items for the next issue please email

Dan: D.Weinbren@open.ac.uk

Sean: sean.creighton@btinternet.com

Details about the Group can be seen on www.open.ac.uk/socialsciences/friendly-societies-research-group/fsrg-about-us.php. The previous Enewsletter can be downloaded from www.seancreighton.com