

## THE LIFE OF RICHARD ROME BEALEY ( 7th February 1828 - 5th March 1887 )

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This talk is on the life and works and Masonic life of Richard Rome Bealey, an English commercial traveller who often visited Dundee in the course of his occupation selling various chemicals to the jute trade and other industries. During his many visits to Dundee he became very friendly with Bro. John May and Bro. Andrew Stewart of this Lodge both of these Brethren being the Gas Works Manager and a Mill Manager respectively. Their connection with, Bro. Bealey will be shown later in this talk.

The Bealey family tree shows that Bro. Bealey was descended from a well to do family, who were very religious and compassionate benefactors. This was to extend itself down to Richard Rome Bealey. His father., Joseph, was shown in 1818, as a Flannel and Baize manufacturer at Summerecoastle and Moore Street, Rochdale. 1825 shows Joseph and his grandmother, Rachel, and grand father Ralph living at Tentercroft. She was a Tea dealer, whilst he was a Traveller.

A Tenter, being a wooden frame over which fabric was stretched and left to dry and bleach in the sun; Croft meaning farm and with the joining of these two names the title of the house is self-explanatory. A map of 1825 shows the area with Tenter frames on it. High rise flats now occupy the site. Whitefield, near Radcliffe, also gets its name from the fields in which the fabric was spread out.

At Manchester Cathedral on 26th April, 1827, Joseph married Mary, the daughter of David Rome. This is how the name Rome entered the Bealey family. They had three children, Richard born 7th February, -1828, at Spotland; Tentercroft being in the district of Spotland. David Rome was born at Spotland 10th March, 1830 as was Ralph, his twin brother, who was not blessed with the name Rome. All were baptised at Providence Chapel, Rochdale, by John Ely, who was quite a character in the dissenting and congregational world. Joseph, father of Richard, died aged 34, six weeks after the twins were born, and is buried at, Providence Chapel. This may account for the twins being baptised on the day they were born, probably in their home.

In 1832 there is no mention of the Bealey's in the local trade directories. Ralph , Richard's grandfather, died aged 69, on 8th December, 1833; his wife Rachel, died aged 67 on 24th February 1838.

They too were buried at Providence Chapel, with Richard, their son who died 2nd April, 1828, aged 23, eight days before Bro. Bealey was born. This may be why Richard was so named. This sort of tragedy seems to have haunted the Bealey family. Ralph, the younger of the twins, died aged six. David later emigrated to Australia.

As yet little is known of Richard except that he had a private education. This suggests that they were not without money. It is also said that he was apprenticed to the drapery trade in Manchester. Although in the fly-leaf of the book, "Later-life Jottings", in Stalybridge Library, a hand written note states, "He was, I believe, at one time a Master-Bleacher at Stand, near Whitefield, and must have been in a very good position". This would give him an insight into chemistry and would be useful in his career as a chemical and yarn agent. A.C. Bealey and Co. Ltd. also made Oil of Vitriol which is Sulphuric Acid which speeded up the process of bleaching.

In 1860, Bro. Bealey again visited Dundee, still with his eye on the Jute trade, his business premises at this time being 13, Joiner Street, Manchester. The Minute Book of Lodge Operative No.47, Dundee, for the 2nd October, 1860, reads,"Bro. May proposed and Bro. A. Stewart seconded, Richard Rome Bealey, aged 32 and unmarried, of 50, Fountain Street, Manchester, (and another whom I 811 not proceed with) as fit and proper persons to be admitted" and no objections being made, they were made Entered Apprentices, and having to leave town and not

knowing when they would be back, they were also Passed to the Fellow Craft and Raised to the Degree of a Master Mason all on the same night and as you all know this practice has long since been discontinued. The Minute Book for that meeting also states, "Fee paid £1/11/6d. I have researched all our books in the committee room and there is no trace of Bro. Bealey having been present at any subsequent meetings. I made enquiries of United Grand Lodge of England as to the possibility of Bro. Bealey having affiliated to an English Lodge but the answer that I received was and I quote,

"Dear Mr. Goldie, with reference to your enquiry regarding Richard Rome Bealey, I regret to inform you that we have checked the registers of Commercial Lodge No.411 and also our indexes of London prior to 1950 but without success I'm afraid.

We have been unable to trace his membership of any English Constitution Lodge. However, we would gratefully appreciate any information you already have, which may enable us to trace his Masonic career under the English Constitution. Signed:- K.A. Jowett.

Bro. Bealey was a founder member of the Manchester Literary Club and the first Honorary Secretary in 1862.

A poem published in the Bury Times on June 6th, 1863, gives his address as 'Old Hall' in Stand.

The original Hall, a large wood and plaster building, was demolished in 1835, and a new house built on the site. It was here that Bro. Bealey lived with his mother. This lovely Hall is still there. In 1864 he published his first dialect poem, entitled, "Come, Sally, come into thy supper", as a penny sheet. He was very interested in Mechanics and Working mens Institutes and seems to have organised entertainment on their behalf. He was a Liberal and also a total abstainer of the strong waters.

1866 sees him contesting the attempt to close an ancient footpath leading out of Park Lane in Stand. After a meeting in Park Lane School, legal proceedings were instituted and a case of Riot was tried at Bury Petty Sessions on 28th June, 1866, in which Bealey was cited as one of the defendants; ultimately the right of way was vindicated.

During residence at Old Hall, the family were connected with Stand Unitarian Chapel, although Bro. Bealey frequently attended the New Church services in the company of Mr. Henry Pitman, brother of Sir Isaac Pitman, of Shorthand fame. On 30th April, 1870, Bealey married Eliza Hart, he being a bachelor and she a spinster. They had eight children, one of which died, the others outliving their parents. After leaving Old Hall they moved to several places in Manchester. In 1875 his poem, "The man who is kind to another," from his book of poems entitled "Field Flowers and City Chimes, published in 1866, was renamed "Here's to his health in a song," now known as "The Masters Song", was set to music by Dr. John Morgan Bentley, who was a brilliant musician, and a Master Mason of Alexandra Lodge No. 993

of the English Constitution. This demonstrates the kind of people whom Bealey associated with. Bentley was also the composer of Bealey's "Music in The Twilight". Although Bro. Bealey was a lapsed member, "The Master's Song" was first sung in Alexandra Lodge in 1875.

About this time the lifestyle of the Bealey's began to change; orders were not easy to come by; the soirees that he arranged with poets

such as Waugh and Brierly who were also Masons did not attract the required attendances; life began to harden. In 1878 when business was said to have soured the family moved to Arnold on the outskirts of Nottingham, first living in Front Street and then Church Street.

In 1884 "Later Life Jottings" was published which included "Heres to the Craft" and several others. The income from this may have helped ease the situation. In a letter dated December 5th, 1946, from Canada from his son Harold, he says, "He was ever a kindly man, whose

greatest joy was giving pleasure to others, whatever their station in life. The touch of genius, if I may refer to it as such, did not fit him for a commercial life or the accumulation of worldly wealth, consequently our bringing up was a hard one, so you may surmise luxury of any kind did not come our way". Harold died at South Bay, Saint John County, Canada, February 29th, 1950.

In 1885, the family were living in Nottingham. Another son was born on the 5th February, 1885; the occupation of the father was given as "Commission Agent"

Trade was depressed and the Bealey family suffered. The children were getting older and the servant had gone. Richard was not too well.

In 1886 little had changed, little or no money coming in. Towards the end of the year Richard became ill again. It was decided he should have a spell in Buxton but to no avail and his pain became worse.

In January, 1887, it was decided that their youngest son would be christened at St Johns, Carrington. On the 31 January, he was christened Charles Dickins Bealey. Five days later Richard Rome Bealey died, the date being the 5th February; 1887. Of his funeral on the 9<sup>th</sup> February, the Manchester City News reported, "At the funeral beside relatives were present, Mr.W.H. Smith, Secretary of the Nottingham Literary Club; and many others. The coffin was almost hidden by beautiful wreaths of camellias, hyacinths, ferns and other flowers and foliage. Letters of praise also appeared throughout Lancashire and Nottinghamshire newspapers.

A fund for his widow, who had been left destitute with seven children, was started by Rev. Sparks. Commercial Lodge No 411, contributed. At a meeting of Lodge Operative, Dundee, on 25th February, 1887, R.W.M. Bro. Henderson presiding, "a letter from Bro. Blandly of

Commercial Lodge was read, craving assistance for the widow and family"; a donation was sent. In further minutes of 7th June, 1887, a letter and petition had been received from H.R. Hatherly for relief to Mrs. Bealey.

It was duly filled in, but unsigned by the Master. It was thought that he should make enquiries about certain points, before the application was

sent to Grand Lodge. The fact that Bealey had lapsed his membership would make it difficult to complete; no further report was made.

Following is a copy of a letter sent to Manchester Lodges headed, "A Brotherly Appeal":- "Richard Rome Bealey, initiated in Operative Mason Lodge of Dundee No 47, through force of circumstances never was able to subscribe to or join any English Lodge of Freemasons, composer of "We are Brethren every one", "If thy Brother offend thee" and "Here's to his health in a song". He succumbed after a painful and protected illness leaving a widow and seven children entirely destitute and unprovided for.

The fact of Bro. Bealey not being able to afford to become a subscribing member of any English Lodge precluded his widow and children from receiving support from any of the Masonic charities; but being a Mason his abilities merit some recognition, which can best be shown by helping his widow and children in their great distress and bereavement".

It isn't known how much was donated, but the 1891 census shows Mrs Bealey and family living at 259 Watcombe Circus, Carrington, Nottingham, a large Victorian house, her home being described as "School and Lodging House". The lodgers were John L. McKine and wife, of the American Consulate. Mrs. Bealey remained there until she died on the 24th December, 1916, and was buried with Richard at St.John's. The grave was unmarked; as the years passed, it was forgotten.

On the 7th December, 1943, an article appeared in "The Nottingham Journal" written by Sydney Race and is as follows:- Richard Rome Bealey by Bro. S. Race, P-M- 3219, PPGD. In it he states, "No stone marks the grave but its position has recently been identified by Canon Hart, D.P.G.M for Nottinghamshire". An Abstract from the 1944 Proceedings of the P.G.L. of Nottinghamshire states that the General Purposes Committee decided to place a headstone with a suitable inscription at the grave of Richard Rome Bealey, and Bro. Race had the honour of composing the inscription.

On 7th September, 1944, a Bro. J.F. Douglas of Castle Lodge, No-3219, of the English Constitution wrote to Bro. Race and told him that there was an old parishioner of St.Catherines in Nottingham, a Miss Bealey, who was a very lonely old lady and wondered if she could be related to Bro. Bealey and it was established by Bro. Race that she was indeed Elsie Mary, Bro. Bealey's daughter.

As all the characters of the era of Bro. Richard Rome Bealey are now dead it only remains to recite one of Bro. Bealey's more famous Masonic poems, it is entitled "HERE'S TO THE CRAFT"

We meet here as Brethren and friends,  
and aye with each other agree;  
Bound close by the mystical tie,  
No rancour among us can be.  
Firm set on the level we stand,  
Our actions are all on the square,  
We each grip the hand of a friend,  
And freely the best with him share.  
*Then here's to the Craft that we love,*

*It' harmony, truth and goodwill;  
And here's to the Mason whose heart  
Is true to the Brotherhood still.*

Our Lodge is a haven of rest  
From storms that will come to a life;  
Our Lodge is a citadel strong,  
Set high above trouble and strife.  
The world has both envy and hate,  
We know only goodwill and peace;  
We help one another along,  
And earth's need of sunshine increase.  
*Then here's to the Craft ETC*

The first mighty builders who reared  
Their monuments massive and grand  
,Had knowledge of wonderful truth  
That guided the head and the hand.  
Their work and their worship were one,  
Their labour was effort divine;  
Their secrets they've left to us veil'd,  
In mystical symbol and sign.  
*Then here's to the Craft ETC.*

From Solomon on to our Prince  
We've Masters of every Degree  
The lowest and highest in rank,  
All showing what Masons can be.  
As virtue all stations adorns,  
Our Craft can embellish a throne;  
Far higher than parties and sects,  
In Masonry wisdom is shown.  
*Then here's to the Craft ETC.*

This was by Richard Rome Bealey from "Late-life Jottings", 1884

It only remains to be said or assumed as the case may be that not having been back in Dundee again since 2nd October 1860, we can only surmise that Bro. Bealey was true to his Mother Lodge by not Affiliating to any of the English Lodges that he was a regular attender at. Since 1875, when "The Masters Song" was first sung in Alexandra Lodge, the singing of this song at the Festive Board at English Constitution Lodges after Installations has spread all over the world, and in the words of P.M. Bro. Denis Holden of Lodge No. 5502 of the English Constitution there is no better sound or sight when the first song at the Festive Board is the "Masters Song" sung solo and at the chorus all the Brethren present stand up with their glasses held towards the Master and sing this chorus together and then sit down. At the next two choruses this is again repeated.

Considering that this song was written by a Master Mason of this Lodge and is sung all over the world, I personally I would love to see the same becoming a part of Lodge Operatives Festive Board Celebrations and start something new within the Scottish Craft.

And as a little bit of trivia, did anyone notice that three consecutive dates appeared in the life of Richard Rome Bealey, they were:-He was born on 7th February, Became a Mason of a Lodge whose Charter date is 6th February

And he died on 5th February.