



Province of South Rheged

Newsletter

May 2020

In these troubled times it is uncertain when we will be able to meet again, with the freedom of association we enjoyed not so very long ago, isolation and a sense of detachment can become somewhat overbearing.

The general consensus is that September may be the earliest date we can look towards, but this may prove optimistic as this terrible pandemic runs its course. For some Courts it is possible that a full season of meetings will be lost, so in the absence of our regular meetings, this Newsletter is being produced with a view to keeping us, as a Province, in touch with each other, to enable us to share our stories and ideas, in fact anything that you feel may be of interest to Athelstan brethren. We are now in our third year as a Province and are beginning to write our own history, but there are bound to be stories and information relating to Court names, meeting places, characters, which could be shared so please don't hesitate to submit anything that you feel may be of interest to our Province.

Masonic Orders as a whole have not been slow to set up lines of communication and we are sure you will all have received numerous emails detailing how Freemasonry is dealing with this situation; this newsletter is not an attempt to replicate that, simply an endeavour to retain the wonderful spirit of friendship, fun and fraternity that has always been a cornerstone of our Province of South Rheged.

You are all hopefully aware that a Provincial Almoner, John Forster, has been appointed whose role is now to liaise with each Court Almoner, and between them and Grand Court, to ensure that our efforts are consolidated. His early contacts have proved most rewarding and, no doubt along with contact from your other memberships, the support of your Court Almoner has been evident.

Let us also not forget how important it will be to keep in touch with any prospective members and candidates; once we have returned to something like normality we will still need to welcome them into our fraternity. Within our Province, and Courts there are many ways we can keep in touch, a growing number of us are using Zoom to hold regular chats and meetings, and there are also the usual staples of Email, Text, Facetime, Messenger, Skype to name but a few.

Not forgetting of course The telephone!

Our Province covers a widespread area and is growing in strength and character; we now have ten Courts ranging across the Province, from Macclesfield to Middleton, incorporating Hyde, Chester, Wirral, Liverpool, Southport, Poulton le Fylde, Chorley and Salford.

This area, with Cheshire in the South, Merseyside in the West, and Lancashire North and East is geographically very similar to the ancient Saxon Province of Southern Rheged, hence the Provincial name.

The Saxon Province of Rheged was an important and powerful Province, well before Athelstan's time, and its origins are described by historians thus:

"Rheged appears to have been a comparatively large kingdom which covered the whole of modern north-west England, roughly incorporating the counties of Cumbria and Lancashire, and possibly Cheshire. It stretched from Hadrian's Wall above [Caer Liguallid](#) (modern Carlisle), perhaps all the way down to [Campodunom Loidis](#), (modern Leeds) in the Midlands, and west to [Caer Legion](#) (Chester). The kingdom was initially part of [Coel Hen's 'Kingdom of Northern Britain'](#), which had evolved from the former Roman military zone. According to the scant written sources available, upon the death of [Coel Hen's son, St Ceneu ap Coel](#), Northern Britain was subdivided, creating [Ebrauc](#) to the east of the Pennines and Rheged to the west. Its northern capital was [Caer Liguallid](#).

The name 'Rheged' seems to derive from the confederation of Celtic tribes that occupied almost the whole of the north below Hadrian's Wall, the [Brigantes](#). Pre-Roman Celtic tribal names seem in places to have survived the period of empire and were occasionally reused from the fourth and fifth centuries. Formed at a time when the Celtic language was undergoing rapid change, 'Brigant' seems to have become 'Breged' and then Rheged. Within the kingdom, Carlisle was possibly founded as an Iron Age British town by a division of the Brigantes who were known to the Romans as the Carvetii. It may have been their settlement that was turned into a civitas by the Romans in AD 79 and named [Luguvalium](#) (which contains the name of the god, Lugh. Appended to that is 'val', which probably means 'leader', but see the [Catuvellauni](#) introduction for a counter-argument). During the Romano-British period, the name seems to have been mangled into [Caer Liguallid](#) (or perhaps even [Caerleyl](#)), and later generations mangled it further, merging the two words into one, Carlisle.

The kingdom was divided in 535 into [North Rheged](#) and [South Rheged](#). There are suggestions that it was not even a single kingdom at the start, but a confederation in the spirit of the Brigantes. This idea would seem to contradict the tradition that Rheged was formed as a division of Northern Britain, but if a confederation did indeed exist before the creation of the kingdom, perhaps as a direct continuation of part of the Brigantes confederation, then it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Rheged was deliberately formed based on the confederation's area of influence. Little survives in the historical record other than in poems and genealogies, much of which is early Welsh in origin, carried there when the North fell. Rheged has often been overlooked by archaeology.

The kingdom was probably sparsely populated, as much of its land was either moor, rocky limestone upland, or undulating lowland with poor soils. Fully arable and pasture land was hard to find. Local culture evolved directly from the Iron Age, without large-scale Roman influence except around the Wall and in Carlisle. As the increasingly patchwork series of British kingdoms to the east fell to the Bernician Angles, Rheged quickly became a bulwark of the defence of Northern Britain. When it finally fell, in the early seventh century, so did the North"

In South Rheged we are fortunate to have both a Provincial Banner and a Provincial Sword, in fact we were one of the first Provinces to have our Provincial Sword dedicated by the new Grand Court Dedication Ritual at our 2020 Provincial meeting. That was a very proud moment for the Province and for those of you who were unable to be present, the Oration to dedicate the Sword is as follows:

"The sword has ever held fascination as both weapon and symbol. In its simplicity it has a multitude of uses, and in its complexity it has much to offer in its symbolism.

The action of Knighting, whether by the Monarch or within a Masonic Chivalric ceremony, demonstrates, without parallel, the importance, respect and reverence justly applied to this

magnificent traditional artefact which still holds today the mystery, respect and tradition originally applied by the ancient artisans who manufactured it, and the subsequent owners who devoutly revered it.

The sword is judged to be an emblem of military honour, and should inspire the bearer to be just and beneficent in his pursuit of honour and virtue. In fact, as well as its more obvious dual roles of defence and attack, the sword has been held, and, indeed, is still held to symbolise many desired personal attributes and aspirations, many of which are used in our Masonic ceremonies.

In Freemasonry the sword is used to symbolise solemnity and reverence as when it is reversed when standing in respect of departed merit or when during prayer. As an Arch of Steel symbolising protection, or across the hands when taking an Obligation, and in many other symbolic ways.

Also within the Masonic context, the Tyler or Outer Guard holds a sword to symbolise the dual purpose of barring entry and protection.

In Alchemical symbolism the sword represents purification, in that the metaphorical sword cleanly pierces the spiritual soul of man. The sword also represents the active or masculine force, while the sheath or scabbard the passive or female principle. In the Alchemical tradition, the sword is recognised as being created using all the four elements of the universe: FIRE, EARTH, AIR and WATER, symbolising in turn, UNITY, BALANCE, TOTALITY and CREATIVITY.

Whether you seek a symbol of strength, justice, balance or some religious significance, it should be appreciated that the sword holds many meanings and much symbolism from which to make your choice. Regard this emblem with equal respect and perhaps consider deeply the philosophical depths that this much revered object encapsulates."

Following this dedication the Sword was paraded around the Court by the Grand Marshal and dedicating team in a very solemn, interesting and unique ritual.

Normally of course, the Sword is always paraded with the Banner, not just at our Provincial meetings but whenever the Provincial Grand Master formally attends a Court meeting with his Provincial Officers of the Year. These visits are publicised well in advance so if you haven't been to our Provincial meeting, or seen a Provincial Team Visit yet, then keep an eye on the Calendar once this current situation is over and do your best to attend. Our Provincial Marshal, his Deputy and the Officers of the Year work very hard to produce very impressive entrance and retiral processions when forming a guard for the Provincial Grand Master.

You should all now be in possession of the pages of new ritual which you can print and overlay into your 2017 Ritual Book. This will enable us all to be reading from the same page, which is always useful, until new books are printed. The changes were implemented to ensure that the "storyline" of the ritual now flows better from the Candidate's viewpoint and those of you who have had chance to see this being performed will appreciate how well it has been amended.

Whilst this current disruption to our lives is unwelcome and unwanted, it does give us the opportunity to familiarise ourselves with the changes to the Ritual, perhaps learn that piece that we have been meaning to memorise for years, but have never had the time.

You don't need reminding that wherever possible Ritual should be delivered from memory rather than read, we can't all perform to the same standards but wherever possible the Candidate should feel he is part of a conversation rather than being lectured to, certainly the Deacons should do their

best to memorise their presentations rather than reading the crib often attached to the back of the visual aid for the Emblems.

Finally, there have been some administrative changes from Grand Court which your Secretaries have all been informed of, and whilst we appreciate no one likes change for the sake of it, with our new Grand Court Administrative Team now firmly at the helm these changes have been implemented with a view to simplifying the Administration of Courts, Provinces and Grand Court.

Brethren, the editor in Chief of this newsletter is Deputy Provincial Grand Master, WBro Norman Alexander, who will welcome the support of any budding correspondent and receive any newsworthy items from your Courts. Please do not hesitate to contact him at norman.alexander@gmail.com even if only to comment on this edition.