



Internet Lodge 9659
United Grand Lodge of England
Province of East Lancashire
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Short Papers Competition 2007

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Title

A Cyprus Puzzle.

Author

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One of the most challenging aspects of Masonic history is the story of Lodges that didn't make it for whatever reason. *Lane's List* is full of lodges that started and failed but their story contributed, nonetheless, to the development of the Craft.

Here, in our thriving District of Cyprus, St.Paul's Lodge No.2277 is the oldest KNOWN lodge, having been founded in 1888 by 27 British servicemen. This came about ten years after Britain took control of the island.

Prior to that time, of course, the island was ruled by the Ottoman Turks from 1571. A paper written for the Internet Lodge by Bro Celil Layiktez shows just how old Turkish Masonry is.

Bro. Layiktez says that "*According to Gould, Alexander Drummond, the British Consul in Aleppo, had been appointed as District Grand Master for 'the Orient' (including Turkey) by the Grand Lodge of England. Later, in 1764, Dr. Dionysios Menasse had been appointed District Grand Master for Asiatic Turkey and Armenia.*"

How does this affect Cyprus ? Well, despite a ban on Masonic meetings by the Grand Sultan of Constantinople as early as 1748, it continued to exist in the Ottoman Empire and was certainly well-established long before Turkey ceded control of the island to the British in 1878. For that reason, it is hard to believe that among the many Turkish officials, civil servants etc who were based here would not have been those who would have wanted a Masonic presence of some kind.

At the moment, this cannot be proved either way. There is no reason why Masonry could not have existed but there is nothing to say that it did.

Furthermore, the majority of the population of Cyprus has always been Greek Cypriot. Freemasonry is known to have existed in Greece since 1811 when Dionyssios Romas, with the assistance of HRH The Duke of Sussex (later to become the first Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England) set up the Serene Grand Orient of Greece. This body disbanded in 1843 but subsequently lodges were established in Athens, Piraeus, Chalkis, Corfu, Patras, Syros, Lamia and Argos under the Grand Orient of Italy, until the official formation of the Grand Orient of Greece in 1864. Could none of this have spilt over into Cyprus ?

But there is even more. Cyprus has always been a 'crossroads' in the Eastern Mediterranean and many other countries have had dealings here, either of a commercial or a military kind. In the courtyard at S.Lazarus Cathedral in Larnaca, we have Italian gravestones which bear the Square and Compasses. These of course may have been the graves of Italian masons who died in Larnaca and were not necessarily members of a lodge here.

Given that Freemasonry had been in regular, organized existence for 161 years before the British came to Cyprus, it is hard to believe there was nothing here before then. But, I wonder if we'll ever be able to prove it ?

Short papers are intended to be read aloud in lodge meetings as a form of Masonic Education.

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