

Survival?

That was the question on hand by the brethren and officers of Battlefield Lodge # 714 back in the fall of 2005. What can we do to change the current situation? It was, to be perfectly frank, a bleak time for the lodge. We were struggling for candidates and struggling with the decline in attendance at our monthly meetings. The Master; Wor Bro Stewart Alexander had called an emergency meeting of those brethren who were committed to the future of Battlefield Lodge. Those who gathered knew that it was do or die and thankfully the attitude was No Surrender.....and we soon put our heads together and fought for the future of our lodge.

We had no candidates so what could we try to attract people back to lodge? but more importantly get them interested, involved and keep them coming. This was not a problem unique to Battlefield; however the only solution lay with those who were "committed". A change of attitude and a change in the Status Quo had to be achieved. Ideas came forward and we had to combine all our energies and thoughts to create an almost new identity and rebirth.

Masonic Education would be our first thoughts. That could be fun and interesting as a starting point. A Burns Supper was suggested but many other lodges hold these? "Let's try anyway" was the answer. In the month of January 2006 we had our regular meeting; the subject of the night, Robert Burns and how Freemasonry changed and shaped his life and the poetic genius he was, in oh so many ways. For the banquet room we arranged a caterer to come in and serve up a traditional Burns Supper Meal. There was Haggis, Tatties, Neaps and Steak Pie and some genuine social harmony. All those in attendance, after a full belly, agreed it was a success and we all had a great time. There were in the region of 40 people in attendance. This was fantastic, considering our average attendances at that period of time. It created an appetite and sense of meaning and togetherness that had slipped. Those who took part and those who attended wanted to build on the seed that had been planted. The question was; Where do we go from here?

Bro Graham Tait had joined Masonry back in Scotland where he was familiar with the workings of the Third Degree Scottish Style with enough difference that perhaps this may attract people to join us. The goal; an Exemplification of the Third Degree the way it is carried out in Scottish

Lodges, in particular Lodge Bishopbriggs # 1259 on the role of the Grand Lodge of Scotland. Interest among the brethren soon ensued and the decision was made to attempt to recruit a degree team with accents. Something that was not too difficult to find in Battlefield Lodge. After all, the roots were Scottish, English and the boys from the North of Ireland. A degree team was assembled and we soon began some very intense practice sessions (after all this would be new to most brethren involved). The practices went well and January 2007 soon grew closer and closer. The goal was to simply fill the seats in the Lodge Room and create an atmosphere of enjoyment and togetherness. The night was a great success with 80 plus brethren deciding to join us in the new venture. A great night was had by all and the feeling was that perhaps this was something to put Battlefield back on the map.

2008 would see us hone the skills of that degree team (with further additions from other lodges taking part). 2009 seen a further expansion and most recently January 25th 2010 (the Bard's Birthday Itself) where great effort was taken to emphasize the differences between both rituals. The interest in attendance has grown over these past 4 years. From 80 in 2007 growing to 120 plus in 2009, this night has now become a staple of the Battlefield calendar.

January 25th saw Battlefield hold its 4th exemplification of the Scottish Third Degree and 5th Burns' Night. On this occasion we were joined by no fewer than 130 signing the register. This number would include the representation of 35 different lodges from within District B and many outlying jurisdictions. We would also be pleased to have our current District Deputy Grand Master of Hamilton District B; Right Worshipful Brother Terrence J Brown (whom along with past DDGM's have been instrumental in supporting Battlefield in all its endeavours over recent years) along with one of our main stays Past Grand Master Most Worshipful Brother Ron Groshaw (this was his third time attending).

At the end of the degree Worshipful Brother Graham Tait engaged everyone in the lodge room in a small exercise of appreciating the very poignant saying "From Darkness to Light"; an illustration of how we might feel had the light never appeared. This was in reference to the current DDGM's benevolent project "Follow Your Guide". The goal to purchase, train and unite with a needy person a dog guide.

After a small talk on this subject the plate of benevolence was opened up to all in attendance. A whopping \$620.00 was collected that evening and promptly passed on to the District Secretary for deposit. A huge thanks to all who participated in this worthy cause.

In the banquet room the brethren gathered in anticipation. The Haggis would soon be piped in by Worshipful Brother John Terrence of Hugh Murray Lodge No. 602 escorted by Brother Stuart Gibb (carrying the ceremonial Haggis aloft) and Steven Dall, both brethren of Battlefield. A special mention has to be made of Battlefield's Senior Warden Brother Steven Dall who did an excellent recital of the "Address to the Haggis". We then had the pleasure of listening to Brother Charlie Paul (a member of Lodge Sir William Wallace No. 1504, Glasgow, Scotland) who supplied some excellent entertainment before, during and after the meal.

The candidate for the evening was presented to the brethren and received an engraved Masonic Pocket Watch commemorating the night's events. This has become a tradition for the candidates to receive this small token of appreciation and it would only be fair to mention those past candidates: 2007 - Bro Billy Woods (Battlefield No. 714); 2008 - Bro David Ferguson (St Andrews No. 593); 2009 - Bro Glenn Jarvie (Enniskillen No. 185) and 2010 - Bro John H Broadhead (Battlefield No. 714). Not only were these past candidates in attendance but Brother Glenn Jarvie also participated in the degree and did an excellent job.

The Star O Rabbie Burns was given its place and many joined in the chorus. A very large head table were all involved in the appropriate speeches which were all expanded, slightly, with a Scottish flare; even the Junior Warden's Toast had an almost Burns feel to it. The banquet room was full and everyone in attendance enjoyed the entertainment, the food, the many donated raffle prizes but more particularly the making of new and the renewal of old acquaintances. It was only appropriate we ended the night with Auld Lang Syne.

Thanks to all of you for your willingness to participate and a much broader thank you to all the brethren who have supported this event these past 4 years; you are the ones who drive us forward and renew our energy to make this night a most enjoyable one for all to see. Proof indeed that we are at our strongest when we are at one with each other.

Any brother that would like to provide an Article for this newsletter, please contact W. Bro. Lindsay Reiach at 905-765-8341.