

Wolnosc Odzyskana: A Case for Masonic Recycling

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WHEN my friend Nick Tkatschuk, who lives in the east of Poland (*born in Yorkshire to a father born in former Poland now Ukraine and a Yorkshire mother*) sent me an email announcing the reponing of a lodge in Lublin, I struggled to pronounce the name, so I am sticking to the translation of Freedom Restored – it's much simpler.



Above
Gavels, wands, columns
and other equipment
from the former
Coronation Lodge

The lodge that was going to be re-consecrated, had originally been charted in Lublin under a warrant from the Grand Orient of France in 1784 and worked until 1821, when all lodges were closed down by Russia following her invasion of Poland.

After that in the 20th century there was a co-Masonic lodge and an attempt between 1935 and 1938 to revive. Clearly, re-consecrating a lodge called Freedom Restored had connotations in Poland, considering what had happened there over the last 20 or so years.

I made up my mind to go to the Consecration and thought how nice it would be if I could get hold of a set of working tools from one of the many lodges in Manchester that have closed down.

So, I had a word with Robert Mitchell, the APGM for our lodge, Internet Lodge – and that's when the idea came alive. His response, a couple of weeks later, was: "Yes, and is there anything else they need?"

It took the Brethren in Poland a little while to grasp that anything was possible but eventually, their final response was: "Yes please".

Thus it was, that a couple of weeks later I collected two rather battered old suitcases and a large black painted metal box that came with the full blessing of the former members of Coronation Lodge. They had thought it was all over, but suddenly out of that darkness came the possibility that they could shed Masonic light somewhere else in the world.

The contents spread ever wider over the carpet as I unpacked the suitcases, Wardens columns, gavels, malls, a full set of wands, officers collars and jewels, original candidates aprons, a brass letter G, a hardly used set of tracing boards, pair of ashlars, and a set of working tools.

Together with my co-conspirator, Alan Turton we cleaned, polished and fettled, and then packed everything up in a big wooden box. It weighed in at 60 kg, over two sacks of potatoes! We also discovered that the rather used collars were transformed into newness by a quick trip to the dry cleaners.

At the end of September we joined a queue of migrant Poles going home to see family and friends, and flew to Warsaw. There, we met up with a party of French Brothers and a couple

from Sweden and all went to dinner to get to know each other.

The following day we all visited the main cemetery and were taken on a tour of some of the past leading Brothers over the last 100 years, including Grand Masters and 330 Masons.

How nice that they are still practically regarded.

The next morning it was off by coach to Lublin, a three hour journey across the east of Poland, travelling eastwards towards the Ukraine.

The weather forecast for Saturday 4th October was correct – it was grey and raining – and of no consequence to our anticipation. The Consecration was to take place at what was once a stately home in the countryside but had become a theatre workshop.

The Gardienze was a delight and would have been even nicer if we had been able to stroll through the formal parkland in the dry. The main hall was set up ready, with a stage and row of king sized chairs (*presumably from Shakespeare kingly plays*) and looked very grand indeed.

How strange it was to see the Coronation Lodge gear all now back in action, wands by chairs, gavels on pedestals and the Master's silver collar jewel awaiting use, but engraved for Coronation Lodge No. 2930 in 1902.

The Grand Lodge team arrived and prepared what they needed, while the Grand Master, MWBro Marek Zlotkiewicz conducted the ceremony. When it came to the actual consecration they actually poured the oil and wine, and scattered the corn and salt on the original tracing board of 1902.

The immediate thought was, "*that's an antique, you can't do that*" – but of course you can and should. After all, how many tracing boards have two lodges consecrated on them.

After the consecration was completed, and Bro Nick was installed as the first Master, we adjourned for a buffet lunch. Afterwards, we returned and the new lodge held its first meeting; always a heady occasion.

There might only have been seven founders but the first business of the lodge was to interview a candidate, and this occupied the main part of the meeting. The candidate was

brought into the lodge blindfold and questioned by the members of the lodge for almost half an hour.

Then he retired and the vote was taken.

Unanimous.

We closed the lodge, took the obligatory photographs and went back to Lublin for a celebration dinner.

A month later, I was at Manchester Science and Art Lodge No. 5309, which is now the lodge of the members of Coronation Lodge. I took with me a bottle best Polish vodka, and all present got a shot.

I obeyed the first Master of Wolnosc Odzyskana and called a toast to the members of Coronation Lodge as a thank you, and then we all rose and drank a toast to a new lodge, a thousand miles distant.

Internet Lodge had offered an engraved Square and Compasses to Lodge Freedom Restored but they were so taken with the entire process that they decided at their next meeting to create a Development Fund and stocked it with £1500, so that the exercise could be repeated several times in other places.

Whenever the story is told, those hearing the tale find it just as rewarding as we did doing it. It really was win-win for all involved, and of course not only does the donor lodge know that its loss is Freemasonry's gain, but that it's also played a part in spreading the Craft to places it has long been absent from.

It is not simply the transfer of the physical items that takes place but a message of support, in this case from



the Province of East Lancashire, which also travelled across Europe.

How better could one express the values of Freemasonry universal.

And how much better it is recycling gear from closed lodges, rather than simply accumulate it in a dank basement in some Masonic hall.

(Normally I hate giving acknowledgements but in this case there was generosity from Masons

and non-Masons alike, which really made the exercise so rewarding. To the members of Coronation Lodge for the gift, a transport company in Rotherham who export packed it, to the Polish exporter and transport company and the engraver who gave us their services for free, and who found it as exciting as we did. And to the Province of East Lancashire, its officers and PGM who helped make it all happen - John Belton)

Above
Founder Members of
Wolnosc Odzyskana
Lodge in Poland



Left
Coronation Lodge
members, photographed
in August 2003