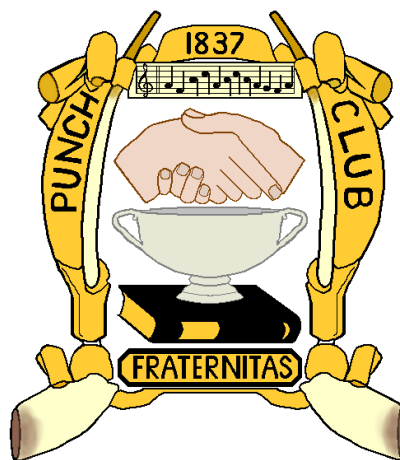
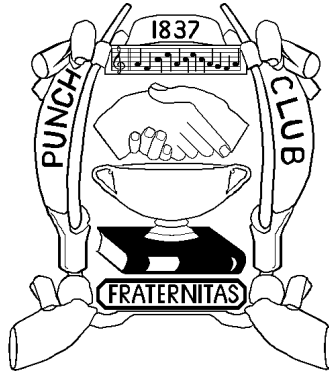


THE PUNCH CLUB



1837-1949

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A body of professional men met for mutual enjoyment round a bowl of steaming Punch at the University Hotel, Grafton Street, London, in 1837. Styling themselves the Jolly Cocks, they continued there for 21 years and so created an atmosphere of geniality and good fellowship that the same aura of brotherliness pervades the Punch Club, its lineal descendant, which meets at the Albany Club, Savile Row, in this year 1949, passing the hours with music, discourse and ready wit.

In those earlier days would have gathered men of mark as Dr. J. Edwardes Carpenter, composer, writer, and President for 18 years; John Duff, publisher and President for many years; John Parry, John Wilson, Scottish vocalist, and Donald King, well-known singer, too, of those days. The popularity of these past officers induced the members of the last century to subscribe for their portraits in oils, which are still hung regularly at Club meetings. The Club still honours Dr. Carpenter and Donald King as their founders, and, for many years after the former's death in 1885, Carpenter Night was an annual feature.

By the mid-century the Club had a definite constitution and the earliest rules extant are fundamentally as they are to-day. In those days, however, when a bowl of Punch could be brewed for five shillings, it was incumbent on each member in turn to provide a "Bowl". Whip bowls were a feature too. A chairman, nominated at the previous meet-ing, presided and "gentlemen of musical ability" were elected honorary members. At the present day, "honorary" is accorded only to good members, whose age, health or distance, precludes their attendance.

The Club has had its vicissitudes. Changes of outlook, two major wars, changes of home, ups and downs of membership, migration from hotels in the West to taverns further East, back, forth and West again have not however changed its heart. Always there has remained that nucleus—a guarantee of its "fellowship" and further survival.

From earliest records it would seem that membership was culled almost entirely from the world of art, literature, medicine and music, but in 1867 rules were revised to make the membership more open, "unfettered by any conditions of profession, or calling, race or creed"

Later it was felt advisable to curtail this wide qualification, though every member still has the privilege of introducing a guest, whose admittance to membership is subject to the agreement of the Club as a whole, as in earliest days. At the present time it would be true to say that membership is very largely culled from the business world.

CHANGE OF NAMES AND VENUES.

Until the Club settled down in 1884 to its present permanent title, there were changes of name, from the Jolly Cocks, deemed too frivolous, to the University Punch Club in 1858. Again in 1867, the word Punch was deleted as not expressing the true purpose of the Club. It may be noted, however, that one-half of the annual subscription was by rule earmarked for the provision of Punch.

It is interesting to notice the migration of the Club. With the sale of the University Hotel in 1884, ordinary meetings were held at The Old Jerusalem Tavern, Clerkenwell, The Black Bull, Holborn, and the Duke of Argyll, Little Pulteney Street, while the Masons' Arms, Maddox Street, and Anderton's Hotel were favoured on occasions when the Club dined.

Anderton's later became the home of the Club in 1894 until the 1914-18 war, when the meetings ceased for eight years. It was at Anderton's in 1895 that the first Trustees, Bros. John Turner and W. F. Mills, were appointed.

A receipt dated November, 1894, records the handing over of eight pictures and one Punch Bowl for the Punch Club.

Revived in 1923, largely by the great efforts of P.P's Conrad King and Alex Hill, the Club resumed at Anderton's and later went to Gow's, in the Strand.

From here in 1932, the migration was Eastward to Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese with its sawdust covered floors, dimly lit recesses, its quaint bars and its famous steak and lark puddings. Here P.P. Willie Foyle occupied the Presi-dential Chair.

Thence to the Old Cock Tavern, Fleet Street, in 1934, with its ancient high backed seats and almost more ancient waiters, till 1937, when numbers forced a move to Williamson's, of Bow Lane, modernly built on the site of previous buildings dating back to 1666, the year of the Great Fire.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, the proprietors found it impossible to cater owing to early closing and a move further West was made to Gow's Restaurant, St. Martin's Lane, in 1939. Numbers increased and so did catering difficulties and in 1943, through the very good offices of Bro. Alex. Barker, later Secretary and President in this year 1948, a good home was assured in the Albany Club, Savile Row, where, despite blackout, the change to afternoon meetings and other difficulties of war time, the Club has enjoyed a period of great success.

In 1937 while at Ye Olde Cock Tavern, the Punch Club celebrated its Centenary Year. The celebration took place at Princes Restaurant, Piccadilly. To P.P. Bro. Conrad King, the oldest member of the Club, was accorded the honour of occupying the Presidential Chair. Elected an honorary member in 1895, he became President in 1913-14, was Secretary Treasurer from 1923 until 1942 and in this present year still plays and chants the incantation at the brewing of the Bowl.

THE EMBLEM.

The *Emblem* suitably embodies the purpose and features of the Club.

Centrally placed, the Bowl symbolises the fount from which emanates the spirit of friendship and brotherhood which pervades the meetings of the Punch Club.

Hands clasped above the Bowl and the word *Fraternitas* in the scroll below, depict the spirit of fellow-ship, which inspired the founders and binds the members into one brotherhood.

The Book, on which the Bowl rests, and the line of music above, reflect the literary and musical aspects of the Club.

Two Churchwarden pipes, entwined within the scroll on either side, reflect one of the customs, which characterise every meeting.

The Emblem is of recent date and is the work of Mrs. Cecil Hewitson, wife of the popular past president (1935-36).

PERMANENT INSTITUTIONS.

The *Officers* have increased considerably in number in the last two decades. Previous to that, President, Vice-President, Secretary-Treasurer and Trustees ordered the welfare of the Brethren.

For many years the offices of President and Vice-President were occupied by the same brothers for many years, as has been indicated, but since 1907 three only have occupied the Presidential Chair for even two years in suc-cession.

The President now occupies the chair throughout his year of office, or in his absence the Vice-President, a custom decided upon in 1909. This constitutes a change from that in existence as far back as 1858.

It has 'become almost customary now for length of membership to constitute a brother's "claim" to promo-tion to the Chair, he having been first Vice-President and having served in the capacity of Punch Master.

This office was instituted in 1934 and was occupied by Brother Sydney Butcher till 1942, when he became Vice-President, occupying the Chair in the following year, when the move was made to the Albany Club.

This last qualification is waived in exceptional cases, as in the translation of the Secretary to the Vice-Presidential Chair, owing to the disorganisation which might ensue. This, the most onerous office, has been occu-pied with great success and for very long periods by such well-known brothers as Dr. Carpenter, Brothers J. T. Plomer, Alex Hill, Conrad King and Alex Barker.

Following the installation of the President, it be-comes one of his first duties to present to his predecessor an inscribed tankard as a token of the brethren's esteem. This custom was instituted in 1934.

This privilege was also granted in 1937 to Bro. Sydney Butcher for his services as Punch Master.

Since 1943 other offices have become permanent institutions.

To the Jester, descendant of the musical director of other times, falls the lot of providing entertainment for the brethren.

Provision and distribution of churchwarden pipes, snuff and tobacco, is the duty of the Pipe Master.

Dissemination of Punch Club matters of interest and a survey of the monthly meetings flow from the pen of the Editor of the Bulletin. First edited in typescript by Bro. Bernard Leverton, now overseas, the Bulletin proved so popular that in January, 1946, the first printed copy was produced and now regularly includes the President's Letter.

The office of Padre needs no comment; suffice it to say that the Rev. Bro. Spackman combines with the dignity of his office the attractiveness of a vivid raconteur.

A pleasing feature of the Christmas Meeting is the visit of children from the Padre's Parish. They are welcomed by the President, sing a carol and receive the gifts of toys provided by the brethren.

OTHER SOCIAL FUNCTIONS.

An important feature of the Club, unknown to members since 1940, was the Summer Outing which dates back many years. In 1886, the closing- dinner was held at Harrow-on-the-Hill and the following- year at The Mitre, Hampton Court. This was not, however, a regular feature till 1923, when a Summer Ramble was held at the instigation of P.P. Bro. Cecil Hewetson, who organised it and entertained the Brethren at his home afterwards. Other enjoyable visits were made to Windsor, Hampton Court, The Zoo, Wihipsnade, and the upper reaches of the river on that never-to-be-forgotten trip with dinner and the ceremonial brew on board.

Ladies' Night dates from 1913-14 and is customarily held on the last Saturday in February. Introduced by Bro. Conrad King, President in that year, they have always proved a great success. When first mooted, such an idea brought forth the resolution that "Rule 6(a) should not be interpreted as admitting lady visitors to nomination for election". This, according to the Minutes, was carried unanimously by great force and fierce determination.

The Ladies' Luncheon was a natural outcome of the Blackout, when evening meetings had to be abandoned, and has likewise proved extremely popular. So popular has it become that it was still retained when Ladies' Night was resumed in 1947.

Formerly, May and October meetings were re-spectively designated St. George's and Nelson Nights, entertainment provided being appropriate to the occasions.

On Founder's Night, when Dr. Carpenter's memory was celebrated, entertainment was culled from his own works, and it may be of interest to Brethren that it is tra-ditional that the President may call on any brother to pro-vide entertainment. Failing this, he may pay in forfeit either the cost of a bowl or read a passage from Dr. Carpenter's works. These being safe in the keeping of the trustees, there seem little likelihood of the latter forfeit ever being paid.

THE BREWING OF PUNCH.

In early days a brother's bowl was " had in "; to-day a visitor finds interest in viewing the Brewing of the Bowl to the accompani-ment of the following incanta-tion, sung first on Nelson Night, 1909, when it was intro-duced by P.P. T. Alders Smith, and regularly for over 20 years by P.P. Conrad King:—

Four elements joined in harmonious strife,
The world represent and typify life.
Into the goblet the lemon's juice pour,
For acid is ever Life's innermost core.
Now with the sugar's all sweetening juice,
The strength of the acid its power to reduce.
The bright boiling water pour in the bowl there,
For water encircles the world everywhere.
Let drops of the spirit to join it now flow,
Life to the living nought else can bestow.
Drink it off quickly before it exhales,
Save when 'tis glowing, the draught nought avails.

Gathered at the magnificent silver Irish Bowl - purchased through the good offices of P.P. Bro. Aubrey Collins - Bro. President and Bro. Punch Master, arrayed in the collars of office bearing the Club Emblem, are attended by other brethren, who, in turn, as each couplet is chanted, add the lemon juice, sugar, water, ale and Irish whiskey, the traditional ingredients.

Follows the crucial moment when Bro. President demands the verdict of the Tasters *as* to the quality of the brew, and Bro. Punch Master, having" assured himself that all are charged, calls for a bumper toast to "Your President".

From this point on through the meeting follow the time honoured toasts: The Club coupled with the name of the President, Visitors and Absent Brethren—the last traditionally drunk at 9 p.m., following the chant:—

Absent though you be my brother,
We this night do think of you,
While the clock strikes nine this evening,
May your thoughts be with us too.

Whether duty calls or sickness;
Whether good or ill assail;
May the architect who heeds us,
See that nought but good prevail.

The brethren part with the strains of Auld Lang Syne and while ever the same spirit of fellowship which has flowed from the Bowl for one hundred and eleven years goes on, the Punch Club will hear those same strains for centuries yet to come.

PAST PRESIDENTS SINCE 1858.

J. Duff, Dr. Carpenter, J. Plomer, C. Johnson, N. Watts, W. F. Mills,
J. Turner, C. Braid, T. A. Smith, C. Corelli, G. M. Dibdin,
Rev. C. Serjeant, Conrad King, W. West, A. Hill, G. Jeffrey,
G. Cook, F. Roberts, E. Severn, W. Ough, H. Walbrook, A. Hutt,
M. Severn, W. Foyle, R. Egerton, S. Kemp, B. Nobes,
C. Hewetson, Conrad king, G. Webb, H. Driver,
D. Tom Butler, G. Hope, T. Hawes, S. F. Butcher, T. Smith,
R. E. Quarterman, A. Collins, W. Dale, R. A. Barker.

