

THE MARENCOURT CUP

In 1812, France and England were engaged in the Peninsular War, Sea battles became an important feature of this war, as the two powers fought for supremacy in Spain and Portugal.

In November, 1812, the schooner, *United Sisters*, of Poole, with Joseph Webb as master, was bound for Bristol, with a cargo of pipeclay, when it was boarded and plundered, about four miles off Start Point, by *Le Furet* (the Ferret), a French privateer, from St. Malo. Webb and his crew were detained on board the *Le Furet* by its captain, Louis Marencourt. A few hours later, the sloop, *Three Friends*, of Youghal, with James Campbell as master, on its voyage from Southampton, came into sight, and was also quickly captured by *Le Furet*.

On finding that the cargo of the *Three Friends* consisted only of bricks and hoops, Marencourt, a member of the masonic order, directed that the ship be scuttled and sunk, but when searching its papers, and discovering Campbell's certificate as a master mason, countermanded the order and restored the sloop to its master.

Joseph Webb, the master of the first ship to be captured, although not a member of the masonic order, was also liberated and he, too, had his ship returned, possibly through the intercession of Campbell. A *carte d'échange*, a document drawn up in triplicate, was signed by Marencourt, Webb and Campbell, who appears to have served as a witness. In the document, which was dated 12 November, 1812, and signed aboard the *Le Furet*, James Campbell designated himself 'Master Mason of No. 13', one of the order's Limerick lodges. Although the three men had been complete strangers, serving their respective warring countries, up to a few hours before, the masonic bond ensured that Campbell obtained his freedom unconditionally, while Webb was required to swear on oath that he would faithfully honour the covenant.

The document certifies the release of Joseph Webb, his ship and crew, as prisoners-of-war, on condition that he, on his word of honour and oath, would make every effort to procure the liberation of Brother Joseph Gantier, who had been captured on 16 February, 1812, on board the French schooner, *Confiance*, and detained on board the prison ship, *Crown Prince*, at Chatham. Should he not succeed within two months, Webb bound himself to go to France, undertaking, in the meantime, not to bear arms against that country. James Campbell also signed the document, and it seems certain that he,

BY JIM KEMMY



The Marencourt Cup.

too, promised to assist in obtaining Gantier's release.

In a report, 'Masonic Memoir of Capt. Louis Marencourt and of Brother Captain Campbell of the Union Lodge, No. 13', the *Limerick Chronicle*, of 28 November, 1812, gave the following account of the event:

Arrived, the Schooner 'United Sisters',

of Poole, Webb, Master, from Poolè, bound to Bristol with Pipe-clay – was boarded and plundered about four miles off the Start Point, by 'Le Furet', French Privateer of 18 guns, 140 men – Captain Webb was detained on board the said Privateer for two hours, during which time an Irish Sloop, 'Three Friends', Brother Captain Campbell, Master, hove in sight, which was taken possession of also by the enemy; but both vessels and their crews were liberated on the Masters signing the following article in the English and French languages:

'Carte d'Exchange.

Le Corsair Le Furet, de Saint Malo, Armsteaur in Potier, and Flareonbert, Capitaine Louis Marencourt.

It is hereby certified to whom it may concern, that I, Louis Marencourt, Captain of the French Privateer, 'Le Furet', captured on the 6 November, 1812, in the latitude of Start Point, (owner Thomas Hammond), Captain Joseph Webb, and that he Joseph Webb and Crew of the said vessel have been provided with safe conveyance for England and released by me from the Ship under my command, in which he was detained a prisoner of war on the following conditions:

That I, Joseph Webb, above-mentioned, have hereby engaged my word and honor, and upon my oath, that immediately after my arrival in England, I shall make every application in my power to exchange against me and my ship's company, Brother J. Gantier, taken on the 15th February, 1812, on board the French Schooner, 'The Confiance', and detained on board the Prison Ship, 'Crown Prince' and now prisoner in Chatham; and that if I cannot succeed in



Old Baal's Bridge, which was demolished in 1830.



liberating the aforesaid Brother Joseph Gantier two months after the date of the present engagement, I shall repair to France, to be a prisoner of war, as I should, had not Captain Louis Marencourt granted me my liberty. I engage myself besides not to bear arms either by sea or land against France or her allies, before the execution of the above mentioned conditions, made willingly and treple at sea, on board the 'Le Furet', on 6 November, 1812.

Joseph Webb, Captain United Sisters of Liverpool.

James Campbell, Capt. Three Friends of Youghal.

Louis Marencourt, Capt. Le Furet, M.M. No. 13'.

But the fortunes of war were to be cruel as well as kind to Louis Marencourt. On 6 February, 1813, *Le Furet* was once more in English waters, and found itself being chased by the sloop, H.M. *Wasp*. When, after being forced to leeward, off Scilly, on the frigate, *Modeste*, commanded by Captain J.C. Crawford, *Le Furet* was finally captured.

Le Furet is described as a remarkably fine ship of 170 tons, with 14 guns and 98 men, and had sailed only the previous day from Abreval. The following copies from Admiralty documents give details and dates of the ship's capture:

On 17 February, 1813, the *Limerick Chronicle* published a letter, written by Captain Crawford, of 'His Majesty's ship', *Modeste*, who was also a member of the masonic order, on the capture of *Le Furet*. The letter was sent from Spithead to John Wilson Croker, and was dated 7 February, 1813:

Sir, - I have to acquaint you, for the information of my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, that on Saturday morning last off Scilly, a large French Schooner, Privateer, was forced to leeward on the *Modeste* by being chased by his Majesty's Sloop, *Wasp*, and I am glad to say the *Modeste* captured her. The Privateer so confident of her superior sailing would not bring to, until her rigging and sails were much damaged, and three of her men killed. I am happy in making this capture, as she is a remarkable fine vessel, has run two years, and has done much damage to our trade. Her name is *Le Furet*, of St. Maloes, commanded by Louis Marencourt, 170 tons, 14 guns, 98 men. - She had left Abreval the day before.

J.C. Crawford, Captain.

To JOHN WILSON CROKER, Esq., Admiralty.

Although Marencourt had been captured by a fellow-member of the order, the masonic bond was not, on this occasion, strong enough to secure his immediate release. He was sent to a prison ship at

Spithead and, later, it is believed, to Plymouth, where a large number of French prisoners were held in the Mill Prison. The freemasons among these prisoners established their own lodge, called the Amis Réunis.

Members of the masonic order in Limerick, having learned of Marencourt's capture from Captain Crawford's letter published in the *Limerick Chronicle* on 17 February, met to consider how best they could respond to his captivity. Resolutions passed, on 18 and 24 February, by two Limerick lodges, Lodge No. 271 and the Rising Sun Lodge, No. 752, were sent to the Plymouth Lodge. These resolutions expressed fraternal expressions of admiration for Marencourt's conduct, and sympathy on his misfortune; copies were also sent to the Grand Lodge of Ireland.

The Limerick members wished to express the admiration in a more tangible form. An editorial in the *Limerick Chronicle*, of 17 February, included a copy of an address sent to Marencourt by Mayor Thomas Wilkinson, who was also a member of the masonic order:

In our fourth page will be found the capture of the 'Le Furet', French Privateer, Louis Marencourt, Commander, by the *Modeste*, British Frigate, Captain Crawford. It will be recollected in what a praiseworthy manner Captain Marencourt behaved to Brother Captain James Campbell, of the sloop, *Three Friends*, of Youghal, and to Captain Joseph Webb, of the *United Sisters* of Poole, for which he received the thanks of the Union Lodge, No. 13, - No. 271, - and Rising Sun, No. 952, of the City, which were transmitted to the Secretary of No. 79, Plymouth, as also several memorials to Governments, through the Earl of Donoughmore, Grand Master. The Union Lodge voted a Vase, value £100, with the following address ... 'Sir and Brother, - Impressed with feelings of the sincerest gratitude for your noble and disinterested conduct to Brother Capt. Campbell of No. 13, and sympathizing with you on your present captivity, we beg leave to convey to you our most unfeigned regard and highest admiration; and to assure you that no exertion on our part shall be wanting to procure you that invaluable gift, liberty, which you bestowed on a Brother Mason when your prisoner. This consciousness of a noble action, Sir, is its own reward - that reward you possess in the fullest manner; and we shall receive the highest gratification if we can in any manner add to that feeling, by requesting you to accept the assurance of our warmest esteem, and we beg your acceptance of the accompanying Piece of Plate, as a tribute of our fraternal affection.

Thomas Wilkinson, W.M. 13.

And Mayor of Limerick.

Charles S. Grace, Secretary.

To Brothers Capt. Louis Marencourt'.

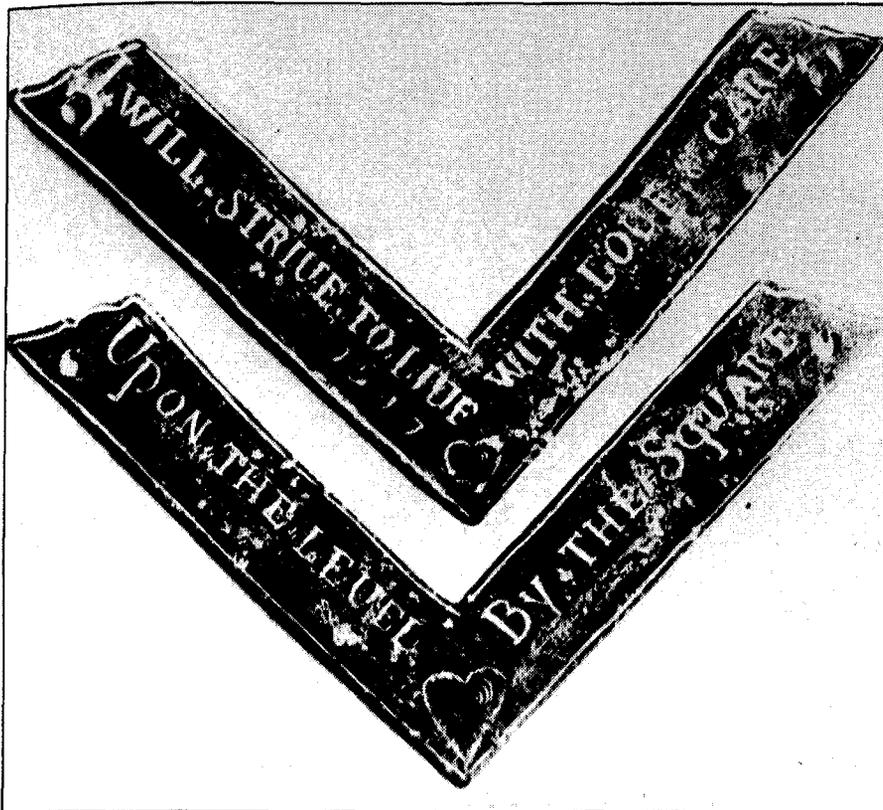
From the information contained in Thomas Wilkinson's letter, it would

Admiralty (Captains' Journals 2552)				
H.M.S. <i>Modeste</i> Feby 6 1813 Saturday				
H.	Courses	Winds	A.M.	
1	E S E		Fresh breezes and cloudy.	
5	E b S		At 6.30 saw 2 strangers to westward.	
7	E b N		At 8 D ^o W ^r made sail. At 8.40 answered signal for an enemy from the <i>Wasp</i> , made all sail in chase of a Schooner to windward, fired several guns at d ^o	
9	E N E			
10	N b E	W N W	At 10.30 she struck under French colours.	
11 } 12 }	up North off N E b N		She proved to be the <i>Le Furet</i> Privateer of 14 Nine Ponders and 98 men. Out pinnace, sent her and the Jolly Boat for Prisoners.	

H.M.S. <i>Modeste</i> , Sunday, Feb. 7, 1813.							
P.M.							
at 1, came to with the best bower at Spithead and moored ship.							
Wednesday, 10th.							
P.M.							
at 3, sent the French prisoners to the prison ship.							
Admiralty, Secretary, Miscellanea, 357.							
Name of Prize.	Nation	Class	No. of Guns.	No. of Men.	By what Ship taken.	When.	Captain's Name.
Furet	French	Priv.	14	98	Modeste	6 Feb. 1813.	J. C. Crawford.

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The Baal's Bridge Square: 'Upon the Level, By the Square, I will strive to live, with love and care'.

appear that a presentation to Marencourt was being prepared at that time. It was decided that an inscribed silver cup would be presented to him. The cup was manufactured in Dublin by J.S., A.D. 1813. The initials are those of three Dublin silversmiths of the period - John Smyth, John Somers and John Sherwin. The latter became a freeman of the Goldsmith's Company in 1812, while John Smyth appears on the list of Dublin traders only for the first time in 1813. As so important a work would hardly have been entrusted to a beginner, the cup may be regarded as the work of John Somers.

The date of the dedication of the cup was 1 May, and, as Marencourt had been set at liberty some time previously, it was forwarded to France for presentation to him through the Grand Lodge of that country. He had, in the meantime, quitted France and when news of his death in Africa reached his home, the cup was sent back to Limerick.

The cup, with cover, of solid silver, which was voted to Captain Marencourt by Lodge 13, stands 18 1/2 inches high. The cover is surmounted by a small figure, representing an officer of a lodge, in evening dress, with a hat covering his head, and dressed in collar and apron, with a gavel in his hand. It bears the following inscription:-

To Capt. Louis Mariencourt, of the French Privateer Le Fureé, To Commemorate the Illustrious Example of Masonic Virtue, his conduct to Capt. Campbell displays, The Brethren of Lodge No. 13 on the Registry of Ireland, Present and Dedicate this Cup, Limerick May 1, 1813. On 2 February the Brig 'Two Friends' became the Prize of the 'Le Fureé.' The signals of Masonry were exchanged between the Commanders & instantly Capt. Mariencourt bestowed his Ship his Cargo and his Liberty on Captain Campbell.

Inscribed on the other side of the cup are the words, *Sit Lux & Lux Fuit.*

The cup is a solid and enduring memorial to Marencourt, but there are some discrepancies and inaccuracies in the inscription which cannot fail to be noticed. Chief among these is the date given for the incident which led to its presentation. All the printed accounts agree in giving 6 November, 1812, but as the carte d'échange was dated 12 November, and was signed on board, this latter is more likely to be correct, so that the date inscribed on the cup (2 February) must be an error. The name is incorrectly spelled as 'Mariencourt', and the vessel commanded by Campbell is called the *Two Friends*, instead of the *Three Friends*.

There is one other important discrepancy. Marencourt was understood to have learned of Campbell's masonic standing through finding his master mason's certificate among the papers on board the ship, but the cup records that signals of masonry were exchanged between the two.

Despite these inconsistencies, the Marencourt Cup remains an important memorial in Irish freemasonry. But there is a masonic relic of greater antiquity in Limerick. This is the 482 year old Baal's Bridge Square.

James Pain was the contractor for rebuilding Baal's Bridge in Limerick, in 1830, and, on taking down the old structure, discovered under the foundation stone at the Englishtown side on old brass square. The square bears the date 1507. A heart appears on each angle. The words on the square are as follows:

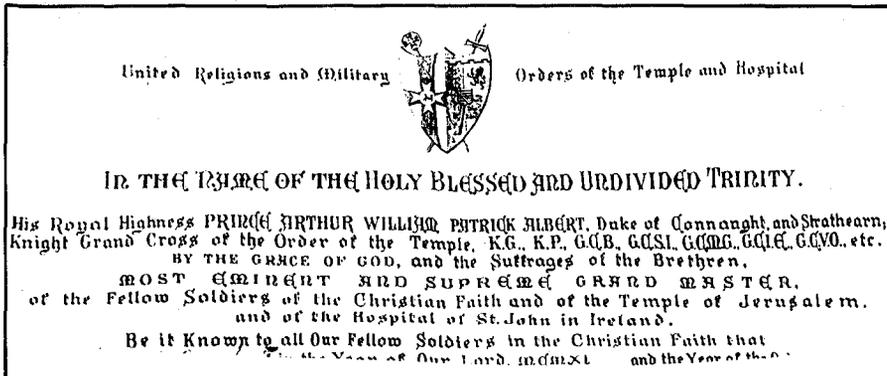
Upon the Level, By the Square, I will strive to live, With love and care.

Baal's Bridge is still a solid structure, of a single arch, and was built to replace an ancient bridge of the same name, which consisted of four arches, with a range of houses on one of its sides. The date of the erection of the earlier bridge is not certain, but the old square may have been placed under the foundation stone in 1507.

James Pain, an architect and builder, was born at Isleworth in 1779. He and his brother, George R. Pain, entered into partnership, subsequently settling in Ireland, where James resided in Limerick and George in Cork. They designed and built many fine buildings throughout Munster. James Pain was a provincial grand architect in the masonic order, and presented the Baal's Bridge Square to Limerick Lodge 13. He died in Limerick, on 13 December, 1877, in his 98th year, and was buried at St. Mary's Cathedral.

SOURCES

- The 'Marencourt' Cup and Ancient Square, by Henry F. Berry, Dublin, 1905.
- The Limerick Chronicle, 28 November, 1812, and 17 February, 1813.
- The Pocket History of Freemasonry, by Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight, Frederick Muller Limited, London, 1953.



Certificate of the United Religions and Military Orders of the Temple and Hospital.