

UNITED ALBANY BRETHREN BENEFIT SOCIETY

J.M. Berning

Cory Library for Historical Research, Rhodes University, Grahamstown

The United Albany Brethren Benefit Society (Albany Brethren)¹ was a Grahamstown example of the friendly society movement which reached a peak in Britain during the last century.

THE FRIENDLY SOCIETY MOVEMENT

The term "friendly society" is rather older than the 19th century and the first society may have been the Friendly Society of Bethnal Green founded in 1687. By 1800 the two basic objectives of such societies had become established — (1) the provision of sick, old age, burial, and similar benefits, (2) the provision of convivial activity and good fellowship. The members were drawn from the "industrious classes" who needed the financial security provided by the first objective and the colour and conviviality introduced into drab lives of the second. It was a 'self-help' movement whereby working members paid into a common fund from which grants were made to members or their families when sickness or old age deprived them of income or burial expenses came as a heavy financial blow.

The growth of industrialization in Britain during the century stimulated the growth of the friendly societies and they became organised on more formal club lines and developed more elaborate ceremonial, ritual, and regalia — clearly influenced by Masonic practices. There came to be special ceremonial occasions, notably the annual meeting when a society gathered to enjoy itself and show itself to the world.

Until about 1815 friendly societies were mainly independent and local. Members would come from a particular area and might all be workers in a particular trade, members of a particular church or immigrant group (e.g. Irish Catholics). From about 1815 nationwide orders or "unities" began to develop, again following Masonic influences. The orders developed a national and regional organisational structure plus corresponding ceremonial and ritual. The basic purposes of financial benefits and fellowship remained, however. The greatest danger in the friendly society system was the collapse of the society which could cost the members their investment with no hope of redress. The orders, which had national funds to call on, were more secure against this than independent societies. Two of the major orders (and among the first to develop) were the Independent Order of Oddfellows (Manchester Unity) and the Ancient Order of Forresters (Salford Unity). Both were organised on national (or Unity), regional and local levels and both spread beyond Britain. Local Oddfellows were organised into "lodges" and Forresters into "courts". There were several other similar orders.²

THE ALBANY BRETHREN: AN OUTLINE HISTORY

It is hardly surprising that British immigration to the Eastern Cape should have brought with it men who had known the friendly Societies in Britain and that these men should have considered starting a local society to provide financial security and conviviality which can have been no less in demand in their new home. Some years were to elapse after the 1820 settlement before such a friendly society could emerge.

On 5th September 1828 a few friends met at the house of Mr Flinn on Market Square, Grahamstown, with the

object of forming a friendly society. They were John Brown, W. Elliott, W. Chadwick, O. Flinn, and Ennis Saunders. Flinn and Saunders do not appear in the published lists of 1820 Settlers but the names John Brown, W. Elliott, and W. Chadwick do. Chadwick was listed as a shopkeeper, John Brown a farmer, and Elliott may have been a frameworker, a farmer, or a smith.³

The group had before it as it met the rule books of various societies brought out from England which they used to compile a set of their own rules. This they had printed. The original group, joined by others, met at Mr Flinn's, later at Mr Mandy's⁴ canteen which was more central, then at Mr D. Brown's house in Bathurst Street which was more peaceful.

The publication of the rules led to a rapid growth and after a few months the number rose to 60. Many of these however were older men — who were rather a drag on a friendly society as they were very liable to draw out more than they could pay in. The ideal was to have a large number of young men who paid in regularly but made few claims during the early part of their membership. Mr Brown's house proved inadequate and the Society moved back to Mr Mandy's canteen where the large upper room was hired on a regular basis.

It would appear that meetings continued to be held there until 1843 though the Annual Dinner was sometimes held elsewhere.

In 1843 the Dinner was held in the 'new club house' which became the permanent home of the Albany Brethren until the Society ceased to exist. The building has, however, survived them and is now St Clement's Anglican Church and hall. Not all of the present building was completed by 1843, probably only the main central section — the east and west wings being added later.

In its heyday the "lodge", or Hall, could accommodate a large formal dinner or ball, allow more than one meeting to be held simultaneously and was hired out wholly or partly for regular or occasional use.

The impulse to build a "club room" of their own probably came in part from growth in numbers of the Albany Brethren, though the contemporary efforts in that direction of the Albany Masonic Lodge may also have influenced them. Certainly opposition to the alcoholic connotations of Mandy's Canteen was a factor. As Bro. W. Stanton, "one of the founders of the Society" said in 1878: "It was their humble servant . . . , who brought the subject

1. The "United" was often dropped in actual use.

2. P.H.J.H. GOSDEN, *The friendly societies in England, 1815-1875* (Manchester, 1960).

3. E.M. JONES, *Roll of the British Settlers in South Africa . . .* (Cape Town, 1971).

4. The canteen was kept by John Mandy. The Albany Masonic Lodge met in his premises from 1828 to 1835.



so forcibly before [the Governor] Sir G. Napier — the evil that attached to holding their meetings in a public-house which was bringing ruin at an early stage on the Society . . . [Napier] saw the force of it and granted this land . . .”⁵

The acquisition of their own Hall did not however fully solve the Brethren’s alcohol problems as both members and chaplains continued to attack the presence of alcoholic drinks at formal dinners. The activities of some friendly societies in England seem to have worried at least some of these critics. The Albany Brethren compromised. For example, at the 1893 Dinner one could drink either sherry and wines or soda water, lemonade and ginger ale.

It is difficult to reconstruct the early years of the Albany Brethren as no minute books or records seem to have survived and reports in the *Graham’s Town Journal* (December 1831 onwards) are not very detailed.

The first report of the annual “parade” to St George’s Church (later the Cathedral) appears in the *Journal* of 10 October 1833. The Brethren assembled at their meeting place and marched to church where the Rev. John Heavyside preached a special sermon. A report on the service was sent in by “a correspondent” who described the church as “numerously and respectably attended” and said that “the appearance of the members of the Society bore testimony to its increasing prosperity and respectability. The Society was rapidly increasing and had been productive of great relief to many distressed families.”

Clearly the tradition of an annual church parade to St George’s, which was maintained throughout the existence of the Society except in times of war, became an early feature. The interest of John Heavyside, the Colonial Chaplain, in the Albany Brethren was also important and may have begun the Brethren’s affection for his church, though they were also consciously or unconsciously following the example of English societies which often met in the local Anglican parish church for a special service.

In 1837 the *Journal* first reports the Annual Dinner,

Church Square and lower High Street, Grahamstown taken from the tower of old St Georges Church, before 1878, showing the Albany Brethren’s Hall on the left hand side of the road beyond the narrow bridge.

PHOTOGRAPH: VAN DER RIET COLLECTION

which it continues to do regularly thereafter. These reports of the Annual General Meeting, Dinner, and Church parade are a major source of information on the Albany Brethren. The first Annual Dinner may have been held in April 1830, the date Sir George Cory gives for the formation of the Society.

The A.B.B.S. seems to have reached its highest peak in the 1850s. Membership rose to just under 200 in 1860. In 1849 it had been 120. In 1857 funds and property totalled £3 000 and by 1858 £2 000 had been spent on relief. Annual income in the 1850s varied between £240 and £340, expenditure between £113 and £120.⁶ Reserve funds seem to have been ample as the main hall and east wing of the Lodge could be built without drawing on relief funds.

Perhaps more interesting is the social position attained by the Albany Brethren at this period. Contrast, for example, the slightly patronizing tone of the 1833 *Journal* report quoted above and Col. Henry Somerset’s speech at the 1849 Annual Dinner: “He contrasted the appearance of Graham’s Town now with what it was eight and twenty years ago, when the British Settlers on their arrival here, went as strangers to him in his capacity as Magistrate to ask, What were they to do? or, where they were to go? He placed one under one bush, another under another. He now saw amongst the most opulent and influential men of the Town, some of those very men. The building they were in had been

5. *Graham’s Town Journal*, 6.11.1878.

6. Statistics compiled from relevant issues of the *Graham’s Town Journal*.

raised by that Society reflecting so much credit on all who belonged to it, of whom many were either British Settlers or their descendants.’’ The A.B.B.S. had in other words been identified with the success and growth of the Albany settlement and Grahamstown. In 1857 the *Journal* reporter described the Society as “the most important social institution in this city”⁸ and its members as “the bones and sinews of the country”. At the 1860 Dinner Jonathan Ayliff suggested that a young man struggling to obtain a social position should join the Albany Brethren and aspire to become president.

It is difficult, without detailed economic and social analysis, to indicate the reasons for the strength of the Albany Brethren by the 1850s. Among the reasons seem to have been: no other rival societies of strength had emerged; they had filled a valid need, and by virtue of their age — few other Grahamstown bodies can have been as old — and achievements they had established a significant position in the Albany settlement. It is, perhaps, not without significance that among the Society’s banners displayed in their hall were the Colours of the Grahamstown Volunteers of the 1846 war — there displayed because so many of the Corps had been members of the Albany Brethren.

During the 1860s there was some financial and numerical recession. Income tended to drop — £290 in 1860, £224 in 1866; while expenditure relative to income rose £282 in 1860, £228 in 1866. Membership in 1866 had fallen to 105. The overall financial position of the Society seems to have remained sound, however, and there does not seem to be any indication of a decline in social standing.⁹

Among the reasons for the weaker position may have been the appearance of strong rival friendly societies. The Loyal Eastern Province Lodge of the Oddfellows was established in 1861, for example, and the St Patrick’s Mutual Benefit Society (Roman Catholic) in 1859, and there may have been others. Also by the 1860s even the youngest of the original members would have been elderly and many older men must have fallen out of the ranks.

The 1870s saw an upward curve again. Membership in 1872 and 1875 was 125 and expenditure of £305 left a credit balance of £82 in 1874. This was in spite of the appearance of further rivals such as the Forrester’s Court “Queen Victoria” (1872) and the Good Templars’ Good Samaritan Lodge (1873). It should, perhaps, be pointed out that men could and did belong to more than one lodge. A. Will, the undertaker, held office in the St Andrews and Albany Masonic lodges, in the St Andrews and Caledonian Societies, and in the Loyal Eastern Province Lodge (Oddfellows) and the Court “Queen Victoria” (Forrester’s); he also belonged to the A.B.B.S. C. Windsor held at different stages the offices of president of the Albany Brethren, master of the Loyal E.P. Lodge, and chief ranger of the Court “Queen Victoria”.

The first great excitement of the 1870s was the 50th anniversary celebrations of the 1820 Settlement. This had its effect on the Albany Brethren — from 1870 the phrase “founded 1828” was added to the heading of notices and at the 1870 Dinner in November a summary of the founding and history of the Society was read out.¹⁰ The increased awareness that the Albany Settlement had a history may well

The Albany Brethren and a civilian band outside their Hall (now St Clement’s Church), probably in the 1870s.

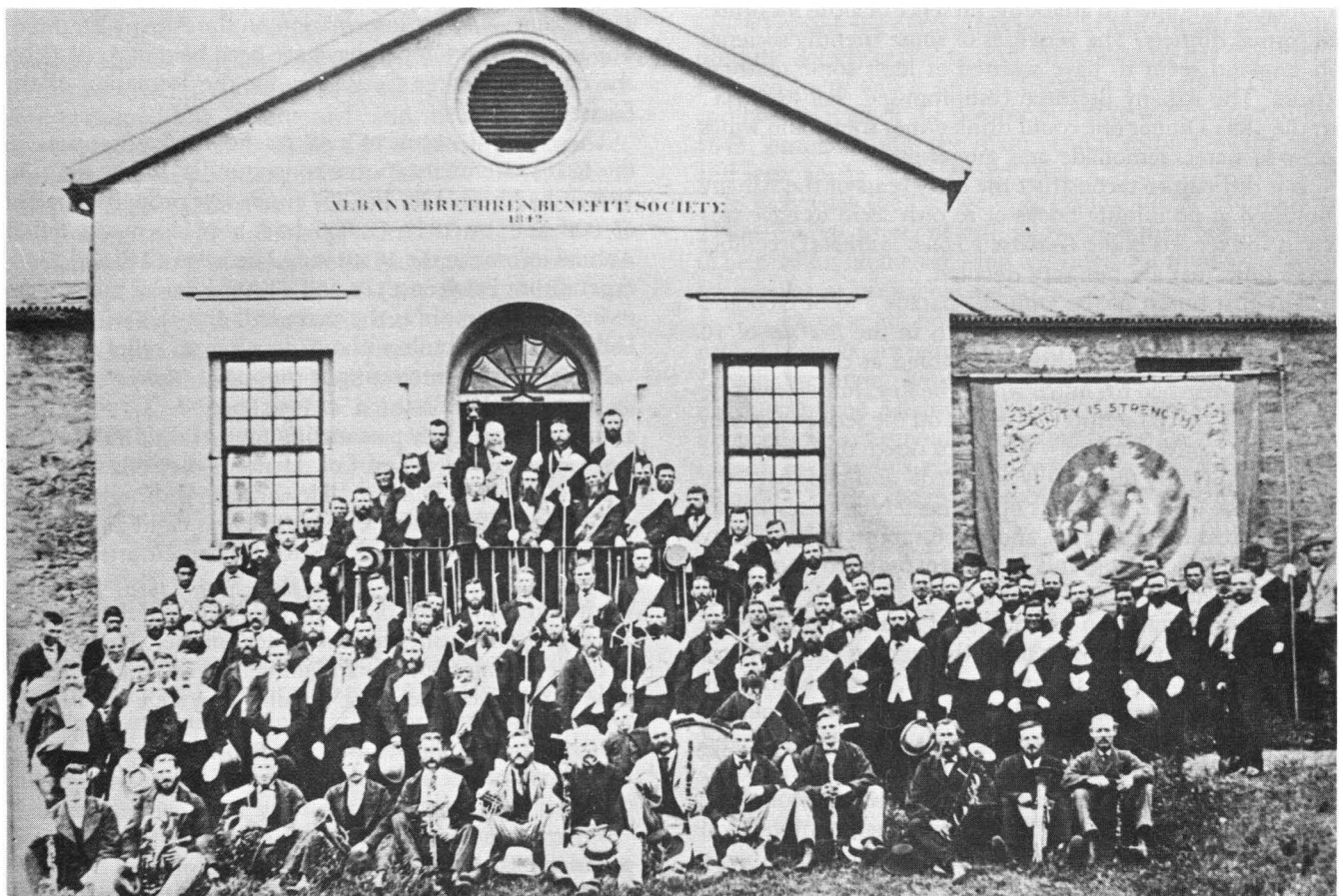
PHOTOGRAPH: VAN DER RIET COLLECTION

7. *Graham’s Town Journal*, 10.11.1849.

8. *Ibid.*, 7.11.1857.

9. Statistics compiled from relevant issues of the *Graham’s Town Journal*.

10. *Graham’s Town Journal*, 11.11.1870.



have benefited the Brethren who were so closely identified with it.

The Albany Brethren had their own jubilee celebrations in 1878. "This *ancient* and excellent local Association has steadily advanced its way for the past 50 years and is now the oldest, most prosperous and useful Association in our community . . . through all the changes and vicissitudes experienced by the Eastern Province by war, drought or pestilence it has maintained its prestige" said the *Eastern Star*.¹¹ And *Grocott's Penny Mail*¹² remarked: "Its local character and growth with the growth of the settlement is a feature to be found in the Albany Brethren alone."

The celebrations included a great dinner attended by Dean Williams, Catholic, Baptist, Wesleyan and other clergy, the Hon. Samuel Cawood, Mr Justice Smith, and other secular local notables. The following evening saw the *Conversazione* and Jubilee Ball. This started at 20h30 and dancing was kept up vigorously to midnight, when the ladies were escorted to supper in the East wing of the Hall. Dancing was later resumed and kept up until daylight.

The 1880s saw another decline. Only 30 people were in the church procession in 1884 and only 52 at the 1887 dinner. At that Dinner the Bishop (A.B. Webb) estimated that between 1 000 and 2 000 people had left Grahamstown in the preceding five years. Only about four founders of the Society were left in 1878 and by the late 1880s even the second generation was said to be ageing and dying off.

The end, however, was not yet, for the 1890s were generally a period of recovery with membership steady around the 70 mark and a generally optimistic note in reports. New members were sought but only young able-bodied men. 1898 was the 70th anniversary and all seems to have been well. The final blow would, in fact, seem to have been swift and unexpected — the Anglo-Boer War broke out. In 1899 the Annual Meeting and Church Parade were held but no Dinner — this had been cancelled before in war time, for example in 1850. The local press makes no further mention of an Albany Brethren Annual Meeting during or after the War. Probably the drain away of young men and increased claims hit the Brethren very hard. The Society probably continued after the War on a reduced scale. In November 1905 they sold their Hall to the Loyal E.P. Oddfellows Lodge who retained ownership until 1921 when it was sold to the Diocese of Grahamstown. The Albany Brethren may, according to oral tradition, have met in the Cross Street area for a while after 1905 but seem to have finally disbanded about 1907, though there is at present insufficient evidence to be exact.

THE ALBANY BRETHERN: AN ANALYSIS

It is easier to analyse the period covered by the only minute book at present known to exist and so the following account may be more accurate for the period 1877 to 1886 than for the early years.

The *Graham's Town Journal* of 6th November 1852 said that the membership included "many of the most skilful and enterprising artizans of the district." In 1857¹³ it said that the Society was composed "principally of the working classes . . . for its president even, it looks not to men of wealth, standing or title . . ." and in 1863 it referred to "the working men's Albany Brethren Benefit Society [which] flourishes while other societies supported by wealth and influence die" when reporting the Annual Meeting.¹⁴

Some idea of what was meant by "artizans", "working classes" or "working men" can be obtained by listing from

the relevant *Directories* the occupations of office-bearers and other known members, as far as these are given. The earliest occasion when this can be done on a fairly wide scale is in 1853 when the *Journal* published a list of fifteen office-holders and committee members. Of these thirteen can be assigned occupations with reasonable accuracy from the 1853 *Cape Almanac*:

A. Sanders (saddler); W. Watson (carpenter); C. Levey (carpenter); J. Glass (sawyer); B. Hall (carpenter or tailor as two B. Halls are listed); T.E. Passmore (carpenter); W. Wedderburn (shopkeeper or turner as two W. Wedderburns are listed); J.B. Levey (tailor); J.J. Mansfield (officekeeper); W. Wood (iron-monger or shoemaker as two W. Woods are listed); W. Glass (mason); J.E. Evans (sailmaker); and C. Wedderburn (mason).

This list can be compared with lists of office-bearers and occupations given 30 years later in the *Eastern Province Directories*. The lists for 1882/3 are:

C. Windsor (painter); W. Swan (butcher); W. Watson (clerk or hairdresser as two W. Watsons are listed); H. Weineck (wagonmaker); E.J. Patrick (blacksmith); R. Dersley (miller); G. Tinkler (sail and tent-maker); H. Whitehorn (general dealer); J. Hawkins (mason); D. Duggan (wagonmaker); J. Wedderburn (wagonmaker); B. Selby (wagonmaker); W.J. Webber (carpenter); G. Shaw (carpenter or salesman as two G. Shaws are listed); W. Tomlinson (wine and spirit merchant); and J. Maitland (mason).

It would seem, therefore, that members tended to be skilled artisans. Indeed in 1890 Bro. Wedderburn attacked the "master tradesmen" or employers for holding aloof from the A.B.B.S.

The office-holders and the majority of members lived in Grahamstown but there were also country members. Their ability to take part especially in the convivial activities must have been limited but they could certainly benefit financially. It is difficult, on available evidence, to form a clear picture of the number of country members, their location, and the part they played in the Society. In 1875 there were 127 members including 44 in the country. The number of members attending more routine meetings between 1877 and 1886 seems to indicate quite a large number of members who came only to more important meetings. The *Minute-Book* also contains reference to members in Queenstown, King William's Town, Peddie, Alexandria, Southwell, and Port Elizabeth. Indeed it was a boast of the Society that no matter where a sick member was he had but to send his card and his money would be sent. In 1885 Bro. G.H. Robson applied for aid from Kimberley and later from Cape Town. There was, probably, no geographic limit to membership provided the member paid his dues regularly.

A third class of members were the honorary members. In 1875 for example there were thirteen, and fourteen in 1882. These included clergy like The Rev. John Heavyside, Dean Williams, Bishop Merriman, and other leading Albany or Grahamstown personalities like Samuel Cawood and Dr W.G. Atherstone. These honorary members supported the A.B.B.S., took part at least in the Annual Meeting celebrations and contributed to funds either in the form of a regular annual payment (£1-1-0 in Minute-Book period) or by irregular donations. They were not financial members, that is, they got no monetary benefits.

11. *Eastern Star*, 8.11.1878.

12. *Grocott's Penny Mail*, 8.11.1878.

13. *Graham's Town Journal*, 7.11.1878.

14. *Ibid.*, 6.11.1863.

The affairs of the Albany Brethren were managed by a Committee which, once the Society had developed its final form, consisted of the president, sometimes a vice-president, two trustees, four stewards, two auditors, a secretary, and sometimes a treasurer or sub-secretary. There were also sub-committees, for example on building. The functions of each type of office-holder are not fully clear but seem to have been roughly as follows: The president had considerable prestige inside and probably also outside the A.B.B.S. He was the chairman for the committee meetings and presided over general meetings, the trustees seem to have handled the A.B.B.S. funds, to have been responsible for investing money received, for preparing financial statements and in general to have been responsible for the proper use of the funds; the stewards, who are sometimes termed "visiting stewards", may have been responsible for the actual distribution of relief or for verifying claims for relief. There always had to be two auditors who acted as internal auditors and checked the financial operations. During the reign of George Shaw, as secretary, (1860-1893) there was a small salary attached to this post which Shaw had come, in practice, to occupy permanently, though it still seems to have been necessary to re-elect him each year.

Income was derived from (a) members' regular subscriptions plus money from honorary members (1888 = £80 + £6), (b) special dues such as fines, refreshment dues, dinner funds, sale of regalia, (c) letting of all or part of the hall — the Temperance and Orangeman Societies and a dancing master were among the regular users, (d) investment of accumulated funds.

Expenditure went on (i) sick pay, (ii) funeral allowances, (iii) pension allowances, and (iv) running expenses. It was necessary to raise special funds for convivial occasions as friendly societies were often criticised for collecting money for charitable purposes and then spending it on their own enjoyment and entertainment.

When a member fell ill he "declared on the box" — important records and documents were kept in a box, though the term here was probably figurative. If he had paid his dues to date he was entitled to sick pay for the duration of his illness. He sent in his card to prove that he had paid to date and in some cases, for example if he were too distant to be visited, a doctor's certificate.

Actual rates of sick pay varied with general and A.B.B.S. circumstances. In 1864 for example the rate which had been 15 shillings per week was increased to 21 shillings. When the member recovered he "declared off the box" and payments stopped. Brethren, especially country members, were not always beneath failing to "declare off" as quickly as they ought.

A particular accident or case of special distress could be dealt with individually and a payment made. In 1880 £2 was paid to a member who had broken an arm. Funeral benefits similarly were paid as a lump sum to cover expenses incurred. In 1869 the relatives of a deceased member got £15 and a member received £7-10-0 on the death of his wife.

A special problem was that of members in chronic ill health or unable to work because of age. These could become an almost unending drain on the "box". To meet this a type of pension scheme was floated. A special sustentation fund was built up to provide regular small payments to such members. The member had to forego other claims on the Society (except perhaps burial) and had to pay if he took part in the Annual Meeting or other celebrations, but he got his small allowance (in the 1880s Bro. Clarke got £10 for 12 months) without having to pay any regular dues.

This system needed economic stability so that it could offer the young members who paid in regularly but drew

out seldom the prospect of financial aid in old age or infirmity. Young men joined the Society to insure themselves against future infirmity and to take part in the conviviality of the club room. The A.B.B.S. seems to have achieved and maintained a secure position throughout almost all its history. Not for nothing could the *Journal* claim, in 1859, that there was no town hall but the Albany Brethren could seat 400 to 600 people.¹⁵

The main business of the Society was transacted at general meetings which, in the minute-book period, were held once a month. Order of procedure was (a) minutes and matters arising (b) report of any members sick "on the box" — the actions of the officers to be approved where necessary, (c) initiation of new members, (d) correspondence and motions, (e) candidates for membership proposed and voted on, (f) collection of dues and compilation of a cash statement for the evening. Officers were required to attend such meetings, but attendance of ordinary members varied. In cases of special importance a "summoned meeting" was held at which at least all town members were required to be present. It is not certain whether or not the brethren indulged in any purely convivial activity at the general meeting, though they may have done.

The three main occasions for ritual and regalia would have been the initiation of new members, the investiture of new office-bearers and the Annual Meeting celebrations. There is little information on how new members were initiated. If it followed the pattern common in British societies, the initiation probably consisted of leading the new member into the main hall. There he would be presented to the president seated in the "apse"¹⁶ and, surrounded by his officers. The president would then address the new member and invest him with his regalia. The investiture of new officers took place at a monthly meeting after the election. The outgoing president occupied the chair as above. After the minutes had been read and confirmed he installed the new president in the chair and invested him with the president's sash and addressed "a few appropriate remarks to him."¹⁷ The new president then invested the vice-president and officers with their regalia "pointing out to each their duties and making an earnest request that they would support the Chair."

The annual celebrations consisted of (1) the Annual General Meeting, (2) the church parade, (3) the dinner and sometimes a dance or smoking concert. In the early years the celebrations all occurred on one day. At a later period they extended over two or three days, one of which was the first Tuesday in November.

The church parade saw members assemble, usually in the afternoon, at the Hall. Full regalia was worn and a large banner or banners carried. A band, sometimes military sometimes civilian, led the parade which, depending on the weather and other factors, might proceed straight to St George's Cathedral, or march along a round-about route. The Cathedral laid on a special service — full choral in later years, with a sermon by the Colonial Chaplain, later the Dean, or by the Bishop, who usually attended to read a lesson if he was not preaching. After the service the Brethren marched back and dispersed prior to the Dinner.

15. The size of the existing building suggests that these figures might not be strictly accurate.

16. This "apse" can still be seen in St Clements Church behind the altar.

17. Cory Library, Rhodes University, Grahamstown (CL), MS 7056 A.B.B.S. Minute Book.

For this the Hall was elaborately decorated and insignia and banners were on display. The tables formed a horseshoe, the president at the centre top with the apse containing the large banner behind him. After grace followed a specially catered dinner which was punctuated by as many as fifteen toasts with appropriate speeches and replies.

This toast list was a fairly formidable feature of the evening but once the 'loyal' and polite toasts were disposed of those remaining could be used to air views and provoke discussion. An Eastern or Albany view-point was often roundly expressed, especially in the great days of Grahams-town and Albany. In 1857 a toast to 'the succeeding members and success to the cause of Separation was proposed (by Mr J. Parker acknowledged by Geo. Wood Esq. 'in an energetic speech)'. In 1878 Bro. Stanton spoke in the following terms: 'He regretted much the Dean [Williams] had said was true. They had sent nincompoops [to Parliament], and it was much to be regretted that they were still sending nincompoops (great laughter). From what he (Bro. Stanton) learnt in the chair of this room he was able to defend their rights and liberties. He had defended them against Solomons (cheers). He hoped to see many follow his steps and go from that chair to Parliament (cheers) . . . They must know what were the affairs of the West — and they were never able there to call old Stanton a nincompoop. But the way the interests of the East have been sacrificed by a trimming press was not right.'¹⁹ The toast to the Army and Navy was another which gave scope for comment and in later years when horizons were more limited the toast to the mayor and Council could provoke lively comment on local affairs. Speakers on these occasions included Robert Godlonton, Henry Somerset, W.G. Atherstone, Bishop Merriman, Dean Williams, George Wood, and a variety of local notables.

Not everybody approved of this sort of thing. The Rev. John Heavyside noted in his diary in 1857 that he had given 'them a suggestion or two as to the desirableness of abstaining from the discussion of politics.'²⁰ Replying to the toast to the Judges in 1878 Mr Justice Smith felt the need to refer to Bro. Stanton's (and Dean Williams's) speeches — 'He would say one word of warning. He would greatly regret if these gatherings should degenerate into political demonstrations . . . He felt himself out of place here tonight while some of the speeches were being made . . . There was about to be a general election. It occurred to him that instead of doing what they could to keep the precepts of charity, to which they were invited by the occasion, they had been airing political feelings and principles, and there were some who might have to consider themselves among the nincompoops.'²¹ The A.B.B.S. do not however seem to have heeded such warnings — the prospect of fourteen dull toasts may have been too much!

The regalia in use at Annual Meetings and other occasions will have varied over the years. The basic item seems to have been a sash worn across the breast over the left shoulder. These would indicate ordinary membership or office held. In 1893 ordinary members' sashes were blue and crimson, past presidents' crimson and yellow, present office holders' blue and silver. It seems likely that the various kinds of office-bearers would have had distinctive sashes. From 1881, if not before, sashes should have been worn over black clothes with white gloves (similar to Masonic practice). After Dean Williams's funeral in 1885 it was decided to adopt as funeral regalia a black neck ribbon 6,25 cm wide worn across the sash. Staves were also carried at some stages. William Allen in his diary of the 1870 Settlers Jubilee Celebrations described the Albany Brethren in the Procession — ' . . . then the Albany Brethren, more numerous

still, with some dozen men with long blue staves at the point of which each had an open gilded hand with a small red heart in the palm. . .'²² The hand and heart was a common friendly society symbol. In 1875 some new 'insignia' were in use; the *Journal* described these as 'consisting of a series of implements of husbandry with the commonest names but of the most useful order which set forth the pioneering character of the Society.'²³ The photograph from Dr F.G. van der Riet's collection of Grahamstown photographs in the Cory Library shows the Brethren outside their Hall and some members holding staves showing crossed tools — saws, axes, spades, etc. — which seem to be the 'insignia' described. The photograph also shows other staves, some of which might be those mentioned by Allen. Staves may have been associated with particular offices.

Medals were also worn — these were sometimes awarded for long service — Bro. George Shaw being the recipient of one. Medals may have been worn on some occasions as a substitute for full regalia.

The banners carried in procession and on display in the Lodge were large. Allen describes 'a great banner very gaudy and gay' and Dr van der Riet's photograph shows one about 2 meter by 2,5 meter hung between two uprights. The motto 'Unity is Strength' appears on it and the central illustration shows a man failing to break a bundle of sticks tied together — a favourite friendly society symbol and motto.

The church parades were always to St George's Cathedral. The A.B.B.S. was not in any way a denominational society and, for example, invited many denominations of clergy to its Dinners, but it also rejected at least one attempt to alter the constitution to allow other churches to be used for the annual parade. The loyalty was probably to the Cathedral rather than to Anglicanism, despite the English example of the use of the Anglican parish church, for when Bishop Merriman, who was A.B.B.S. chaplain, felt himself excluded from his Cathedral he tried to get the Society to change to another Anglican church, Christ Church, but failed.²³ **C**

18. CL, MS 7056 A.B.B.S. Minute Book.

19. *Graham's Town Journal*, 7.11.1878.

20. CL, J. HEAVYSIDE, Diary, 3.11.1857, in H.M. MATTHEW, *Grahams-town Diocese: historical notes* (typed copy).

21. *Graham's Town Journal*, 7.11.1878.

22. CL, W. ALLEN, *Diary*, 25.5.1870 (unaccessioned photostat copy).

23. CL, MS 7056 A.B.B.S. Minute Book.