

HEARD UNDER THE OAK TREE  
by Bill DeWitt, Grand Historian



**The Mystery of the Diabolical Decade Discrepancy**

*A Treatise to Solve the Century Old Mystery*

*An open further response to Jr. P.N.G.A. Bill Glass*

January 17, 2007

Further greetings to you Jr. P.N.G.A.:

In the course of our dedicated endeavors to our beloved Order we may become fortunate to create an accomplishment that will leave its significant historical mark in the annals of our California Druidic history. Normally we do not have such an opportunity. If we do, we may not recognize its value to our Order. However, we did recognize the opportunity and have accomplished the task. It is with this thought that we have teamed up and solved *The Mystery of the Diabolical Decade Discrepancy*.

After this essay we could rename the title to *The Diabolical Decade Discrepancy*, for, in my opinion, the mystery has now been solved. I must confess to you that I had already begun research on this subject. However, your letter of challenge and your name creation of the subject not only made this an irresistible challenge, but also caused the process of research to be hastened.

You will recall in my previous letter I suggested that I would take on the task of proving the date of 1781 to be the correct year of the founding of our *Modern Druidic Order*. I now feel assured the 1781 date is, in fact, the correct date. I suggest the evidence that follows will convince you, and others, that my conclusion of 1781 was the year that Henry Hurle gathered with his friends at the King's Arms Tavern in London and founded our beloved Order. It would appear that the Europeans have the correct year in their records. We should cement this in the annals of our California Druidic Order history. *This will, in effect, rewrite California Druidic history! Yes, the Brits have it correct.*



I decided to focus my research on the source of year controversy. That source is Brother Beale's treatise on the beginning of Modern Druidism. Charles Beale was from London and a member of the parent Order, known as the "Ancient Order of Druids." He obtained his historical facts from his research of Druidic books and records found at the British Museum, as well as his personal experience as a member and officer of the Order. In all fairness to Charles Beale, his founding date of 1771 may have been the result of such as a typographical error. But, in any event, the date must be corrected in all documentation to be 1781.

*I further focused on two areas that directly related to his essay. The first area was the (American) Revolutionary War. The second focus brought my attention across the Atlantic Ocean to England. There I researched the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in that country. These two areas and their*

relationship to Charles Beale's essay offered conclusive evidence, in my opinion, that the Brits were correct and we were incorrect; namely, 1781 is the year.

Brother Beal stated, "The year 1771 found Great Britain committed to war of repression against their American kinsman, who rather than submit to the obnoxious laws and burdens imposed upon them, were shedding their life-blood on the fields of battle, in a supreme effort to assert their right of self-government and secure freedom and separation from the mother country." He further stated, "A more unpopular war was never entered into by the British government." It is evident that the Revolutionary War was in progress at that time. And this is a critical inference for our conclusion.

Let us now address the Revolutionary War. With all due respect, I must correct you regarding the date the War ended. This War took place from 1775 to 1783. Yes, it ended in 1783 (Treaty of Paris signed 9/3/1783), not 1776. Also, the Revolutionary War was, in fact, relevant to Brother Beal's essay, if for nothing else, it establishes somewhat of a timeline. With his referencing remarks regarding the war, we can conclude his use of the year 1771 is incorrect since the War began in 1775. (There was, however, the Battle of Point Pleasant, Virginia on October 10, 1774. In 1908, the U.S. Congress officially recognized this battle as the first battle of the American Revolution.) Also of interest is the fact that the Boston Tea Party did not take place until December 16, 1773. The Colonies were under British rule at that time. Therefore, Charles Beal's use of 1771 is incorrect and is suspicious wherever used. Hence, logic prevails for the date to be 1781.



Brother Beale further sets the mood and atmosphere of the times by mentioning the religious agitations in England. Included was his reference to Lord George Gordon. He further states that Gordon organized a mob comprising several thousand people who committed acts of violence. My research reflects that Lord Gordon organized and made himself head of the Protestant associations which were formed to secure the repeal of the Catholic Relief Act of 1778. On June 2, 1780 he headed the mob that resulted in the so-called "Gordon Riots." The annals of England's history clearly include this event. They destroyed several Roman Catholic chapels, pillaged the private dwellings of many Catholics, set fire to Newgate Prison and broke open prisons. There were about 450 people killed or wounded before the riots were quelled. The point is that this event took place well after 1771, and just before 1781. Consequently, the mood and atmosphere that Brother Beal wrote about really related to 1781, not 1771. The evidence continues to favor 1781!

And then there is the *plaque*. It would appear that the plaque was made and installed on the *Old King's Arms Tavern* about 150 years after the founding the Modern Druidic Order, probably 1931.



Further research in our Journal of Proceedings of The 67<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the U.A.O.D. of Druids of California, June 15 to 18, 1931, reflects our recognition of the 1781 date. NGA Charles Ceridono offered his Annual Report. He reported on National and International Relations on page 17. He mentions in that Report that the Druids of England had plans for international festivities in London in 1932 to celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the re-organization of our Order. The 68<sup>th</sup> Journal of Proceedings, page 28, corrected the year of celebration to 1931. NGA Ralph Starke commented the affair was one of the most colorful and magnificent fetes ever attempted by our English brothers. The celebration was concluded with a pilgrimage to the old Druidic monuments and to *Stonehenge*. There were no exceptions taken in either

Journal regarding the date of founding which resulted in 1781. This is another "notch in the handle" for the year of founding to be 1781.

Your letter mentioned that Cyril Guglielmoni was the compiler of *A Condensed History of the Druidic Order* in 1934. Further, that he had included the 1771 date taken from the writing of Charles Beale. Your account is accurate. Although Brother Guglielmoni preceded my birth in death, I

consider him to be my mentor in the history of Druidism. He was a great champion of Druidism. To his credit we should be aware that he too recognized the 1781 founding date. During the 1920's he authored a column in the California Druid Magazine entitled "*Observations.*" In the November 1927 issue, page 10, he mentioned the founding of Modern Druidism to be 1781. Unfortunately, his historical compilation quoted the year 1771 from Charles Beale's essay, with no notes to reflect the year controversy. And, we in California have accepted Brother Beale's incorrect year to be the correct year of the founding of Modern Druidism. But we are now in the process of correcting this long-accepted error.

Your letter mentions the concern of when Charles Beale wrote his essay. The California Druid Magazine contained a series of continuation articles, beginning in the August 1926 issue. Page one contains the initial article entitled Origin of Modern Druidism. This series is Brother Beale's narrative we have been writing about. The article had been published in the American Druid. Although the date of the publication is not mentioned, it would appear it might have been a recent issue. The article further states that "Charley Beale of London who is a member of the parent order, known as the 'Ancient Order of Druids.'" The word is signifying current times. The article further states "though now 82 years of age and 61 years a Druid" would indicate he certainly authored the essay well after 1830. He must have been born on or about 1844. This would tend to negate any theories offered in your paragraph relating to when the treatise was written.

Let us continue with the August 1926 California Druid Magazine article containing the beginning of Brother Beale's treatise. This reproduction does, in fact, state the year 1771 as the year that Henry Hurle met with his friends at the King's Arms Tavern. The November 1926 issue of the Magazine contains a further continuation of this long narrative. Page one contains information on Lodge No. 2. Since this is critical in our analysis I shall quote this information. "Within two years of the revival of the Ancient Order of Druids, on August 21, 1783, Lodge No. 2 was inaugurated at the Old Rose Tavern, Ratcliffe, Highway, London, E." A simple extrapolation places the revival of the A.O.D. to be the year 1781, the birth of our Modern Druidic Order. Of interest, the article further states, "On August 22, 1783, Lodge No. 3 was inaugurated at the Intrepid Fox, Westminster". Hence, within this same essay by Charles Beale, the years 1771 and 1781 (1783 minus 2 years) refute each another. In my opinion more credence should be given to the account of 1781. It is more specific in date and specifically relates to the year of founding.



King's Arms Tavern

I therefore must conclude that the year 1781 was, in fact, the founding of Modern Druidism. That 1781 was the year that Henry Hurle gathered with his friends at the King's Arms Tavern in London and founded our beloved Order. The preponderance of evidence not only suggests, but also proves that the year of 1781 to be the proper year. Henceforth, let us in the State of California recognize the true birth of Modern Druidism to be the year 1781.

I trust that my obligation of proving the date of the founding of our Modern Druidic Order has been accomplished, while at the same time maintaining the integrity of our Order. This has been a venture in the search for TRUTH that has rewarded the annals of our history with that TRUTH. *Your colorful description of this discrepancy was most interesting to read, however, it may have just been a "typo!"*

It is with this "ferreting out of the truth" that I remain

your humble Grand Historian, Bill DeWitt.

Cc: Editor, California Druid Magazine