

Freedom of Cowbridge

CONFERRED ON COL. H. R.
HOMFRAY

COLOURFUL AND PICTURESQUE
SCENE

There was a large and representative assembly of local townsfoll, members of leading families of the county, and aldermen, councillors and officials of Cowbridge Corporation, at the Old Town Hall, Cowbridge, on Wednesday last week, when Col. Herbert Richards Homfray, J.P., of Penllyn Castle, near Cowbridge, was enrolled as an honorary freeman of the Borough of Cowbridge.

The ceremony presented a highly colourful and picturesque scene, the Mayor and his mace-bearers and the aldermen, wearing their robes of office, Tributes were paid to Col. Homfray for the great services he had rendered to the borough and the county, and to the sterling qualities which have made him one of the most popular and respected men in the public life of Glamorgan.

The Mayor (Councillor Johnson Miles, J.P.) was accompanied on the platform by the Mayoress (Mrs. Miles), Councillors and officials of the Cowbridge Corporation, and Col. and Mrs. Homfray.

Letters expressing their inability to attend the ceremony were read by the Town Clerk (Mr. Arthur S. Gwyn), from Lady Mansel Franklyn, Dr. Edwards (former Archbishop of Wales, who is an honorary freeman of Cowbridge), the Right Honourable David Lloyd George (another honorary freeman of the borough), Dame Margaret Lloyd George, and Major Thomas Edmunds, Ewenny Priory.

The Mayor then called upon the Town Clerk to read the resolution of the Cowbridge Corporation to confer the freedom of the borough on Col. Homfray.

The Town Clerk, reading the resolution, stated that the Mayor had proposed that Col. Homfray should be made a freeman of Cowbridge, "he being a person having rendered eminent services to the borough."

The council had received a letter from the Rev. Gilbert Williams, R.D. (vicar of Llanblethian, and rector of Cowbridge) who stated he would be pleased to supply oak from the Cowbridge Church for the purpose of making the casket.

QUAINT OATH

The Mayor then administered the quaint oath to Col. Homfray, by which the new freeman swore to be "obedient to the Mayor," to be "civil to aldermen," and to "obey their warrants, precepts and commands." He then gave an address in which he referred to the admirable personal qualities of the new freeman.

Mr. Miles said he considered it a great privilege to offer the freedom of the Borough of Cowbridge to Col. Homfray. Some people might say that he and Col. Homfray did not have much in common, but he would like to point out the following resemblances which they bore:—Col. Homfray believed in honoring the King; so did the Mayor of Cowbridge; Col. Homfray believed "better death than dishonour," and "peace on earth and goodwill to men,"—and these were the sentiments of the Mayor of Cowbridge also.

Col. Homfray, said the Mayor, was the representative of one of the greatest families in the county. He came from a family, who believed in "action, maxims and motto."

"Col. Homfray," he continued, "has spent many years in this old borough, rendering great services to the men of the Vale. He has discharged his duties on the Glamorgan County Council without fear or favour (hear, hear), and he has served as chairman of the Cowbridge Bench of Magistrates without fear or favour also (loud applause). Today I pay him public tribute by conferring on him the freedom of this ancient borough. My colleagues and myself reached this decision by a unanimous vote."

The Mayor concluded his speech amidst loud applause, at the same time handing to Col. Homfray the oak casket.

Alderman Davies, the deputy mayor, speaking as a seconder of the resolution to confer this distinction on Col. Homfray, said the corporation were giving him the highest possible honour. He was sure there was not a person in Cowbridge who was not in whole-hearted accord with their decision.

TOWN'S HIGHEST HONOUR

The town of Cowbridge, in placing Col. Homfray amongst the few distinguished persons who were freemen of the borough, had bestowed on him the highest honour it had to offer. They had met together that afternoon to do honour to Col. Homfray, as one who had lived for very many years among them. Some of them had

known him for half a century, and could bear testimony that he had taken a leading part in the public life of the district. Col. Homfray shared in the love which they bore for the old borough and for the beautiful environment of the Vale of Glamorgan. He had commanded, and at all times received the respect of everyone of them, (applause).

He would not disturb the modesty of Col. Homfray, by speaking of him in any terms of laudatory praise, but he was quite sure he could use the words of the poet Goldsmith, in writing of the humble village schoolmaster: "He wore without abuse the grand old name of 'gentleman'."

It would be quite unnecessary for him, speaking to the Cowbridge audience, to inform them, or attempt to enumerate the great qualities possessed by Col. Homfray, which had fitted him to receive the honour which had just been bestowed upon him. There was one thing in particular, however, to which he wished to refer, and to which the Mayor had already alluded in his speech. That was the position which the Colonel had held for so many years as chairman of the local Bench of Justices, a position which he had filled with the utmost dignity and high capacity.

"As to the freedom which has just been conferred on him," said Alderman William Davies, "it has been well won by Col. Homfray. I hope the day will never come when the freedom of our borough will be conferred on any man lightly, and I feel certain that there is no doubt whatever in the minds of any of us present in this hall, that this freedom has been well won by Col. Homfray, after the long and honourable public service he has rendered with such distinction." (applause).

"I have been long enough in public life to have realised the truth of the old saying that public life brings more kicks than halpence. I don't think for a moment that Col. Homfray has received any of the kicks. As one of the great unpaid, I am certain that he has never received any of the halpence. But he can scarcely be altogether immune, I think, from some of that criticism which falls to the lot of almost every public man.

"I think it is only fitting that some mark of appreciation or some sort of encouragement should be shown, and I think that Col. Homfray will interpret our action this afternoon as having that mean-

UNANIMOUS DECISION

Alderman C. M. Davies said that as they had heard, the council were unanimous in their decision to make Col. Homfray a freeman of the borough, and he was convinced that he was expressing the opinion of the inhabitants of Cowbridge when he said that Col. Homfray was thoroughly deserving of the honour (applause). Such an honour was the highest any town could confer on a man.

He had been asked several times that week whether there were any privileges attached to the freedom, and he had been obliged to admit that he did not know of any. People today, always seemed to be "looking for something to be had at the end of everything." He was sure Col. Homfray would not think in that strain, and that he would be fully appreciative of the privilege which had been conferred on him. There was a time, however, when there were certain privileges to be obtained by a freeman. Looking up the old records, he found that in the year 1232; the freemen were exempt from paying tolls and taxes. He was afraid, however, he could not promise Col. Homfray that he would be free from income-tax. (laughter).

Alderman Davies remarked that although women had invaded many of the branches of life in which men had once held sway, he had never yet heard of a "freewoman."

Turning to Col. Homfray, he added: "So I suppose, sir, this is one of the things you can keep to yourself and never anticipate having a lady with you." (laughter).

"Col. Homfray has made a very solemn declaration," he went on, "and I hope he will keep his promise. He has sworn to be civil to the aldermen, and I hope that he will never violate that declaration, and will always be civil to these poor gentlemen in red robes." (laughter).

He remarked that Cowbridge, unlike some of the towns, was very jealous of the type of men it placed on its roll of freemen. During the 36 years that he (Alderman Davies) had been a member of the Corporation, there had been very few names added to the roll.

"We are delighted—and I say it from the depths of my heart," he added, "to see Col. Homfray's name on the roll of freemen of the borough of Cowbridge, and I hope that both he and Mrs. Homfray will spend many more years amongst us."

COL. HOMFRAY'S THANKS

Col. H. R. Homfray said that the honour they had done him in making him a freeman of the old town of Cowbridge, and the kind words which had been said on his behalf, were rather more than he was accustomed to, and he hardly knew how to reply. He would like to tell them in his own way why he had rendered his services to Cowbridge, and why it had always been his delight to do so. Cowbridge had been his native town for more than 71 years. Some 48 years ago, through the kindness of his late brother, he took up residence in Penllyn Castle, and except for a brief interval, he had been there ever since.

"All that time," said Col. Homfray, "my wife and I have reared a family, and I am proud to say they are here today, together with my son-in-law, Mr. J. C. Clay (the Glamorgan cricketer) and daughter-in-law, and such of my grandchildren, who are of an age to understand these proceedings. That record of domestic life in itself, is enough to bind you to your native town."

He loved Cowbridge because he knew it pretty thoroughly having had close contact with the town during his lifetime. He had grown to love its antiquity, and he had learned to have great regard for its present day affairs. He had the greatest admiration for the manner in which Cowbridge was governed by the Corporation. Cowbridge, although a small town was as progressive and held its head as high as any of the large towns.

A feature of the old town which strongly appealed to him was the annual show on Mayor's Sunday, when the Corporation turned out with all the pomp and ceremony they could summon.

Col. Homfray thanked the Rev. Gilbert Williams (vicar of Cowbridge), for pro-

viding a piece of oak from the old beams of Cowbridge Church for the making of the casket, and he also thanked Mr. Sidney Smith, a Cowbridge boy, for carving the casket which would be treasured as a family heirloom. He said he recalled many happy memories of his visits to Cowbridge Church in the early days of his life.

"As long as I have health and strength," said Col. Homfray, and as long as Cowbridge has need of my services, they are always very freely at her disposal. I venture to say that when my time is up, if Cowbridge has need of the services of my successor, I am sure you will find him just as ready and anxious to carry on as I have endeavoured to be all my life. I thank you all!"

Amongst those present at the ceremony were: Mr. and Mrs. L. G. Williams, of Bonvilston; Miss Edmonds, Mr. and Mrs. J. C. Clay, Mr. John Homfray, Mr. Frank Homfray, Capt. H. C. Homfray (Master of the Glamorgan Hounds) and Mrs. Homfray, Miss Anne Homfray, Capt. and Mrs. G. S. Nicholl-Carne, the Rev. Gilbert Williams (vicar of Cowbridge) and Mrs. Williams, Mr. and Mrs. G. A. H. Samuel, Kent, the Rev. and Mrs. Emrys Davies, the Rev. B. T. Roberts, Mr. Vivian S. Gwyn (Cowbridge magistrates' clerk) and Mrs. Gwyn, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur W. Gwyn, Mr. Hugh Reynolds and Mr. Percy Smith, County Councillor and Mrs. Smith, Llantwit Major, Mr. E. Morgan Rees, J.P. (president of the Glamorgan Farmers' Union) and Mrs. Rees, Mr. James James, J.P., Mr. Ward David, J.P. Llanharan; Mr. T. H. Hopkins J.P., Pencoed; Mr. J. R. Staien, Coedhills; Mr. Richard Morgan, St. Hilary; Mr. Roderick Williams and Mr. D. C. Watts, Mrs. G. Tilley and the headmaster of the Grammar School and several of the boarders.

The proceedings were brought to an end by the singing of "God Save The King."