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AN
ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

Wor. Bro. CHARLIE D. EATON
P.M., P.A.G.D.C., P.P.G.W., Wor.,

AT THE

JUBILEE MEETING

OF THE

LECHMERE VOLUNTEER LODGE

No. 1874

MAY 6TH, 1931



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Supplement to the Jubilee Souvenir.

Address delivered at the Jubilee Meeting

I do not propose to enter at any length into the early years of the Lodge at Kidderminster, as this is fully dealt with in the brochure which will be in your hands later in the evening.

I think, however, it will be well if I read to you the minutes of the original meeting at Kidderminster held Feb. 20th, 1880, when the decision to form a second Lodge in that town was arrived at, viz. :

EXTRACT FROM ORIGINAL MINUTE BOOK.

PRELIMINARY MEMO.

LECHMERE LODGE, 1874.

1st Meeting of the Brethren interested in the formation of a New Lodge held at the Masonic Club, 128, Mill Street, Kidderminster, February 20th, 1880. Present, Bros. Geo. Taylor, A. Cowell, G. W. Naylor, J. T. Meredith.

Bro. Taylor laid before the Brethren present all the reasons existing for such a step to be taken and sketched out a line of action whereby it could be made to fill a want and ensure a successful result. By the unanimous wish of the Brethren it was decided to ask the following to join in the petition as original members : Bros. G. Taylor, G. W. Grosvenor, G. W. Naylor, J. T. Meredith, A. Cowell, F. Burcher, W. M. Roden, E. Hammond, J. F. Harvey, H. B. Pigot, and M. Tomkinson.

Bro. Taylor was requested to draw up the necessary petition and submit to Lodge Hope and Charity 377 for their recommendation.

Bro. Cowell proposed and Bro. G. W. Naylor seconded that Bro. G. Taylor be the first W.M., Bro. Grosvenor the first S.W., and Bro. G. W. Naylor the first J.W. Carried unanimously.

It was also resolved unanimously that Sir E. A. H. Lechmere, P.G.M., Worcestershire, be requested to lend his name as that of the New Lodge. The whole of the above-named Brethren signed the Petition.

The Brethren interested were all P.M.s, or members of the Lodge Hope and Charity, No. 377, of Kidderminster, or of Vernon, No. 560, of Stourport, and were professional men or local manufacturers.

The lodge was intended to be a class lodge and not in any way a competitor with No. 377, who, in fact, were asked to and did recommend the petition for the Charter.

The membership was restricted by the bye-laws to a total of thirty, but as a fact never exceeded twenty-five, and after a somewhat chequered career found themselves in 1894 reduced in numbers and unable to secure a sufficient attendance to conduct a ceremony, and when a suggested candidate was proposed the secretary advised the proposer that it was unfair to his candidate to bring him forward in the state of the lodge.

During the winter of 1893-4 I was in the habit each Sunday morning of meeting Bro. J. C. Aston, who was associated with me in the Bedford Lodge of M.M.M.'s for the purpose of rehearsing the work of that Degree in order to fit him for the office of W.M. of the lodge, and it was from his suggestion that the idea of forming a Masonic Lodge composed of N.C.O.'s of the 1st Volunteer Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment first emanated.

He was at the time suffering from illness and unable to take any steps in the matter, but within a few days I had approached a number of my fellow N.C.O.'s and found the suggestion most favourably received.

A meeting was held, attended by Bro. J. C. Aston, Jacob Whitehouse, H. S. Bailey, J. L. Jones, A. W. Edge, and myself, and it was decided to sound a number of the members of the Sergeants' Mess, and no less than seventeen offered themselves as candidates.

Owing to the fact that neither of the promoters were qualified for nomination as Worshipful Master, although it was intended to restrict the lodge to N.C.O.'s, it was decided to seek the co-operation of two officers who were so qualified, and Capt. Henry Burrough, a P.M. of the Tudor Lodge, No. 1792, and Capt. T. J. Graham, the Worshipful Master of the Athol Lodge, No. 74, my Mother Lodge, on

being asked, at once consented to join and entered with enthusiasm into the scheme.

The Provincial G. Secretary of Warwickshire, the late Wor. Bro. Geo. Beech, afterwards Prov. G. Master, and a former officer of the Battalion, was interviewed. He not only offered no support, but stated that Warwickshire did not want another lodge and declined to furnish us with the necessary forms of petition.

It may be noted that at this time there were but thirty-one lodges in the province, of which seventeen were in Birmingham with an average membership of fifty-five, the last of which, the Alma Mater, No. 1644, was consecrated eighteen years previously in 1876.

Nothing daunted, a petition was duly drawn up with the recommendation that the lodge should be called "The Royal Warwickshire Volunteer Lodge." Wor. Bro. Capt. Burrough, myself, and Bro. J. C. Astor, were nominated for W.M., S.W., and J.W. respectively.

This was presented on May 2nd to the Athol Lodge, No. 74, approved and signed by the Wor. Master, Bro. Capt. T. J. Graham and his Wardens.

Meanwhile, Capt. Burrough had obtained an interview with the D.P.G.M., Wor. Bro. J. T. Collings, the case explained to him and his support solicited, with the result that he wrote on May 7th that he had laid the matter before the P.G.M., Lord Leigh, who had replied "that he was not in favour of exclusive lodges," and that with this strong feeling on the part of his Lordship it was undesirable to continue the effort.

This letter was laid before those interested, and as a result Capt. Burrough again approached the D.P.G.M. on the 26th June and submitted the petition¹ urging the exceptional circumstances in its favour, and accompanying it with the formal recommendation of the Athol Lodge², a petition recommending the appeal for favourable consideration which had been prepared in the meantime³, and which was signed by eighty distinguished Brethren, amongst

¹ See Souvenir, Appendix A.

² See Souvenir, Appendix C.

³ See Souvenir, Appendix D.

whom were seven present Prov. G. Officers, including Wor. Bros. Col. Wm. Cox, Prov.S.G.W. ; F. G. Swindon, Prov.J.G.W. ; John Harris, Prov. G. Treasurer ; twenty-four P.P.G. Officers, seven Masters of Birmingham Lodges, and twenty-three P.M.'s, a significant comment on the objection of the venerable and most respected P.G.M., and also an application from seventeen N.C.O.'s who desired to become candidates in the proposed lodge.⁴

On July 20th Capt. Burrough had a further interview with the D.P.G.M., asking him again to put the matter before Lord Leigh, and as a result received the following letter dated July 30th :

July 30th 1894.

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER,

I write to inform you that I have submitted to our Prov. G. Master, Lord Leigh, the various Petitions in reference to the suggested formation of a new Lodge, viz. : that of the Warwickshire Volunteers, and which he has returned to me without having attached his signature.

He declines to do so owing to the great objection he entertains to the formation of exclusive Lodges, as he mentioned in his first letter to me on the subject and which he now more strongly expresses. So decided are his feelings on this point that he states that for similar reasons he some time ago declined to join a Lodge then about to be formed in London exclusively for officers of the Grand Lodge of England, and it is this feeling which induces him to withhold his recommendation to the Petition.

It is only right, I should add, that he states although he does not sanction, he does not actively oppose.

It is my duty to acquaint you thus plainly with the views of our Prov. G. Master, and under these circumstances I beg to return you the various documents which you have sent me and which I enclose herewith.

Allow me personally to thank you for the courtesy with which you have brought the application under my notice.

I beg to remain,

Faternally yours,

(Signed) J. T. COLLINS, D.P.G.M.

To BRO. H. BURROUGH.

⁴ See Souvenir, Appendix B.

This letter was taken as permission to approach the M.W.G.M. direct, and on 22nd October application was made to the Grand Secretary, accompanied by the whole of the Petitions, for the Grand Master's approval, and on the 31st October the following reply was received :

31st October, 1894.

DEAR SIR AND BRO.,

I have to apologize for the delay in replying to your communication of the 22nd September last on the subject of the proposed Royal Warwickshire Volunteer Lodge.

The granting of a warrant rests entirely with the M.W. Grand Master, but I am sure His Royal Highness would not entertain a Petition for one within a Province without the recommendation of the Provincial Grand Master, as required by Article 116, Book of Constitutions.

The Grand Master has on many occasions granted Warrants to Lodges bearing titles such as that of the proposed new Lodge, and which may be composed mainly, if not entirely, of the class indicated by the names those Lodges bear, but the Laws of Masonry do not admit of such Lodges having a bye-law limiting its Members to any particular class.

Nothing, however, can prevent the Members of any Lodge, whatever name it may bear, arranging among themselves that only those of a particular class shall be proposed for election. That is the case with "The Chancery Bar Lodge," which the Grand Master consecrated last year, "The Northern Bar Lodge," "The Victoria Rifles Lodge," and numerous others.

It is possible the Provincial Grand Master, in view of this explanation, may be pleased to reconsider his determination not to recommend the Lodge.

I shall be happy at any time to see you or any of the proposed Founders and discuss the matter with you, but I am convinced His Royal Highness would not entertain any application not recommended by the Provincial Grand Master.

I return you the Petition and the documents which accompanied it.

I am, dear Sir and Bro.,

Yours faithfully and fraternally,

E. LETCHWORTH,

Grand Secretary.

W. BRO. H. BURROUGH, P.M., LO. No. 1792, P.P.Dep.D.C. Staffs.

As a result Capt. Burrough again sought an interview with the D.P.G.M. and the Prov. Grand Secretary, and was informed that further application was useless, as the Provincial Grand Master having made up his mind "could and would put his foot down." This was confirmed in a letter from the D.P.G.M.

Owing to the illness of Capt. Burrough the matter remained in abeyance until April, 1895, when Lord Leigh was again approached and finally refused the application.

In the meantime the promoters had not been idle and had turned in the direction of Worcestershire.

At that time the Parish of Balsall Heath was in the county and Province of Worcester and in order to strengthen their position Bro. Sergt. Major Kadband, of the Worcester and Warwick Volunteer Artillery, whose headquarters were in Runcorn Road, Balsall Heath, was taken into council, with the result that eleven members of that arm of the service applied to be associated with the movement.

In April the Masfield Lodge, No. 2034, then meeting at the Moseley and Balsall Heath Institute, were consulted as to their feeling towards a proposal to form a second lodge in their rooms, and approval was most readily granted.

Application was then made to Wor. Bro. Geo. Taylor, the Prov. G. Secretary of Worcestershire, and as a result he suggested that as the Lechmere Lodge No. 1874 were unable to carry on at Kidderminster, arrangements might be made for its removal to Balsall Heath.

A meeting of the whole of those interested was held in Birmingham, and Bro. Taylor attended and explained the circumstances, with the result that his offer was at once accepted, with the condition that the lodge should be named the Lechmere Volunteer Lodge and he was authorized to complete the arrangements with the Wor. Master and Brethren at Kidderminster.

A meeting of the lodge was held, and on June 30th Bro. Taylor wrote confirming the arrangements as follows :

June 30th, 1895.

DEAR BRO. EATON,

The labour of stock have prevented me writing ere this. We had a most agreeable and unanimous meeting on Thursday—at which by the bye you did not attend, but there was no reason.

All was in quite as good accord as at our meeting of deputations.

The following was unanimously resolved :

“ That having carefully taken into consideration the present position of the Lodge, and its future prospects, which they regret to feel are not favourable to its hopes of life in Kidderminster, and being satisfied with the proposal of the Brethren applying for its removal, we hereby assent to its removal to Balsall Heath under the name of the Lechmere Volunteer Lodge or such name as may be ultimately agreed upon, and under the condition that such present officers of the Lodge as may be desirous of continuing in office and not being in any way ineligible shall have their offices and those that follow secured to them.”

Also resolved :

“ That a stipulation be made that present members pay a subscription of not exceeding one guinea.”
I will draw up an application to Grand Master and P.G. Master. All the joining Bn. I duly proposed.

Faithfully,

(Signed) GEORGE TAYLOR.

P.S.—I will now ascertain who will and who will not continue membership and office.

At this meeting of the lodge Bros. Eaton, Aston Bailey, Edge, J. L. Jones, and Whitehouse were proposed as joining members, and at a meeting held on August 27th, the Prov. G. Master's assent was announced, the six joining members elected and twenty-eight candidates proposed for initiation.

It is only right to mention that in connection with the arrangements made with the Kidderminster Brethren, the only liability incurred was arrears of rent amounting to £13, while the whole of the valuable properties of the lodge, together with the contents of the Alms Fund, £41 3s. 9d., were handed over to the reformed lodge and ultimately, at the suggestion of the Prov. G. Master, Sir A. F.

Godson, and Bro. Taylor, the whole of the Alms Fund were voted to the Lechmere Memorial Fund in memory of the late Prov. G. Master, Sir E. A. H. Lechmere.

In July Capt. Burrough, recognizing that the wishes of the promoters were in a fair way of accomplishment and under the changed circumstances the lodge would start with the benefit of a Wor. Master and a number of P.M.'s, in keeping with his unselfish efforts wrote the following letter :

24th July, 1895.

DEAR BRO. EATON,

Please accept my thanks for your kind invitation to the meeting this evening, which I regret I am unable to attend.

As I explained to you at our interview a short time ago, I think that now there is no necessity for my joining. It will be in the interests of the Lodge if you begin as you intend to go on and that no exception shall be made in my case. I appreciate the kind feelings entertained towards me by all the Brethren associated with you, and heartily reciprocate the same. I need hardly say how much I wish your Lodge success, and from the list of new names added to the old members I can foresee the making of a Model Military Lodge.

Whilst regretting that our efforts to found a new Lodge in Warwickshire, I must congratulate you all upon having obtained the "Lechmere" Charter and brought it so near home.

Again wishing you every possible success.

Believe me,

Yours faithfully and fraternally,

(Signed) H. BURROUGH.

BRO. C. D. EATON,
Wheateys Road

The first meeting was arranged for September 4th, 1895, at Balsall Heath, for the purpose of electing the twenty-eight candidates and initiating the first ten.

The arrangements for this meeting were made by the Birmingham Brethren in conjunction with Bro. Taylor, and up to September 3rd I had received no communication from the Wor. Master, Bro. R. Eager, consequently in the absence of his assistance and the inability of Bro. Taylor to be present, I had with Bro. Taylor's approval arranged for the ceremony of initiation to be taken by Capt. Burrough with the aid of a number of local sympathisers. Judge my

surprise when on the morning of the meeting I received a letter from the W.M. stating that he would be present and would take the ceremony up to the Ob.

This quite upset my plans. I therefore went over to see Bro. Eager and explained that all arrangements had been made in conjunction with Bro. Taylor and all I wanted him to do was to open the lodge and sign the minutes, and to this he eventually consented.

Satisfactory arrangements were made with the Masefield Lodge for the use of their furniture.

In December Wor. Bro. Col. Ottley, who had succeeded Sir A. F. Godson as D.P.G.M., suggested, in view of the neglect of the lodge by the Kidderminster officers, that it was advisable to alter the installation to the October meeting, in order that I might be qualified for the office of Worshipful Master, I having been appointed J.W. at the meeting in October. This was agreed to and the necessary alterations made in the bye-laws and approved by the Prov. G.M. and the M.W.G.M.

At the January meeting in 1896 the first letter of apology for absence was received from the S.W. The Wor. Master also wrote asking for a meeting of P.M.'s to be called to consider the question of the W.M., under the impression that the election was in February, and Col. Ottley wrote that should I not wish to succeed to the office, either Capt. Burrough or Capt. Ryder should be asked to become subscribing members and take over the duties and responsibilities as W.M. Poor Capt. Burrough was ill at the time and passed away in February, and Capt. Ryder declined. At this meeting also the D.P.G.M., Col. Warner Ottley, gave a ruling that while with the consent of the C.O.'s of the several units "uniform" should be worn by the members of the lodge, it should not be worn when visiting other lodges.

During the first thirteen months, under the nominal rule of the W.M., Bro. Eager, he attended the lodge on three occasions ; the only ceremony he performed was that of opening and closing the lodge. Two of the Kidderminster members attended on two occasions and four others once only.

Wor. Bro. Geo. Taylor attended in November and raised to the third degree the two first initiates. Altogether during this period nine regular and six emergency meetings were held, thirty-one candidates were initiated and passed, and thirty were made Master Masons, the ceremonies being taken by P.M.s. of other lodges, of which Capt. Burrough attended six meetings and initiated twenty-four of the first candidates. Col. Ottley attended twice and raised two. Capt. Ryder attended seven meetings, passing no less than twenty-eight to the second degree. Wor. Bro. T. R. Arter, P.M. 2034, and Prov. G. Treasurer, who practically took charge of the working after the death of Capt. Burrough and who eventually became a joining member, raised no less than sixteen to the third. Wor. Bro. E. Collens, P.M. 560, and later Prov. G. Secretary, although residing at Stourport, initiated one and raised two, while Wor. Bro. Herbert Manley, P.M. Godson, 238, and Wor. Bro. Arthur Hulme, W.M. of the Tudor, 1792, each took part in the ceremonies, the former raising four and the latter passing three.

The charge to the initiates was given on every occasion and the explanation of the 2nd T.E. on three occasions.

Apart from the Brethren named, much assistance was most generously given by P.M.'s of local lodges, more especially so those of the Masefield Lodge, No. 2034.

I may here remark that many members of the lodges meeting in these rooms will have noticed and wondered at the connection of the photograph in the dining room of an officer in full military uniform without any apparent Masonic connection. For their information that is a photograph of the late Capt. Henry Burrough, to whose memory the original members of the Lechmere Volunteer Lodge will ever pay respect and affectionate tribute and to whose council and guidance the lodge owes much of its success.

Almost at the *first* meeting the question was raised as to the support to be given to the Masonic Charities, and a Tontine System was inaugurated at a subscription of 10s. 6d. per share per annum. This was joined by every member and is in existence to-day, and has been the means of raising very considerable sums for the Masonic Institutions and

enabling many members to serve stewardships at one or other of the annual festivals.

When we consider that during this important period of the lodge history, the principles and tenets of Freemasonry had to be imparted to such a large body of new members, it speaks highly for the enthusiasm of the few brethren who promoted the transfer that the lodge has throughout its career at Balsall Heath and King's Heath held a foremost place in the Province and has ever been ready to assist and support every movement for the advancement of the interests of the Order.

The climax of the early period was reached when at the October meeting in 1896, the Master Elect was installed by the D.P.G.M., Col. Warner Ottley, assisted by Wor. Bro. Edward Collens, P.M. 560, with the full ceremony of the opening of a Board of Installed Masters and in the presence of many distinguished officers of the Volunteer forces.

During the early days many and repeated complaints were made of the poor accommodation at the Moseley and Balsall Heath Institute, and for the greater number of meetings one room (the small hall) only was available and this was divided by curtains so as to form the lodge room and dining room, and a corner screened off by two large screens (one of which is here exhibited) so as to form a preparation room for the candidates.

Shortly after the Institute authorities built an additional room for use as the lodge room, but even this in the course of a few years proved inadequate for the increased membership, and the result was that eventually the few lodges then meeting there formed a Limited Company which secured the present Hall for our use.

Of those early members only three of the promoters are left, of whom I am the only subscribing member, and of the thirty-one initiates seven only remain, viz. :

Wor. Bro. W. G. Tye

Wor. Bro. W. E. Meggeston } initiated 4th Sept., 1895

Wor. Bro. H. Scandrett

Wor. Bro. F. Edwards (initiated October 14th, 1895),

all of whom are still active in the lodge, while Wor. Bro. John Grant (initiated September 14th, 1895) is in Jersey ;

Bro. W. G. Garnett (initiated September 4th, 1895), who we are glad to see with us to-day, and Bro. Owen Hopkins (initiated October 2nd, 1895), who served under General Botha in the West Africa Field Force, and who I believe is still living in South Africa.

Of the thirty-one, nine occupied the chair of 1874 and three in other lodges.

I will conclude by reading an extract from the *Freemason* of September 21st, 1895 :

"After the ceremony of Initiation, the chair was resumed by the W.M., but before the Lodge was closed the Prov. Grand Master elect expressed the great pleasure he felt on behalf of the province at having such an influx of able and intelligent soldiers and citizens into the Masonic body of his province, and after expatiating upon the manifold virtues of the late lamented Prov. Grand Master, whose name the Lodge bore, and pointing out to the new Brethren the advantages they had acquired in taking over the old warrant with its endowments for charitable purposes, expressed a fervent hope that the Lodge might increase and flourish in his province, and that they might emulate their predecessors in their charitable work, and he further assured the Brethren that all he could do he would do for the furtherance of the interests and the promotion of their success and prosperity.

Bro. Charles D. Eaton, acting J.W. and the chief promoter of the movement, thanked the Provincial Grand Master elect for his kind expression and feelings, and for his promises of assistance and support and also for the assistance and support he had already given them, and for his having at great sacrifice attended there that evening, and assured the Provincial Grand Master that it was the aim, object, desire, and determination of every joining soldier to bring into the Lodge that spirit of emulation and discipline which had enabled them in their various military positions to raise their respective corps so high in the estimation of all their Majesty's subjects, and further assured the Provincial Grand Master that the Masonic customs, landmarks, and traditions would be preserved unsullied to the best of their ability so long as they all should live."