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# Abbot Lichfield Lodge,

No. 3308.

OPENING OF THE MASONIC HALL  
EVESHAM, THURSDAY, OCT. 8th, 1914.

Some Notes on the Old  
Evesham "Mercy & Truth"

:: Lodge, No. 703. ::



Presented to the Lodge by Bro. W. Gill Smith.

THE old Masonic Lodge at Evesham did not enjoy a very long existence, for it was warranted on 13th May, 1818, and ceased to meet after 9th November, 1831, although it was included in the renumbering of 1832, when it became No. 454. It was originally known as the "Mercy and Truth" Lodge, No. 703, and was finally erased in 1833. There is a tradition that many years afterwards certain Evesham people who had emigrated to Australia succeeded in founding in that country a Lodge having the same appellation and number as the old Evesham Lodge—an appellation unusual in Masonic nomenclature—and that some of the furniture of the old Lodge was sent out to them there.

The migrations of the Lodge during its career were:—

1818. Rose and Crown, Evesham.

1819. Crown, Evesham.

1824. Cross Keys, Evesham.

1826. Ship Inn, Pershore; and Cross Keys, Evesham.

1827. Coach and Horses, Pershore; and Cross Keys, Evesham.

There are only two Lodges now in existence in the Province of Worcestershire which were warranted prior to the "Mercy and Truth" Lodge, viz., Harmonic Lodge, No. 252, Dudley, in 1784; and The Worcester Lodge, No. 280, in 1790.

After such a long interval of time it has been difficult to pick up many historical threads concerning our previous Lodge, for apparently none of its documentary evidences are now in existence.

In 1822 the W.M. was Benjamin Workman who was then living at Great Hampton. During his term of office he received the following letter:—

Worcester, September 18th, 1822.

"Worshipful Sir and Brother,

Our Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Bro. Dr. Dods, has commanded me to inform you that he will hold a Provincial Grand Meeting at the Reddeer Inn, Worcester, on Wednesday, the 2nd of October next, at 12 o'clock, when your company is particularly requested, with as many brethren of your Lodge as can make it convenient to attend, for the purpose of nominating and appointing the different Grand Officers for establishing a Provincial Grand Fund, &c. The favour of an answer before Saturday, the 22nd



inst., stating the number of brethren that are likely to attend, will oblige.

"I am, Worshipful Sir and Brother,

"Yours fraternally,

"S. SWAN,

"Provincial Grand Secretary.

N.B.—Dinner on the table at half-past three o'clock.

The only member of the "Mercy and Truth" Lodge who attended in response to this request was, so far as I can trace, the W.M. himself, and he received honours, being nominated and appointed S.G.D. At the same meeting a P.G.L. appointment was conferred upon Bro. William Law Phelps, P.S.W., and upon Bro. Holland, both of the Evesham Lodge; whilst of the three Tylers appointed one was Bro. Redman, of the same Lodge. At the conclusion of this meeting the "Worcester Herald" tells us that "the cup of cheerfulness and the bread of plenty were heartily enjoyed."

In February, 1824, a proposition came before The Worcester Lodge to take £16 from the Lodge funds for the purchase of jewels, &c., for P.G.L. It was "unanimously negatived," and the Secretary was ordered to inform the brethren of the

Evesham Lodge, who were evidently about to consider a similar proposition, concerning this decision.

When the "Mercy and Truth" Lodge terminated its brief career in 1831, its possessions became scattered and, as already noted, some may even have gone to Australia.

In April, 1908, Wor. Bro. C. B. Shuttleworth, D.C. 280, when engaged in making an Inventory of the possessions of his Lodge came across the following listed items:—

"Two books that belonged to the Old Evesham Lodge of 'Mercy and Truth,' 703."

"Two brass columns from the same Lodge."

"Holy Bible from the same Lodge."

Then followed an entry to this effect:—

"The above property of the Evesham Lodge, presented by Wor. Bro. T. L. Smith, Feb. 1898 and to be returned to Evesham should a Lodge be ultimately opened there."

These "two books" cannot now be traced despite a careful search also made in the P. G.L. Library at Worcester, but the handsome brass columns eventually passed into the possession of Bro. J. T. Williams, of our Lodge, and were restored to us by him soon after the Abbot Lichfield Lodge was

consecrated, which ceremony took place on 14th Jan. 1909. The Columns are not in use however as they are not in harmony with the existing furniture. They are on view here this evening, one of them has this late inscription upon its base:—"Mercy and Truth Lodge, No. 703, Evesham, 1818, Erased 1833, T. L. S." The other is inscribed:—"Presented to Worcester Lodge, No. 280, Feb. 20th, 1890, by Bro. T. Lamb Smith, P.M., Treasurer, P.G.J.W."

The Volume of the Sacred Law alone remained in the possession of The Worcester Lodge up to the time of the consecration of the Abbot Lichfield Lodge, at which time it was duly returned to Evesham, and has always been used at our ceremonies since then. It contains this inscription upon the front inside cover:—"This Book was the property of Lodge, 'Mercy and Truth,' No. 703, Evesham, 1818, and was presented by Bro. T. Lamb Smith, P.M., 280 P.G.J.W., to Lodge 280, Feb. 20th, 1890."

It is well known that Wor. Bro. T. Lamb Smith was an enthusiastic collector of masonic relics, and it would also seem probable that he was of an Evesham descent. Another local relic from his collection is still possessed by Lodge 280. It is a



Theatre Programme, which by the kindness of the W.M. of that Lodge, has been lent for temporary exhibition in our Lodge. Evesham rejoiced in the visits of many travelling companies of actors and actresses at the commencement of the last century and there is evidence that inhabitants of all classes flocked to see them play productions both fearful and wonderful. There were Benefits galore for the leading players, and numerous 'by desire' performances. From this Evesham Programme we gather that the brethren of the Lodge of 'Mercy and Truth' were not immune from the blandishments of the Potter family who were running a company here then, and that accompanied by the W.M. and his officers, they sallied forth "down the Bewdley,"—or, to give it the facetious appellation then accorded to it of "Drury Lane"—and seated themselves to watch and applaud the performance of the following varied Programme, from which the casts of the plays are here omitted:—

THEATRE, DRURY LANE, EVESHAM.

By Desire of  
 The Master, Officers, and Brethren of the  
 Lodge of Free Masons,  
 Monday Evening, December 11th, 1820,

the admired Play of  
**SECRETS WORTH KNOWING!**  
 Or a Lesson for the Ladies.

A Masonic Address by Brother Le Grose.

A Dance by Miss Campbell.

A Comic Song by Master Potter.

The popular and truly laughable Musical  
 Farce of  
**LOCK & KEY.**

Mr. Rivers will recite  
 The Bridal Spectre! or Alonzo & Imogene.  
 The Serio-comic Mock-heroic Barletta called  
 Tom Thumb the Great,  
 or the Laughing Court of King Arthur !!!  
 Pic, 2s. Gallery, 1s.  
 Begin at Seven o'clock.

Printed by J. Potter, Theatre, Evesham.

That Worshipful Master of 1820; those  
 Brethren; the ingenious Potters and their  
 players; all of them have long since strutted  
 out their parts and passed from off this  
 Stage. May the earth lie lightly on them!

E. A. B. B.