

Royal Arch Masonry in Worcestershire.

1753

The first Provincial Grand Master for Worcestershire was Sir(?) Robert de Cornwall (who also held the same office in the Provinces of Gloucestershire, Shropshire, Monmouthshire and Herefordshire) (1)

The appointment took effect on 9th. June 1753. De Cornwall died in 1756 and there was a lapse of 36 years i.e. until 21st. January

1792

1792, when John Dent, M.P., was appointed Provincial Grand Master and Grand Superintendent (R.A.). During the three years of De Cornwall as P.G.M. there was only one Lodge working in the Province viz. the Lodge at The Talbot Hotel at Stourbridge, numbered No.119 in the Lodge register of the Grand Lodge ('Moderns'), erected in 1733 and erased in 1769. (2) ✓

It is convenient here to recall
(Incidentally, it will be recalled) that the Premier Grand Lodge ('Moderns') was formed in 1717 and the 'Antients' Grand Lodge 34 years later (i.e. in 1751). The 'Moderns' were lukewarm or even hostile at times to Royal Arch Masonry whereas the 'Antients' regarded it as "the foot, heart and marrow" of Masonry. The Royal Arch Degree was worked in the 'Antients' Craft Lodges with the knowledge and approval of their Grand Lodge and it is suspected that, in due course, the practice spread to some 'Moderns' Lodges.

The 'Moderns' had a clear need for a Grand Chapter, both to regularise a growing practice and to meet the competition of their earnest and energetic rivals. ^(the Antients) And that Grand Chapter came in 1766, probably as warmly welcomed by the rank and file as it was resented by some of their leaders and officials. (3)

1800

However, "by the year 1800 the 'Moderns' had warranted about 126 and the 'Antients' about 83 chapters, only some of which were at work, but we see what is probably a move in the direction of the union of the two bodies in a regulation of 1798, to the effect that no Royal Arch Mason exalted in a Lodge, as distinct from a chapter, could be admitted as a member of or visitor to a chapter. Obviously, at this date, some Craft Lodges were still working the Royal Arch ceremonial, and, although the regulation was not everywhere observed, it does suggest that there was a growing feeling

that the "regular" Royal Arch Mason was one who had received the degree in a chapter, not in a lodge.

The coming into force, late in the 1790's, of the laws against seditious meetings (39 Geo. III, ch. 79) brought uncertainty into Masonic administration, both Craft and Royal Arch, but, apparently, strengthened the hands of Grand Chapter in requiring that the petition for a new chapter should come from a lodge of Craft masons and ~~be unanimously signed at a meeting from which brethren who were not R.A. Masons or did not intend to be exalted in the proposed new chapter had withdrawn~~ (4)

E. Comp. F. J. Underwood, P. G. St. Br. (P. Z. No. 20), writing to a friend on 25th. March 1942, said "... 280 (i.e. Worcester Lodge) worked a chapter in the years 1809 - 12 without any warrant, as was frequently done in those days. When Joan Allen Jr., who was the moving spirit in this chapter, died in 1812 it seems to have been dropped, probably as there was no one sufficiently acquainted with the work. But the interesting point is that when St. Wulstans Chapter was warranted in 1845 (sic) the Founders were exalted in a Leicester Chapter (5) but immediately after the consecration a number of members of Lodge No. 280 ("Worcester") became joining members and amongst them 7 or 8 who were members of the Lodge during 1809 - 12. They had probably been exalted but as they had not registered with Grand Chapter they would not be eligible as founders (6) Where E. Comp. Underwood obtained his information is not known but it is credible when one considers the laxity in organisation of both Grand Lodge and Grand Chapter in those times

MAY 1844
The first authentic information we have concerning Royal Arch Masonry in the Province is from the Minutes of Harmonic Lodge No. 313 (now 252) meeting at Dudley dated 7th. May 1844 when it was recorded that "Bros. Shedden, Morris, Masefield, Harper and Patterson were appointed a Committee to make enquiries as to the probable expense of the Royal Arch and report to the next Lodge" (7) Of this Committee only Bros. Shedden and Morris were Royal Arch Masons (both members of Chapter of Potititude No. 51 (now 43)).

"Although there is no record of the working of the Committee, Bros. Shedden and Morris evidently took the matter in hand seriously for on July 13th. 1844, a Petition was completed for submission to Supreme Grand Chapter". It was signed by:-

- J.W.Harris, 'Z', St. Peters Chapter No.607(now 419), Wolverhampton,
- (Rev.) H.R. Slade, D.D. 'H' " " " " " " " "
- Paul Law " " " " " " " "
- Joseph Spencer ✓ " *Chapter of Fortitude No. 51 (now 43)*
- C.S. Clarke ✓ " *St. Peter's Chapter No. 607 (now 419)*
- Thos. Clear ✓ " *Chapter of* " " " " " "
- C.L. Darby " " " " " " " "
- E. Mayrick " *Chapter of St. Peter's* " " " " " "
- O.G. Rejlander " *St. Peter's Chapter, Wolverhampton No. 607 (now 419)*
- Jas. Morris ✓ Chapter of Fortitude No.51 (now 43), Birmingham.
- J. Shedden ✓ " " " " " " " "

Thus ~~two~~ ^{ten} of the Founders hailed from Staffordshire and two from Warwickshire..

DEC. 1844.

The petition was granted and the Chapter ^{of Dudley} was consecrated at the Swan Inn, Dudley, on Friday, 13th. December 1844, by-

- E.Comp. J.W.Harris, as 'Z' (607, now 419) (St. Peter's, Wolverhampton)
 - " Rev. Henry Paper Slade, D.D., as 'H' (607, now 419)
 - " Louis Charles de Laude, as 'J' (607, now 419)
- who were the three Principals of St. Peters Chapter No.419, Wolverhampton. They were assisted by:-

- Comp. Thomas Clear, as Sc.'E' (607, now 419)
- " George Bilton, as Sc.'N'
- " Moses Ironmonger, as P. Sojourner
- " Thomas Fidler Meyrick,) assistant Sojourners
- " Paul Law)
- " J. Shedden, as Janitor

Immediately after the consecration Bros. William Masfield, W.C. Robinson, John Bolton, Alexander Patterson, John Bateman and Thomas Payne were balloted for and exalted in separate pairs.

The appointment of Officers of the new Chapter came next and, presumably, E.Comp. John Windows Harris, as consecrating 'Z' invested:-

- John Shedden as 'H'
- James Morris as 'J'

John Bolton, as Sc.'E'
 John Bateman as Sc.'N'
 Wm. Masefield as P. Sojourner
 A.Patterson } Asst. Sojourners
 Thomas Payne }

Comp. Masefield was requested to officiate as Treasurer pending the appointment of another Companion in due course. Comp. W.C. Robinson was "elected" Janitor.

18th DEC.
 1844

Five days later, i.e. on Wednesday, 18th. December 1844, St. Wulstans Chapter No. 349 (now 280) was consecrated by E. Comp. John Savage (?) who journeyed from London for that purpose, at the request of Supreme Grand Chapter. He was assisted by

when E. Comp. Joseph Bennett was invited as "Z", James Knight as "H" and Robert Rising as "J". Following the Consecration ten Brethren were invited

Thus began the practice of Royal Arch Masonry in Worcestershire by the consecration of two Chapters in quick succession.

The next six years saw ^{St. Wulstans} ~~the~~ Chapter struggling for existence.

(ref. 11/1/1844 - 1850)

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On enquiry to E. Comp. G. E. Paske, (Lyon. G. to E) it was
 ascertained that no correspondence (in or out) during the
 years 1880 (formation of P. G. Chapter of Worcester) to the present day has survived.

References

1. Historical Supplements to G. L. Year Book (1969.)
2. Worcester Year Book p. 262 (Edn. 1944-75.)
3. "Freemason's Book of the R. A.," p. 68, Bernard Jones.
4. *Ibid.* p. 83 & 84.
5. Chapter of Fortitude No. 249^L - warranted in 1496 and
 attached to St. John's Lodge^(MS) No. 249.
6. Quoted from a letter written by E. Comp. G. F. Steward & addressed
 to E. Comp. Philip B. Waugh^{MS} dated 13th Feb 1955.
7. "A Short History of the Chapter of Dudley No. 252"
 by E. Comp. Harry Cherrington, P. P. G. Reg. & Comp. H. E. Thomas, to E,
 from the Centenary of the Chapter in 1904. p. 24.
 E. Comp. John Savage was a P. Z. of the Royal York
 Chapter of Reassurances No. 4 (warranted 1801) and (at No. 1804)
 M. E. Z. of Domestic Chapter No. 206 (warranted
 1793) both in London. He was initiated in 1836, while still
 in his twenties, in the lodge of St. John's Lodge Old
 Cumberland No. 12 and he joined & became
 Secretary of the Emulation Lodge of Improvement
 in the same year. In 1849 the
 "Freemason's Quarterly Review" published a note
 on him from which the following is taken:-
 "Our Brother Savage is probably one of the
 most expert masons now living. If a
 lodge is to be consecrated or a Master installed
 the services of our talented Brother are
 considered as a graceful incident to
 render the ceremony unique & complete..."
 (Taken from Mr. G. W. D. Dyer's "Emulation - a ritual to be remembered")
8. E. Comp. T. O. Haunch^{MS} in a letter^{MS} to the Author states
 "I have not, however, been able to find any correspondence
 relating to his appointment (i.e. as ^{Comp. John Savage} Conservator Officer) in
 the record."
9. ~~"A Short History of the Chapter of Dudley No. 252," by Harry Cherrington,
 & H. E. Thomas.~~