

CHAPTER of HOPE & CHARITY, No.377.

The Chapter was consecrated on the 8th September, 1871, by the Grand Superintendent A.H. Boyds, assisted by Ex.Comp. E.C.J.Barber as H. and Ex.Comp. W.Masefield as J. Ex.Comp. C.C.W.Griffiths acted as D.C.

There were 20 Ex.Comps. and Comps. present at the meeting, which took place at The Lion Hotel, Kidderminster.

Ex.Comp.W.Bristow as Scribe E. read the Warrant and also Installed the Principals designate, namely -

E.Comp. A.J.Hancocks	Z
" J.Fitzgerald	H
" W.Lee Fawcett	J

Other Founders present were Comps. E.A.Brown, P.Bellitzey and A.T.Hancocks.

At this meeting four Joining Members were proposed and eight Brethren proposed as Candidates.

At the end of the year the total membership was twenty, composed mostly of Business and Professional gentlemen.

Comp.G.W.Grosvenor acted as Scribe E. for the first two years and during that period joining members from Vernon Lodge and a number of Candidates from 377 and 560 were Exalted.

Without doubt one of the most outstanding members of the Chapter during the early days was Ex.Companion James Fitzgerald. The notice board of the Lodge of Hope and Charity shows his name on four occasions as W.Master and in the notes of Bro.Cowderoy at the Centenary he mentions an Honorary of £50 to this worthy Brother who had done so much work for the Lodge. Such also was the case of the Chapter for on the appointment of Bro.G.Grosvenor to the office of Scribe E. in 1873 Ex.Comp Fitzgerald took over the duties of Scribe E which office he held until his death in 1895. He was organist at St.George's Church and deputy organist at the Parish Church for many years and one will notice on reading the early Minutes of the Chapter that in most cases of a vacancy caused by absence of one of the Principals the gap was filled by Comp.Fitzgerald.

Ex.Comp.George Taylor is also worthy of mention for he also was a tower of strength, but on his appointment to Prov.Scribe and shortly afterwards to Prov.H. his help was sadly missed by the Chapter.

From 1885 membership and attendances were greatly reduced and often the Chapter was opened and closed without any other business except confirmation of the Minutes conducted. On one occasion not enough Companions attended to open the Chapter.

It may seem hard to understand the reason for this slackness but one must take into consideration that Craft Lodges were also suffering the same troubles.

On several occasions Hope & Charity Lodge was forced to install Past Masters into the Chair.

Vernon Lodge also suffered the same fate. After the departure of the Baldwin Brothers from the district brethren of Hope & Charity came to their help for we notice on Vernon Past Masters' Boards the names of W.Bros.- W.Lea Fawcett, G.W.Grosvenor, E.A.Broome, James Morton, C.D.Dixon, J.T.Meredith, G.W.Naylor, George Taylor, Arthur Comber, J.W.Consterdine-Chadwick, and H.Morrison. This great help without doubt kept Vernon on the books of Grand Lodge during the period 1872/1890.

In 1881 the Lechmere Lodge was Consecrated at the Masonic Hall, Mill Street, Kidderminster. Among the Founders were several members of the Chapter, viz. G.Taylor, G.W.Grosvenor, G.W.Naylor, J.T.Meredith and W.M.Roden.

This Lodge ( badly depleted in numbers ) was taken over by Brethren of the Warwickshire Volunteer Force in 1895 and renamed Lechmere Volunteer Lodge No.1874.

The first Master of this Lodge, after removal to Moseley & Balsall Heath Institute, was W.Bro.C.D.Eaton, who was also a P.Z. of 377.

W.Bro.Eaton in his address on the occasion of the first meeting mentioned that "The Lodge, which was founded in Kidderminster, was intended to be a CLASS LODGE and not in any way to compete with 377, who were asked and recommended the petition". He also mentioned that membership was to be confined to professional men and Local Manufacturers and that membership should not exceed 30. It is interesting to note that the membership never exceeded 25. Very often the Lodge was unable to secure sufficient attendance to conduct a ceremony.

Several members of Lechmere were members of the Chapter G.R.Green, T.F.Bland, R.Edgar and particularly J.E.Green whose name is outstanding on the P.Zs Board.

Bro.J.E.Green occupied the Chair of Lechmere 7 years after initiation and took part in NO ceremony, in fact, from 1889 to 1895 only one candidate was initiated. He was Exalted in 377 Chapter in 1889, Scribe N. in 1892, elected J. in Sept.1893 and did not attend for installation until June,1894, Installed H. on Dec. 1894, Installed Z. on 31st Dec.1895. He did not attend another meeting of the Chapter until 14th December, 1896.

Details of this particular meeting should be recorded. The September Chapter meeting in those days was the occasion for the election of Officers for the ensuing year and Installation took place in December.

Ex.Comp Green was not present at the September meeting and the usual elections did not take place.

I should mention that the Chapter moved from the Lion Hotel to the Masonic Hall, Mill Street, Kidderminster, in March, 1880, and the meeting mentioned was presided over by Ex.Comp.G.Taylor Prov. G.H. The death of Ex.Comp Fitzgerald was the main topic of the meeting. The excessive rent charged by the 377 Committee was also discussed, but as I have mentioned no election of Officers.

The next meeting of the Chapter took place on the 14th of December, 1896, the companions present totalled 7 including the Janitor. I feel that the proceedings of this meeting should be detailed.

Ex.Comp J.E.Green was present as M.E.Z. and mentioned that the business of the Chapter was the election of Principals and Officers for the ensuing year. It was stated that as the elections (as was the custom) did not take place in September the elections could not take place.

The Grand Supt. had recommended that the Principals and Officers for 1897 should be the present Officers re-elected.

On ballot the E.Cs. and Comps. elected were :

Ex.Comp.	J.E.Green	M.E.Z.
"	E.C.Lewis	H.
"	W.Burlock	J.
"	J.E.Stone	Treas.
"	P.Morrison	S.E.
"	W.H.Talbot	S.N.

The Scribe F. was instructed to communicate these appointments to the G.Supt.

There is a pencil note stating that these Minutes were copied from Notes of the late Ex.Comp.Morrison.

No further official meeting of the Chapter took place until the 13th March, 1899, and the Minutes were confirmed and signed by A.F.Godson, Grand Supt.

A special meeting of R.A.Masons was held at the Masonic Hall on the 4th March, 1899, when it was resolved to resuscitate the Chapter of Hope and Charity and that all dues and any arrears to Grand and Provl. Grand Chapter shall be liquidated from arrears received from OLD COMPANIONS (not new members). The Grand Supt. presided at this meeting and there were 17 members present and 8 apologies.

The meeting of the resuscitated Chapter was held at the Masonic Hall on the 13th March, 1899, the three Provl. Grand Principals presiding. The election of principals and Officers took place and many joining members and Candidates were proposed.

The following meeting on the 29th May, 1899, was presided over by Ex.Comp. W.T. Page, the business conducted was the exalting of two candidates and the election of several Joining Members.

The Installation of Ex.Comp. G.W. Grosvenor took place on the 12th June, 1899. Ex.Comp. W.T. Page (280) was installed into the chair of H. and Ex.Comp. H. Pearse J.

At this meeting a committee was formed to draw up the Chapter By-Laws, for up to this date no Chapter By-Laws had been approved by the Province and Grand Chapter.

At the Chapter Meeting held on 11th Dec. 1899, Ex.Comp. J.E. Green, who was 1st. Prince when the Chapter closed down, tendered his resignation. Perhaps there is an excuse for his apparent apathy for it will be noticed from the list of members' addresses he is named as residing at Surbiton, Surrey. The last communication from Comp. Green was dated 18th June, 1918, (when he requested a clearance certificate to be sent to him) - Mr. Justice Green, Judges House, Coalabar, Nigeria.

F.C. PERRETT, P.G. Std. B., P.Z. 377.

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