

- 18th. Dec. Chapter Consecrated - presumably, by E.Comp. J.Savage, Z.
1844 of Chapter No.7 & M.E.Z. of Chapter No.206. - Joseph Bennett 'Z', James Knight, 'H', Robert Rising 'J', - Officers appointed & invested & 10 Brethren exalted.
- 1845 In 1845 the Chapter was opened in Feb., May & Aug. but in Nov. only 2 of the Principals (Z & H) were present & the Chapter was not opened
- 1846 In June 1846 only Z. & J. were present & the Chapter was not opened. However, elections for the Principals for the ensuing year & proposals for Exaltees & Joining Members were made. The proceedings of the evening were circumscribed with the next Summons!!
- In July Joseph Bennett continued as 'Z', R. Rising seems to drop out of the picture as does also J.Knight. S.Hunt, a P.Z. of the Chapter of Fortitude No.51 acted as 'H' and until March 1848, either he or J.McMillan, a P.Z. of Chapter No.1. acted in that Office. At that time neither of them were members of the Chapter.
- 1847 In January, a Committee was formed to draft By-laws & it is interesting to note that from the date of its Consecration until it ceased to meet in 1850, the Meetings took place whenever someone thought fit. For instance, the Chapter was opened on 19th. Dec. 1848 & after the reading of the Minutes & the taking of a ballot it was adjourned until the following day.
- In March 1847, Br. W.P.Shilton was one of the 2 Exaltees. After the ceremony Comp. H.J. Powell resigned his ^{Office} as P.Soj. for business reasons and the M.E.Z. immediately appointed the newly-exalted Comp. Shilton as P.Soj.!!
- In June 1847, the proposed By-laws were submitted & Notice of amendments was given.
- 1848 In March 1848, a Dispensation was read, signed by 'A.Dobie' (G.S. pro tem) Prov. of Worcestershire, approving J.Bennett as for the fourth year & Comp. H.H.Shilton as 'J' !! H.Eginton was installed as 'H' & H.H.Shilton as 'J'
- 1848-49 The Chapter met in August & Dec. & the 3 Principals were present but in Feb. 1849 Eginton, 'H', died.
- 1850 The Chapter did not meet again until 1850 when, in January, owing to there being only J.Bennett, 'Z', present with S.Hunt (acting) 'H', the Chapter was not opened.
- On 21st. Feb. 1850, with J.Bennett, 'Z', S.Hunt as 'H' and J.McMillan as 'J' the Chapter was opened & it was agreed that that in consequence of the lack of resident principals, the death of E.Comp. Eginton and the continued illness of E.Comp. Shilton, and the resultant non-calling of the Chapter to meet, the subscription for the past year be remitted. In view of there being no eligible Companions for the Principals' Chairs, it was agreed to apply to the Grand Superintendent* for a Dispensation, but apparently this was not granted and there is no record of the Chapter meeting again until 24th. February 1858.
- During the 5 years I have just recorded, the Chapter exalted 21 Brethren & there were a number of joining members. Most of the exaltees were, of course, from the Worcester Lodge, but none of them appear to have been through the Chair of the Lodge & it seems fair to draw the conclusion that it was lack

of support by the P.M.'s of the Lodge which caused the temporary collapse of the Chapter. The 2 P.Z.'s who were fairly regular visitors & who acted as Principals on many occasions, must have been true enthusiasts, as it appears that they came from as far away as Nottingham - no mean feat in those days!!

The Chapter recommenced its activities on 24th. February (1858) Joseph Bennett occupying the Chair of 'Z', J. McMillan was installed as 'H' & C.C.W. Griffiths as 'J'. Four Brethren were exalted one being Br. William Haigh, who, apparently, was so thrilled with the Chapter that at the May Convocation he presented the Chapter with a set of six spirit decanters, which we are using this evening for the port, so kindly given to us by E. Comp. Mark Higgins.

Now we come to the 100 years of regular Convocations & it is interesting to note the influence of certain Companions during that long period. It is also interesting to note the effect of two Wars & the introduction of the motor car into common use.

It is very obvious that had it not been for the tenacity of that grand original, Joseph Bennet, this Chapter as we know it, would not be in existence at all. Among the other names which are very much in evidence in the Minutes are J. McMillan, C.C.W. Griffiths, W.H. Wood, William Woods, A.F. Godson, W.F. Page &, of course, Fred Underwood.

Meeting place. Previous to 1873, the actual premises on which the meetings were held is not recorded, but from then until 1876 they were held at the Bell Hotel. The Chapter then met at 95, High St. until May 1897. The present premises were used by the Chapter for the first time in September 1897, the rent being £10-10-0 p.a. including light & heat.

By-laws No By-laws were approved until Aug. 1858. These contained, among other things, the duties of the Sc.E., Treasurer, Master of Ceremonies & Janitor. Part of the Janitor's duties was to deliver the Summons to the Companions!!

Finances The only mention of finance in the period 1844/'50 is an announcement in March 1848 that the Chapter had a balance of £5-11-6, but in May 1850 the Treasurer's report stated that all debts & liabilities amounting to £107-8-0 had been paid off in consequence of the prosperity of the Chapter during the previous 15 months and that there was a balance ~~in~~ in hand of about £10.

The original by-laws stipulated that the Treasurer should present his accounts at the Feb. Convocation each year, but, as in the case of many other rules & regulations, in these early days this seems to have been ignored, and the first mention of a Treasurer's report after the one I have mentioned was in 1864.

As the years went by, however, the Treasurer's report became more & more an important feature of our proceedings & not only were the actual accounts laboriously inscribed in the Minutes but also a very detailed explanation of them, giving the number of Brethren who had not paid their subscription & specifying the number who were considered good or otherwise.

The original subscription was 12/6d. It was reduced to 10/- in 1869. In Sept. 1880 a Special Convocation of the Chapter was held at which Sir Edmund A. Lechmere was installed as Grand Superintendent by the then G.Sc.E., Lt.Col. Shadwell H. Clerke. William Stallard was 'Z' of the Chapter at the time & among those present were J.V. Stallard, F.G. Underwood and as a guest, Geo. W. Grosvenor, P.Z. of Hope & Charity Chapter No. 377.

I mention this event at this point because in the following Feb. the Treasurer's report revealed that expenditure had exceeded income during the year by £36-17-4 & this was due to heavy wine & food bills, possibly in consequence of the banquet after the installation of the Grand Superintendent.

A Committee of investigation was appointed but there was no report of any findings.

- 1863, 1866, 1868 The Chapter subscribed towards the window in the Cathedral in the years 1863, 1866 & 1868. The window is in memory of Joseph Bennett.
Worcester Cathedral
- 1867 A.P. Godson was exalted.
- 1870 In Feb. 1870 Br. William Stallard was exalted. The Treasurer reported that £150 had been invested in the Bank.
In May 1870 a portrait of C.C.W. Griffiths was presented to the Chapter. E. Comp. Griffiths died in 1879. During the 21 years (1858-1879) there is scarcely one set of Minutes which do not record him having taken some part in the proceedings. The same remarks apply to E. Comps. W. Woods & W.H. Woods, but their names too appear to fade from 1879 onwards.
- 1876 In Aug. 1876, none of the Principals were present, but the Chapter was opened by P.Z's & £5 was voted to Lodge No. 28 towards the cost of furnishings occasioned by the removal to 95, High St. A loan of £25 was also granted to Lodge No. 28 towards the cost of removal.
- 1877 In Feb. 1877, new robes were purchased (Apparently now in use)
- 1883 In Feb. 1883, it was reported that E. Comp. J.C. Gregg was destitute & £5 was voted to him from the Chapter Funds & £7-13-6 was collected from the Companions present. E. Comp. Gregg played a very active part in the affairs of the Chapter.
- 1889 In Nov. 1889, a request from Senior Fidelis Chapter No. 529 that they should be allowed to use our furniture was received. This request was granted at a fee of £1-1-0 p.a. plus the share of renovation expenses.
- 1886 John Stallard was exalted in Feb. 1886 & W.T. Page in August of the same year. The Minutes of Prov. G. Chapter meeting that year are fully recorded in our Minute Book. A.P. Godson, 2nd. Prov. G. Principal presided and the names such as F.G. Underwood, A.R. Row and W.B. & G.E. Williamson are prominent.
- 1893 In May 1893 the first mention of a Grand Chapter Certificate being presented is recorded.
- 1897 In Feb. 1897 it was proposed by the M.E.Z. & seconded by W.T. Page that an unusually good supper be substituted for the usual banquet on Installation nights.
- 1907 In 1907, ten years later, there was a discussion upon the falling finances of the Chapter, due to the costs of the Installation banquets, & it was decided that the cost of the dinner should remain at 5/- but that only light wines should be included. I trust that history is not going to repeat itself.
- 1899 John Stallard was installed as 'Z'.
- 1903 In Feb. 1903, the Companions were admitted for the opening of the Chapter for the first time. Prior to this only the Principals & P.Z's were permitted to be present.
In Nov. 1903 Prov. G. Chapter apparently met at an ordinary Convocation of this Chapter. The Provincial G. Principals took the

recommending an investigation was appointed, but there ~~was~~ is no

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Chairs, transacted their business & then left.

1907 In May 1907, W.T. Page was installed as 'Z'.
In Sept. the same year the Convocation was only attended by nine
Companions & none of the Principals were present and so the
Chapter was not opened.

1907 to 1919 W.T. Page frequently gave both the Mystical &, at least, one
other lecture, but generally speaking, the Lectures were given
by the Principals at each exaltation until 1940.

In Sept. 1912, new collars were purchased & the robes were cleaned
and the old collars (presumably the original ones) were presented
to the Library & Museum.

1917 F.J. Underwood was exalted.

1918 The Janitor's salary - he was then Comp. J. Radband - was incre-
ased from £2-10-0 to the magnificent sum of £3.

1919 The first Summons of a Convocation is pasted in the Minute Book,
and at the Installation in May that year W.T. Page attended the Chap-
ter as Grand Superintendent for the first time.

Relations with the Province It is interesting to note at this point that up to this time
visits to the Chapter by the Grand Supt. were very rare. As
far as I can ascertain, Sir Edmund Lechmere never visited the Chap-
ter at all, even though he was installed as Grand Supt. at
a Special Convocation of our Chapter. His successor, Gen.
Sir William Campbell, only came on one or two occasions. Sir
Augustus Godson was a more frequent visitor on our Installation
nights but there is no record of any attendances of the other
Prov. G. Principals. I think, therefore, that the introduction
of the common use of the motor car, which after all only really
began in the early 1900's has some bearing on this matter because
from that time onwards the Three Principals of the Province
invariably attended our Installations, took the Chairs & delivered
the Addresses to the Principals, Officers & Companions. On the
few occasions W.T. Page came on his own he generally gave two of
the Addresses himself. The 2nd. Prov. G. Principal at that
time was, of course, S. S. Somers. He succeeded W.T. Page in
1934 & until the outbreak of war in 1939, the 3 Prov. G. Principals
regularly attended our Installations. However, I am getting
a little ahead of myself.

1920 In Sept. 1920 a request was received & granted for the use of
our furniture by Page Chapter on the same terms as those granted
to Sempiternis.

1921 In May 1921, W.T. Page presented us with the Altar Plate,
Circle & Triangle. The same year we paid £1-3-4 towards
the cost of a vacuum cleaner & agreed to pay 10/6 p.a. towards
the cost of a telephone.

1925/'26 In 1925 the rent was increased to £12-12-0 in May 1926.
Comp. John Edward Davies, a member of 529 Chapter, was elected
Janitor.

1929 In Feb. 1929 it was decided that the robes should once again
be cleaned and that 'H' robe should be dyed a proper purple
but the dyers advised us that the robe would not stand it so it
was not done.

1930 In Feb. 1930 Edward Lancelot Bunting was exalted by E. Comp.
H. P. Fenton & G. E. Williamson acted as P. Soj.

1933 In May 1933 Fred.J.Underwood was installed as 'Z'

1934 In 1934, it was decided that all P.Z's of the Chapter should be presented with P.Z's Jewels. Up to that time, with the exception of one or two occasions, Jewels were not presented.

1938 W.F.C.Underwood was installed as 'Z' & appointed Fred. Underwood as D.of C.

1939 We now see the influence of a second war. Fewer candidates came forward. It became difficult for even Companions in Office always to attend and, quite obviously, the Chapter was sustained by Fred. Underwood. He gave the Mystical Lecture on every occasion on which it was given from the day he was appointed D. of C. until Leonard Greenwood went into the Chair of 'Z' in May 1950. With two exceptions, he gave the Address to the Companions from 1940 until he died and on many occasions when only one of the Prov. G.Principals was present he gave another Address as well and those of us who remember him appreciate the help and kindness he extended to us.

1944 Companions, I may during the course of this paper have dropped some fairly sizeable bricks, but I commenced by saying that this was an attempt at a factual history and I have faithfully adhered to that intent. When I arrived at the year 1944 in our Minutes I realised that if I continued with the history on a factual basis I should probably, drop the largest piece of Masonry the world has ever seen. However, history I have been commanded to give and history - though comparatively modern - you are going to get. The Chapter met on 8th. Nov. 1944 and the Minutes are headed in very large writing "CENTENARY MEETING". Jock Ingles was the 'Z' at the time, Leonard Sharpe was H. L. Adlington 'J'. The then Grand Supt. S.S.Somers was present & among others, were the names of M.F.Higgins, W.F.C.Underwood, R.W.Thomason, H.V.Stanton, L.W.Greenwood, W.Jeffries, F.H.Griffiths, 'Z' of the Chapter of Dudley No.252 & J.E.Grosvenor, P.Z., Hope & Charity No.377. E.H.Downey was exalted (R.W.Thomason acting as P.Soj.). After this a Lecture was delivered by Fred. Underwood, but, I gather, from the Minutes that his history of the Chapter was very brief & that he devoted most of his talk to furniture & regalia used in a Royal Arch Chapter about 1809 & which he exhibited.

Several letters of congratulation were read including one from the Chapter of Dudley No.252 which also mentioned that they were celebrating their centenary on 13th. Dec. having been consecrated on that date in 1844 and having had a continuous history from that date.

The Grand Supt. then addressed the Chapter and pointed out that this was the first centenary celebration held within the Prov. G. Chapter of Worcestershire.

1947 At an emergency Convocation in Oct. 1947 Br. E.G.Davies was exalted & a letter of resignation was read from his Father. It is interesting to think that the possibility of a third generation being exalted is on the cards.

Conclusion. The Chapter of Dudley No.252 & this Chapter were consecrated within 5 days of each other & until 1871 were the only Chapters in Worcestershire. Royds Lodge No.1204 was consecrated in 1867 & in the early days of our Chapter quite a number of the brethren of Royds Lodge were exalted in this Chapter & it is with pleasure that I see members of that Lodge among those present this evening. I hope I have not continued too long. It is very difficult to compress 105 years of history into a quarter of that number minutes.

No! Royal Standard consecrated in 1854 (as No.930)

I think that, at least, this history proves that given men with honest tenacity of purpose such as Joseph Bennett, C.C.W.Griffiths, Samuel Hunt & J.McMillan, almost anything can be achieved which

P.T.O.

1987/17-19

brings me to the real purpose for standing before you - to propose the Toast of etc.

~~1987~~ The following is a copy of a letter, addressed to E.Comp. P.B.Mayne, after the delivery of the paper.

14, Waterloo Road,
Wolverhampton.

13th. February 1958.

Dear Comp. Mayne,

ST. WULSTAN'S CHAPTER.

May I venture to congratulate you on a very happy and successful evening, and on the result of your strenuous labours.

I am very grateful to Brother Will Underwood for so kindly extending to me an invitation to be present at the Centenary Meeting of my Mother Chapter, in which, as you probably know, I was exalted exactly 39 years ago (=1919) yesterday. I was also very happy to find amongst you so many Brethren of 280.

I was very interested in your references to the history of the Chapter which must have entailed much research, and thank you for showing me the original Minute Book.

Fred. (F. J. Underwood, P.A.G.O.) P.H. 20+5812.

My old friend Brother Underwood gave me much help when I had to write the History of St. Peter's Chapter, here, on the occasion of our Centenary in 1942, and I think you may be interested in the following extract from a letter which he wrote to me on the 25th. March 1942:-

"280 worked a Chapter in 1809-12 without any Warrant as was frequently done in those days. When John Allen Jnr, 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. Wulstan's Chapter was warranted in 1845 (sic) the founders were exalted in a Leicester Chapter but immediately after the consecration a number of members of Lodge 280 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"

was a "Mother" Lodge

i.e. 32 to 35 later which seems dubious

I hope that in due course you will publish a history of the Chapter. It would be most interesting.

Again, my congratulations, and many thanks for your kindness and hospitality.

With kindest regards.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

Fred. I. Steward,

P.A.G. Soj.