

ROYAL EDWARD LODGE NO. 892

LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE

Treasurer

Secretary

Bro. R. W. Davies.

23, Castlefields,
LEOMINSTER,
Herefordshire.

9th September, 1977.

W. Bro. R. G. St. George, P.J.G.D.,
6, Widney Lane,
SOLIHULL,
Warwickshire. B91 3LS.

Dear W. Bro. St. George,

Thank you for your letter of the 20th August, 1977, which has been forwarded on to me by our Provincial Grand Secretary, W. Bro. Blench.

I regret the delay in replying, but it was necessary to arrange a visit to our Bank, in order to obtain the Lodge records from their vaults.

Augustus Frederick Godson was balloted and initiated on the 14th March, 1865, he was proposed by the Senior Warden Elias Grawick and seconded by Worshipful Master, Henry Moore, he was passed on the 11th April, 1865 and raised on the 9th May, 1865.

X The Lodge Minutes dated the 10th December, 1867 record the receipt of a letter from Bro. A. F. Godson, tendering his resignation, and, at the same time, offering five guineas to be applied to some Masonic Charity to purchase a Governorship for the Royal Edward Lodge. The Lodge selected the Masonic Institution for Boys. X

With regard to the last paragraph of your letter, no 'centenary history' was written when the Lodge attained it's centenary in 1961. I am, however, enclosing, herewith, two copies of a talk given by W. Bro. R. W. Darlington to the Lodge entitled, "A History of Royal Edward Lodge, Number 892", which may be of interest to you.

I would mention that W. Bro. R. W. Darlington is now the Provincial Senior Grand Warden of the Province of Herefordshire.

If I can be of any further assistance to you, please let me know.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

R. W. Davies

R. W. DAVIES. M. M.,
Secretary.

10 SEP 1977

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A HISTORY OF ROYAL EDWARD LODGE NO. 892

given on Thursday 18th November 1975 by W. Bro. R. W. Darlington.

You will have noticed from the last Summons that my short talk this evening will be on the history of Royal Edward Lodge and I hope that you will forgive me if I change this to a brief history of Freemasonry in Leominster. My reason for this is that during the past 250 years, there have been three separate Freemason Lodges in Leominster, the first two having no direct connection with the present Royal Edward Lodge No. 892.

So let's go back 233 years to the 11th October 1742 which was the date on which the Lodge at the Three Horse Shoes, Corn Square, Leominster was warranted by the premier Grand Lodge as No. 191 but in 1755 it was renumbered 125. The Grand Lodge archives contain no returns or correspondence from this Lodge which was erased from the Roll on the 27th January 1768. There is no record that it ever bore the name Royal Edward.

The engraved list of Lodges for 1767 shows it unnamed and still meeting at the Three Horse Shoes. There is an interesting air of mystery about this Lodge and perhaps one day W. Bro. Leslie Williams, who is the present proprietor of the Three Horse Shoes, will find the missing records hidden in some recess in that ancient building. Stranger things have happened!

We now jump some twenty-five years to 19th November 1793 when Royal Edward Lodge No. 533 was, I quote, "constituted by Mr. Dunkerley with William Wood as Master, and Samuel Nicholas and Thomas Full as Wardens. Here in passing, I would mention that Mr. Dunkerley was a very famous character in the history of Freemasonry; as no doubt most of the elder brethren will know - he was a sort of Masonic Messiah. He sponsored the opening of numerous Lodges and during the course of his career he was

10 SEP 1977

Provincial Grand Master of six Craft Provinces and Grand Superintendent of eighteen Royal Arch Provinces. There is some mystery about his origin and it is stated somewhere that it is believed that he had some connection with the then Royal Family. The Minute Book for this Lodge covers the period from 7th February 1795 till the 30th June 1814 and for some reason the first few pages are missing. The first minute is of a Lodge held on the 7th February 1795 at the Red Lion Hotel in Broad Street which was then the principal coaching hotel but is now an ironmongers warehouse. There is, therefore, no record of any Consecration ceremony but there is in the possession of this Lodge a printed sheet bearing the words of the hymn reputed to have been sung at the Consecration Ceremony in Leominster Priory Church on the 2nd November 1795.

The Lodge Minute book contains many interesting items but time only permits the inclusion of some of the more outstanding.

On the 14th August 1797 the Brethren met but no Lodge could be held as the key of the pedestal which apparently contained the necessary equipment had been lost but as the Lodge was held on the 11th September 1797 it appears to have been recovered.

On the 3th December 1800, the Lodge night was altered from the second Monday in each month to the Thursday on or immediately before the full of the moon in order to suit the convenience of the Ludlow Brethren, market day being held in Ludlow on Monday.

On the 17th December 1801, it was resolved that in future the Master should be elected half-yearly on the Lodge nights preceding the Feast Days of St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist respectively so that there was a new Master every six months.

In October 1805, the Ludlow Brethren signified their desire of resigning their membership in consequence of a Lodge having been established in Ludlow. Now this Lodge may have collapsed as the Lodge of the Marches Warrant is dated 1853. ✓

The Provincial Grand Lodge was held at the Town Hall on the 16th September 1806 and was followed by a public procession to church. After which the Brethren dined together. In the same year, a Lodge was held on Christmas Day and for some reason is the last time that the Master signed the Minutes. On the 16th November 1809 a letter was read from the Vicar of Glascombe, Radnorshire but now a prisoner in Presteigne jail for debt, requesting that each member subscribe one shilling each, and again I quote, "to alleviate his distress". Seventeen members subscribed and the amount was made up to one pound from Lodge funds. To give an idea of the value of a shilling in those days, on the 6th December 1810 the supper charge was raised from one shilling to one shilling and sixpence.

The last minutes in this book are those for 30th June 1814 but the Lodge which had been re-numbered 560 at the Union of Grand Lodges in 1813 seems to have continued in a haphazard manner, being finally erased from the Roll on the 5th March 1828. There is no record why this Lodge chose the name Royal Edward in 1793, but it may be an allusion to Edward the Confessor, the Burgesses of Leominster having been granted a charter in 1290 to hold an Annual Fair on his Feast Day.

Royal Edward Lodge No. 1194 but now 892 was warranted on the 11th November 1861 and this was in no sense a continuation of the earlier Royal Edward Lodge but an entirely new Lodge. However, at the first meeting in December 1861 there was present a brother who had been initiated in the previous Lodge in 1816. On the 10th December 1861 the Lodge met at the Royal Oak Hotel and was regularly opened with Bro. J.H. Bluck as Worshipful Master Designate. Meetings continued until 3rd April 1862 when the Lodge was consecrated. There were present R.W. Bro. Rev. J. Bowles R.W.P.G.M. and W.Bro. Arch Deacon Lane Freer R.W.D.P.G.M. fifteen brethren of Royal Edward Lodge and twenty-five visitors. No doubt a number of brethren will remember that there is a Lane Freer memorial window in Hereford Cathedral.

It is of particular note that at the time this Lodge was consecrated, the railway service between Hereford and Shrewsbury had been in use for eight years with five trains daily, and that to Kington for four years with four trains daily; and I think this may well have been a contributory factor of the continued prosperity of the Lodge. The Lodge seems to have worked throughout its existence with true Masonic harmony with the exception of the year 1863 to 1864 when at the Installation ceremony held on the 8th December 1863 W. Bro. J.H. Bluck protested against what he considered certain irregularities in working the Lodge but afterwards withdrew his protest. However, at the next meeting of the Lodge the P.G.M. occupied the Master's Chair and read certain rules regarding the future government of the Lodge. The newly installed Master W. Bro. J.H. Arkwright never again occupied the Chair but the Lodge meetings appeared to have been conducted in harmony despite his absence.

It was on the 13th October of this year (i.e. 1863) that the Lodge number was altered from 1194 to 892. On the 12th December 1865 Bro. J. Bradford informed the brethren that he had recovered in a peculiar way the floor cloth, sword and the Book of Constitutions belonging to the Royal Edward Lodge and he had pleasure in presenting them to the Lodge.

On the 8th March 1870, W. Bro. Henry Moore the Worshipful Master presented to the Lodge a set of gavels and stands. Here it may be of interest to mention that this Brother was a solicitor in the town and it was in the cellar of his house "Walflawn" that his grandson, Col. Charles Moore found a crudely painted Masonic coat of arms which had possibly been discarded by the Lodge and which he returned to it. This stood on the mantelpiece of the Robing Room until a few years ago when it was sold and the proceeds made a useful contribution to the new lighting fittings in the dining hall.

So the good ship ROYAL EDWARD then sailed on for many years on a sea of tranquility.

On the 10th April 1888 W. Bro. Major A. T. Hancox presented the Lodge with a set of ivory handled gavels inlaid with silver which are still highly prized and are only used on special occasions such as this evening.

On the 9th December 1890 it was carried that a Royal Arch Chapter be affiliated to the Lodge but no further action appears to have been taken. On the 8th December 1891 a vote of thanks was recorded to Mrs. Phillips, mother of Bro. J.H. Phillips, for the beautiful manner in which she had gratuitously embroidered a banner for the Lodge. A founder jewel was subsequently presented to Mrs. Phillips. This, of course, is the banner which has been placed in honourable retirement this evening, eighty-four years later.

On the 9th October 1900 the Lodge thanked the Worshipful Master and brethren of the Rising Star Lodge, Bloemfontein for the extremely kind way in which they had helped to lighten the sorrow of W. Bro. Ellwood occasioned by the death of his son while on active service in South Africa.

The minute book for the next fifteen years contains little of outstanding interest being mainly occupied with the normal routine working of the Lodge, but on the 11th February 1915 sympathy was expressed for those members of the Craft held prisoner in Germany including W. Bro. Percy Hull, Paradian Lodge, and it was resolved that a postcard be sent to him. This worthy brother instigated a fund from Germany to aid inmates and by 1916 it amounted to £4,000. On the 15th March 1916 while he was still a prisoner W. Bro. Hull was appointed Past Grand Organist of the United Grand Lodge of England and, of course, he was subsequently our very famous organist at Hereford Cathedral.

At about this time, Lodge meetings were changed from the second Tuesday to the second Thursday with the Installation in January.

On the 12th February 1920, it was agreed to become a founding Lodge of the proposed Freemasons hospital to which end subscriptions amounting to £165:18s:0d were received and the Lodge was placed on the list of founding Lodges.

From the 12th January 1922 onwards, the Installation meetings were held by dispensation in the Town Hall and those of the Brethren who know him may be interested to know that on the 11th May 1922 W. Bro. W. G. Allen who is still a member of the Lodge, was initiated - he was then twenty-nine years old.

On the 12th October 1922, it was decided to purchase the Anthem sung at the Priory Church on the 2nd November 1795 for the sum of three guineas, and this of course is still in the Robbing Room.

On the 11th October 1923, W. Bro. Bradford presented to the Lodge the organ which he had loaned to it for the past twenty years, and it has only just been disposed of.

The late W. Bro. Reginald Cross became a joining member on the 11th January 1928.

We now come to one of the outstanding milestones in the history of the Lodge. A special meeting was held on the 1st March 1929 at which it was agreed to purchase the present premises from W. Bro. R. E. Scudamore. The estimated cost would be £1,350, including fittings and furniture to be raised by 5% loans in amounts of £10. The first Lodge in the new temple was held on the 10th October 1929 and at the next Lodge on the 14th November 1929 it was recorded that forty-nine chairs, together with other items as listed in the Minutes had been presented by members. At the Lodge held on the 12th December 1929 it was reported that the cost of the property, after sales of lumber for £50, was £450, the total cost including alterations, fittings and furniture was £1,373.

On the 4th January 1931, W. Bro. Reginald Cross was appointed Director of Ceremonies.

On the 9th February 1933, a silver square and compass were presented by Bro. E. E. Diggory.

June 1938 was another notable month in the Lodge history for at the Lodge then held it was agreed to purchase a garage and kiln, and part of the yard adjoining the premises for £250, to be raised by loans at 4%. At the October meeting of the Lodge, it was reported that the property had been purchased.

On the 14th December 1944, the Lodge Management Committee was formed - apparently they had never had a Committee before.

A rather touching note appears in the Minutes of 11th December 1947 - it was there recorded that Wilder Lodge at Leominster, Massachusetts, USA was forwarding a gift of twenty-one cartons containing shoes and clothing for children, also toys and candy with best wishes and prayers for better times and eternal peace. A Committee was appointed to arrange the distribution of the gifts which were presented by the wife of the W.M.

On the 7th April 1949, the date of the Installation was changed from January to May.

On the 11th May 1960, W. Bro. Reginald Cross relinquished his position as Director of Ceremonies after holding the office for thirty years, during which he had such an excellent influence on the Lodge that his name will never be forgotten.

For some years the Brethren had been acutely aware of the poor condition of the Lodge premises, particularly the dining hall and bar, and on the 6th March 1962 the Trustees were authorised to borrow up to £2,000 to cover the cost of alterations and decorations under the supervision of W. Bro. Vincent Brown of Vaga Lodge, assisted by W. Bro. R.B. Powell; both these brethren being subsequently elected honorary members of the Royal Edward Lodge in appreciation of their services.

The regular Lodge held on the 10th April 1962 was the occasion of the centenary commemoration and dedication of the Temple. The Temple was dedicated to the services of Freemasonry by the R.W.P.G.M. R.W. Bro Bishop E. W. Sara assisted by his Provincial Officers.

The Minutes of the Lodge held on the 10th December 1861 were read by the Secretary and the Warrant of the Lodge and Centenary Warrant were also read, after which the R.W.P.G.M. presented the Centenary Warrant to the Lodge. It was a very memorable evening.

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Since that date further improvements to the ante-room have been tastefully carried out under the supervision of W. Bro. Schofield and the Lodge now possesses premises eminently suitable to contain its great tradition and the memory of those far sighted brethren who made it all possible.

And so Worshipful Master, I complete the task with which you have honoured me.

It has been a labour of love which I dedicate to all those who have gone before and whose story I have presented to you, confident that we who now bear the responsibility can so frame our lives and conduct our Lodge as to be worthy of them.
