

From a perusal of "histories" of Preceptories of Knights Templar it seems customary to commence with an outline history of the Order itself from the year 1118 A.D. ("...when it was founded in the presence of the Patriarch of Jerusalem by some pious and noble persons devoted to....the Service of God..... promising to live in perpetual obedience and poverty after the manner of Canons"(1)) down to the present time-resembling a saga with occasional interruptions due to religious & political animosity.

E.Kt. W.F.Tolladay says(2) "...little or nothing is known of the Order in the Midland Counties from the year 1303 A.D. (A.L.4317) until the year 1791 when it woke to new life and energy after, apparently, being dead for many years. (For) By the united endeavours of Pope Clement V., King Philip the Fair of France, and Edward II of England, A.D. 1313, the Order was dissolved in Europe and their immense property confiscated.

"It will, however, be seen that the design of these Potentates was frustrated; and the Order of the Templars was not entirely annihilated; for the Encampment of Baldwyn, which was established at Bristol by the Templars, who returned with Richard I (Coeur de Lion) from Palestine, still continues to hold its meetings, and is believed to have preserved the ancient ceremonies of the Order. This Encampment, with others in order of seniority as printed in the 'Liber Ordinis Templi' so ably edited by the Great Vice-Chancellor, constitute the original Encampments in England"

"From these have emanated Encampments or 'Preceptories' as now called, in the British Islands and the United States. So that the Order, as it now exists, in the United Kingdom and America is lineally descended from the ancient Order of the Crusaders"

Alas! for these fond pipe-dreams, they cannot be substantiated. V.E.Kt. Col. Chitty, in a Paper read before the Manchester Association for Masonic Research(3) said "I hope I have made it clear that there is no direct historical connection between the old Orders of Chivalry and our Masonic Orders, but I think we may claim to have taken much of their ideals and principles and incorporated them into our Orders".

The Masonic Order of Knights Templar appears to have been introduced about the middle of the 18th. century. "The earliest known record is found in the minutes of St. Andrews Royal Arch Chapter, Boston, Mass., in 1769; It is referred to in a Dublin advertisement of 1744 and by 1780 the Temple and Malta degrees were being worked throughout Ireland"(4).

"Dunckerley authorised the Royal Arch Chapter of Friendship, Portsmouth, to confer the Degree in 1788 and a year later it was worked under the Grand Lodge of All England at York (5) and a Supreme Grand Royal Encampment was working in Bristol in 1780"(5).

About this time (i.e.1780) the Abbey Preceptory was erected in Nottingham. In the Roll of Preceptories under Great Priory there are five "Time Immemorial" preceptories listed and lettered A,B,C,D and F ('E' presumably, ceased to function) and of these Abbey Preceptory, Nottingham, is lettered 'A' and is, therefore, the senior Preceptory not only in the Midlands but on the Roll of Great Priory. It was followed by 'Holy Rood' erected in Coventry in 1803 and, shortly after, by 'Mount Calvary' also in Coventry. Both these Preceptories are defunct having been erased from the Gt. Priory Roll in 1888 and 1894 respectively(6). These were followed by 'Ascalon' Preceptory, warranted in 1810(7) which met in Birmingham. It, too, is now extinct.

There appear to be no extant records of these three Encampments and it seems that Knight Templary became dormant in the Midlands between 1812 and 1850.

In passing, it should be mentioned that the Duke of Sussex was elected Grand Master of the Order in 1812 and it is on record(8) that "...he never took any interest in its proceedings and never communicated with it..." during the whole of the time he was its titular head. That was, probably, a contributory cause of the recession. The Duke died in 1843 and was succeeded by Col. C.K. Kemys Tinte on the 3rd. April 1845(9). From then onwards the affairs of Gt. Priory seem to have taken a turn for the better for on the 22nd. February 1850 it issued a warrant for the Consecration of the Beauceant Encampment which took place on 17th. May 1850. The Founders were "Col. George Augustus Vernon, William Henry Reece, Frederick Dee and several other Knights (not named)"(10)

Incidentally, Col. G.A.Vernon was a brother of R.W.Br. Henry C.Vernon, Prov. G.M. (1850) and Prov. Prior (1857) for Worcestershire. Of the other named Founders, Henry Reece was a P.M.of St. Pauls Lodge No. 43 and Frederick Dee was Prov. G. Secretary, Staffs.(1845/60)

According to Gt. Priory records,(10) those present at the Consecration of Beauceant Encampment in May 1850, apart from the three named Founders, was one William Masefield (probably as a Founder) who was a fellow member with Col. Vernon of the 'Cross of Christ' Encampment, London, in which he was installed a Knight in 1844 (two years after his initiation in Harmonic Lodge No. 252 (then 313). He was invested in the office of "Expert" in the newly founded Beauceant Encampment(2).

W.F.Tolladay in his "Howe-Beauceant Preceptory, Review 1850 to 1911" states that the Beauceant Preceptory....had a successful career for eleven years. However, "...on 21st. May 1861, the day appointed for the installation of Sir Kt. F.J.Roberts as Commander, there were present the V.E.Kt. G.A.Vernon, Prov. G.Commander, Sir Kt. B.W.Goode (E.Commander) and other Knights. The Commander-elect(11) not being present the meeting was adjourned sine die". It did not meet again until 19th. Feb. 1862. In the meantime, Howe Encampment was formed (1861), three of the Founders of Beauceant viz. H.Reece, B.W.Goode and Thomas, James being founders of the new Encampment. Tolladay further states that in November 1893 representatives of both Encampments (or Preceptories as they had now been styled) met at the Gt. Western Hotel, Birmingham, when it was decided to amalgamate the Howe and Beauceant Preceptories - no reason being given.

So much for the lineage of the Richard Coeur de Lion Preceptory. We can now turn to its birth and progress. The idea of forming a new Preceptory, to meet at Kings Heath, seems to have emanated from the Howe-Beauceant Preceptory (Birmingham) for, of the twelve Founders of this Preceptory, no less than half were members of Howe-Beauceant - of the others, 2 were from St. Amand (Worcester), 3 from Richard de Vernon (Dudley) and one from Bernard de Tremlay (Walsall). It will be recalled that, in 1920, the Province comprised Preceptories in the Counties of Shropshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Staffordshire.

Ten of these Knights held the first meeting of Founders on 25th. February 1920 in the offices of E.Kt. C.D.Eaton, at 109, Colmore Row, Birmingham, and, presumably as an act of courtesy, E.Kt. Eaton took the Chair (and also recorded the minutes). The absentees were E.Kt. J.S.Pritchett and Br. Kt. H.V.Stanton.

E.Kt. Col. Zacchaeus Walker, the only Great Officer among the Founders, was invited and accepted the nomination of Preceptor-designate and, in gratitude, promised to provide "iring ladders" for the use of the Knights in refectory".

The Founder's ^{fee} was fixed at 10 guineas, Installation fee at 7 guineas and the annual subscription at 2 guineas. It was also resolved that the Preceptory should meet three times in the year viz. 1st. Friday in November and the 3rd. Fridays in January and May - and this endured until October 1928 when the day and months of meeting were changed to what they are now. The meeting concluded when the Founders' Petition to Gt. Priory was signed.

The second meeting of Founders was held at the same address on 30th. June 1920 when the Preceptor-designate obtained approval of his list of Officers and it was reported that E.Kt. J.Headon Boocock of Howe-Beauceant had offered the gift of two Banners (12) and the loan of "...any portion" of their furniture required for the Consecration, which was gratefully accepted. It is pleasing to report that that was not the only instance of the help and encouragement received in the early years by this Preceptory at the hands of the Members of Howe-Beauceant.

The design of the Preceptory Banner, submitted by E.Kt. Charlie Eaton, was approved as were the names of Companions C.Braden Allen, F.S.Rawson, J.H.Harris, Reuben Gibbins, Percy Hudson, E.Larkham and Archibald Allen as Candidates. They were all regularly elected at the first regular meeting on 5th. November 1920 and subsequently 'installed' with the exception of Comp. Percy Hudson. His name appeared as a candidate on the Summons for the last time for the meeting on 20th. May 1921 when he again failed to attend "...due to a business engagement".

The great day of the Consecration of the Preceptory occurred on Saturday, 24th. July 1920, being held at the Masonic Hall, Institute Rd., Kings Heath. The Consecrating Officer was the V.E.Kt. Lt.Gen. Sir Francis Lloyd, G.C.V.O., K.C.B., D.S.O., K.C.T., Provincial Prior of the combined Provinces of Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire.

He was accompanied by his Prov. Sub-Prior, E.Kt. William Waldron and 13 Provincial Officers and Officers of Gt. Priory.

The Consecration was followed by the installation of E.Kt. Col. Zacchaeus Walker, P.Gt.Swd.B. as E.Preceptor by the Provincial Prior and the appointment of the first Officers as follow:-

E.Kt. Canon C.W.Barnard	Chaplain
Br.Kt.T.L.Griffiths	1st. Constable
" " Major G.H.Smith	2nd. "
E.Kt. F.G.Whittall	Treasurer
" " C.D.Eaton	Registrar
Br.Kt.Major W.B.Hammond	Marshal
" " James Lucking	Herald
" " S.S.Somers	1st. Swd. Bearer
" " C.P.Perry	2nd. " "
" " Howard Rawson	Sword Bearer
" " Alfred Allen (Jr.)	Capo. of Guard
Frater Otho Scott	Outer Guard

In parenthesis, it may be observed that the names of Zacchaeus Walker, Canon Barnard, C.D.Eaton, James Lucking, Seth Somers and Alfred Allen, all of whom have heard and obeyed the Great Captain's call, are still remembered in this year 1970 as Brethren who attained high and executive rank in this and other Orders and Degrees. In the years that followed no less than eleven other Brethren, who gained admission to this Order through this Preceptory, have attained equal distinctions and have thus shed a lustre on this Preceptory which may be unique. (A list of these 17 Knights form an appendix to this paper).

The Consecration Minutes do not record who delivered the Oration and what was said on the nature and principles of the Order or, indeed any other details. A search through the Masonic periodicals in our Provincial Library at Worcester extant in 1920 likewise proved fruitless.

The preamble of the Minutes of the first Regular Meeting, held on Friday, 5th. November 1920, is worth quoting, if only for the picture it conjures up. It is as follows:-

"At 6 p.m. the Marshal, Kt. W.B.Hammond, took command of the Master, assembled the Knights in the Chapter House, saw that the Officers and Visitors were at their proper stations, arranged the Knights in two columns in the North and South sides of the Preceptory and formed the Arch of Steel"

"The Preceptor, attended by the Chaplain, entered and ascended the Throne and was saluted by the Knights under the direction of the Marshal"

And had the Registrar added "followed by a fanfare of trumpets" the scene of splendour and pagentry would have been complete! So commence the Minutes of the first Regular Meeting.

It is not necessary, and indeed would certainly be boring, to give details of every one of the 150 regular meetings of this Preceptory that have taken place since its consecration but there are some

incidents that may be properly referred to.

At the first Regular Meeting it is recorded that the Preceptory Banner was the gift of Mrs. Amy Parker (afterwards Mrs.C.D.Eaton) who, presumably, had done the embroidery to the design of E.Kt.Eaton, the other gifts being:-

A black altar Cross	} by B.Kt. T.L.Griffiths
A brass triangle & 12 candlesticks and two large altar candlesticks	
A poignard by B.Kt. W.B.Hammond	
and a pilgrim's staff by E.Kt. C.D.Eaton	

The Registrar also reported that he had written to Howe-Beauceant Preceptory expressing appreciation and thanks for the loan of furniture and in reply the Registrar, E.Kt. Leader Doocock, offered the further loan of a shield, breastplate and vizor for "as long as required". At the next meeting it was announced that the Preceptory was indebted to Col. Walker (E.Preceptor) for the gift of "24 silver firing-swords" which provoked a unanimous vote of thanks for his generous gift.

Due to the continued inability of Comp. Percy Hudson to be present, the 3rd. meeting was devoted to a Priory of Malta when the six Candidates duly installed at the first meeting were put through. Again, Howe-Beauceant came to the rescue by loaning the necessary furniture. At this meeting it was announced that V.E.Kt. Sir Francis Lloyd had resigned as Prov. Prior and that E.Kt. William Waldron had become Prov. Sub. Prior-in-charge.

At the January meeting in 1922 the Preceptory was informed that E.Kt. George Kent had been designated Prov. Prior and the Registrar was instructed to write offering congratulations and to invite him to hold his Installation under the Banner of this Preceptory. The offer was accepted and the meeting held on the 25th. May 1922 at the Imperial Hotel, Temple Street, Birmingham.

The Treasurer, E.Kt. F.G.Whittall, was at that time Preceptor-elect of Howe Beauceant which again loaned the furniture. No wonder E.Kt. Whittall, in his capacity as Treasurer, was able to shew a credit balance of £42 in his accounts at the end of the first year and that after all expenses, including those connected with the Consecration had been met!

The Minutes for May 1922 state "After an explanation by the Eminent Preceptor the ballot was taken for the Eminent Preceptor for the ensuing year and E.Kt. Canon C.W.Barnard was duly elected" The "explanation", presumably, concerned the reason why the 1st.Constable (Major G.H.Smith) had been passed over. At the same meeting the sum of 10 guineas was sanctioned as a donation to the Mark Benevolent Fund Festival over which Col. Zachaeus Walker presided as Prov. Grand Master of M.M.M. of Warwickshire on 29th. June 1922.

On the 11th. October 1928 an emergency meeting, which, by the way, the Registrar termed the 25th., was called for the purpose of

altering the regular meetings to the 2nd. Thursday in the months of February, April and October which was agreed.

On the 7th. May 1934 another emergency meeting of the Preceptory took place when no less than six candidates were balloted for and duly installed. In the following February (1935) a ballot was held when two joining members and four candidates were elected, the candidates being installed.

Thus, in the space of nine months the membership increased by twelve.

Then a year later (13th. February 1936) the Preceptory received a Deputation, headed by E.Kt. S.S.Somers, who presented a Petition for the formation of the "Temple Balsall" Preceptory. Whether our Registrar (Br.Kt. W.S.Burton) was at fault is not apparent from the Minutes but the Petition was acceded to and the Temple Preceptory No.278 was consecrated by the Prov. Prior, V.E.Kt.C.D.Eaton, K.C.T., at the Masonic Hall, Institute Road, Kings Heath, on Friday, 27th. March 1936. Dinner followed at 7/6d. per head 'inclusive of wines'.

A suspicion that the abnormal growth in membership and the reception of the Petition were related seems justified but the Minutes bear no confirmation. (14)

At the April 1935 meeting E.Kt. F.J.Whittall asked leave to relinquish the Office of Treasurer and at the following meeting in October he was presented with a silver loving-cup as a mark of appreciation of the Preceptory of his 15 years service as Treasurer. He obeyed the Great Captain's call a year later.

34 years later his son, E.Kt. J.A.Whittall, P.Gt.Std.B, attended and on behalf of his Family offered to return the loving-cup which kindly gesture was accepted with much appreciation.

The Preceptory has never lagged in its support of Masonic and other Charities. Here are a few examples:-

- (a) At the 7th. regular meeting (3-11-'22) alms collected amounted to two guineas which was donated to the "Birmingham Chinese & Indian Mutiny Fund". It seems odd, for by then, nearly 70 years had elapsed since those events had occurred in British history.
- (b) For the Royal Masonic Institution for Boys in 1925 twenty guineas were donated.
- (c) In 1936 the Preceptory sent ten guineas to the New Premises Fund of Mark Grand Lodge.
- (d) In 1928 V.E.Kt. Canon Barnard died and at the November meeting the Preceptory voted a donation of ten guineas to the "Canon Barnard Memorial Fund". The alms collected at this meeting amounted to the, hitherto, unprecedented sum of £6-10-6d. - unprecedented, because the average charity collection in the "thirties" was £1-12-0d.

- (e) On the 30th. September 1954 (103rd Regular Meeting) on the motion of E.Kt. F.S.Rawson, it was decided to donate fifty guineas to ~~the~~ Charity - but the Registrar failed to record which Charity!
- (f) At the 111th. Regular Meeting (11-4-'57) the Registrar read a letter from E.Kt. Rev. R.H.Fowler returning thanks for the Preceptory's donation to the restoration fund of his Church. E.Kt. Fowler so often assisted the Preceptory as Chaplain that he was regarded by many as a member.
- (g) At the February 1961 meeting it was decided to donate £1 per member in response to the appeal issued by the Heads of all Christian Orders of Freemasonry towards the cost of erection of a Chapel to adjoin the Royal Masonic Hospital.

Looking back, it seems strange that the Minutes contain only one reference to World War 2. That was on 21st October 1941 when E.Kt. Rawson proposed "...that during the state of Emergency the annual subscription should be voluntarily increased to £2-12-6d. and the Country Members to 15/-d. Which was agreed".

Only one meeting was cancelled viz. October 1939 but the Preceptory met on 10th. February 1940 at 2-30 p.m. and installed Br. Kt. Eli Mann Squire as Eminent Preceptor having been elected ten months previously. Thereafter, the Preceptory met regularly without a break on its proper meeting dates.

Since its consecration, this Preceptory has given refuge to no less than 118 "weary and fatigued" pilgrims and we have welcomed four joining members.

Of its Hon^{ary} Members, we are still proud to number our own much respected Provincial Prior, V.E.Kt. P.H.Griffiths, V.C.T. who, with his Provincial Sub-Prior, V.E.Kt. D.R.Counsell, P.Gt. Con., is with us this evening.

In conclusion, it must be admitted that the foregoing is a somewhat prosaic account of the first fifty years existence of this Preceptory. Gone are the days when the recorders of minutes were allowed a free rein and our only excuse and consolation is to blame them not for errors of commission but of omission.

REFERENCES

- (1) "Richard de Vernon Preceptory - Review 1857-1907
by E.Kt. W.S.Shepley (M/s in Prov. Library, Worcester).
- (2) Extract from the History of "The Howe-Beauceant Preceptory
No.67, 1850-1911" by E.Kt. W.F.Tolladay
- (3) "Knight Templary - fact and fiction" An Address by V.E.Kt.
J.W.Chitty, (M.A.M.R. Transactions, Vol.5 (1967) p.94.
- (4) "The Freemasons' Pocket Reference Book" by F.L.Pick and
G.N.Knight. (1955 Edn. p. 155)
- (5) A rival to the 'Moderns' Grand Lodge in London, set up in
the City of York in 1725. It had died out by 1792.
- (6) W.S.Shepley's "Richard de Vernon Preceptory - 1857 to 1907.
- (7) According to E.Kt. L.J.Biddle, in a Paper read in Howe-
Beauceant Preceptory on its history, 'Escalox' was constituted
by the Bristol Grand Encampment, as was 'Holy Hood', in 1803.
(The Paper is in the possession of E.Kt. Granville Niness)
- (8) "Chivalric Freemasonry in the British Isles"
by Sir C.A.Cameron (Dep. G.Mester (R.T.)? Ireland)
(Prov. Library book No.783)
- (9) R.Woof "The Templars" Vol. 5., p.8.
(Prov. Library book No.1335)
- (10) Letter from V.E.Kt. M.C.Edwards, Gt. Vice-Chancellor, to the
writer dated 6th. April 1970.
- (11) Not named
- (12) Although the names of E.Kts. J.S.Pritchett and H.V.Stanton
are mentioned in the Founders' minutes they did not become
Founders.
- (13) ? Standard (Beauceant and Vexillum Belli)
- (14) *is confirmation that these companions were
determined to become founders of a new Preceptory.*

APPENDIX.

Members of Richard Coeur de Lion Preceptory
who subsequently attained (or were of) high
rank in this and other Orders and Degrees

1)	CoL. Zacchaeus Walker	Prov. G.Master of M.M.M. War'ks.	d.1930
2)	Canon C.W.Barnard	Gt. Prelate (1925), Dep. Prov. G.Master, War'ks.(1918)	d.1928
3)	C.D.Eaton	Prov. Prior (Worcs.), Prov. G. Master of M.M.M. (Worcs.)	d.1946
4)	James Lucking	Dep. G.Master, M.M.M. (War'ks.)	d.1940
5)	S.S.Somers	Prov. Prior (Worcs.), Grand Supt. R.A. (Worcs.)	d.1954
6)	Alfred Allen	Dep. Prov. G.Master (Worcs.)	d.1949
7)	F.G.Whittall	Prov. Sub-Prior (Staffs, War'ks. & Shrops.)	d.1936
8)	W.S.Burton	Prov. G.Master of M.M.M. (Worcs.)	d.1968
9)	D.R.Counsell	P.G.D.(Craft), Prov. Sub-Prior (Worcs.)	-
10)	F.H.Griffiths	Dep. Prov. G.Master (Craft) Worcs., Gd. Supt. (R.A.) Worcs., Prov. Prior (Worcs.)	-
11)	W.Harvey Gibbs	P.G.D., Asst. Prov. G.Master (Worcs) Prov. G."H" (R.A. Worcs.)	d.1946
12)	S.D.Toon	Asst. Prov. G.Master (Worcs.)	d.1951
13)	R.M.Hadley	Prov. G.Master of M.M.M. (Worcs)	d.1950
14)	J.W.Thompson	P.Prov. Sub-Prior (Ceylon) Asst. Prov. G.Master-designate (Worcs.)	d.1956
15)	G.H.Tomlin	Prov. Vice-Chancellor (Worcs.)	-
16)	L.B.Heynes	Prov. G. "H" (Worcs.)-Dep. G. Supt.	-
17)	B.J.W.Chambers	Asst. Prov. G.Master (Worcs.)	-