

The Chapter of Dudley No 252.  
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When Comp. Edgar Thomas and I agreed to prepare a History of the Chapter of Dudley we did so, perhaps I should say, lightheartedly, for from a preliminary reading of the Minutes there appeared to be very little to write about. We soon found, however, that we were greatly mistaken and that this job should have been commenced six or twelve months earlier.

A copy of the Booklet which has been printed will, later this evening be presented to each Companion attending this Centenary Meeting. I am afraid you will find the mode of presentation, in many respects rather crude. Our only excuse, which I trust you will accept with true Masonic Charity, is lack of time to write and re-write, arrange and re-arrange the matter which makes up this History

I do not propose to bore you with a string of exact dates but the first four are important and must be referred to.

MAY 7th 1844.  
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JOHN SHEDDEN.

JAMES MORRIS.

On this date is recorded in the Minutes of Harmonic Lodge the first reference to the Royal Arch in Dudley and as far as we know, Bros. Shedden and Morris were the only two Royal Arch Masons in Dudley at that time. They were, with others who were not Royal Arch Masons, appointed to enquire into the expense of the Royal Arch. It is to these two Companions that we owe the existence of this Chapter.

John Shedden, by the way, was one of the Brethren who agreed to reconstitute Harmonic Lodge in December 1827.

JULY 13th. 1844.  
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On this date a Petition was prepared for presentation to Grand Chapter. This petition was signed by John Shedden and James Morris, of the Chapter of Fortitude, Birmingham together with E. Comp. John Window Harris, Ist.

Principal of St Peters Chapter, Wolverhampton and also  
nine other Companions of that Chapter.

AUGUST 7th. 1844.

On this date a Charter of Constitution was granted  
by "Our Grand and Royal Chapter".

DECEMBER 13th. 1844.

The Royal Arch Chapter, attached to the Harmonic  
Lodge No 313 at Dudley in the County of Worcester and  
called "The Chapter of Dudley" was opened and consecrated

The Consecrating Officers were the Three Ppls  
of St Peters Chapter :-

M. M. Comp. John Window Harris.

M. E. Comp. the Rev. Henry Raper Slade,

M. E. Comp. Louis Charles de Loude,

assisted by five other Companions of St Peters Chapter and  
John Shedden who acted as Janitor.

After the Consecration Ceremony six brethren of

Harmonic Lodge were proposed, elected, exalted and immediately put into office. Among these Brethren was that splendid man and mason William Masefield who was appointed Principal Sojourner and also Treasurer.

E. Comp. J. W. Harris remained with the Chapter as Ist. Ppl. for the first year but neither he nor any other of the petitioners from St Peters ever became subscribing members. <sup>we</sup> This Chapter, must, however, be for ever indebted to them for their kind assistance in the foundation of this Chapter.

The second meeting of the Chapter was not held until August 19th 1845, no reason being given for this long lapse of time.

The year 1852 marks the exaltation of a very great Stalwart of this Chapter viz. William Bristow, first installed M. E. Z. in 1858 and on six subsequent occasions. I think William Bristow was connected with the Horseley Co. of Tipton. I have approached the Firm for information but am informed by the Managing Director that, unfortunately,

their records are missing about this date.

Companion Bristow, on many occasions, acted as M. E. Z. in the Royal Standard Chapter although he was never a member of that Chapter.

In 1854 nine members of this Chapter founded the Royal Standard Chapter. They were led by Ex. Comp. William Masfield who became their first M. E. Z.

Apparently the regalia for the Chapter was obtained by degrees and it was not until 1876 that robes were purchased for the Officers.

In 1876 a peculiar and I should imagine a very irregular procedure was adopted. Comps. J. O. Brettell and S. J. Stokes were elected H. & J. respectively but, not being present at the Installation Meeting, were installed into their chairs in the Royal Standard Chapter. The Minute in the Royal Standard Records of February 1876 is as follows:-

Comp. Brettell appointed H. in 252 Chapter  
and Comp. Stokes appointed J. in 252 Chapter  
were installed into their respective chairs.

On Jan. 20th. 1880 Comp. G. P. Chapman was  
installed Z but resigned from that Office at an Emergency  
meeting in April when Comp. Sir Edmund A. H. Lechmere of the  
Alfred Chapter, Oxford was proposed, elected a member and  
also elected as M. E. Z. On April 20th he was installed,  
by dispensation, first J., then H. and afterwards as Z.  
The dispensation states that he had never served the Office  
of 2nd or 3rd Ppl. or that of Scribe or Sojourner but was  
otherwise duly qualified. In Sept. of the same year Sir  
Edmund was installed M. E. G. Supt. of Worcestershire. It  
seems fairly obvious that the Chapter was asked to qualify  
Sir Edmund for the office of Grand Superintendent. The  
date of his installation as G. Supt. marks the formation of  
the Prov. G. Chapter of Worcs. although he was not the first  
G. Supt. E. Comp. Wm. Masfield was appointed the first  
Prov. G. H. of Worcs.

Since its formation the Prov. G. Chapter has met

n Dudley 16 times, 8 under our banner, 7 under that of  
oyal Standard Chapter and once under the joint banners  
f 252 and 498.

The financial position of the Chapter was far  
from secure for many years. In 1846 a series of "Subscription  
tickets" was issued to pay off all claims against the  
Chapter and to defray the cost of the Banners. The accounts  
were often presented showing a balance due to the Treasurer.  
In 1894 there was a balance in hand of over £50, thereupon  
the subscription was halved with the inevitable result of  
adverse balances again within a few years. It is very  
gratifying to note that during the Treasurership of E. Comp.  
William Hanson who served in this capacity from 1908 to  
1931 and his successor F. Comp. A. Ernest Duesbury, his  
successor who is still serving, the Chapter has been placed  
in a sound financial position.

For some years fines for non-attendance were,  
according to the Minute Books, in existence. A Principal  
was fined 2/- and other Officers 1/-. On one occasion

it was proposed that "any Companion not being present or prepared to do his duty shall forfeit 5/- to the funds of the Chapter. In the absence of any accounts during this period we cannot say whether these fines were enforced or not.

M. E. I shall not go into further detail here but there are some <sup>other</sup> names which should be mentioned in Open Chapter on this Important occasion, names of E. Companions who have served this Chapter so faithfully and well :-

SAMUEL SMITH.

WILLIAM WALDRON.

WILLIAM BROWN.

THOMAS CHAMBERS.

JAMES JONES.

GEORGE E. MORRIS.

DANIEL OAKLEY

JAMES E. CARTWRIGHT.

WILLIAM HANSON, 57 years a member of the Chapter and who I am delighted to say is still with us and Father of the Chapter.



ERNEST DAVIES, 34 years in this Chapter and who has done so much to keep up our standard of work, many thanks to him.

I should also mention four Janitors

Francis Garner.

Samuel Spittle.

William Faulkes.

Richard Cooksey who has been our Janitor for the last 24 years.

During the 100 years just ended, the Chapter has had only four Places of Meeting viz :-

The Swan Inn Dudley.

Geological Society, New Street, Dudley.

The Saracens Head Inn.

The Masonic Hall, Dudley.

I do not know <sup>w</sup><sub>k</sub> here the Geological Society was but the Swan Inn is now The National Provincial Bank.

*Writing*

E. 251/1071

I do not think we could end this Century in a more fitting way than we have, that is by giving our blessing to the formation of a further Chapter in Dudley. 24 of our members with three others and all members of Mosaic Lodge are to be the Founders, the petition has been approved and the Warrant is in course of preparation.

Mosaic Lodge Warrant is dated 1928, the Centenary year of Harmonic Lodge. Mosaic Chapter Warrant will be dated 1944, the Centenary year of this Chapter. I rather think these circumstances are unique.

The first principals designate are those who have been appointed to Provincial Office this year by our Grand Superintendent :-

Ex. Comp. P. H. Buckler Prov.G.J. Z.  
Ex. Comp. F.G.G. Walker Prov.G.Sd.B. H.  
Ex. Comp. Ben Marsh Prov.G.S.N. J.

*Wentley*

*J. Shedd*

*J. Morris*