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Notes on The Stability Lodge No. 564

Worshipful Master Bro. Wardens and Brethren, when one is asked to address this Lodge one feels what more can be said about the Lodge and its connections when such a concise History was produced for the Centenary of the Lodge in 1949. Though the period from 1949 to the present time is not a long period historically speaking, from the membership point of view it is, and I doubt if there are very many brethren of this Lodge were present at that meeting or who have a copy of the History produced by Bro. Albert Grove. The only brethren I can trace from that era are W. Bro. H.E. Bloomer Init. 27.3.45 Master 1958 and W. Bro. J.M. Gould Init. 22.02.38 Master in 1953

This Lodge came into being at a very difficult period in the History of this Province, when since 1824 until 1847, there was no Provincial Grand Master and feelings were at a rather low ebb due to Grand Lodge making no move to appoint a Provincial Grand Master. During this period the Province came under the Grand Registrar along with other Provinces in the same situation. It would appear that one of the reasons the Grand Registrar wished to have these provinces under his care was because Grand Lodge had rules that when the Grand Registrar had Provinces under his care, he was entitled to the rank of R.W. Bro. This brethren is on record in the Quarterly Communications held in the Museum of that period, not as published in a recent history.

In 1847 Dr. Roden was appointed Deputy Provincial Grand Master and the first Provincial Grand Lodge was held. However there were still difficulties, for Dr. Roden got himself in trouble not only with the Worcester Lodge but with his own Lodge, in which in the latter case he was at variance with the B. of C. over a brother in his own Lodge. This makes me wonder if this is the reason so many things happened prior to the Consecration of this Lodge as your history informs us that the Founders met as a Lodge prior to being Consecrated on a number of occasions, today these meetings would be classed as Founders Meetings though the Minutes would appear in the minute Book. We find however that the Deputy Provincial Grand Master recommended the Lodge to meet although no Warrant had been received. The first Master Charles Curran was a P.M. of Faithful Lodge No. 696 Birmingham (now 473) this being one of the sponsor Lodges along with Clive Lodge No. 819 now Vernon Lodge No. 560. It also seemed that five brethren who were treated as Founders though they had not signed the Petition, and were

elected at the first meeting on 16th July, 1849. Although Bro. Ford signed the Petition he never took Office as being Landlord of the Vine Inn where the Lodge met he was under B. of C. inelegible.

A Committee was appointed on this date to frame the By-Laws and arrange for the purchase of the necessary furniture, Ornaments and Jewels of the Lodge. It is noted that the committee appointed consisted of two Members who had not signed the petition and further brethren who had not signed the petition proposed or seconded resolutions electing such brethren as Members of the Lodge. One of the names of the Brethren treated as Founders was George Bates, and at this meeting he was elected a Joining Member, as were others who had not signed the petition. He paid 10/6d joining fee. He was at that time not a Mason, and some time after, he was initiated in the Lodge. Evidently the position was soon discovered, but he was not initiated till some months after the Lodge had been Consecrated on 18th June 1850.

On 28th August 1849, "The Worshipful Master on behalf of the Committee appointed to frame the Bylaws and purchase Furniture reported:- to the brethren of the Lodge the result of their labours that it was decided that arrangements be made at once with the Lichfield brethren for the purchase of the furniture etc. of that Lodge and power vested in the Committee according ly. At the Committee Meeting on 16th October 1849, the minutes record the furniture and equipment purchased from the representatives of St. John's Lodge Lichfield. Before we talk about any of this furniture let us look at this St. John's Lodge No.431

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This Lodge was most likely Warranted or one of the first to be Consecrated at the Crown Inn, Leek Staffordshire in 1814. Its warrant was dated 26th August 1814, just a few months after the 'Union of the Premier Grand Lodge and the Antients Grand Lodge to form the United Grand Lodge of England. It was called "Jedediah Lodge" No.657. In 1815 the Lodge moved to the Talbot Inn, in Derby Street, Leek in 1815 and four years later to the Plough Inn Leek in 1819. In 1820 the Lodge made a further move to the Red Lion in Leek, and on this date the Lodge was renamed St. John's Lodge. Though in these early times the movement of Lodges between different hostelries was a common move, the fact that it changed its name would give rise to the thought that the Lodge was in trouble and new blood had come into the Lodge and forced the change in the name. The Lodge stayed at the Red Lion for 13 years when in 1833 it moved to the Swan Inn in Leek. Things must have gone wrong again for in the same year we find that the Lodge moved to the "Three Crown Inn" Lichfield,

From 1815 to 1831 Freemasonry throughout the Province of Staffordshire was in a languishing state. Not one Lodge was founded, whilst one by one, several of the existing Lodges dropped out, an indication of the general decadence and loss of interest the result, mainly it would seem, of the absolute inaction of the Provincial Grand Master and the absence of any controlling authority. The same neglect extended to other Provinces under Egerton's rule and was keenly felt. 1849 and for several years, proved a very gloomy period in the History of Staffs. This was due to a certain extent to an outbreak of Cholera when the Provincial Meeting at Wolverhampton was cancelled.



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where it remained for 10 years until in 1843 it moved to the Guild Hall Lichfield. From your Committee records it would seem that the Lodge was in trouble in 1849, for at that period Stability Lodge were making arrangements to purchase the Lodge Furniture, but it was not until 1850 that the Lodge was erased. In the closing up of the numbering of Lodges in 1832, St. Johns Lodge became No.431. You might be interested to know that the number 431 had a very chequered existence. It was originally the number of the Kings Arms Lodge which met at Blackwall, London, and was erased in 1776. On the 19th June 1772 it was given to the Lodge of Friendship, London. In 1780 it became the number of St. Michaels Lodge, Alnwick, in Northumberland. In 1792 Pythagorean Lodge, Richmond, Surrey and at the union in 1914 it was the number of Lodge Unity, Guernsey, until 1832 on the next renumbering when it was given to St. Johns Lodge Leek.

A month before the Lodge was consecrated two brethren were raised to the Sublime Degree of M.M., one was passed to the second Degree and one brother initiated. In January 1850, your Lodge was consecrated.

There is an interesting minute in the minute book, for 26th August 1851 which reads as follows:- "In consequence of the Stourbridge Races happening on this day and the non attendance of Members the Lodge was not opened." Brethren the accounts of the early period make interesting reading, and how the Treasurer managed to get a balance is quite a thing, debts to brethren were outstanding for considerable time in each case. We read in the accounts for 1849 that the Lodge furniture from Lichfield cost £47.10 and the W.M.'s and J.W.'s. expenses to Lichfield were £1.10.0 and 15 0 respectively. Consider what it would have cost today. In order to balance the accounts we find that Bro. Curran and the J.W. Bro. Tringle were not paid their expenses, but Bro. Ford, who had paid quite a lot, including £6 3s 6d for the Warrant, and Bro. Weldon, got nothing that month. Neither was Bro. Brierley paid his £6. 8s 6d for the Book, but then he was not a Member of the Lodge.

Though in listing the history of the furnishings of the Lodge, a thought of some of the furniture being older than St. John's Lodge. The furniture was most likely older than the Lodge, the Tracing cloths not so, for remember that the following items did not come under official directive until 1818 when the first list of Lodge Officers and the dress was promulgated and even then many Lodges did not observe these regulations for a number of years. In fact

today the Worcesters Lodge No.280 have a 'Salmon' on their Stewards Jewels.

The Floor Cloths were probably older than the Lodge, though at this period in time we were seeing the appearance of a Lodge Board, in one form or another. Your Boards are of the Harris type, (for at the period of the Consecration of this Lodge, the Emulation ritual combined with the Lectures and the design of the Tracing Boards were representative of those we use to day and which the Regalia Manufactures promulgated with the ritual at this period, Harris having designed the standard boards we have today. Though there are still a number of Hand painted boards to be seen and designed by the Painters.

One of the interesting items are the Lanthorns for the first and third degrees. I would not be categorical and say that these two items indicate a working of long ago. For those brethren who do not know what they were (they were lanterns) up until recent years they used one of these lanterns, which were placed over the Candle at the Masters Chair in the third degree to light up the floor in front of the pedestal. They were eventually frowned upon by Grand Lodge and I have not seen them used for many years. Most likely a similar use was made of that in the first degree in days gone by.

It is rather interesting reading the History to find that the two Lodges who were sponsors were Faithful 696, Warks. and ~~Yarn~~ Harmonic Lodge No.313, Dudley.

It would also appear that on the day of Consecrating, the Lodge carried out and Initiation; Passing and raising, Consecration of the Lodge and Installation of the Master. The omission of the ballot for the Worshipful Master went on for 50 years, though R.W. Bro. W.T. Page, Prov.G.M., had instructed them to carry out the correct procedure. It is also noted that the minutes of the Installation Meeting in 1851 were written up by three different brethren.

Meeting Places: The Lodge met at the vines Inn which was situated just above the King Edward School. It was proposed to move the Lodge to the Bell In, Rye Market, which is now Market street. However an amendment to the proposition was made to move the Lodge to the Talbot Hotel and the amendment was carried. 31st Oct. 1851

Brother Aston who died in 1899, was four times Master of the lodge in 1853;54;60;63. He died in 1899 and in 1900 the Lodge purchased a font which was placed in Holly Trinity Church, Amblecote in his memory.

I also noticed that the first record of all brethren below an Installed Master being asked to retire from the Lodge and a board of Inst

Installed Masters being opened was in 1881. This dose not mean however that this procedure was not carried out.

An important event took place at the September Meeting in 1882 when a letter of resignation was received from W.Bro. D'arcy Ellis. The brethren were surprised at it was carried unanimously that the resignation of so old and valued Member should be accepted until the Secretary had written and asked him to concider his decision.

The Secretary did so, and read Bro. Ellis' reply expressing his regret at ~~having~~ leaving his Lodge, but felt that he could no longer remain a member of any Worcestershire Lodge.

At the Installtion Meeting in January 1884, the Installing Master was was W.Bro. B.G. Taylor, Prov.G.Secretary. At this meeting W.Bro. Edwin Stringer the retiring Master, presented a very handsome "Loving Cup" to the Lodge.

A Scroll was presented to W.Bro. A. Grove on his 26th Anniversary as Secretary of the Lodge.

A good many important brethren in this Lodge went on to further promotion, and two from whom I received a great deal of encouragement in my early days as Curator of the Museum were W.Bro. H.R. Hammersley and W.Bro. Ralph Bennetts.

Brethren I could find no better way to end this talk than to quote from your Centenary History the following.