



**A REVIEW OF FREEMASONRY  
IN BROMSGROVE IN THE 18th  
AND 19th CENTURIES**

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## PREFACE

The earliest record of a Freemason's Lodge in Bromsgrove is that of St. John's Lodge No. 489, a "Modern" Lodge which met at the Golden Cross Hotel, in High Street, Bromsgrove its Warrant being dated 11th July 1786.

Its meeting place was changed to the Star and Garter Hotel in Droitwich in 1792, and was erased from the Grand Lodge Register on 6th February 1811.

The next Lodge to be established in Bromsgrove was The Clive Lodge No. 819, its Warrant dated 13th January 1849. It was consecrated at the Town Hall, Bromsgrove on the 11th July 1849, the Presiding Officer being Wor. Bro. W. Roden, Deputy Provincial Grand Master.

At that time the Province of Worcestershire had no Provincial Grand Master, and it may be appropriate to include in this account a few details of the struggle to get a Provincial Grand Master.

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## THE PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE

In 1753 Sir Robert de Cornwall was Installed Provincial Grand Master over the Provinces of Worcestershire, Gloucestershire, Salop, Monmouth and Herefordshire. This may seem a large area, but the number of Lodges could be counted on one hand.

In 1791 Wor. Bro. John Dent was appointed Provincial Grand Master over the Province of Worcestershire but he did not visit the Province as at this time it was deemed a title in Grand Lodge and his post was to represent the Province at Grand Lodge. He died in 1826 and there is no record of him visiting this Province in the whole of the 35 years. He was an M.P. and P.S.G.W. of England and Grand Treasurer. His Collar Jewel was made in 1822 and is now on display in the Museum at Worcester.

After the death of J. Dent the Province did not have a Grand Master until 1851 when Henry Charles Vernon P.S.G.W. of England and P.D.P.G.M. of Staffordshire was Installed. From 1826 to 1851 the Worcester Lodge made representations to Grand Lodge without success and as a protest they decided they would not pay their Grand Lodge dues. Some considerable time afterwards Grand Lodge realised this and ordered the Secretary to attend the quarterly Communication and bring the Warrant and Minute Books, of the Lodge. They were eventually admonished and everything returned to normal. It was however made known to them that in the absence of a Provincial Grand Master the Lodge came under the direction of the Grand Registrar and he could appoint a Deputy Grand Master.

The Worcester Lodge had lost heart and it was the Royal Standard Lodge who took up the matter. On 12th February 1847, a Lodge Meeting was held at Kidderminster under the Banner of the Royal Standard Lodge to take steps for the formation of a Provincial Grand Lodge, when a letter was read from V.W. Brother A. Dobie, G. Reg., into whose charge the affairs of the Province had been confided, to the

effect that he would have much pleasure in giving his assistance. He further writes: "One thing will require some consideration, and the sooner you (Bro. Dr. Roden) and the Brethren can take it up the better. I mean the appointment of a Deputy Grand Master and the other officers who will do their duty and be satisfactory to the Brethren of the Province".

On 17th August 1847 the first Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting was arranged at Worcester and Wor. Bro. W. Roden was appointed and invested as Dep. Prov. Grand Master. He held office for approximately two years when he resigned, it would appear that he had differences of opinion with one or more Lodges in the Province and in 1851 Wor. Bro. Vernon was appointed and invested as Provincial Grand Master with Wor. Bro. John Hyde as Deputy Provincial Grand Master.

From this time the Province has gone from strength to strength and Meetings have been held every year since 1851.

And now to return to the Olive Lodge No.819. It was consecrated in 1849 and the Presiding Officer William Roden, Esq., M.D. resigned the following year.

The Warrant names seven Brethren in the Constitution:

WM Thomas William Kinder	S.W.	of St. John's Lodge, Leicester No.348
SW Xavier N. Paszkorvitz		of Filde Union Lodge, Fleetwood No.533
JW Richard William Johnson		of Lodge No.348
Thomas H. Wheeler	P.M.	of Lodge No.348
William Pettifer		of Lodge No.348
William J. Windram	J.W.	of Lodge No.348
Arthur Kinder		of Lodge No.348

How a group of Leicester Masons came to found a Lodge in Bromsgrove remains a mystery but research has proved that most of them were Coachbuilders but there is a suggestion that the connection may be with the Railway Carriage Works at Bromsgrove but this is without proof.

Of the twenty-six members who go to form the roll of the Lodge during its first year of existence, only five had addresses in Bromsgrove, eleven in the neighbourhood whilst of the remainder, four hailed from London, three from Leicester and two each from Birmingham, Shrewsbury and Worcester.

The following is an extract from "A Short Account of the Vernon Lodge No. 560" as compiled from Records by Wor. Bro. Edward Collens, P.M. P.P.G.S.W.D. Br. Prov. Gv. Sec. and read on the 50th Anniversary of the Consecration of the Lodge on 11th July 1899.

"A Lodge with the majority of its members thus widely scattered could only hope to succeed by dint of the most determined enthusiasm and esprit de corps, and these essentials were not more evident in this than is usual in Lodges. Small attendances are notable from the first; the second meeting of the Lodge was attended by but six members and two visitors, although candidates were initiated and passed. Rapid promotions followed as a matter of course and I notice that the Rev. Harcourt-Oldham, Vicar of Stoke Prior who was initiated on 10th October 1849 was elected to the Master's Chair on 12th November 1851 just two years after receiving the light of Masonry. Bro. Oldham may have been a very admirable Mason, but with so short an apprenticeship he could hardly have qualified himself for the duties of Master of his Lodge".

With such adverse influences at work, it is not surprising that our Bromsgrove Brethren lost heart, having first tried the effect of quarterly meetings in place of monthly ones we read under date 26th November 1855 the following resolution was passed:-

"That owing to the want of members and short attendances at Lodge, this Clive Lodge be dissolved, its Warrant returned to Grand Lodge, and its furniture sold. Any surplus funds to be given to Masonic Charities".

Another meeting did not take place for seven months - at all events that resolution was never confirmed; on the contrary fourteen brethren all residents of Dudley were proposed

as - joining members and elected on 30th June 1856. The names of the fourteen brethren were:-

Rev. A.G. Davies	WM	Royal Standard Lodge No.730
Geo. H. Deeley	PM	Perseverance Lodge No.838
Elliott Hollier	PM	Harmonic Lodge No.313
Sam H. Blackwell		No.730
James Worley		No.313
G.B. Lowe		No.838
Thos. Wright	Sec'y	No.838
William Wigginton	Sec'y	No.313
Henry Roper		Royal Standard and Harmonic
William Timmins		No.838
B. Bagley		No.838
William Holland		No.313
Zachariah Round		No.313

Resolutions affirming the expediency of removing the Lodge to Dudley, altering the name from Clive to Vernon and dealing with its surplus revenues were also passed, and another meeting held on the 27th August 1856 at the Golden Cross Hotel to confirm the resolutions, closed the Bromsgrove record.

The following is a list of Brethren who served the Office of Master of the Clive Lodge No.619:-

Bro. Thomas W. Kinder	1849-50	Bro. J.H. Iles	1853-54
" " " "	1850-51	Bro. Thomas Housman	1854-55
Bro. R.W. Johnson	1851-52	Bro. J.H. Iles	1855-56
Bro. Rev. Harcourt Oldham	1852-53		

Information obtained from the "Bromsgrove Messenger":-  
 Bro. R.W. Johnson was a Magistrate at the Worcester Quarter Session in 1860 and the Rev. J.H. Iles was Master of the Grammar School and Hon. Chaplain 4th Battalion of Staffordshire Rifle Volunteer Corps. He was the last member to occupy the Chair at Bromsgrove and he presided over the first meeting at Dudley.

With reference to the re-naming of the Lodge it will be noted that the Provincial Grand Master at that time was Henry Charles Vernon Esq., P.S.G.W. of England P.D.P.G.M. of Staffordshire.

Other Lodges named after the Prov. G. Master during their lifetimes were Royds Lodge No.1204, Lechmere Volunteer Lodge No.1874, Godson Lodge No.2385 was so named before Sir Augustus F. Godson Kt MP

became Prov. G.M. in 1895, Campbell Lodge No.3643, Francis Davies Lodge No.5035, and of course the Lodge named after our present Provincial Grand Master, R.W. Bro. Frederick Hickton Griffiths O.St.J.

There are several items of interest on record which took place during the six or seven years of the lifetime of the Clive Lodge.

On 5th May 1852 Bro. Edmund Anthony Harley Lechmere P.S.G.D. Wor. Mas. Semper Fidelis Lodge P Sec. of the Appollo Lodge, Oxford was proposed as a joining member by Bro. R.W. Johnson, and seconded by Bro. Housman, S.W.

The Rev. Thomas Housman (Prov. G. Steward 1852) was the grandfather of A.E. Housman, poet, and chapter 8 in John Pugh's book "Bromsgrove and the Housmans" is devoted to Thomas - Priest and Gentleman and first Vicar of Catshill.

#### MEETING OF PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE IN BROMSGROVE

On the 15th June 1852 Provincial Grand Lodge was held under the Banner of Clive Lodge at the Golden Cross Hotel; the Right Worshipful Henry C. Vernon, Prov. G.M. presiding. The Town Hall where Clive Lodge held its meetings was reserved for the banquet.

The Worcester Journal of 17th June 1852 states that about 100 Brethren from the Lodges at Worcester, Stourbridge, Dudley and Kidderminster attended with a goodly number of visitors from Birmingham and neighbouring places. The writer of the article must have been a Mason himself for although he writes: "What took place in the Lodge we are of course unable to state to our readers, Freemasonry being at Bromsgrove, as it is all over the world a "deep impenetrable secret" to all but those who are initiated into the craft", he nevertheless gives a list of names, ranks and Lodges of many of them attending as well as all the brethren appointed to Offices in Prov. Grand Lodge.

The list is followed by a full account of the sermon preached in the Parish Church of St. John and a detailed account of the formation of the procession to and from the Church or as he calls it "the sacred edifice" whose bells were ringing.

The procession was led by part of the Band of The Queens Own Worcestershire Yeomanry Cavalry which was placed at the disposal of the "Clive Lodge" by the kindness of Col. Clive.

The brethren were in full regalia and "elegant but mysterious looking banners" with Rough and Perfect Ashlers Tylers with drawn swords, first, second and third degree tracing boards, the V.S.L. Square and Compass, the Corinthian, Ionic and Doric Columns, Gavel and Globes and other Masonic appurtenances. The account even gives the place at which the Bible was opened - Numbers C.10.

A copy of the full article is in possession of the Bromsgrove Lodge No.5414 and is a fruitful ground for future historians.

#### NOTABLE BROMSGROVE FREEMASONS

Among the Bromsgrove Brethren appointed at Officers of Provincial Grand Lodge on that day are:-

P.G. Registrar	Bro. J.F. Hornsby JW 819
P.G. Stewards	Bro. Maund, Bromsgrove
	Bro. T. Harris, Stoney Lane
	Bro. Rev. T. Housman, Catshill
	Bro. L. Minchall, Bromsgrove

Of the Rev. T. Housman an indication has already been given of where details of his life can be found, but although Benjamin Maund is a world famous botanist very little is known about him by the Bromsgrove Freemasons.

A paper entitled "A Great Bromsgrovian" was read at the Bromsgrove Institute in 1926 and an account of this appeared in the "Bromsgrove Messenger" 12th June 1926. A copy of which is in the possession of the Bromsgrove Lodge No.5414.

Bro. Maund was born at Tenbury in 1790 and the United Grand Lodge of England Library and Museum give us these facts:

"Benjamin Maund was initiated on 25 May 1822 in the Apollo Lodge No.378 (now 301) Alcester, and is described in the Grand Lodge Register as a Printer, aged 33, of Bromsgrove. He remained a subscribing member of this Lodge until the end of 1828. He became a joining Member of the Clive Lodge No.819 (now Vernon Lodge No.560) on 11th July 1849 and is described as a Bookseller of Bromsgrove. He remained a subscribing member of this Lodge up to 1855, after which I am unable to trace any record of him." According to the By-laws and History of the Province of Gloucester (SK) published in 1882 a B.Maund of No.819 was appointed a Prov. Grand Steward in 1852.



The "Bromsgrove Messenger" report of 12th June 1926 records that Benjamin Maund retired from business in 1852 and resided first at Folkestone and afterwards at Sandown in the Isle of Wight, where he died 21st April 1864.

In the south side of the chancel in Bromsgrove Church are two stained glass windows to the memory of his wife and son who predeceased him, and he himself is commemorated alongside the windows by a wall tablet with a sculptured likeness, and outside the Vestry door by a coffin-shaped tombstone.

Maxwell Fraser's "Companion into Worcestershire" published in 1939 by Methuen gives the following facts: "Born in 1790 he carried on the combined business of chemist, bookseller, printer and publisher for many years in his native town (Bromsgrove). As though his business was not sufficient to keep any ordinary man fully employed he sought to interest people in flowers and gardening, which he himself loved, and started a monthly publication in London in 1825 called The Botanic Garden. It had coloured plates and descriptive letterpress and supplements dealing with horticultural subjects. It took thirteen volumes to complete and was not finished until 1850. It was republished in part on more than one occasion, and he ran a similar but more extended work under the name of The Botanist. The original drawings are preserved in the botanical department of the British Museum. Maund was elected a Fellow of the Linnean Society in 1827".

His own Botanic Garden is reputed to have been in the Crown Close near to where the Council House stands and the two mulberry trees which were moved when the road was widened to alongside the Bingo Hall could easily have once been in his garden.

#### CONCLUSION

The following is an extract from the "Review of the Kentish No.3021":- This story represents a few strands in the cord of time. It records an attempt to maintain the dignity of high tradition and weave continuity in times of considerable change. The present cannot consciously profit by the past unless there is an effort to remember what has gone before. Let this then be our tribute to past endeavour and if it helps us in any way to dedicate ourselves to the future then the tale will have been worth telling.

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8 June 1979

Dear Brother Tom,

Herewith a copy of a booklet which I propose to sell in aid of the '82 Festival for your perusal and inclusion in your records.

I would appreciate it if you would treat it in confidence as I do not propose to issue it until October or November and have not informed the officers of 5414 yet.

There are one or two mistakes which I may correct by addition of an "errata" but the chief one which you can help me with is the names of the joining members of Blue Lodge. The account says 14 but there are only 13 names. Would you kindly check with the Vernon Lodge pamphlet and phone me the missing one and I can add it to the copies I have as only 100 have been printed. If it goes well I can have the reprint corrected.

Do you know where the minute books of the Blue Lodge are?

If they are in the archives of the Library & Museum I should be very pleased to come to Worcester to read them.

Thank you for all the help you give me and I send my best wishes for a happy & restful vacation.

Yours sincerely & fraternally  
Delphic