

Northfield Masonic Hall

Ex Libris

WORC. PROV. LIBRARY
MASONIC HALL
WORCESTER



1901 — 2001

100 years of Freemasonry

Masonic Province
of
Worcestershire.

Copyright Worcestershire Masonic Library and Museum Trust

The Northfield Masonic Hall Premises. How did it all start ?

As detailed on the 1882 plans, the land (plot 884 on the ordnance survey map) was owned by the Grove Exors and was used for farming. The first evidence of any building work was in May 1894 when plans were submitted by Philip Blenkam - Architect and Surveyor of Selly Oak - to build a "House, near to the Travellers Rest" for Mr Charles H. Hayward. This house was a modest 2 up 2 down and still exists on the site at No 645 Bristol Road South (The Nursery as we know it).

The unusual feature of this house was the position in that it was some distance away from any other house, with open land on all three sides.

The next development was in 1895 for a "Proposed New Pair of Houses - Bristol Road - Northfield" submitted by Newton & Cheatley - Architects of Birmingham for M.J. Kuli. These Houses although Semi-detached were more elaborate than No 645 and included an attic, cellar, bathroom, toilet inside and toilet outside. The Houses appear to be unchanged to this day at No's 647 & 649.

Some 3 years passed before anyone considered any further building work on the site. A well known local builder "Mr George Woodcock of Cock Lane Northfield" had plans submitted by Philip Blenkam (same Architect and Surveyor as No 645) in August 1899 for a detached Residence and also a new Joiners Workshop, Stables etc Bristol Road, Northfield.

The detached residence (presently the caretakers house with flat above) was an elaborate affair. 4 bedrooms, dressing room and bathroom with toilet upstairs - Dining room, Drawing room, Kitchen, Scullery and sunken Larder downstairs. The garden was surrounded by a purpose built wall and at the bottom of the yard a Cycle Shed and Office ! The Office with bay window and porch had a second story accessible from inside by a ladder.

The Joiners workshop included 3 bay storage below and an upper large area for 8 workmen's benches and a foreman's office. Adjacent to this was the harness room, 4 stall stables and carriage house with hayloft and corn store over. Present day, the dining room back wall to the columns was the 3 bay storage area and committee room No 1 was the stables and carriage house.

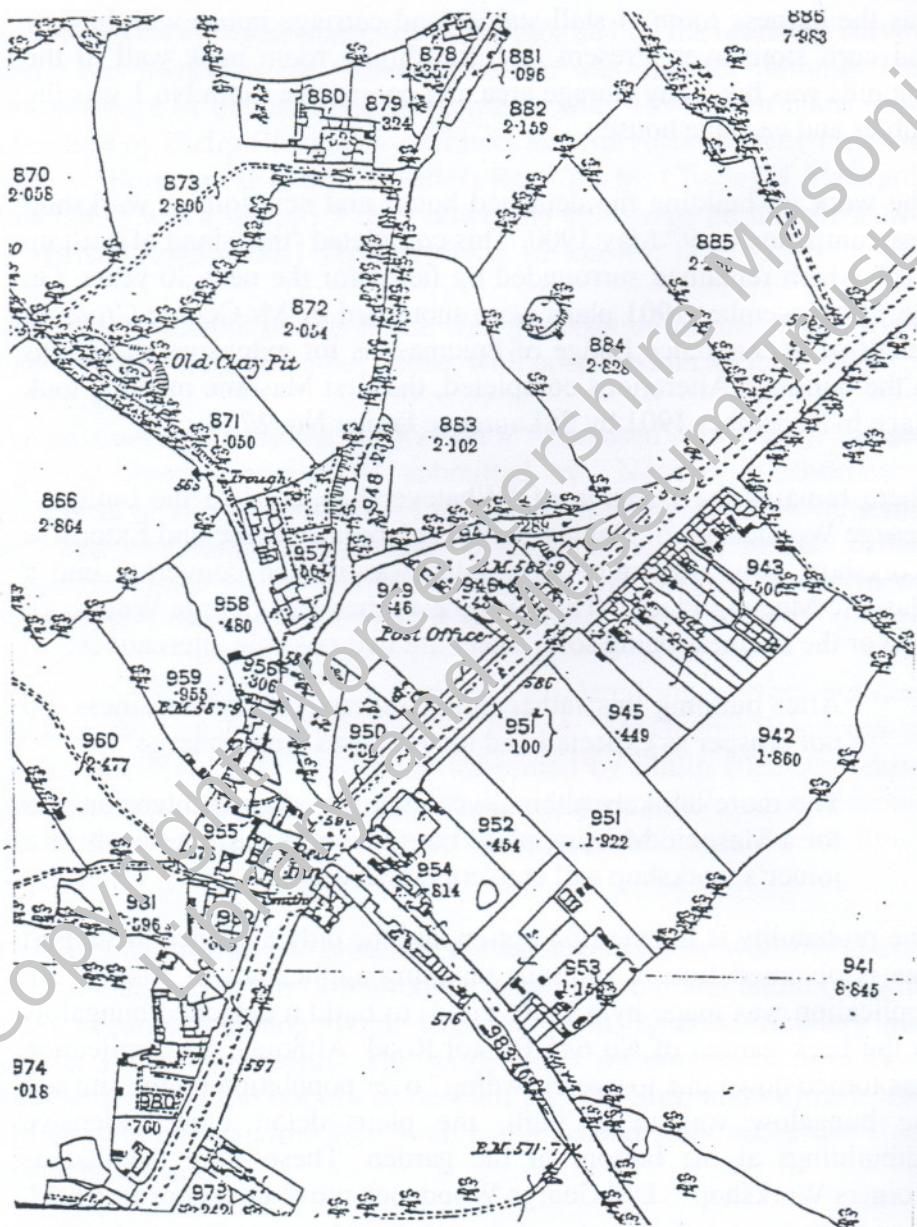
The work on building the detached house and new joiners workshop was completed on 9th May 1900. This completed "the island of built up area" which remained surrounded by fields for the next 30 years. On the 11th November 1901 plans were submitted by Mr George Cross on behalf of St. Laurence Lodge of Freemasons for extensive alterations to the building. Alterations completed, the first Masonic meeting took place in December 1901 by St Laurence Lodge No. 2724.

There remains the question of "Whatever happened to the builder - George Woodcock"? Having built an elaborate House and Extensive Workshop, why after only 18 months was it then converted into a Masonic Meeting Place? There is no evidence that George Woodcock died or the business being sold. There are two possible alternatives:-

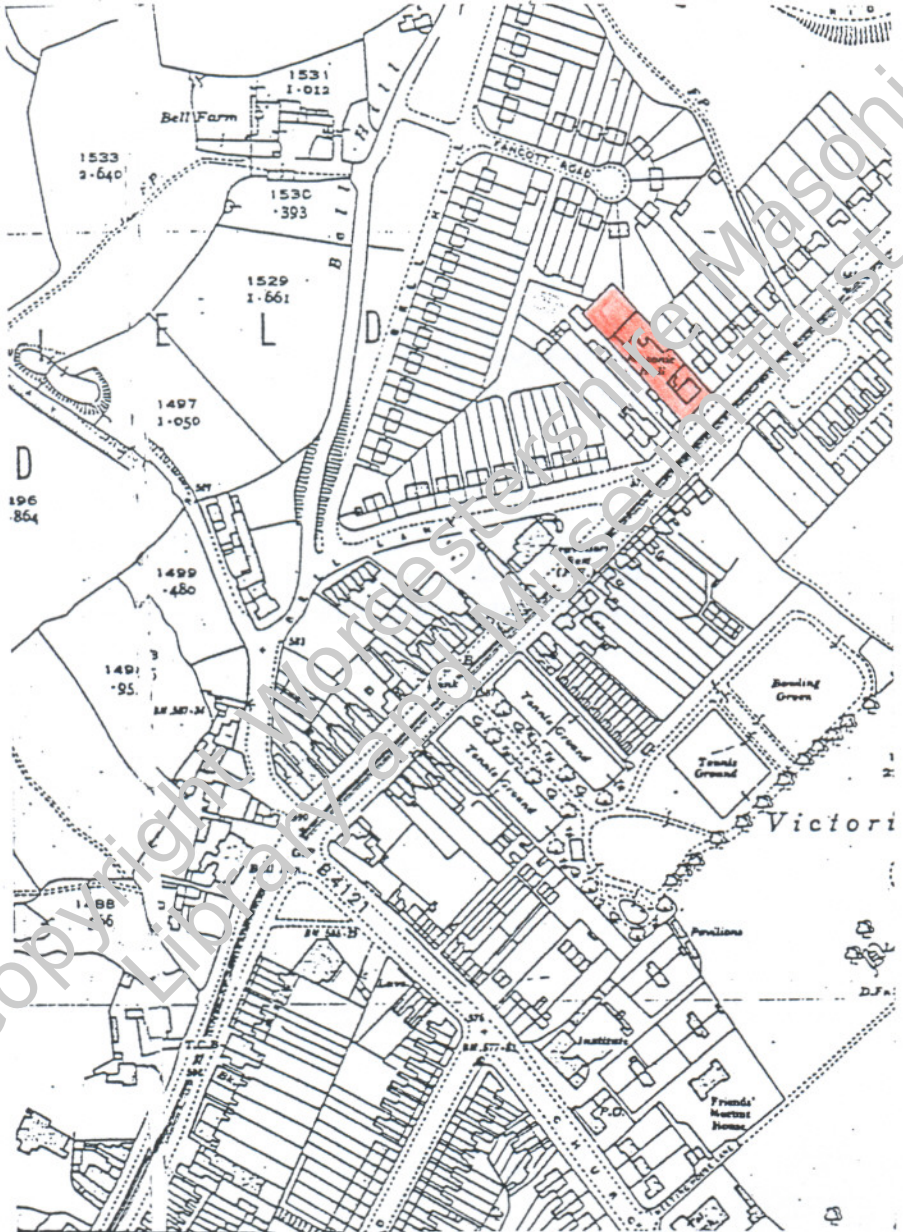
- A After building this rather large Joiners Facility - business did not prosper as expected and the premises were too large.
- B The more unlikely alternative - that the original intention was for a Masonic Meeting place but to be built surreptitiously as a joiner's workshop and converted afterwards.

The probability is for the first option and the only evidence to support this is obtained from a spurious planning application in 1945! An application was made by a Mary Field to build a detached bungalow in the back garden of No 645 Bristol Road. Although the application was turned down due to overcrowding / over population on the site and the bungalow was never built, the plans detail other extensive outbuildings at the bottom of the garden. These were detailed as "Joiners Workshop". Did George Woodcock move next door in 1901?

Northfield Area
Ordnance Survey Map 1883



Northfield Area
Ordnance Survey Map 1937



After 1901

Dates of Importance:-

- 16th June 1916 Masonic Rooms & House advertised for sale by Auction although immediately prior to auction purchased by W.Bro. R.E.L. Evans (St. Laurence Lodge) for £1,050, although he sold the House for £450. Over the next 18 months, ownership of the Hall was transferred to St. Laurence Lodge by deed of transfer.
- 29th Nov 1937 The freehold was purchased for £192 10s 0d and the House (641) bought back?
- 7th June 1939 Plans submitted for extensive modifications to the Masonic Hall. This included raising & fitting new roof, new buttress risers, re-position emergency staircase and remodelling the Lodge room and dining rooms. The rooms were re-opened on the 21st October 1939 at a regular meeting of Northfield Lodge No. 5056.
- 8th June 1939 The Northfield Masonic Hall Ltd was incorporated.
- 6th June 1955 Plans submitted for the New entrance and extension to the dining room.
- 1963 Caretakers House converted to Flat etc.
- 30th Dec 1964 The St. Laurence Lodge undertook to convey the Freehold to the Company Free of charge.
- 1971 Purchase of 645 Bristol Road South, (The Nursery), outbuildings demolished and car park extended.

Consecrations:-

- 24th Sept 1919 Kings Norton Lodge No, **4001**.
- 10th Nov 1928 Northfield Lodge No, **5056**.
- 6th April 1929 Thistle Lodge No, **5064**.
- 27th April 1929 St. Laurence Royal Arch Chapter
No, **2724**.
- 26th July 1930 St. Laurence Mark Master Masons
Lodge No. **893**.
- 9th Sept 1935 St. Laurence Royal Ark Mariners
Lodge No, **893**.
- 8th Jan 1936 Coston Lodge No, **5600**.
- 18th Feb 1939 Dofra Lodge No, **5775**.
- 29th June 1944 Lickey Hills Lodge No, **5947**.
- 31st Aug 1945 Servant Lodge No, **6115**.
- 22nd Jan 1949 Lodge of Franchelie St, Leonard No, **6788**
- 31st Oct 1963 Beacon Lodge No, **7915**.
- 20th May 1964 Lodge of the Round Table No, **7961**.
- 29th Sept 1965 Northfield Royal Arch Chapter No, **5056**.
- 29th April 1968 Weoley Castle Lodge No, **8196**.
- 10th May 1970 Bernard De Frankley Preceptory No, **421**.
- 24th Jan 1978 Lodge of Justice & Equity No, **8807**.
- 26th Nov 1985 Centenary Lodge of Mark Master
Masons No. **1623**.
- 28th June 1991 Northfield Chapter R.C. No. **1022**.
- 23rd May 1995 Chapter of the Round Table No. **7961**.

Officers
of
The Northfield Masonic Hall Ltd

1939

Chairman - W.Bro. Alfred Allen.
Treasurer - W.Bro. Henry James Gittoes.
Secretary - Bro. John McPhail McKenzie.

2001

Chairman - W.Bro. A.M. McDowall, PGStB
Vice Chairman - W.Bro. K.J. Brine, PProvGStB
Treasurer - W.Bro. A.G. Imlah
Secretary - W.Bro. F.E. Ursell, PProvGSwdB

Gentle reminder:-

I must, therefore, remind you that the Masonic Hall belongs to the Northfield Masonic Hall Ltd which is a Company Limited by guarantee and the members of the Company consist of one Representative from each Lodge meeting in the Hall. The management of the Hall is, therefore, in the hands of all the Lodges meeting here. You have all elected your own Representatives, and if you are not satisfied with the way they are behaving and the actions they are taking, it is entirely up to you to sack that Representative and to appoint someone in his place who will carry out your wishes, always remembering of course, that the majority vote must count.

"Extract from the Chairman's (W.Bro. Nock, PPGD) statement 18th September 1958"

Distributed at the St. Laurence Lodge No. 2724 Meeting 26th Nov 2001.
(36,509 days after the first meeting at these premises)