



Worcestershire Associated
Masonic Lodges



GROUP 13
STOURBRIDGE



FOREWORD

Group 13 W.A.M.L. comprises 24 elected representatives (4 from each of the undermentioned six Craft Lodges meeting at the Talbot Hotel, Stourbridge).

Lodge of Stability No. 564

Godson Lodge No. 2385

Swinford Lodge No. 5729

St. Kenelm Lodge No. 6082

Old Edwardian Lodge of Stourbridge No. 6141

Lodge of St. Thomas No. 7940

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This copy of the address by the Presiding Officer, W Bro. C. D. Barlow, P.P.G.W., has been commissioned by him privately for distribution to members of Godson Lodge.

Worshipful Brethren and Brethren,

I refer, firstly, to the first Festival of Worcestershire Associated Masonic Lodges Group 13, which took place last year. On that occasion Worshipful Bro. Ralph Bennett presided. He gave an address on Freemasonry in Stourbridge from early times, and about Stability Lodge in particular.

My address, this year, is about the early days of Freemasonry in Oldbury and the foundation of Godson Lodge. I do this so that Brethren of Godson Lodge may learn something about the early days of their Lodge and, also, that the Brethren in Stourbridge, who have taken the Godson Brethren to their hearts, may know something of the origins of our Lodge.

There was a preliminary meeting held in Oldbury on 19th September, 1890, at which there were 14 Brethren present. Amongst them were four Past Masters: one from Royal Standard Lodge whose name was Abraham Green—a name which is well-known to many of you here present; one from Perseverance Lodge; two from Dartmouth Lodge—in Staffordshire, of course; and the Senior Warden of Dartmouth Lodge, Alfred Thompson, who became the Founder Worshipful Master of Godson Lodge. Also present were the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden and Junior Warden of Harmonic Lodge, No. 252, which, as you know, is in Dudley.

Now to give you some idea of the Consecration of Godson Lodge, which took place on 11th March, 1891, I have obtained a brief cutting from the Birmingham Daily Gazette for Thursday, March 12th, 1891, and from which I will now read:—

A new Craft Lodge of the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons in the Province of Worcestershire was solemnly Consecrated at Oldbury yesterday. The new Lodge is called the Godson Lodge out of compliment to the popular Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Worcestershire, W.Bro. A. F. Godson, M.P. Its meetings will be held in a well-appointed room at the Talbot Hotel, in the centre of the town of Oldbury, and present appearances indicate that in the immediate future the Godson Lodge will develop into one of the most successful and expert Lodges, even in the Province of Worcestershire, where the workings of the craft have so long held a degree of excellence which is seldom attained.

The inception of the movement for the founding of a Masonic Lodge in Oldbury dates back about two years, when a number of brethren resident in Oldbury, but belonging to several neighbouring Lodges, met and the question of the advisability of founding a Lodge in the town was discussed. For various reasons the movement seemed to hang fire for a short time, but about 12 months ago the matter was again brought up and from then to now the lead in the matter has been taken by Bro. Alfred Thompson, who was yesterday installed the first Master of the Godson Lodge. In his efforts Bro. Thompson has been ably seconded by G. F. Old, a young and enthusiastic brother who was yesterday appointed first Secretary of the Lodge. The names of others, such as W.Bro. William Waldron, W.Bro. Abraham Green

and W.Bro. Enoch Wood, who have rendered splendid service to the promoters and whose names are found among the list of Founders of the Lodge, might be mentioned in this article.

The day's proceedings commenced at half-an-hour past noon when a Craft Lodge was opened in the **Public Schools, Talbot Street.** The Lodge was opened under the banner of the Harmonic Lodge No. 252 Dudley, the Mother Lodge of the Province, the officers of which occupied the respective chairs, namely Bro. Robert Chambers, W.M., W.Bro. E. J. Chambers, S.W., Bro. Walter Hanson, J.W., Bro. James Jones, Senior Deacon, Bro. Duncan I. Sheddon, Acting Junior Deacon. After the Lodge had been opened in the usual form, so that the Provincial Grand Master and the Officers of Provincial Grand Lodge, both past and present, could be received and honoured according to their rank, these officers entered the Lodge Room under the capable direction of Bro. J. Mossop, Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies. The reception of Provincial Grand Lodge Officers is a function which entails the performance of a very beautiful musical service. This and the remaining musical portions of the day's ceremonies were admirably rendered by a quartet consisting of Bro. Alexander Smith, W.M., of the Noah's Ark Lodge No. 347, and three other brethren of that Lodge, namely Bros. W. H. Smith, S.W., E. W. Smith, J.W., and H. Newnes, Inner Guard. The organ was presided over by the Provincial Grand Organist, Bro. H. M. Jackson.

The report in the Daily Gazette goes on with a description of the formation of the Lodge and the parades of the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master and his Officers into and out of the Lodge. It also gives a list of the Brethren attending but as this is in rather small print I did not count them, although I would guess that there are a good 100 names recorded as having attended.

The item in the Birmingham Daily Gazette continues:

The proceedings concluded with a grand banquet held in the Public Hall (that is what, I think, became the Town Hall, just across the Oldbury square from the Talbot Hotel), over which the Worshipful Master of Godson Lodge presided. He was supported by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and other Officers of Provincial Grand Lodge. The usual Masonic toasts were honoured and the proceedings were pleasantly dispersed with a choice selection of music. The whole of the Lodge collars and jewels were presented to the Lodge by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master . . . (and Brethren, if you will look in this Lodge Room, you will find that those original Officers collar jewels are here displayed in a case). That concludes the quotation from the Birmingham Daily Gazette.

While we are speaking of the Festival, I can tell you that the menu was as follows:—

SOUPS

Oxtail Julienne

FISH

Salmon and prawn sauce. Filleted sole.

ENTREES

Compote de pigeon
Veal cutlets a la jardiniere

REMOVES

Forequarter of lamb
Sirloin of beef. Saddle of mutton.
Boiled and roast chicken.
Ducklings. York ham.

SWEETS

St. James' pudding. Godson pudding.
Gooseberry tart.
Creams. Jellies. Ice pudding.

Cheese

Dessert

Coffee

Although I have seen the menu, I do not know how much was charged for the meal in those days. There is no reference to this charge in the minutes.

After the consecration in March, the next meeting of the Lodge was on 17th April, 1891, and there were five Brethren initiated at that meeting. The first name in the minute book and, therefore, we must consider him the first initiate in Godson Lodge, was the Reverend Henry McKean. He was raised to the Second Degree at an emergency meeting on 12th June, 1891, together with eight others. He was

raised to the Third Degree on 21st August, 1891 together with eight others: so you can see there was quite a lot of work going on in the Lodge on those occasions.

Bro. the Reverend McKean was invested as Chaplain at the first Installation in the Lodge on 13th March, 1892: and he was invested as Past Provincial Grand Chaplain in 1898 at Provincial Grand Lodge. He died on 24th June, 1904. One of his aprons is regularly worn by a grandson, Worshipful Bro. William McKean Growcott, of the Lodge of Truth No. 6606, Warwickshire. (The President here invited W.Bro. W. McKean Growcott to stand and exhibit the apron to the Brethren). Bro. the Reverend Henry McKean was never a Worshipful Master of his mother Lodge, but he continued as Chaplain until his death on 24th June, 1904; in fact, the minutes of 22nd June, 1904, record that "Bro. the Reverend Henry McKean sent an apology, along with his fraternal and best wishes to every member of the Lodge, regretting that 'he would not be with us to-night'."

Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire has been held under the banner of Godson Lodge in the Public Hall, Oldbury, on two occasions. The first, on 25th September, 1901, when 43 members of the Lodge attended. That was the greatest number of any Lodge in the Province and would certainly be a record in these days.

The method of opening Provincial Grand Lodge was, apparently, different in those days from today. It was opened in the Three Degrees by the Godson Worshipful Master and his Officers. Then the Provincial Grand Master and his officers were received

and Provincial Grand Lodge conducted its business. The Provincial Grand Master closed Provincial Grand Lodge and left in procession together with his officers, whereupon the Godson Lodge Worshipful Master and officers closed in the Three Degrees. The Provincial Grand Lodge, as you can see, was "inserted" in the Third Degree of a regular meeting of Godson Lodge.

The second Provincial Grand Lodge was held at the Public Hall—or, as it is now called, the Town Hall, Oldbury—on 25th September, 1912, and I presume that the same opening and closing was conducted on that occasion.

I also presume that this accounts for the expression "Held under the Banner of Godson Lodge."

Since that time Godson Lodge has not been host—(as an individual Lodge—to Provincial Grand Lodge but has associated itself with various groups of Lodges after the usual manner known in these days, under Group 4, which included the Halesowen Lodges.

Earlier I mentioned the presentation of the Officers' collar and jewels by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master. Under the list of donations there is a blank in the minute book after the name of the Provincial Grand Master Sir Edmund A. H. Letchmere (Bart.) M.P., but we know that he presented the Charity Box (which is still in use) and I must assume that he also presented the Ivory Gavel. The Masters Maul **did** at one time bear some inscription on a metal band but this is now missing. No purchase of such gavels is listed in the minutes. They are no longer in use as the ivory has become too brittle and they have suffered from over-enthusiasm by officers.

Provincial Grand Master and his officers were received

One item which was not donated, but was purchased by the Lodge—The Lodge Banner. The one in this room is a copy as the original (painted on silk) was suffering from having been unrolled and re-rolled over many years, was replaced in 1962 by W.Bro. Ted Fullwood. The original is listed in the minute book as having cost £6.00!

Finally may I, on behalf of all the Worshipful Brethren and Brethren of Godson Lodge, thank most sincerely the Brethren of the other Lodges in Stourbridge for the generous and fraternal reception of us into their midst after the sudden closing of the Talbot Hotel, Oldbury, in 1969 after more than 77 years of Freemasonry in Oldbury.

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