

LODGE OF

No 573

PERSEVERANCE

PERSEVERANCE

HALESOWEN



DLXXIII



DATE OF WARRANT FEB. 2<sup>ND</sup> 1850

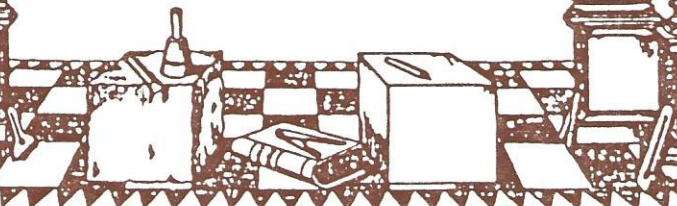
PATRON LODGE OF THE ROYAL MASONIC BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION, ROYAL MASONIC INSTITUTION FOR BOYS, ROYAL MASONIC INSTITUTION FOR GIRLS AND GRAND PATRON LODGE OF THE ROYAL MASONIC HOSPITAL

Worshipful Master: W<sup>OR</sup> Bro. J. M. Price

PAPER PRESENTED BY WOR BRO R W HARPER P P W ON THE 8TH. OCTOBER 1985 WHEN THE LODGE CELEBRATED THE DEDICATION OF THE MASONIC ROOMS 50 YEARS AGO ON THE 8TH. OCTOBER 1935.

AUDI  
VIDE  
TACE

AUDI  
VIDE  
TACE



LODGE OF PERSEVERANCE NO 573

Eleven years after its formation at the "Swan Inn", Dudley, on 24th April, 1850, and after two changes of meeting place, the petitions of Halesowen Masons won the consent of the Provincial Grand Master for a move to Halesowen.

Thus Halesowen became established as a Masonic centre in the Province of Worcestershire.

For twenty five years the Lodge prospered in the room over the stables and the Brethren enjoyed the hospitality provided by "Mine Host" at the Shenstone Hotel.

The Shenstone Hotel is now demolished for so called improvements, but must always be remembered as the corner stone of Masonry in this part of the Province. The minutes show (and we have a complete record) the varying fortunes of the Lodge over the period, and the difficulty of getting established in Halesowen after the upheaval of the move from Dudley.

Some meetings consisted of reading the Minutes, collecting subscriptions - usually in arrears - and little else. But there were the High Spots, the record (in my book) goes to Wm Bro. Waldron and His Officers who on 13th May 1833 opened the Lodge at 4.p.m. and carried out, Two Raisings, Three Passings, and one initiation, closing the Lodge at 7.45 pm. There is no record of the time they called their Coachmen from the room below.

By 1885 - (note the significance of the date)- the Lodge had overgrown the rooms at the Shenstone and more spacious accommodation was looked for in the Town. The Old Drill

Hall (later known as the Borough Hall) had been recently vacated by the Army and sold. This building was certainly large enough and the Lodge of Perseverance a desirable tenant. It is recorded that the owners were prevailed upon to provide special accommodation for the use of the Lodge, and the use of the cellar under the stage for the storage of refreshment. The Lodge moved to this accommodation on 14th December 1886. They continued to use these rooms for nearly 50 years, eventually sharing the premises with the Labour Exchange, the local Operatic Society, the Town Band, the Old Peoples Club, the Scouts, and a Cinema, not to mention sundry other organisations. (Not I would add all at the same time.) This fifty year period, in borrowed premises, and not always under ideal conditions was (I am sure) the major growth period of Masonry in Halesowen. There did not seem to be any shortage of candidates, and many members rose to High Masonic Office, in both Grand Lodge, and Provincial Grand Lodge.

Three times Provincial Grand Lodge was held at Halesowen under the Perseverance Banner. In 1887 when Rt.Wor.Bro. Sir Edmond Lechmere P.G.M. presided, the Lodge was preceded by a service in the Parish Church which all the gathering attended in procession. On this occasion four Lewises were entrusted with the duty of carrying the sacred volume. They were, Seth Smith Somers, John Pearson, Samuel W.H. Cookson, and George H. Parry. All four were presented with Bibles to mark the unique ceremony. In 1900 Wor.Bro. W.T. Page Deputy P.G.M. accompanied by the Provincial Officers and all the Brethren present attended service at the Parish Church

prior to proceeding in Procession to the Meeting at the National Schools. In 1911 Provincial Grand Lodge was held at the Halesowen Grammar School (prior to this date there was no suitable Hall at the Grammar School) and was presided over by Rt. Wor. Bro. General Sir William Campbell P.G.M.

On the 19th July 1905 the Perseverance Chapter of Holy Royal Arch Masons was consecrated and shared the accommodation at the Drill Hall.

On 8th February 1921 Perseverance Lodge of Mark Master Masons was consecrated.

Masonry in Halesowen was now really established and was growing from strength to strength. The close tie with the Church was marked by the Church Service before Prov. Grand Lodge was a notable feature of Halesowen Masonic life, and special arrangements were made each year to mark the Patronal Festival of the Parish Church - St. John The Baptist - and the feast of St. John the Divine (St. Johns' Dinner.)

On May 8th 1928 Bro. Francis Lionel Rose was installed into the chair of The Lodge, and on that occasion (recorded as a warm evening) there were 88 Brethren present. How they managed in the room behind the stage at the Drill Hall I don't know, but at the very next meeting of the Lodge the question of accommodation and the present lease on the premises was brought up and debated at length.

First, to ensure continuity of tenure a 3 year lease was obtained on the Drill Hall with a further 3 year option. It was then agreed that by the expiration of these periods new premises must be found. A new Masonic building as a permanent home for Halesowen Masonry was to be the aim. But Where, and

When, and How?.

As usual a committee was set up to find ways and means, and eventually a plot of land was purchased in Tenter Street, but nothing much else happened.

On the 13th December 1932 a letter was read from Bro. Albert Shuter asking for the support of the Lodge for the formation of a new Lodge, and for the use of the Lodge Room and furniture for about 5 years. It was proposed seconded, and carried. - "That this The Lodge of Perseverance No.573 receives the application of Bro. Albert Shuter with much favour and is fully prepared to support a petition for the formation of a new Lodge as set forth in the application - providing that it shall be a Lodge within the Province of Worcestershire and that sufficient be forthcoming to ensure a successful Lodge without detriment to the Lodge of Perseverance "

Halas Abbey Lodge was consecrated on 11th May 1933.

Perseverance Lodge had its first daughter Lodge. The five years for the use of the rooms and furniture is now 52 years.

At the installation meeting of Perseverance Lodge two days prior to the consecration meeting 17 Masons had crammed into the Lodge room. Now something had to be done about the new premises if the standards set by Perseverance and now being emulated by Halas Abbey were to be maintained.

Another committee of Master, Wardens, Past Masters and Officers with representatives of the Chapter, Mark and Halas Abbey Lodge was formed with instructions to draw up and submit definite recommendations for the Lodge to consider. Fifteen months later the Committee reported and proposed, - "That Newfields, a

house and 3/4 acre of land be purchased from Bro.J.B.Downing for £1400". This proposal was eventually accepted by the Lodge, providing the total cost of the purchase and the necessary alterations did not exceed £3000. Wor.Bro.A.T. Butler agreed to prepare schemes and estimates and came up with a figure of £3650 minimum. The whole scheme was almost in ruins! Bro J.B. Downing quickly offered to buy the greenhouse for £50 and to make £100 donation. Relief, Jubilation, the Lodge could manage the balance.- The scheme was saved.

.. More plans were prepared by Wor.Pro.Butler and estimates obtained, - too high. More revisions, more estimates - still too high, more proposals and counter proposals, time did not stand still. In December 1934 the first Trustees were appointed. V.Wor.Bro.S.S.Somers, Wor.Bro.W.D.Abbiss, Wor.Bro. A.T.Butler, Wor.Bro F L Rose.

By March 1935 four separate schemes had been prepared and the total budget raised to £4000. The Chapter agreed to pay the additional cost of the apse - £145. In April 1935 it was agreed to proceed at a total cost of £4450 including the purchase of the House and Land. Under the skillful guidance of Wor.Bro.A.,T.Butler a perfectionist of the old school - the work proceeded and the Halesowen Masonic Temple was dedicated on 8th October 1935 by the Prov. Grand Master, The Rt. Wor.Bro.General Sir Francis Davies D.G.M.

There were present at the dedication 58 members of the Lodge (I knew 56 of these Brethren) and 46 visitors.

After the dedication ceremony the Lodge was opened with due ceremonial being given to The Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodge Officers present, and a full evenings work completed.

- 1). A Grand Lodge Certificate was presented.
- 2). A Ballot was taken for two new applicants, Ronald Samuel Goodman, and Thomas Alfred Nicklin.
- 3). Mr. William Robinson was initiated into the Lodge.
- 4). The normal Lodge business - and that rather protracted - was completed.
- 5.) Various gifts to the Temple were presented, accepted and acknowledged.
  - A.) The curtains and other items for use in rooms. - The Wives and Ladies of the Brethren - by letter.
  - B.) The Secretary's Desk - The Wor.Master and Brethren of Halas Abbey Lodge.
  - C.) Six chairs - Mrs. Skuter - wife of the Wor.Master of Halas Abbey Lodge.
  - D.) Six Collars - the Secretary of Halas Abbey Lodge - G.A.Mansill.
- 6). The Pro.Grand Master gave an address on the New Temple and thanked the Wor.Master and Officers of the Lodge.

At last, Perseverance Lodge, together with its Chapter and Lodge of Mark Master Masons had their own new home, and one daughter - Halas Abbey was sharing it with them.

What a Night!!!

We must now ask ourselves, "What have we Masons of the last half century made of the gift which our forebears left for us!!

The fruits of much heart searching, much labour and not a little risk. A Masonic building they were so proud of, which we have accepted as of right. Have our efforts to maintain the growth of Masonry and Masonics Principals lived up to the fine ideals with which everyone left the meeting on the 8th October 1935. On reflection perhaps we have not done too badly, but, could we have done better?

A period of consolidation was an absolute must following the efforts and upheaval of building and not least financing the New Temple, and what better mark of achievement could there have been than by the founding of a New Lodge

Halesowen Lodge No.5635 was consecrated in these rooms on the 21st October 1936 - almost a year after the dedication of the rooms. The Senior Past Master of Perseverance Lodge - indeed the most senior Mason Halesowen has ever produced - Very Wor.Bro.S.S.Somers - was installed as the first Wor.Master.

Unfortunately 1939 followed 1936 all too quickly. With a large debt (much of it to individual members) still outstanding on the New Hall and the building and furnishings still not completely finished efforts must now be concentrated on the demands of the National Emergency. Many Members left for active service and those who remained were all engaged in some kind of time and energy consuming service to the community. Nevertheless despite all the hardships and difficulties the Lodges carried on and contributed far more to the war effort than was generally known or acknowledged. At the end of 1944 anticipating the end of hostilities and an early victory, and in preparation for the return of Brethren serving their Country and of worthy men seeking knowledge of the Order, a group of far seeing Masons presented a Petition to Perseverance Lodge for a new Lodge at Halesowen to help accommodate these Masons and Gentlemen. Their foresight and anticipation proved to be correct.

Lapal Lodge was consecrated on 13th April 1945 within a week of the war in Europe being ended.



This was the beginning of what has perhaps been the greatest period in the history of Halesowen Masonry. Serving members were returning to take up their offices and a spirit of friendly rivalry was springing up between individual members and Lodges. Hence ceremonies gained sparkle and lustre. This period of consolidation and rehabilitation by example led to expansion. Members were attracted from new professions and industries. New blood brought new outlooks and ideas to blend with, but not alter the old. The moral and social influences of Masonry by the practice, service and example, of its members affected nearly everyone in this town in some way or other.

Now what of today and of the future? The two Craft Lodges of 1935 have now grown to eight.

The Chapter of 50 years ago has developed into two Chapters.

The Mark Lodge is now joined by an Ark Mariners Lodge.

There are two Rose Croix Chapters.

The 100 Masons of 1935 is now 600 Masons of 1985.

These 100 Masons by their united efforts (and not a little personal sacrifice) made certain that the Masonry they had created in this place should have a building worthy of the good name that Masonry and all things Masonic carried with it in this town. They also wanted to be certain that succeeding generations of Masons would have a proper place in which to meet and practice their art. It is up to us the 600, to take up the challenge, to build on the foundations laid by our predecessors 50 years ago, and to be certain that we hand on to our successors a building and more importantly

principals worthy of the high ideals which inspired it. We have accepted the fruits of their labours and I hope maintained and improved these buildings in a manner they would approve. I am certain, knowing the original purchasers they would be highly delighted with the improvements that have been made, but the need to practice those high ideals of Masonry was never greater than at the present time, and not only to practice but to be seen to practice them. In a world where moral and social virtues seem to have almost gone, and the dogmas of even Church and State appear to be changed to suit the tide of fashion; and where example is more likely to invite ridicule than respect, we must step out of the smug complacency of the last 20 years and be prepared to acknowledge our allegiance to the doctrine of the order. Our forebears gained much respect within the community by their loyalty to the order, to their Master and to their Lodge. Are we, the Masons of the 80's prepared to show half the support to our Wor. Master and the order as was shown by our predecessors or do we consider that our duties to Masonry begin and end with six or seven or even eight attendances at Lodge during the season? Or would we attend at all without a banquet?

Brethren, if we wish to leave for our successors not just a well cared for building and grounds, but, as was left for us - a truly Masonic Ornament, we must be prepared to show our loyalty to the order, to practice out of the Lodge those duties we have been taught in it, openly to acknowledge that we believe there are limits of good and evil, by example to inculcate a code of moral and social behaviour and to exercise the art of charity for the relief of poverty, oppression and distress, that the world may know the Happy and Beneficial effects of our institution.