

A SHORT HISTORY OF THE PERMANENT WAY LODGE

No. 9951



There is a long association between railways and Freemasonry.

As the railway age developed in the 19th and early 20th centuries so too did Freemasonry. The power of steam enabled men to travel more easily and new lodges proliferated as a result.

Many of the railway pioneers, who were instrumental in this early development of the railways, were Freemasons, for example James Watt, Isambard Kingdom Brunel and Daniel Gooch. Other notable railway Freemasons were William Stanier, George Churchward, Nigel Gresley and Richard Maunsell, representing the various regions of the railways.

A NEW LODGE IS BORN

Indeed there were and are a great many lodges with close historic railway links and now one more has joined their ranks. It is The Permanent Way Lodge, No. 9951, which was consecrated on Saturday, 10th February 2018.

The seeds of a Railway Lodge were sown over time as it became clear that a number of the Brethren of Elmley Castle Lodge, No. 6247, shared perhaps more than a passing interest in railways. Aware of the rich history of railway-related lodges, that seed began to grow and a small number of Brethren got together to seriously plan the creation of a new railway-specific Lodge for those Freemasons with an interest in railways. The first informal meeting took place on 24th November 2014.

The concept of a themed Lodge is not, of course, a new thing. There are

Lodges that cater for footballers, motor cyclists and oarsmen as well as those in the professions.

The notion of a new Railway Lodge was fully embraced by The Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire and information was shared with other Lodges and Provinces.

MEETINGS

The interest generated exceeded all expectations and informal meetings were held to consider the basis and format of the Lodge, its by-laws, meeting dates, design of the jewels, regalia and so on. From the outset it was decided that the Lodge, although formed under the constitutions of The Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire and a daughter Lodge of Elmley Castle Lodge, No. 6247, meeting in Evesham, would be peripatetic. In other words it would meet at various places throughout the United Kingdom.



The Jewel of the Permanent Way Lodge

The new lodge was given the name 'The Permanent Way Lodge'. The permanent way is the name given to the tracks upon which trains run.

The Permanent Way Lodge, No. 9951, will meet four times a year on the fourth Friday of January (Installation), May, July and September.

It is planned that meetings will take place alongside social events at venues of railway interest and thus wives and partners of Brethren will be encouraged to participate.

The new Lodge will be open to any Mason who has an interest in railways, whether as a leisure interest or professionally. It will be using Emulation Workings. It will be an Initiating Lodge, open to new members partial to railways, who may be considering becoming a Freemason.

THE WORSHIPFUL MASTER'S GAVEL

The three Grand Principles that Freemasonry is founded upon, brotherly love, relief and truth, were very much in evidence in those early days of the railways. There is a story that gives an example of this concerning Daniel Gooch, by then a prominent Freemason. As the man in charge of the Swindon Works, it was his job to ensure high standards of work and discipline were in force. One morning a workman came in suffering the

effects of a heavy, previous night's drinking. The penalty for this was to be fined half a day's pay, which Gooch enforced. However, when he learned the reason for the workman being in such a state, namely that a young child of his had just died, Gooch still fined the man. He did, however, pay the man's fine for him and also paid the funeral expenses of the child. A fine example of masonic principles!



Sir Daniel Gooch

Daniel Gooch visited The Royal Sussex Lodge of Emulation, No 355, in Swindon, became a Joining Member and the Master in 1853 and 1854. He became Master of Lansdowne Lodge of Unity, No. 626, at Chippenham, Wiltshire. Both these Lodges are still in existence. He eventually became the Provincial Grand Master of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire.

We are fortunate in the new Lodge to have, as a founder member, the custodian of the very gavel that Gooch owned and used. He has kindly agreed that the Worshipful Master of the Lodge may use this gavel at our meetings. The gavel was made from a block of ivory brought back from Uganda by John Gooch, his father. The gavel was made at the Swindon Locomotive Works. The head depicts two images. One end shows the Square and Compasses and the opposite end the Heraldic Badge of Richard the Lionheart, although no

2018/4.5

reason for this can be established. The handle is attached to the head by a screw thread, so it can be separated for storing in its masonic case. Gooch carried his regalia in a medical Gladstone bag.

THE FUTURE

The Consecration of any Lodge is an exciting occasion that underlines the vibrancy and opportunity presented by Freemasonry. Following in the footsteps of the likes of Watt, Brunel, Gooch, Churchward, Gresley, Stanier, Maunsell and many others, this is a Lodge that builds on a rich heritage. It can also look forward to an equally rich future.

If you would like to be a part of this future then please contact the Secretary by email at:

thepermanentway@yahoo.com