



THE ROYAL WOLVERHAMPTON SCHOOL MASONIC CONNECTIONS

" the advantages of education, by which means alone we are rendered fit members of regularly organised society."

The essential nature of the work of the Orphan Asylum in the field of education, allied to the practice of relief, struck an answering chord in the hearts of the local Masonic Brethren. The first donation to the Foundation from a Masonic Lodge appears to have been five guineas given by St. Peter's Lodge, No. 419, Wolverhampton in 1863. This was followed by Lodge of Honour No. 526, Wolverhampton in 1875. As the reputation of the School spread, so did Masonic support and the first donation from a Lodge in the Province of Worcestershire, Royal Standard Lodge, No. 498, was received in 1892 while the first from the Province of Warwickshire came from Tudor Lodge No. 1792, in 1894.

Meanwhile in 1893 the Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffordshire sent its first donation of £27-10s-0d, a considerable sum in those days. Since then nearly two hundred Craft Lodges and other Orders have subscribed to the School, some annually, others in answer to specific appeals. In addition many Masons have supported the School by regular contribution or personal legacy.

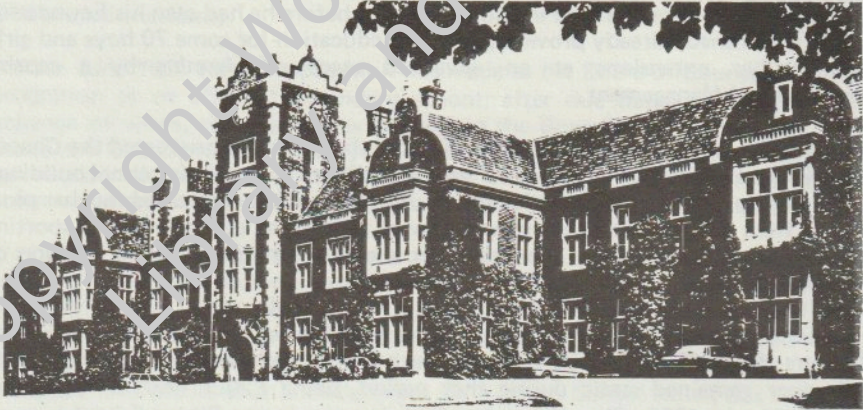
The Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffordshire has been convened at the School on three occasions: in 1894, when the Provincial Grand Master, the Earl of Dartmouth, laid the foundation stone of the School Chapel; in 1911, when the Earl of Dartmouth again presided; in 1931, the Earl of Dartmouth presiding yet again at the laying of the foundation stone of the Junior School. In 1977 the School was most pleased to act as host to the Provincial Grand Chapter of Staffordshire. The Grand Superintendent on that occasion was E. Comp John R. Wellings who was for many years a member of the School's Board of Governors.

Over the years many prominent Masonic Brethren have served long and faithfully on the School's governing body. These have included three Provincial Grand Masters, four Deputy Provincial Grand Masters and Sir Arthur Bagnall, famous for his Report on Masonic Charities. So strong has been the moral and financial backing given to the School



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NISI DOMINUS FRUSTRA



The origins of the School date from 1850 when John Lees, a prominent Wolverhampton merchant, founded a temporary asylum to relieve the distress arising from a succession of cholera epidemics which afflicted Wolverhampton and district in 1849, culminating in the deaths of 720 persons (out of a population of 30,000) in a six week period during the Autumn of that year.

At his own expense John Lees acquired the lease of premises situated at 46 Queen Street; he commissioned the necessary alterations, and the Foundation came to life on 1st April 1850 with the admission of 13 boys between the ages of 7 and 10. These boys were to be "clothed, fed and educated for upwards of 4 years". Their dress is described as "similar to that of the Christ's Hospital boys in London, except that the stockings, instead of being a light yellow colour, are of a chocolate brown".

"The benefits conferred by such Asylum were found by the said John Lees to be so great that he became desirous of extending the advantages of such an institution to a larger number of children than the said Asylum so established by him could accommodate or his private means allow him to provide for". In March 1852 this generous enthusiast went ahead and purchased 2½ acres of land at Goldthorn Hill alongside the turnpike road to Stourbridge from Wolverhampton.

On this site the centre block of the present school was erected and ultimately opened in June 1854. The cost of the building had been estimated at £6,000; after an approach to Christ's Hospital to find the money for a "Midlands branch" proved unavailing, the Trustees launched a local appeal which met their financial requirements in full with a remarkably ready and generous response.

In 1860 John Lees made yet another substantial gift to the Foundation of a second plot of land adjoining the former, making a compact site of 5 acres with a frontage of 150 yards to what is now Penn Road. This compassionate, determined and far-sighted gentleman died in 1863 — but not before he had seen his Foundation firmly established, already providing care and education for some 70 boys and girls, with further extensions at an advanced stage of planning by a capable Committee of Management.

On the enlarged site in the next 30 years there were to be erected the Chapel, the original Headmaster's House and several additions to the main school buildings. Subsequently, as public support for the Foundation steadily increased, further plots of land were acquired to provide ever-growing residential, educational and sporting facilities, so that eventually the Foundation became the possessor of 25 acres of most valuable land.

By the year 1900 the number of children in the Foundation had risen, in just 50 years, from 19 to 325. It is interesting to note that the overall cost per child each year remained static during that period, being £20 a head in 1860 and £19-18s-11d in 1900. The cost today for a boarder in the Senior School is some £3,000. It was during this first half century of the Foundation's existence that a clearly discernible ethos emerged, hardening into a tradition of "work hard, play hard and sleep hard". An unsophisticated but all-round approach, based on developing wisdom and stature together with growing up in favour with God and man had become widely recognised characteristics of the Foundation's philosophy. In particular much attention was devoted within this framework to outright

academic achievement, both for its own disciplines and as a prudent pragmatic measure to ensure that every boy and girl should step out from school into the best possible career commensurate with his or her capabilities.

Until the year 1900 the Foundation was generally known as "The Orphan Asylum" and to celebrate its Jubilee their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York (afterwards King George V and Queen Mary) were invited to open the School's new infirmary and present the annual prizes to the children. The Duke of York, in the course of replying to an address of welcome, announced that Queen Victoria had been graciously pleased to allow the prefix "Royal" to be granted to the Foundation, which in future would be known as "The Royal Orphanage of Wolverhampton". The School retained this title until 1944, when a communication from the Home Office to the Chairman of the Board of Governors intimated that His Majesty King George VI had been pleased to command that the institution should henceforth be known as "The Royal Wolverhampton School".

For nearly a century the School has been proud to be honoured by Royal Patronage, first bestowed by Queen Victoria in 1891, and continued by King Edward VII and Queen Alexandra in 1901, King George V and Queen Mary in 1910 and King George VI and Queen Elizabeth in 1936. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, continues to be the School's Patron and demonstrated her active interest in the Foundation by her visit in June 1969. She spent over two hours at the School, opening Clarence House, visiting the Junior School and displaying a knowledgeable concern over all aspects of the School affairs.

From 1894 the School began to enter candidates for the Cambridge Local Examinations. The curriculum was broadened progressively and from 1902 until 1917 the children at all levels were regularly inspected by the Cambridge University Locals Syndicate. Despite inevitable difficulties teaching standards were maintained throughout the First World War and the public examination results for 1918 and 1919 proved excellent.

In June 1921 formal application was made to the Board of Education seeking recognition as an efficient secondary school; after due detailed inspection and exchange of views, this status was granted to the Boys School in February 1922 and to the Girls School in January 1928. The delay over recognition of the latter was occasioned by the need to raise money in order to effect improvements in accommodation and recreational facilities to match the Inspector's recommendations.

After recognition it was realised that the admission of boys and girls from the age of seven was not consistent with the normal conception of a developing secondary school; eventually, in 1931, it was decided to establish a Junior School and to take advantage of the consequent re-organisation to lower the age of admission from seven to five years of age. The School had just acquired the Graiseley Old Hall Estate and this provided an excellent site for a Junior School which was built with commendable alacrity and opened in September 1932. From January 1934 this important addition to the resources of the Foundation was recognised as an efficient preparatory school. Extensions soon became necessary and were effected by 1938.

During the period between 1900 and 1939 the number of orphans fed, clothed and given a good education averaged 335 in any one year. The School was independent of official monies, relying entirely on the good-will of a wide circle of

supporters prepared to back their approval of the aims and ideals of the Royal Orphanage with regular financial assistance.

The Second World War and the subsequent social adjustments in welfare and education made a big impact on the School. Service casualties created an increase in the number of orphans seeking admission and by 1949 numbers peaked at 380; but with the cost of both maintenance and education rising rapidly the School began to experience serious financial difficulties. Added to all this Butler's Education Act of 1944 had been implemented, providing secondary education for all children at the State's expense; this, together with the emergence of the benefits of the Welfare State, began to call into question in the public mind any further need for Orphanages.

The School remained loyal to the ideals of John Lees and carried on bravely, but by 1961 the number of orphan applicants, especially girls, had decreased markedly and the overall financial position had become very grave. The advice of the Ministry of Education was sought and after long and careful study a new Constitution came into force in July 1964 which saw the end of the School as an orphanage only. The main aim was to preserve as far as possible the traditional role of the Foundation and at the same time make the entire School financially viable. Fee-paying pupils were admitted, Day Boarders were accepted and the Senior Girls School reluctantly closed. By July 1967 the School had progressed to over 400 pupils, from all parts of the United Kingdom and overseas; about one third of these were Orphan Foundationers.

By 1977 the nature of growing public demand in the sphere of independent education suggested strongly that the Royal School would do well to adopt a properly integrated co-educational structure and resume the admission of girls to the Senior School. In anticipation of this development a new House System was introduced, the School being divided physically into six areas, providing separate full accommodation for five Houses, containing both Day and Boarding pupils and a Sixth Form centre.

In September 1978 the Constitution was amended to re-introduce girls. An initial Girls Day House was established and such was the demand for places that a second such House was needed in the following year. Meantime a new Girls Boarding House was begun, coming into use late in 1980 and officially opened by the Countess of Lichfield in January 1981 who consented that the House should bear her name.

Having evolved a formula which caters for the educational and social demands upon it, the School flourishes. The quality of education offered constantly improves; this was plainly in evidence when the public examination results secured in 1981 placed the School in the top 25 of all independent schools as published in the "Sunday Times" merit table.

Within the new up-to-date framework John Lee's high-minded endeavours continue to find expression in that the body of the School, 505 strong, still encompasses both boy and girl Foundationers. The future can be faced in style and with confidence. "Nisi Dominus frustra" — "in Domino confidamus".

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O.H.D.
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by Freemasonry that in the popular view it has been regarded almost as a Masonic School. Indeed, early in this Century, it was referred to by a speaker as "the Birmingham Masonic School situated in Wolverhampton"; a measure perhaps of Warwickshire's keen interest and active support.

Against all this background, moves were explored in 1939 for the founding of a Royal School Lodge but the outbreak of the Second World War damped out the enterprise. By the 1960's a common desire on the part of many Old Royals, already assiduous in the Craft, and Masons engaged in the affairs of the School in other capacities, resulted in positive action being initiated to found a School Lodge. In this matter the Old Wulfrunians Lodge No. 1111, Wolverhampton, volunteered to function as Sponsor Lodge and characteristically afforded every fraternal assistance in unstinted measure. The Royal Wolverhampton School Lodge, No. 8170, was finally consecrated on 18th September 1967, the ceremony being conducted by the Provincial Grand Master, R.W. Bro Major H. Wilson Keys, a former Governor of the School.

The Royal School Lodge appreciated deeply the brotherly spirit extended by the Old Wulfrunians Lodge and this active brotherhood was happily strengthened by the consecration in 1975 of a Royal Arch

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Chapter – the Wolverhampton Schools Chapter, No. 7411, whose members were drawn mainly from Old Boys of Wolverhampton Grammar School and the Royal Wolverhampton School.

The Lodge greatly values its reception into and co-operation with the Federation of School Lodges at both regional and national levels. Belonging to the Federation greatly assisted the newly founded Royal School Lodge quickly to evaluate and practise the mission of all School Lodges – to maintain and promote the traditions of Masonry on the one hand and on the other to strive to preserve the kind of time-tested education which harmonises with Masonic convictions.

The Brethren of the Royal Wolverhampton School Lodge, consider it a great honour to have been invited to host the Annual Federation of School Lodges. They regard it with humility as a gracious compliment and seal of approval. The Lodge will go forward, endeavouring to fulfil its dual role of furthering the good of the Craft in general and the best interests of the School in particular, with heightened inspiration as a result of the Federation's blessing and good-will.

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