

St. Bartholomew Lodge

No. 696

(WEDNESBURY)

1857 — 1957

Centenary  
Celebration

Copyright Worcester  
Library and Museum Trust  
Worcestershire Masonic

TUESDAY, 19th NOVEMBER, 1957

ANCIENT AND HONORABLE FRATERNITY OF FREE AND  
ACCEPTED MASONS



1857 — 1957

*Centenary Year*

St. Bartholomew Lodge

No. 696

(WEDNESBURY)



MASONIC TEMPLE, Russell Street, Wednesbury

Copyright Worcestershire Masonic  
Library and Museum Trust

# *Festival of the Centenary*

OF THE

## **St. Bartholomew Lodge, No. 696** (WEDNESBURY)

Tuesday, 19th November, 1957

---

### *Order of Lodge Proceedings*

All brethren of the Lodge and Visiting Brethren are requested to take their seats in the Lodge by 4-50 p.m.

At 5-0 p.m. precisely the Worshipful Master, and his Wardens will take their chairs.

1. The opening ode will be sung.
2. The Lodge will be opened in the three degrees.
3. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master of Staffordshire (Rt. Worshipful Brother Colonel The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Dartmouth); The Worshipful Deputy Prov. Grand Master (Worshipful Brother R. B. Mummery, Past Grand Deacon); the Worshipful Assistant, Prov. Grand Master (Worshipful Brother Major H. Wilson Keys, M.C., Prov. Grand Sword Bearer), Grand Lodge Officers and Prov. Grand Lodge Officers will be announced and enter the Lodge in procession.
4. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master will take the chair of the Lodge and appoint his Wardens to the Wardens' Chairs.
5. The Prov. Grand Director of Ceremonies (Worshipful Brother A. H. Mould, P.A.G.D.C.) will call upon the Brethren to salute the Rt. Wor. Prov. Grand Master and the other senior officers present, according to their rank.
6. The Secretary will read the Summons convening the Meeting.

7. The Secretary will read the Minutes of the last regular meeting held on 8th October, 1957 and if confirmed they will be signed by the Rt. Wor. Prov. Grand Master and the Worshipful Master.
8. The Secretary will read the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18th November, 1857.
9. The Director of Ceremonies (W. Bro. H. H. Taylor) will present the original Warrant of the Lodge to the Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master for his inspection.
10. The Prov. Grand Secretary (W. Bro. H. E. Mitchell, M.B.E., P.G.D.) will retire from the Lodge.
11. A procession of Past Masters of the Lodge will be formed and retire from the Lodge.
12. The Past Masters will escort into the Lodge the Prov. Grand Secretary, bearing the Centenary Warrant and as these Brethren perambulate the Lodge, the following Ode will be sung, viz.:-

Now thank we all our God  
 With heart and hands and voices,  
 Who wondrous things hath done,  
 In whom this world rejoices:  
 Who from our mother's arms,  
 Hath blessed us on our way,  
 With countless gifts of love,  
 And still is ours to-day.

O may this bounteous God  
 Through all our life be near us,  
 With ever joyful hearts  
 And blessed peace to cheer us;  
 And keep us in His grace,  
 And guide us when perplex'd,  
 And free us from all ills  
 In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God,  
 The Father now be given,  
 The Son, and Him who reigns  
 With them in highest heaven,  
 The One Eternal God,  
 Whom earth and heaven adore;  
 For thus it was, is now,  
 And shall be ever more.

*So mote it be.*

13. The Centenary Warrant of the Lodge will be handed to the Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master for his inspection.
14. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master will direct the Prov. Grand Secretary to read the Centenary Warrant.
15. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master will invite Worshipful Brother Ernest E. Brown, P.A.G.R., to give a short history of the Lodge.
16. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master will hand the Centenary Warrant to the Worshipful Master of the Lodge and direct that the proceedings be recorded in the Minutes of the Lodge.
17. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master will address the Lodge.
18. W. Bro. Rev. H. Baylis, M.A., P.A.G.Chap. and Prov.G.Chap., will offer up prayer.
19. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master will call upon the Worshipful Master to resume the chair.
20. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master will present the Centenary Jewel to the Members.
21. The Worshipful Master will thank the Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master, the Worshipful Deputy Prov. Grand Master, the Worshipful Assistant Prov. Grand Master and the Visitors.
22. W. Bro. Rev. H. Baylis, M.A., P.A.G.Chap, Prov.G.Chap., will give the Patriarchial Benediction.
23. The Rt. Worshipful Prov. Grand Master, the Worshipful Deputy Prov. Grand Master, the Worshipful Assistant Prov. Grand Master, the Grand Lodge Officers and Prov. Grand Lodge Officers will retire in procession.
24. The Lodge will be closed.
25. The Hymn: " O God our help in ages past " will be sung by all the Brethren, during which alms will be taken:—

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Beneath the shadow of Thy Throne  
Thy Saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient is Thine Arm alone,  
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,  
Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting Thou art God,  
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in Thy sight,  
Are like an evening gone;  
Short as the watch that ends the night  
Before the rising sun.

Time like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly forgotten, as a dream,  
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be Thou our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.

*So mote it be.*

25. The Brethren will sing the first verse of the National Anthem.

*A History of the*  
**St. Bartholomew Lodge**

No. 696  
(WEDNESBURY)

1857—1957

As far as can be ascertained by W. Bro. Sidney Foote, P.A.G.D.C., and W. Bro. Ernest E. Brown, P.A.G.R., who at the request of the Centenary Festival Committee undertook the compiling of this brief history, Masonry in Wednesbury is indebted for its formation in the interest shown by Brethren then associated with and belonging to Dartmouth Lodge (then No. 960) and Lodge of St. Matthew (then No. 766). In fact, the Petition to Grand Lodge was submitted to a meeting of the former Lodge in February, 1857 and after being signed by the Worshipful Master and Wardens sent forward to the Most Worshipful Grand Master.

The following history, which has been compiled mainly from the Minute Books, (the examination thereof being undertaken by Members who gave of their own time in reading through the same) is perforce considerably abridged, but every effort has been made to include all matters and items likely to be of interest to the Brethren.

Apart from a short period during the war 1914–1918 (referred to later) the Lodge has been fortunate in that during its existence it has remained in Wednesbury to hold and continue with its Meetings. True, and very little to cause surprise — by way of retrospect — it has had to depend upon rooms for which rent has been payable, and as such not too easy at all times to fit in with other lettings. In passing, mention can be made of such places as the Dartmouth Hotel, the Anchor Hotel, and the Town Hall. The two latter places, however, were mostly in use by the Lodge, until the time arrived when a few of the then Past Masters (still with us) and the Brethren, looking ahead and with vision and courage, found and purchased premises and following considerable reconstruction work we have now a home of our own.



The Lodge is again fortunate in the fact that the whole of its records have been carefully preserved, for which great credit is due to all those Brethren through whose hands they have passed. In particular, one name must here be singled out, namely W. Bro. George Wilson.

This history therefore commences with the first Minute Book, where the initial entry is under date 7th April, 1857 and contains a copy of the Summons convening the first Meeting of the Lodge and reads as follows:

Ancient & Honourable Fraternity of  
Free and accepted Masons.  
St. Bartholomew Lodge No. 997.

Dear Sir & Brother.

The M.W.G.M. having granted a Warrant of Constitution for a Lodge to bear the above name and number the R.W.P.G.M., Colonel Vernon, has been pleased to grant a Dispensation authorising the Brethren to meet and act as a Lodge until such time as he can conveniently consecrate the same. In pursuance thereof a meeting will be held at the Dartmouth Arms Hotel, Wednesbury, on Thursday, 16th inst., at 4 o'clock at which your attendance is requested.

Yours fraternally,

Thomas James. P.M. 786. 960.

W.M. appointed by the Warrant.

Walsall  
7th April 1857.

At such first meeting, W. Bro. Dr. John Burton, P.P.G.W. St. Matthew Lodge, No. 785, acted as S.W., Bros. E. Jeavons and J. Davies (both of Dartmouth Lodge No. 960) as J.W. and S.D. respectively, and Bro. J. Ketley of St. Matthew Lodge as J.D.

The Master Elect presented three Tracing Boards.

At the following Meeting, held on 17th June, 1857, Bro. Richard Williams was elected Treasurer and continued to act as such until October, 1885.

18th November, 1857. The day had arrived, as on this day the Lodge was consecrated. The Meeting was opened as a Provincial Grand Lodge of Emergency. There were present 13 Brethren of St. Bartholomew Lodge, 22 Visitors, including the R.W. Bro. Col. George Vernon, the Provincial Grand Master for Staffordshire and R.W. Bro. Admiral H. C. Vernon, the Provincial Grand Master for Worcestershire.

The Lodge retained the original No. 997 until July 21st, 1863, when the present No. 696 was assigned to it, which is still the same to the present day.

The nights of Meetings were fixed for the third Wednesday until February, 1858, then changed to the third Tuesday until July, 1878, when the second Tuesday in the month was chosen, and this has been maintained up to and including the present day.

September, 1861. The R.W. Bro. Col. G. A. Vernon, Provincial Grand Master, granted a Dispensation for the holding of a Lodge of Instruction.

Such Lodge of Instruction has continued and is still a very important part in the life of the Lodge. There have been many Preceptors in its long history, due in some measure to the principle that appertained at one period, namely: It was an understood policy that the I.P.M. during his term as such undertook the duties of Preceptor, but later on when it came to the time that W. Bro. Ernest E. Brown, P.A.G.R., P.P.G.W., carried through his year as the I.P.M. of the Lodge, the principle was varied. From that date (the year being 1926) until the present year (1957) W. Bro. Brown has annually been unanimously re-elected to the office of Preceptor.

The Minute Book also noted that sometime between September, 1861, and February, 1867, W. Bro. Thomas James had conferred upon him the distinguished honour of Provincial Grand Senior Warden.

In February, 1867 a purchase was made of an Elbow Chair for the Worshipful Master and four other Chairs to match.

August, 1867. Bro. E. Beasley, S.D., presented a handsome pair of Globes.

February, 1869. Purchase of a complete set of Working Tools, made of mahogany and silver plated, a Sun, Moon and Stars gilded.

September, 1869. W. Bro. W. J. Stubbs, P.P.G.D., was presented with an address and two Gold Jewels as P.M. of the Lodge and P.P.J.G.D. of Staffordshire.

October, 1876. Bro. C. Walsh Graham, S.W., presented a set of Gauntlets for the W.M. and Wardens.

March 1877. Bro. Nicholls retired from the office of Tyler and was presented with a Gold Albert Chain and Seal as a mark of esteem for twenty years' faithful service.

July, 1878. Resolved that Lodge Meetings be held on the second Tuesday of the month.

November, 1881. Bro. G. Sharp, W.M., made a gift to the Lodge of a Chaplain's Collar and Jewel and also Emblems of Mortality.

April, 1887. Purchase of Lodge Banner and a new set of Tracing Boards, along with a set of Officers' Collars.

Whilst Bro. W. H. Bedin made a presentation to the Lodge of a Tracing Mat on Cloth.

Also there was purchased for Lodge use a new Metzler Piano with organ attachment.

A perusal of Minute Book No. 4, which occupied a period from 9th September, 1902 until January, 1916 contains very little that calls for inclusion in this brief history, other than the following items may be noticed in passing.

- (a) 29th May, 1906. The Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffordshire held its Meeting in the Town Hall at Wednesbury, and the then Provincial Grand Master — R.W. Bro. the Earl of Dartmouth, was present.
- (b) Minute No. 551 recorded on page 172 the holding of a Jubilee Tea, and reference is made to the Gift of an Apron to be worn by the newly installed Master and handed down to each succeeding Master who followed.

In addition there was a Gift of a new set of Tracing Boards.

- (c) On 12th November, 1907, Mr. Walter Williams was initiated as a Serving Brother. He retained that office until 7th July, 1946 and proved to be a Brother well respected by all, and due recognition was made to his worth and work when he found it necessary to resign.

Minute Book No. 5 covered the period from 8th February, 1916 (this being the 627th Regular Meeting of the Lodge), until 10th September, 1929, which recorded the 748th Regular Meeting.

This book covers most of the period during the first World War (1914-1918) and a few of the most important items it contains are as follows.

- (a) W. Bro. Lieut. Harold Arthur Jowett was awarded by H.M. The King the distinguished honour of the M.C. for his services to his King and Country.
- (b) At the Meeting held on 10th May, 1920, Bro. Jowett was the Worshipful Master of the Lodge, and at this meeting the Lodge was honoured by the presence of the Provincial Grand Master, R.W. Bro. the Earl of Dartmouth.
- (c) It is also of interest to note that in consequence of Bro. Jowett being on active Military Service at the time when the Brethren wished to elect him to fill the Master's Chair, immediately on his safe return, W. Bro. Sidney Foote, P.A.G.D.C., P.P.G.W., in a truly Masonic spirit "made way" and followed into the Master's Chair Bro. Jowett.

The Minute Book records that Bro. Sidney Foote was duly elected to fill the office of Master and was installed at the Regular Meeting held on 12th October, 1920.

W. Bro. Harold Arthur Jowett, M.C., attained great distinction in his zeal and enthusiasm for Masonry in general and the Province of Staffordshire in particular. He filled very many important offices in Masonic degrees and at the date of his untimely and unexpected death (referred to later) he held the rank of a Past Grand Deacon of the Grand Lodge of England.

He made the journey on 23rd March, 1948 to attend an Especial Meeting of Grand Lodge held at the Royal Albert Hall, London, and at the close — whilst waiting for transport to return to his hotel there to join his wife — who was in London at the time — had a heart seizure, removed to hospital there and called to the Grand Lodge above. His name and his work live on in the minds of a large portion of the present subscribing Members of the Lodge.

Minute Book No. 6 includes the period from October 8th, 1929 (749th Regular Meeting) to January 11th, 1938 (824th Regular Meeting).

- (a) At the Meeting held on 13th October, 1931 there was mention of the death of W. Bro. A. D. Belcher, P.P.G.Org.
- (b) On 8th November, 1932 W. Bro. Willoughby S. Knowles (a brother-in-law of W. Bro. H. A. Jowett, M.C.) resigned, and for his long association and useful work for the Lodge he was elected as an Honorary Member.
- (c) At the Meeting held on 13th December, 1932 mention was made of the death of W. Bro. Dr. H. C. Crew J.P., P.P.G.Supt.Wks.
- (d) At the Meeting held on 11th April, 1932 reference was made to the Dedication of the New Masonic Temple in Great Queen Street, London, and that the Members of the Lodge subscribed £300 to the Fund of the Masonic Peace Memorial.
- (e) On 10th April, 1934 a Resolution proposed by W. Bro. Ernest E. Brown and seconded by Bro. J. J. Steward was passed in the following brief words —  
“That the history of the Lodge be brought up to date.”
- (f) W. Bro. G. F. Butler (then Lodge Treasurer) reported the purchase of a Deed Book to “house” the Minute Books, Signature Books and other papers belonging to the Lodge, and that the same had been deposited at the Midland Bank Limited, Wednesbury.
- (g) At the Lodge Meeting held on 10th September, 1935 (the 802nd Regular Meeting,) the death of W. Bro. E. Martin Scott, P.P.G.W., was reported, he having died at the ripe age of 89 on August 16th, 1935. His date of Initiation as a Member of the Lodge took place on December 8th, 1885.

Minute Book No. 7. 8th February, 1938 to 12th October, 1948 (825th Regular Meeting to 916th Regular Meeting).

The only item of interest for this history is the presentation by W. Bro. F. C. Lowe at the Meeting held in March, 1938 of a new Lodge Banner.

Minute Book No. 8. From October 29th, 1948 to December 28th, 1950.

917th Regular Meeting.

937th Regular Meeting.

As has already been mentioned, the Lodge from the date of its first beginnings had been dependent upon renting suitable premises for the holding of its Meetings, and it was not always found an easy matter to meet the charges that confronted us, arising out of the activities of the First and Second World Wars (1914-1918, 1939-1945). On one occasion it was found necessary to go outside the town because the Town Hall was under requisition for holding various meetings arising out of such Wars. The W.M., Past Masters and Brethren of the Lodge of St. Matthew came to our help. We were permitted to hold our Meetings at that Hall in High Street, Walsall. Whilst this act of a true Masonic gesture was appreciated we found that it was not very convenient to all our Members, and in consequence the attendances suffered.

There is a saying that "it is an ill wind that blows nobody any good." At any rate, it caused some of our active Past Masters to look around, and as evidence of this and with the authority of the Worshipful Master and Members of the Permanent Committee (a Committee authorised by the By-Laws of the Lodge) the then Lodge Secretary — now W. Bro. Sam Wood, P.P.E.,Std.B., issued a letter to the whole of the Members, of which the following is a copy.

" St. Mawes,"

28 Wood Green Road,  
Wednesbury.

6th April, 1944

Dear Brother,

At the last meeting of the Permanent Committee, the provision of a suitable place of meeting, after the war, was considered.

It is obvious that the present place of meeting has many disadvantages and in the event of better facilities being available elsewhere during the immediate post-war period it is desired that you consider the following resolution so that a decision may be obtained at the next Lodge Meeting.

*Resolution —*

“ That provision be made to establish a fund for the purpose of purchasing or building suitable premises for the Meetings of St. Bartholomew Lodge.”

Should the above resolution be adopted the procedure would involve the raising of a fund by means of transferring from the present Deposit Account a sum of three guineas for each subscribing Brother of the Lodge and requiring each person initiated or joining after 31st August, 1944, to pay three guineas especially for that purpose.

It is hoped you will be present at the next Lodge Meeting to assist in the consideration of this matter, but if this is impossible, please convey your wishes to the undersigned.

Yours fraternally,

SAM WOOD.

Sec. 696.

As a result, through the untiring efforts of such Brethren as W. Bros. Sidney Foote, Ernest E. Brown and F. Ernest Darby (P.P.G.W.), premises in Russell Street, Wednesbury, were found.

The building originally had been used by the Congregationalists as their Church in Wednesbury. Later, the premises were used by the members associated with St. John's Church, and for a long period Bro. Arthur Henry Coney (who was at that time a Brother of our own Lodge) used the rooms for a Young Men's Bible Class of which he remained the Leader until his death.

As a result of negotiations conducted by W. Bro. Sidney Foote with the Rector of St. John's Church, the building was purchased on behalf of the Members of our Lodge. Needless to say, it required considerable

alteration and reconstruction work to meet our demands, but the project was faced by all with determination and courage. The time arrived when as a result of services freely rendered by W. Bro. O. M. Weller, P.P.A.G.D.C., as the Architect, and W. Bro. Leonard Brown as the Builder, the premises were made ready and on Tuesday, the 12th day of September, 1950 the premises were Dedicated as a Masonic Temple, since when, in our own Home, we have continued with our work.

It will not be out of place here to record that the Dedicating Officer was our revered Provincial Grand Master, R.W. Bro. The Right Honourable The Earl of Dartmouth, G.C.V.O., T.D., D.L., P.G.W. assisted by —

W. Bro. Col. (Sir) W. J. Kent, C.B.E., T.D., D.L., P.G.Swd.B.,  
Deputy Prov. Grand Master

*and*

W. Bro. R. B. Mummery, P.G.D., Assistant Prov. Grand Master.  
(*Note: Now Deputy Prov. Grand Master following the resignation of W. Bro. Col. Sir John Kent.*)

*With —*

W. Bro. J. A. Whittall, Prov. S.G.W., (now P.A.G.Supt.Wks.) as  
Senior Warden.

W. Bro. D. P. Taylor, Prov. J.G.W., as Junior Warden.

W. Bro. Rev. J. Norman, Prov. G. Chap., as Chaplain.

W. Bro. H. E. Mitchell, P.A.G.D.C., (now P.G.D.,) Prov. G.  
Secretary, as Secretary.

W. Bro. Major H. Wilson Keys, M.C., A.G.Swd.B., (now P.G.  
Swd.B. and Assistant Prov. Grand Master,) as Director  
of Ceremonies.

And other Prov. Grand Lodge Officers, including our own revered  
Organist, W. Bro. Gurney W. Harper, P.P.G.Org., as  
Organist.

This was a memorable day and there were present (including our own Brethren) 101.

Not daunted and still with a vision for the future welfare of the Members that would follow, arrangements were made and the position eased by a few of the Past Masters and Brethren agreeing to loan a considerable portion of the amount required without interest, that the Lodge



Treasurer, who has also acted as the Treasurer to the New Premises Fund (W. Bro. Sidney Foote) was able to announce at an Emergency Meeting of the Lodge held on 18th June, 1957 that the whole of the Loans had been repaid and the premises were now held by Trustees on behalf of the Lodge *free of debt.*

This brief account would be incomplete without recording the generosity of Bro. W. W. Leonard Hughes who graciously presented the Lodge with four valuable antique chairs to be placed near the Master's Pedestal. Also 100 chairs for use in the Temple.

This great accomplishment has been attained by the untiring efforts of the Brethren and the sacrifices they have made throughout the seven years since the venture was first undertaken. It is the hope of the Past Masters and Brethren that posterity will look upon this undertaking and its completion with thanks to the Great Architect of the Universe for the faith that carried the venture through.

The Compilers desire to place on record their deepest gratitude to the whole of the Brethren for their trust, loyalty and devotion.

The Trustees nominated to hold the premises on behalf of the Brethren were :—

W. Bro. Sidney Foote, P.A.G.D.C., R.P.G.W.  
W. Bro. F. Ernest Darby, P.P.G.W. (since deceased)  
W. Bro. A. W. Hickinbottom

The Members of the New Premises Committee responsible for all the arrangements before referred to were :—

W. Bro. Sidney Foote, P.A.G.D.C., P.P.G.W. (Chairman)  
W. Bro. Ernest E. Brown, P.A.G.R., P.P.G.W.  
W. Bro. F. Ernest Darby, P.P.G.W. (deceased)  
W. Bro. O. M. Weller, P.P.A.G.D.C.  
W. Bro. Maria B. Ayre, P.P.G. Std. B. (deceased)  
W. Bro. F. Belcher (deceased)  
W. Bro. A. W. Hickinbottom  
W. Bro. Len Brown  
Bro. H. Parkes  
Bro. W. W. L. Hughes

*Architect:* W. Bro. O. M. Weller, P.P.A.G.D.C.

*Building Contractor:* W. Bro. Len Brown

*Solicitor to Trustees:* W. Bro. Ernest E. Brown, P.A.G.R., P.P.G.W.

This brings to a close a brief, though it is hoped comprehensive, history of the first hundred years in the life of the Lodge of St. Bartholomew No. 696.