

Issue 7. The Province stumbles on.

Brethren, my last communication of the history of Worcestershire Mark Masonry ended with the formation of a Provincial Grand Lodge and the Installation of RW Bro A Godson as the PGM. RW Bro Godson had just had the second Provincial Grand Lodge meeting at Kidderminster on 15 February 1885 when there were only 24 Brethren present.

There were three Lodges at this time, Lechmere Mark, Godson Mark and Ark RAM. All three Lodges continued to meet regularly, but attendances fell away, there was no meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge in 1886.

In March 1887, a letter was received by the Lechmere Lodge from the PGM, suggesting holding Provincial Grand Lodge on the next meeting of Lechmere 59. The Lodge Secretary was instructed to write back to the PGM informing him that after discussion, the Lodge felt that Provincial Grand Lodge should meet on another day than on the Installation night of the Lodge. This must have been considered very seriously for the PGM held the Provincial Grand Lodge under the banner of Lechmere at Worcester on 08 June 1887. There were seven members of each Lodge in attendance and one visitor. The alms collection was 12/6 and was given to the Lechmere Lodge. At this meeting W Bro George Taylor was Appointed, Obligated, Invested and Installed as the DPGM.

1887 showed a drop in membership in both Mark Lodges. The membership of Lechmere had dropped to 25 over the past years and Godson had not advanced any Brethren since 1885. At the Installation meeting of Lechmere on 18 June (my birthday), the Treasurer of the Lodge regretted to report that four members of the Lodge were in arrears. Two were hopelessly bad, one was the PDPGM and the other was the Past Deputy District Grand Master of Malta and the Mediterranean, a melancholy fact probably unprecedented in the annals of Mark Masonry.

The fourth meeting of PGL was held at Kidderminster under the banner of Godson Lodge, at which meeting W Bro George Taylor DPGM presided. The attendance had improved there being nineteen Brethren representing two Lodges.

Difficulties were still being experienced by the Lodges in the Province and the total membership of Lechmere Lodge had now declined to 21 members and no improvement either in Godson Lodge. There was feeling in the Lechmere Lodge that they could not continue without the addition of new blood.

To try and help Godson Lodge over this difficult period, still not having Advanced any Brother since 1885, the DPGM suggested that the Lodge be made moveable and that some meetings might be held in Dudley. However, no action was taken at this time on the DPGM's suggestion.

At a meeting of Lechmere Lodge on 12 June 1889, the Treasurer reported that had commenced the year with a balance of £9.16s.4d, the same now reduced to £2.5s.2d. With resignations, and names of two Brethren having been erased, and no further Advancements having taken place for several years, it was clear that unless great changes took place, the

next audit must show a considerable deficiency. Therefore, one of two courses would have to be faced, either to increase the subscription or close the degree. The former alternative would doubtless cause several resignations and the latter deprive Worcestershire of its PGL. He then went on to say that the committee therefore earnestly trust not only the rank and file of the degree but the Brethren holding higher Offices in the Province, will by their personal exertions and punctual attendance, so elevate and impress the minds of their Brethren committed to their charge, as to cause an infusion of new blood into Mark Masonry in this Province. This report was received and adopted and ordered to be sent to the PGM and his deputy.

A further resolution was put to the Lodge, 'That this lodge begs to record its opinion that the action of the PGM in putting off the meeting of PGL at a few days' notice and for no good reason, is an unwarrantable exercise of power, destructive not only to the kind of feeling that should exist between the PGM and other members, but also calculated to produce still further resignations and detract from the usefulness of the Mark Degree in this Province and the future of Lechmere Lodge.'

The sixth PGL meeting was held on 17 February 1890 at Kidderminster under the banner of Godson Lodge. The DPGM presided again. At this meeting it was moved and seconded that the Province recommend to the Grand Master, HRH, the Prince of Wales, the reappointment of RW Bro Godson as PGM for a further three years. At this meeting there were 12 Brethren present, 6 from each Lodge.

The March meeting of Lechmere Lodge was held a week late due to the WM and the Secretary forgetting the date. The Godson Lodge were still having their trouble with membership, and in May of this year, W Bro Abraham Green proposed, and it was resolved that at the next meeting of Godson Lodge be held at the Saracens Head Hotel, Dudley. This experiment of meeting at Dudley met with instant success, for at the meeting held on 18 August one joining member from the Bedford Mark Lodge, Warwickshire, Bro HM Jackson, was balloted for and also elected Secretary of the Lodge. In addition, 10 Brethren were balloted for as Candidates for Advancement. Five of those balloted were present and Advanced into the Lodge. Two of these Brethren, Chambers and Jones, ultimately went on to be DPGM's of Worcestershire. Since this date the Lodge has only met at Kidderminster on four occasions, November 1890, May and November 1891 and August 1892. It would appear that this move of Godson Lodge had resolved the difficulties they had experienced over nearly ten years.

In 1891, PGL was held at Dudley on 16 February, under the Banner of Godson Lodge. W Bro A Green presiding in the absence of the PGM. The attendance was 14 Brethren. This day the PGM appointed by Warrant, W Bro Abraham Green, PM 330, as DPGM.

On 14 October, a discussion took place in the Lechmere Lodge on the formation of a Lodge of Mark Master Masons at Malvern, but eventually the Proposition was allowed to drop, when it was explained that the PGM contemplated forming a moveable Lodge. There was little to add to the state of the Province at the PGL meeting held on 19 September 1892 at Dudley, though the attendance had improved to 21 Brethren.

The Province and its Lodges continued in this period of instability for a number of years, but by the time of the PGL meeting on 22 November 1904, membership of the Lodges in the Province was on the increase, and more importantly, there was an increase in the attendances at Lodge meetings. The Provincial Secretary reported that the total membership of the Province was 67. It had taken nearly twenty years to increase the membership from approximately 30 to this figure.

In 1905 and with the improvement again in Membership in the Province and as such of the Lodges, yet another blow was to take place with the death of the PGM, Sir Augustus Frederick Godson M.A.

The question of a successor to the late PGM was considered by the Brethren and it was resolved on the motion of W Bro WT Page, seconded by W Bro J Jones, 'That the PGL of Mark Master Masons of Worcestershire, held at Dudley on Tuesday 27 November 1906, unanimously recommend the nomination of and further respectfully petition the MW Grand Master to appoint our esteemed VW Bro Abraham Green to be PGM for the Province of Worcestershire.' This recommendation must have fallen on stony ground for in a letter dated 11 December 1906 informing the Province that the MW Grand Master had been graciously pleased to appoint the Right Honourable the Lord Athlumney to be the PGM for the Province of Worcestershire for a term of three years from the date hereof. The letter went on to say that 'perhaps you would be kind enough to communicate with his Lordship as to when and where he would like to hold the PGL meeting at which his Installation will take place.

Once again, thank you for reading to the end.

Kind Regards

W Bro Jeff Whiteley PGSD, DPGM