

## ISSUE 2

Mark Masonry comes to Worcestershire.

The earliest beginnings of Mark Master Masonry, as we practice it today, are unknown. We are however aware of the stone mason's custom of marking his stones goes back to antiquity. We also know that in the earliest preserved book of the Lodge of Edinburgh there is recorded the attendance at the last meeting in 1599 of several Brethren who appended their marks after their names.

For a very long time some sort of Mark ceremony must have been worked as we may assume from the many sources. In one of the early exposures entitled 'The Mason's Examination', the Master says to the newly 'entered Mason';

'If a Master you would be  
Observe you well the rule of Three;  
And what you want in Masonry  
Thy Mark and Maughbin set you free.'

Mark Masonry, however, did not begin in Worcestershire until 1866. If one looks at the Worcestershire yearbook, in particular at the oldest Lodge in Worcestershire, Lechmere No. 59, it says that it was Consecrated on 22 April 1863, some three years before Worcestershire practised Mark Masonry. There is a reason.

On 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1863 there was a gathering of Brethren at the Swan Hotel, Tewkesbury, many from the Province of Gloucestershire and some from Herefordshire. Among those present were:-

- Frederick K Binkes      Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England
- E S Cosens              Grand Registrar
- William D Tatt         JW Thistle Lodge No.8 London
- Rev. George Roberts   Cheltenham Keystone No.10
- Alexander Shirer       PM Cheltenham Keystone No.10
- WS Wallace GJD        WM Cheltenham Keystone No.10

Among the other Brethren attending were thirteen Craft Masons, seven of whom were from St. Georges Lodge, Tewkesbury.

So, on the 22 May 1863 the 'Abbey Lodge of Mark Master Masons No.59' was Consecrated by the W Bro Frederick K Binks, Grand Secretary, assisted by W Bro William Wallace, PGJD. The duties of the Chaplain were discharged by Bro Rev. George Roberts of Cheltenham Keystone Lodge No.10. Although the minutes of the meeting do not indicate the order in which certain parts of the Ceremony took place, it appears that following the Consecration of the Lodge the Grand Secretary Advanced all thirteen of the Craft Masons present, many of whom were appointed and invested as Officers of the Lodge.

There is an anomaly here as I believe the Warrant of the Lodge is dated 22 May 1863 but in the yearbook the date is given as 22 April 1863. Perhaps members of Lechmere Lodge No.59 could enlighten me.

At this meeting a further eight Craft Masons were proposed as Candidates, although the records show that only one of them was Advanced on 15 January 1864 at the Swan Hotel along with another Brother from the Royal Lebanon Lodge (T.I.) which met at Liverpool. The other seven proposed Brethren are not mentioned again.

Interesting to note that the subscriptions were 10s 6d (52.5p) and 5/- for Brethren living over six miles from Tewkesbury.

An emergency meeting of the Lodge was called on 20 May 1864 owing to the sudden death of the Primus WM, W Bro ES Cosens. W Bro WS Wallace, IPM continued to act as WM for the rest of the year.

At a meeting of the Lodge held on 23 September 1864 it was resolved that every Candidate Advanced into the Lodge shall be required to provide himself with the proper clothing. Prior to this time, it was usual for Brethren to attend wearing their Craft Regalia, and in some cases a white lambs skin apron in the form of a Keystone.

During 1864 the fortunes of the Lodge appeared to be on the wane, the Tylers book showing that there were only six to eight Brethren at the meetings, yet no resignations had been recorded. The difficulty many Brethren were experiencing was the travel to and from the Lodge. Many of the Brethren were travelling from Cheltenham, Gloucester, Hereford and across Worcester. At a meeting held on 10 March 1865 at the Swan Hotel, Tewkesbury, the WM Bro TW Swinburne proposed, and W Bro William Wallace seconded, that a petition be forwarded to Grand Lodge to move this Lodge to Worcester, and to meet at the Bell Hotel, Worcester. This proposal was supported among the higher Officers of Worcestershire Craft as interest in the Mark Degree was on the increase.

At a meeting of the Lodge held at the Swan Hotel on 28 November 1865, the following Brethren were balloted for as joining members: - Sir Edmund AH Lechmere, Bart, PGSW of Bon Accord Lodge No.2, Aberdeen. He was also a Past DPGM of Worcestershire Craft. Also, Albert Hudson Royds, DPGM Worcestershire Craft. The joining of these two Brethren appears to have stimulated further interest. The list of members of the Lodge was revised and seventeen members, by verbal or written invitation, continued as members from that date.

Also, at this meeting it was proposed and successfully balloted for that Sir Edmund H Lechmere be elected WM of the Lodge for the following year, which he graciously accepted. However, the satisfaction felt by the members of having so distinguished a Brother as Master of the Lodge was short lived. At an emergency meeting of the Lodge held at the Guild Hall, Worcester, a letter from Sir E Lechmere was read out requesting that the Lodge be informed that owing to illness and pressure of many other engagements, he was reluctantly compelled to retire from the honour of entering the chair to which he was elected on 28 November 1865. Reluctantly his resignation was accepted. A Ballot for a new Master was taken and Bro CCW Griffiths was unanimously elected. It was also proposed and seconded that the Lodge should in future hold its meetings at the Masonic Hall, Broad Street, Worcester, which was also unanimously carried. It was also proposed, seconded and unanimously carried that in future, 'This Lodge be called the Lechmere Lodge'. The rest they say is history.

On removal of the Lodge to Worcester and the Changing of the name from Abbey Lodge to Lechmere Lodge, no new Warrant was issued, but a Codicil was written in the left-hand margin of the original Warrant and dated 20 May 1866 and signed by the Grand Secretary Frederick Binks. (Binckes)

Lechmere Lodge No.59 continued to flourish especially with the proposal of Candidates such as George, Stanley and Alfred Baldwin and at a meeting on 12 February 1867 one August Frederick Godson was proposed as a Candidate for Advancement. On 11 June 1867 George Baldwin, Stanley Baldwin, EAN Royds and AF Godson were Advanced into the Lechmere Lodge of MMM No.59.

So Brethren, this was the start of Mark Masonry in Worcestershire. It began in Tewkesbury, Gloucestershire and after a shaky start moved to Worcester where, after changing its name, became the successful Lodge it is today.

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Thank you for the time to read this piece of history. If you have any comments or additions, please email me at [dpgm@worcestershiremarkpgl.org.uk](mailto:dpgm@worcestershiremarkpgl.org.uk)

Stay safe and Mark Well

W Bro Jeff Whiteley, PGSD, DPGM

