

## **ISSUE 18 – THE 1960's, A SAD END**

Though throughout the latter half of 1960, there must have been great sadness in the loss of the PGM, the late RW Bro Vernon Grosvenor, CBE., LL., B., JP., who had endeared himself to the Brethren of the Province over a period of ten years in which the Province had fallen back in its numbers for two years and had then began to recover in his last years as PGM, he did not have the pleasure of Consecrating either a Mark Lodge or a RAM Lodge. He must, however, have been pleased that during his period as PGM many eminent Brethren in the Mark Degree were receiving promotion and honour in other degrees. In May 1951, VW Bro HE Clive PGO, was appointed APGM in the Craft, March 1955 VW Bro FH Griffiths PGO appointed Sub Prior in KT, April 1955 VW Bro JE Grosvenor was appointed Grand Superintendent in the Royal Arch in and over the Province of Worcestershire.

Masonry is a progressive science and must progress. On Friday 10 March 1961 Brethren assembled at the Masonic Hall, Kings Heath to see the Installation of a new PGM, VW Bro William Samuel Burton PGO. A Provincial Grand Lodge was opened by VW Bro HE Clive PGO, acting as PGM and assisted by W Bro Lt.Col. EJR Mitchell PGD who acted as DPGM. The MW Grand Master, The Rt. Hon. Lord Harris M.C., V.L., was then escorted into the Lodge by Grand Officers and assumed the Chair. After appointing his Officers, the Patent of Approval and Appointment was read by the Grand Secretary he invested and Installed the PGM Designate into the Chair. The new PGM then announced the appointment of W Bro Herbert Robert Bewley PProvGReg as DPGM.

The seventy-seventh PGL meeting was held on Saturday 03 June 1961 at Dudley with 108 Brethren present. The Provincial Grand Secretary reported that within the last year there had been 29 Brethren Advanced into the Mark Degree and 22 Brethren Elevated into the RAM Degree. There were now 486 Mark Masters and 291 RAM's.

In October 1961 there was further growth in the Mark Degree with the Consecration of the Teme Valley Lodge of MMM's No1260. Tenbury Wells is a warm, welcoming place, which styles itself as 'The Town in the Orchard'. For generations it had a close-knit community characterised by the good neighbourly relationships and warm heartedness. Craft Masonry had been brought to Tenbury Wells in 1866 by the Revd. Sir Frederick Ousley, a notable church musician who had given up a chair at Oxford to come and found a preparatory school at St Michaels, a parish a few miles out of the town on the Leominster Road. He was the Principal Founder and first WM of the Lodge of St Michael No 1097, which has continued to this day with a very warm fraternal spirit and an impeccable standard of ritual. For the Degrees of Mark Masonry and Royal Arch the nearest centre was at Ludlow, being in the Province of Staffordshire and Shropshire, a circumstance which was to have interesting results for the subsequent development of Mark Masonry in Tenbury and also the ultimate emergence of Royal Arch Masonry there. When, therefore, a sufficient number of Craft Masons living in and around Tenbury Wells had become Mark Masters in the adjoining Province, a move was made to establish a Mark Lodge there, and it is interesting to note that, apart from some co-operation from the building management committee, this move did not need the backing of the Lodge of St Michael as a whole.

So, on the 14 October 1961, the Teme Valley Lodge of MMM No 1260 was born. The PGM Consecrated the Lodge and the DPGM Installed the Primus WM, W Bro AW Cooke, who then Invested the Officers of the Lodge. An interesting development in the early history of the Teme Valley Lodge, and one which was to have far reaching consequences, was the Advancement of several Brethren from Wolverhampton, who having previously visited the Lodge of St. Michael, and having been charmed by what they saw as 'Rural Masonry', as opposed to the urban valley they were used to, they sought to come into the Degree at Tenbury. Having been so Advanced they tended to propose other Brethren from Wolverhampton.

At the seventy-eight meeting of PGL held on Saturday 02 June 1962 the Provincial Grand Secretary reported that the membership of the Province now stood at 527 for the Mark Degree and 293 for the RAM.

In 1963 we saw the celebration of the Centenary of Lechmere Lodge No 59, not only the oldest Lodge in the Province, but one which had preceded the formation of PGL by twenty-one years. The WM, W Bro GE Rackshaw, who went on to be PGM, received the Centenary Warrant from RW Bro ES Jacobs, GJW and DPGM for Warwickshire.

1964 was another happy year with the Consecration of the Lodge of Stability on 24 April at the Talbot Hotel in Stourbridge. The Consecrating Officer was the PGM and the Installing Officer was the DPGM. The first WM was W Bro MR Barnsley with W Bro F Clifford Invested as the Treasurer. W Bro Frank went on to become the next PGM.

The year 1964 was also marked by one of the greatest intakes into Mark Masonry since the Province began with 32 Brethren being Advanced and 8 Elevated into RAM. The total for the Province now stood at 559 for the Mark and 304 for the RAM.

On 30 September 1967 there was another Consecration, that being The Bromsgrove Lodge No 1134. I have a conflict of information here. The year book states that the Consecration of the Lodge was conducted by the PGM, RW Bro WS Burton, but my research has shown that although the PGM was in attendance, he requested that his Deputy PGM, take the chair and Consecrate the Lodge who afterwards invited RW Bro HE Clive to Invest the first WM, W Bro FW Houdley. There were 69 Brethren present. On this occasion the entire team of Provincial Officers officiating at the Consecration were all Proposed, Seconded to become Honorary members of the Lodge

1968 was to become one in which anxieties, problems and satisfactions were to dominate the picture of Mark Masonry in Worcestershire. The earlier part of the year was marked by the optimistic atmosphere which the prospect of Consecrating another new Lodge always brings. On 09 May a meeting was held at which Bro JP Cordery was appointed to be the organising secretary to the Founders of a new Mark Lodge to be called The Malvern Priory Lodge of MMM. There followed a series of Founders meetings, the last of which took place on 29 January under the Chairmanship of the DPGM in charge. This last reference points to the fact that on 30 October 1968, the PGM had died, an event foreshadowed on 09 June that year when, although he had attended the eighty-fourth annual meeting of PGL the PGM had not presided but delegated that duty to his Deputy. It was ironic and tragic that

within the next few weeks after that last founders meeting both the DPGM in charge and RW Bro HE Clive should also die. Thus, the Mark Province was deprived of both its rulers and the Craft in Worcestershire deprived of its DPGM. Moreover, RW Bro Clive had been selected as an officiating Officer at the Consecration, at which, because his Mother Lodge in Craft being Royds, he had also wished to be a Founder.

The Consecration of the new Lodge at Malvern took place on 05 March 1969 at the Masonic Hall on Belle Vue Terrace. In the absence of either Provincial Ruler, we find a situation where W Bro CH Grindle was the Provincial Grand Warden in Charge. In the event however, RW Bro JW Chitty PGW who came at very short notice to act as Presiding Officer. He had also been a Founder of Royds Royal Arch Chapter No 1204 back in February 1934. Although he was Grand Secretary working from London he lived at Newent, just over the Gloucestershire border. At the Consecration there were 82 Brethren present. Following the Consecration RW Bro Chitty invited VW Bro FH Griffiths to assume the Chair and Install W Bro GE Rackstraw as the first Master. VW Bro J Hughes, DPGM of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire was Invested as IPM. A Number of the Founders were Advanced in Lechmere Lodge and Tewkesbury Abbey Lodge. The Festive Board was held at the Abbey Hotel where the charge for a five-course banquet was £1.2s.6d including coffee. Wine was 2s.6d per glass.

It was to be four years before another Mark Lodge was Consecrated, a very important one.

VW Bro Jeff Whiteley, PGJO, DPGM. 