

ISSUE 20 – Installation of a new PGM

Following the untimely death of both the PGM, RW Bro WS Burton, and the DPGM, VW Bro Bewley, the Province was left without a ruler at the end of the 1960's. On Friday 25 April 1969 a meeting of PGL was held at Dudley with 138 Brethren present. VW Bro FH Griffiths was escorted into the Lodge and assumed the chair. Provincial Grand Lodge was opened in due form. RW Bro HD Still, GDC, entered the Lodge and announced that the MW Grand Master stood without. MW Bro Rt. Hon. Lord Harris was escorted into the Lodge and assumed the chair. Following the appointment of his Officers to assist in the Installation of a new PGM, the PGM Designate, W Bro F Clifford, PGStwd, was escorted into the Lodge and Installed into the Chair as PGM in and over the Province or Worcestershire by the Grand Master. The PGM announced that his Deputy was to be W Bro GE Rackstraw, who was then duly Installed into that Office.

Nothing much happened in the Province for the next couple of years but on 22 May 1971 the St Egwin Lodge of RAM No1135 was Consecrated at Evesham. The PGM Consecrated the Lodge and the DPGM Installed the first WC, W Bro RW Bonham, MBE, MA. The WC then installed the SW, W Bro HW King and the JW, W Bro. Roebuck. W Bro King went on to become an APM in the Craft in Worcestershire in 1983. An interesting fact was that the first WC, W Bro Bonham, was blind from an early age. Reg Bonham was educated at the blind school in Worcester, graduated at Oxford, and returned to his old school as Master, where he spent his entire career.

At this period the Perseverance Lodges of MMM and the RAM celebrated their Golden and Silver jubilees.

The following year, 1972, saw the golden jubilee of Stechford Lodge No747 and marked by a special festival at which a lecture entitled, 'The Origin and Formation of the Mark Degree' was given and also a delivery of the Mark Lecture.

In 1973 the Vernon Lodge of RAM No923 celebrated its Silver jubilee. This year also saw the Consecration of the Worcestershire Installed Masters Lodge No 1409, but you'll have to wait for information about that as the Lodge will soon be holding a Virtual meeting and I will be Zooming the information to those who log in, you don't have to be a member to watch.

At the ninetieth meeting of PGL held on 08 June 1974 at Kings Heath, the Provincial Secretary reported that the Mark membership of the Province now stood at 637 with 327 RAM Brethren.

At the ninety-first meeting of PGL on 14 June 1975 it was announced that at a discussion of the Board of General Purposes of the need to regularise the ritual used in this Province, viz, The Midland Workings. The PGM went on to inform the Brethren that his wife had made a generous donation to the 1980 Festival of £1000 and had also organised three concerts to be given at Hartlebury Castle which she hoped would generously supplement this amount. The concerts were being held by courtesy of the Bishop of Worcester.

The ninety-third meeting of PGL was held on 11 June 1977. At this meeting the Province was honoured by the presence of RW Bro WJ Leake, PGW, Grand Secretary. RW Bro Leake addressed the Brethren and enlarged on the appeal for donations towards the purchase of

the existing lease and the subsequent extension of the lease from the Crown Commissioners of the premises of the Constitutional Club at 86 St James's Street, London and its conversion for a headquarters and offices of Grand Mark Lodge and for meetings of Mark, RAM and Lodges of other Masonic Degrees in the London area. The sum required was a contribution of £10 each over three years. This would achieve a home worthy of the Order for the next hundred years or so, and he asked for full support from the Province.

In 1974 there had been a decline in membership which had not been reversed and the total was now reported at 622 Mark Masons.

1980 was the year that the Province of Worcestershire culminated their Festival. The total expected to be raised was £35,000 to £40,000, but at the end the Province raised a magnificent sum of £63,000 and added to that raised outside of the Province took the overall total to £112,000. This was the highest total achieved in the history of the Mark Benevolent Festival to that time. Worcestershire were not to get another Festival until 2015 which I am sure most of you will remember, I certainly do as I was the Festival Secretary.

With the efforts for the Festival uppermost in the minds of the Brethren, the appeal for the Grand Lodge building suffered, but even then, a sum of £3943 was collected which averaged £232 per Lodge, which under the circumstances Grand Lodge appreciated.

In the midst of all the preoccupation with the 1980 Festival and the Grand Lodge Building Fund Appeal, we should not lose sight of the pleasure and encouragement occasioned by the Consecration of a new RAM Lodge, Stability, to meet at Stourbridge, and to be moored to the Stability Lodge of MMM No1281. Royal Ark Mariners were, however, destined to experience a more equivocal event.

During the year St Laurence Mark Lodge along with the RAM Lodge had moved from Northfield where there was a lack of Brethren coming forward for Advancement, to the Masonic Hall at Redditch, where things were improving.

In March 1981 RW Bro F Clifford, PGM, resigned his Office and it was waited for the name of the new PGM. Meanwhile the Province remained in the care and under the direction of the Deputy Provincial Grand Master in Charge, VW Bro GE Rackstraw.

Once again Brethren, many thanks for reading until the end.

VW Bro Jeff Whiteley, PGJO, DPGM.

