

ISSUE 22 – THE NEXT CHAPTER

Following the resignation of the PGM, RW Bro Clifford, his Deputy, VW Bro GE Rackstraw was appointed to become the next PGM. His appointment was welcomed throughout the Province, for he had been a tower of strength to the PGM during the twelve years he had served as DPGM. A kind and generous Mason always willing to assist and help others with the ritual and floor work. The Installation took place at the ninety-seventh PGL meeting held at Kings Heath on Thursday 11 June 1981, in the Presence of 166 Brethren. There were many distinguished Brethren from other Provinces and of course The MW Bro. The Rt.Hon. The Earle of Stradbroke, the Most Worshipful Grand Master, accompanied by the Grand Secretary and the Grand DC. VW Bro FH Griffiths was escorted into the Lodge and assumed the chair with VW Bro PH Gough acting as Deputy. The Grand Master then asked for a number of Brethren to assist him including W Bro. Rev. Canon A Webb as Chaplain. The MW Grand Master addressed the Brethren, after which VW Bro. GE Rackstraw was escorted into the Lodge. The Patent of appointment was read, and he was then Installed as PGM, following which he was proclaimed and saluted.

The new PGM then announced the appointment of his DPGM, W Bro David Rawlins. This appointment showed the close affinity between Worcestershire and Warwickshire. The new DPGM was living at Sutton Coldfield and a member of the Craft and Royal Arch in the Province of Warwickshire, but as so often happened in the past, the tendency for Kings Heath to be a centre where Brethren of the two Provinces meet and interact resulted in him becoming a member of Moseley Lodge of MMM No.667, becoming their WM in 1977. This was a statesman like move on the part of the new PGM, for with the difficulties through which Mark Masonry had been passing over the past few years, and with the impending Centenary celebrations, it was wise to appoint a young Deputy with the energy and enthusiasm to be a driving force in the enterprises associated with the Centenary as well as providing a suitable successor in due course. W Bro Rawlins was appointed to the rank of Grand Steward the following year. W Bro David Rawlins never became the PGM of Worcestershire but went on to be PGM of Warwickshire and DPGM in Warwickshire Craft.

The Centenary of the Province was discussed, and it was agreed that the form and final arrangements be left in the hands of the DPGM, with power to co-opt or consult such Brethren as he might consider necessary or desirable to help him.

This year of 1982 saw a further drop in membership of the Province with a decline of 37 members and 20 members in the RAM degree.

During the year though, the PGM Consecrated the Bromsgrove Lodge of RAM.

In 1983 the membership again declined with a loss of 50 members in the Mark and 20 in the RAM.

During this year the Centenary committee had worked very hard and in April a function organised by them had resulted in a very favourable increase in the funds being raised for the Royal Masonic Hospital. On 17 July 1983, a garden party was held at the home of the DPGM which proved very successful and raised over £500 for the same fund. This was

followed by a function, held at the Masonic Hall, Worcester, and run by the wife of the PGM which raised a further £815. With the help of the Craft and other degrees in the Province, the fund had reached over £11,000 by the beginning of 1984. The aim was to try and raise enough money to provide a Ward to be named after the Province and the efforts to achieve this were then in the hands of the Brethren of the Mark Degree. I can find no evidence that this was ever achieved, if anyone can help, please let me know.

During 1983, among those appointed to Grand Rank was W Bro ML Homer, who was appointed PAGDC. W Bro Homers first Provincial appointment in 1976 was that of Provincial Junior Warden. He was Provincial DC from 1982-1985 and Provincial Treasurer from 1985-1997.

On Saturday 18 February 1984 the Godson Lodge of MMM No. 330 celebrated their Centenary with W Bro GJH Scriven the Centenary Master in the Chair. It was a delight to all present to see the one Brother who attended the 50 years celebration and who in 1978 celebrated 50 years in Mark Masonry, RW Bro FH Griffiths. In his address the RW PGM expressed his sincere hope that following on this celebration the Lodge would once again recover and gain momentum to carry it forward to its bi-centenary.

During the reign of RW Bro Rackstraw the Province stayed fairly stable with one other Consecration, that of The Centenary Lodge of MMM No.1623. This took place at Kings Heath on 26 November 1985. The Consecration was conducted by the PGM with the DPGM Installing the first Master. W Bro D Rawlins is still an Honorary Member of that Lodge.

RW Bro Rackstraw continued as PGM until 1986 when his successor was announced.

VW Bro Jeff Whiteley PGJO, DPGM 