

ISSUE 10 – Substantial Growth in the Province

The announcement of the Installation of VW Bro TW Page was received with much enthusiasm by the Brethren of the Province, for here was a man who had served Worcestershire in many degrees. During the first world war he had guided the Mark Province as DPGM, having previously served as Provincial Secretary from 1896 to 1899. His rule, first as Deputy, and then as PGM was to last from 1899 to 1933.

In 1919 not only was he Installed as PGM in the Mark but also the Grand Superintendent over the Royal Arch. He also became Provincial Prior in 1924 when the Provincial Priory of Worcestershire was reconstituted.

His Installation as PGM took place on 27 October 1919 when the Provincial Grand Lodge was opened by W Bro James Jones, PAGDC. RW Bro Sir Richard Vassar-Smith, Bart., D.L, PGM of Gloucestershire and Herefordshire acted as Installing Master. Following his Installation, the new PGM then announced the appointment of W Bro James Jones, PAGDC as DPGM. Previously to his appointment W Bro Jones had been Provincial Secretary.

During his period as PGM there were four Mark Lodges and two Ark Mariner Lodges Constituted. He had only been in Office for two months when he Consecrated the Royal Ark Mariner Lodge attached to the Moseley Lodge of Mark Master Masons No.667, which took place at the Moseley Masonic Hall on 16 January 1920. It was a great time of expansion for all the degrees in Masonry.

At a meeting of Moseley Lodge of MMM on 3 November 1919, the summons contained the item to ballot for Advancement and if elected to advance eleven Candidates all of whom were seeking Advancement with a view to becoming Founders of a new Lodge under the auspices of the Mark Master Masons who belonged to the Craft Lodge of the Mystic Quest. Ten of these Brethren were present and Advanced.

This was a period during which Moseley Lodge was to become the main driving force in promoting not only the Mark Degree but also the Royal Ark Mariner Degree. The addition of their own RAM Lodge seems to have given them impetus not only to expand themselves but to assist in the formation of new Lodges. This kind of drive was sadly lacking within the two older Lodges of the Province.

At the Provincial Grand Lodge meeting in 1921 a letter was read from the WM of Moseley Lodge offering on behalf of the members of the Lodge a sum of £5-5s-0d, towards the cost of providing Standards for use in Provincial Grand Lodge. This was quickly followed by a similar offer from the Worshipful Masters of other Lodges. The Provincial Chaplain delivered an impressive address, the Brethren being upstanding in memory of the battle of Ypres, a fateful day for the Worcestershire Regiment. The Provincial Secretary was pleased to report that there had been 39 new members during the year, although deaths and resignations reduced this growth to 14. On 12 July 1921, the Perseverance Lodge of MMM was Consecrated by the PGM. There were 21 Founders. The Provincial Secretary also

announced that the sixth Lodge in the Province was soon to be Consecrated at Stechford, the Petition being approved by the MW Grand Master. Here again we see the influence of Moseley Lodge who had been permitted to hold an Emergency meeting on 28 September, when a ballot had been taken for four Candidates for Advancement. Following the Advancement, a deputation of several Brethren, including the newly Advanced four, were admitted stating they had a petition to present as they wished to form a new MM Lodge at Stechford. After a unanimous vote by the Lodge the WM and the two Wardens signed the petition. The new Lodge at Stechford was Consecrated on Saturday 26 November 1921 and given the number 747 and had 22 founder members.

During 1922 to 1925 the Province seemed to consolidate but steady progress with membership was achieved. During 1925 the annals of Moseley Lodge reveal a curious train of events. The regular meeting in March each year was one at which the members were required to ballot for a WM for the ensuing year. No such item appeared on the summons for 2 March 1925, but the minutes of that meeting contain an item which reads; 'The ballot was taken for a WM for the ensuing year, and proved unanimously in favour of W Bro EG Apps'. No mention is made of the reason for re-electing W Bro Apps, nor does the summons for the September meeting contain any reference to the Installation of a WM. Instead, there was merely an item which read, 'The WM will Appoint and Invest his Officers,' which he did, re-appointing eleven Officers out of a total of eighteen. The foregoing must now remain a totally unexplained irregularity.

On Saturday 30 April 1927, a further increase in the strength of the Province was made with the Consecration of another Royal Ark Mariners Lodge attached to Stechford Lodge MMM No.747. There were 22 Founders.

At the PGL meeting held on Saturday 3 November 1928, the PGM referred to the illness which had caused the resignation of W Bro James Jones as DPGM and then appointed W Bro Dr. Percy Austin Roden as his successor.

On 2 June 1929, we once again find reference in the minutes of Moseley Lodge to ballot for Candidates for Advancement and if Elected to Advance the eight Brethren for the purpose of forming a new Lodge of MMM's at Northfield.

At a General Provincial Committee meeting a letter from the Grand Secretary was read out informing the Province that a 'New Premises Fund' had been created and that a total of £140,000 was required, equivalent to a subscription of £5 for every Mark Mason, £330 in today's money. The Province's quota worked out at £1,145-0s-0d (£75,000+). The members were keen to pay this in ten instalments and VW Bro CD Eaton proposed that each Lodge be asked to contribute a sum equivalent to £17 per annum within a period not exceeding 10 years.

On 26 July 1930 the Province was further strengthened by the Consecration of another new Mark Lodge, St. Laurence Lodge No.893 which took place at the Masonic Hall, Northfield. A resolution was passed pledging the Lodge to subscribe £105-0s-0d (£7000) to qualify for the collarette and jewel of the 'New Premises Fund'. As a result of this, the new St Laurence

Lodge No. 893 was to become the first Lodge to qualify for the Keystone collarette in this Province, to be closely followed by Moseley Lodge.

In 1932 the Province suffered two significant losses. Firstly, the death of the DPGM, W Bro P Roden, and secondly by the prolonged absence of the PGM owing to illness. The 48th PGL meeting of this year was presided over by VW Bro Eaton assisted by W Bro Thomas Mason, PGD. It was the only time that the PGM, RW Bro Page, had not Presided at PGL since he was appointed in 1919. There was further expansion in the Province when on Monday 9 October 1933 the Vernon Lodge of Mark Master Masons No.923 was Consecrated. This event took place at the Masonic Hall, Stourport on Severn. The PGM, after his long illness, was there as the presiding Officer assisted by his new DPGM, W Bro HV Stanton. Vernon Lodge remains the only Lodge in the Province never to have re-cycled an WM, having someone new in their 87-year history. (Had to get that in, its my Lodge). The first Master of the Vernon Lodge was W Bro John Ernest Grosvenor. There were 24 Founders and they too pledged to subscribe the necessary amount to obtain a Keystone Jewel.

On 28 October 1933 RW Bro WT Page PGM, presided over the 49th PGL meeting much to the delight of the Brethren, following his recent illness. Unfortunately, his recovery was not to last for just one week later on 5 November 1933 the PGM passed away. Following his death, at a series of meetings held within the different Orders, it was agreed to establish the William Thomas Page Memorial Fund from which all Brethren could benefit. This was to be administered under the aegis of the Craft Province, but for the benefit of any Masons and their Dependents throughout the Province.