

Issue 3

The growth of Mark Masonry in Worcestershire

The regular meeting of Lechmere Lodge No.59 on 21 October 1868, held at the Guild Hall, Worcester, was a very historic occasion for Mark Masonry in Worcestershire, even though only one Lodge existed. There were 26 members of the Lodge present, Bro Sir EAH Lechmere was now the Worshipful Master, and 16 visitors from Grand Lodge including Bro WWB Beach the MWG Mark Master of England, Bro GR Portal, RW Dep Grand Master and other Grand Officers. No mention is made of a Grand Director of Ceremonies, RW Bro Frank wouldn't have allowed that!

The Lodge was duly opened by the WM and after confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting, the Most Worshipful the Grand Master of Mark Masters of England and Wales and Dependencies of the British Crown and the other Grand Lodge Officers entered the Lodge and were received with customary honours. The WM Gave thanks for the Honour conferred on the Lechmere Lodge in holding their second moveable Grand Lodge in the city of Worcester. The MW Grand Master replied saying he was satisfied with all the arrangements made.

Following the business of the Lodge, the Lodge was closed in due form with solemn prayer. The MW Grand Master then took the chair with the various Grand Officers taking their respective chairs and Grand Lodge was opened with solemn prayer. There is not much information available on the business transacted at the Grand Lodge Meeting, but one item seems to have divided the Brethren into two camps. It was decided at this meeting, that, for an experimental period of three years the Festival after the half-yearly meeting of Grand Lodge in December should be a 'Charity Festival' under the management of the Board of Stewards. Bro. T Meggy, GMO, followed with a proposal 'that Ladies be admitted to dine at the same tables with the Brethren.' It appears that previously Ladies were allowed to attend but were placed on the balcony overlooking the proceedings. The Grand Secretary, Bro Binckes, seconded the proposition but the Grand Master expressed, in no uncertain manner, his strong dissent for the proposed innovation which he felt, would be fraught with considerable inconveniences. The WM, Sir EH Lechmere, concurred entirely with the Grand Master. The Deputy Grand Master, Rev. GR Portal, supported the change and after a vote the proposition was carried.

The business of the Lodge having been duly transacted, a vote of thanks was proposed by Grand Lodge to Bro William Webb, the Lord Mayor of Worcester, for use of the Guild Hall for the meeting. The Brethren then retired to the Masonic Hall at the Bell Hotel, Broad Street, Worcester, with the Grand Master presiding.

At a meeting of Lechmere Lodge held in June 1869, the WM, Sir EH Lechmere informed the Brethren that he had attended the Grand Lodge of Mark Masters when, in the first instant, RW Bro GR Portal was Installed as the MW Grand Master, following which the Grand Master had appointed him Deputy Grand Master. The WM, Sir EH Lechmere was then presented with a Past Masters Jewel which I believe is now the 'Heirloom' of the Lodge and is passed on to successive Worshipful Masters.

In October 1886 the Lodge moved from the Masonic Hall in Broad Street to a new home above Stallards Wine Merchants at 95 High Street.



Masonic Hall, 95 High Street, Worcester.

On 12 October 1881, the WM, Bro W Barclay, brought before the Lodge the desirability of founding a Royal Ark Mariner Chapter, but more of that later.

It was also reported at this meeting, that although there were 41 members plus 2 Tylers, it appeared that Officers were at times absent without informing the WM or the Secretary. To try and stem this apparent lack of Masonic etiquette it was decided that if an Officer was absent without giving 3 days' notice in writing to the WM they would incur a fine of 3s6p. These fines were strictly enforced and if not immediately paid shall be entered against the Brother by the Secretary, and if not discharged within three months the Brother shall be considered in arrears. From the attendances in the minute book, this new ruling did not appear to have much effect on some of the Officers.

Things appeared to be looking up for Mark Masonry in Worcestershire, for in March 1883, at a regular meeting of the Lodge, Bro TL Smith alluded to the formation of a new Mark Lodge at Kidderminster and requested information on its progress. The IPM explained how matters stood and the Brethren there proposed to take initial steps themselves, but that he had written stating that he would be very happy to place his services as Installing Master at their disposal.

At a meeting of the Lodge held on 13 October 1883, W Bro Augustus F Godson, Deputy PGM for the Mark Province of Warwickshire, was proposed as a joining member by W Bro Barkley and seconded by Bro Buck. At this meeting Bro Wilson intimated that a Hereford Lodge, Ethelbert Lodge, had not joined with Brecon. It was stated in the previous March, that these two Lodges join together so as to establish a Provincial Grand Lodge of MMM's, suggesting whether it would be desirable for Worcester to join. Although several Brethren were in favour of this joining, Bro Wilson advised that this union was not taking place and that Ethelbert Lodge wished to join Worcester. It would seem that W Bro Barkley was not

enthusiastic with Mark Masonry in Herefordshire as he replied that he did believe in Herefordshire Mark Masons.

A Petition for the formation of a new Lodge to be called, 'The Godson Lodge of Mark Master Masons was presented on 18 December 1883 and the Warrant signed by Lord Henniker, MW Grand Master and was dated 01 January 1884 and fixes the day of the Meetings as the 3rd Monday in February, May, August and November.

The Lodge was Consecrated at Kidderminster Masonic Hall on Monday 18 February 1884. W Bro. Godson assisted by VW Bro. Rev William Randall, PG Mark Chaplain, VW Bro, F Binckes, Grand Secretary and W Bro WM Dewar. Among the Founders were W Bro Godson, who was not only the DPGM of Warwickshire but a member of Shakespeare Lodge No.40, George Taylor and Wm Clement Green. The other founders came mainly from Lechmere Lodge 59 and Warwickshire Lodges, Shakespeare 40 and Howe Lodge T.I.

Previous to the Consecration Ceremony, a Mark Master Masons Lodge was opened by the Officers of the Lechmere Lodge 59, with W Bro Barkley, PM, as Worshipful Master and a ballot was taken for the Advancement of 16 Candidates. Following a successful ballot ,15 of the 16 were advanced to the degree of a MMM. Following the Consecration, Bro George Taylor was Installed as the First Worshipful Master of the Godson Lodge of MMM by VW Bro. Frederick Binckes. A well-known Abraham Green was invested as the Master Overseer. On this day nine of the newly Advanced Brethren were appointed and Invested as Officers of the Lodge. The Consecrating Officers were elected Honorary Members of the Lodge. Bro Godson, by a gift of ten guineas, qualified the WM's chair as a life Subscriber to the Mark Benevolent fund.

Worcestershire now had two Mark Lodges meeting and it would not be long before a Provincial Grand Lodge was on the scene.

Thank you again for reading all of this paper, any comments suggestions you can email me at dpgm@worcestershiremarkpgl.org.uk

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