

PRECIS OF THE HISTORY OF TOWNLEY PARKER LODGE No 1083

1866 TO 2016

150 YEARS

In the summer of 1865, several Gentlemen residing in the township of Bradford, Manchester and its neighbourhood resolved, if possible, to obtain a warrant for holding a Freemasons Lodge at the Albert Inn, in the said township.

They requested Abraham Beswick, a Past Master of Faith Lodge No 581 to assist them, who wrote to the Provincial Grand Secretary and which was happily crowned with success.

They approached Robert Townley Parker Esq of Cuerdon Hall, Preston, who was the ground Landlord of much of Bradford and Beswick etc, and he agreed that the proposed Lodge be named Townley Parker Lodge.

The petition was signed by a number of Brethren from Faith Lodge No 581, and it would thus appear that Faith Lodge No 581 is our Mother Lodge.

Our Warrant dated 5th December 1865, signed by the Earl De Grey and Ripon, the Deputy Grand Master, on behalf of the Earl of Zetland, Grand Master, was granted and is open for inspection by any Brother, on each meeting of the Lodge. However the Warrant was damaged in a flood at Freemason's Hall some time ago so we are now working under a Warrant of Confirmation.

On 25th April 1866 the Lodge was duly Consecrated by WBro Stephen Blair, Provincial Grand Master of Lancashire Eastern Division, assisted by his Provincial Grand Officers and, subsequently, Bro Abraham Beswick was Installed as the first Worshipful Master, who then Installed his officers.

A vote of thanks was proposed to WBro Robert Townley Parker, for his attendance, and also for his munificence in presenting the Lodge collars and jewels for the officers, together with the silver working tools, which are used to this day.

At the time the subscriptions varied from one shilling and six pence a month to three shilling and six pence a month, which probably was the equivalent to Country members and Full Dining members as we refer to them today.

During the early years the Lodge donated regularly to various Charities, and was a:-
Double Patron of the Royal Masonic Hospital.

Patron of the ELMBI.

Double Patron of the Royal Masonic Institute for Boys.

Double Patron of the Royal Masonic Institute for Girls.

Double Patron of the Masonic Institution for Old People.

In September 1895 Robert Verney Clayton was Initiated into the Lodge and became a great ambassador for the Lodge, and the Province of East Lancashire, being Provincial Grand Secretary for many years.

General business was carried out during the next 20 years, with little reference being made to the Great War 1914-1918.

However the Lodge celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1916, and WBro PJ Hough, Worshipful Master, presented a Banner to the Lodge, at the same time WBro Robert Verney Clayton presented a silver chain of office, bearing the names of all the Worshipful Masters since the Lodge was founded.

Robert Alexander Palmer, who was raised to the peerage as Baron Rusholme, was the only Lord to be a member of Townley Parker Lodge, so it is only fitting that he is referred to at this time.

He was Initiated into Townley Parker Lodge No 1083 on 27th April 1921, Passed on 28th September 1921 and Raised on 30th November 1921.

He was Installed as Worshipful Master in January 1936.

He was Installed as Provincial Senior Grand Warden in 1947 and Invested as Past Grand Deacon (Eng) on 23rd March 1948.

The then new Masonic Temple in Bridge Street, Manchester to which Townley Parker Lodge No 1083 donated six chairs of office, was opened by His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales on 24th October 1929, and Townley Parker Lodge No 1083 were one of the first Lodges to hold their meetings at the new Masonic Temple.

There was not much of great note to report in principal between the two World Wars, with various actions taking place, such as compulsory blackout being recorded over the whole nation during the Second World War.

The Lodge again carried on with general business from the end of the Second World War, with many new members coming and going until the Centenary Celebration, which was held on Friday 29th April 1966.

The booklet to celebrate the Centenary was an A4 size with every member at that time signing the book in gold leaf, and this celebration seemed to be excellent, and fuller details are enclosed in the booklet for the 150 year celebration.

The Lodge again continued with general business with new members coming and going and Lord Rusholme was still an active member throughout this period, until 28th April 1971 when our existing longest serving member, WBro Eric Cropper was Initiated into the Lodge, by his Seconder, WBro Eric Moore.

At the meeting of the Lodge held on 29th October 1975 Anthony Ronald Hewitt was Initiated into the Lodge, was Worshipful Master in 1985, and took over as Secretary in January 1991 and held this office until January 2016 when he stepped down, a record 25 years in the office, Tony is now the Assistant Secretary.

At the meeting of the Lodge held on Wednesday 26th May 1976, after closing the Lodge, the first of many *OLDE ENGLISH NIGHT'S* was enjoyed at the social board, the proceeds devoted to the then new Walshaw Hall fund.

At the meeting of the Lodge held on 28th January 1981 Brother Eric Cropper was Installed into the Worshipful Masters Chair for the first time, and then in 1991 and yet again in 2001; this was due to suitable candidates not being available at that time, for various reasons.

Many other existing members followed on over the years, as can be seen on the present list of members produced by the Secretary, and are also covered in the 150 year book.

It would be remiss of me, at this stage, not to mention WBro Wesley Marchant, PJGD, who was Worshipful Master in 1992 and 1993, and is our only present Officer of United Grand Lodge and who has promoted our Lodge in many ways during his time as Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, and many other activities within the Province.

We all hope the Lodge will flourish, with all the new members coming in, and will hopefully celebrate its Bi Centenary in 50 years' time!