

A PRECIS OF THE HISTORY OF ALEXANDRA CHAPTER No 993

The Chapter was consecrated on 20 September 1866 at the Midway Hotel in Levenshulme, Manchester. This hotel was to become the meeting place of the Chapter for many years until 1889 when it moved to the Freemasons' Hall, in Cooper Street and eventually in 1928 to the Masonic Temple in Bridge Street Manchester. This is now called the Manchester Hall in Bridge Street, Manchester. Of the nine founders all but one was a member of the sponsoring Alexandra Lodge No 993. The Consecrating Officers were; EComp Stephen Blair, Grand Superintendent in and over the Province of Lancashire Eastern Division, EComp William Romaine Callender, Second Provincial Grand Principal, and EComp Lawrence Newall, Third Provincial Grand Principal. During the first 50 years the Chapter appears to have prospered albeit with the usual variability of membership numbers. It is worth noting that several members of the Chapter achieved prominence within the Province and Supreme Grand Chapter.

The seventieth anniversary was celebrated on 8 October 1936 in the presence of the MEGSupt, the Rt Hon the Earl of Derby, KG, PC, GCB, KCVO, TD, etc; together with the Second and Third Provincial Grand Principals. EComp Frederick Towns, ProvGReg, read a précis of the history of the Chapter which he had compiled. The 50th anniversary had not been celebrated due to the country being at war at that time.

At the outset of the 1939-45 war, necessary restrictions were placed but, apart from not holding the usual September 1939 meeting by order of Supreme Grand Chapter, the Chapter continued more or less as normal. On 9 November 1942, Bro Capt. Frederick William Towns, LLM, was exalted by his father, EComp Frederick Towns. He was installed as the 1st Principal of the Chapter in November 1953 and by the Convocation in September 1958, was congratulated on his appointment to Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah and in 1964 to Third Provincial Grand Principal and in 1965 to Second Provincial Grand Principal. (More of Comp FW Towns later.) In November 1947, due to the restrictions in place on the use of motor cars, the custom of sending representatives of the MEGS to Chapter Installations was temporarily abandoned.

The Centenary Celebration of the Chapter was held on Tuesday 4 October 1966 by dispensation. There were 33 members of the Chapter and 21 visitors. EComp Frederick W Towns, PAGSoj, Second Provincial Grand Principal, deputising for the MEGS, the Rt Hon Earl of Derby, KG, PC, GCB, KCVO, TD, etc, accompanied by EComp Leslie F Hiles, PAGDC, Third Provincial Grand Principal and EComp the Rev'd John Flitcroft, PAGSoj and the ProvGSE were in attendance and occupied the Chapter Principals Chairs. EComp Norman Heywood was called upon to deliver an Oration. He said that as the history of the Chapter's 100 years had been made available to the Chapter members he felt that there was no need to dwell on this aspect. Instead he gave a most interesting and instructive oration on all aspects of Royal Arch Masonry to the acclaim of all present. The Centenary Charter was read by EComp Fred Whewell, ProvGReg and then handed to the MEZ, Harry Sankey by EComp FW Towns for safe keeping. There followed a presentation of new banners on behalf the Chapter by EComp Fred Towns, PAGSoj. At this time the Chapter would meet on 2nd Mondays in September, November (Installation), January and March. On occasions the practice of calling off for dinner and resuming proceedings, which often included the carrying out exaltations, was done. This was to accommodate the long remembered Hall dining arrangements. During the 70's and 80's, the Chapter successfully encouraged new candidates for exaltation although attendance was usually not greater than 20 except at the Installations. From the early 90's onwards, attendances tended to be low with fewer exaltations to offset 'natural wastage'.

At the Installation meeting on 13 November 1995 the Scribe E, EComp Ian Sinclair, PProvGSN, minuted that 'he had made a complete hash of the address to the 3 Principals', that EComp Harold McLellan, PProvGSoj had addressed the Officers 'correctly and with feeling' and EComp H Alan J Garnett, PProvGSwdB, had addressed the Companions 'in his usual immaculate style'. How many Scribe Es would admit that!!

Following a continuing number of meetings with poor attendance it was decided that a discussion would be held to consider the future of the Chapter.

After much discussion between the then current Deputy Grand Superintendent, EComp Percy Seward, PGSwdB, DepGSupt, and EComp H Alan J Garnett, PGStB, the then current Provincial Grand Scribe E,

they saw a means of assisting both the Chapter and the Province: that of a recommendation that the Chapter would assist, when appropriate, in providing the Province with a “fast track” facility. [This facility has since been used to good effect] This recommendation was made at the regular convocation on 8 September 1997, to which EComp Percy Seward, PGSwdB, DepGSupt was invited. After appropriate discussion, the Chapter decided on a change to meet at lunchtime on the 2nd Monday in November (Installation) and the 1st Thursday in March [latterly changed to the 2nd Thursdays in November and March]. Those Companions already in the Chapter would be given the opportunity of being installed in the Chairs of the Chapter and that other joining Companions would achieve this office based on a schedule of their joining dates of the Chapter. However, if required by the Province, the Companion would be recommended to the Chapter for ‘fast track’ progression. It appeared from various discussions, that there were a number of Companions who would be candidates to join the Chapter at the meeting in November of that year. The revised By-Laws were adopted after approval and the following were elected as joining members; EComp Percy Seward, PGSwdB, DepGSupt; EComp Barrington Barton Wallwork, PAGSoj, 2nd Provincial Grand Principal; EComp Victor Francis Hodgson, PGStB, 3rd Provincial Grand Principal; EComp Edward Leslie Johnson, PProvGSN and EComp Jackson Dixon, PProvGStB.

It is very encouraging to record that from this point the Chapter has flourished in that attendances have rarely been less than 20 and the membership has been sustained between 25 and 30.

It would be a remission if the names of H Alan J Garnett, John Sheridan and J Barrie Donald were not mentioned here, they being the longest serving members of the Chapter and exalted into it before the Chapter resurrected itself to meet at lunchtime.

It was noted previously that a good proportion of its members have continued to achieve prominence in the Royal Arch at Provincial and Supreme Grand Chapter appointments. Amongst these are:-

Companion	Exalted or Joined	Rank achieved	Date of highest rank
Buckley Carr	E	2nd ProvGP	1919
Frederick Towns	E	PAGSoj	1960
Frederick W Towns	E	MEGS	1979
Arthur DG Ellis	E	AMEGS	1976
Leslie Ellis	E	G Organist	1979
Rev'd Norman Heywood	E	PAGSoj, 3rd ProvGP	1984
The Ven Frederick J Hoyle	E	PAGSoj, 3rd ProvGP	1989
H Alan J Garnett	E	PAGSoj, ProvGSE	1996
Percy Seward	J	PGSwdB, DepGSupt	1996
Barrington B Wallwork	J	PGSwdB, DepGSupt	1998
Victor F Hodgson	J	PGSwdB, DepGSupt	2002
Stephen M Blank	E	MEGS (Cheshire)	2015
Paul MA Rose	J	PGSwdB, DepGSupt	2016
Harvey Basger	J	PGStB, 2nd ProvGP	2017

It is clear that the Chapter has and continues to have members who have given good service to the Royal Arch Order and its status in the Province of East Lancashire is well established.

EComp David Winstanley, *JP*, PGStB, Scribe E