

250 Years

Chapter History

In 1766 Grand Chapter of the Moderns did not immediately grant Warrants to private Chapters but on 13 January 1769, the following resolution was passed: [Ordered that a seal be immediately made for the public use of the society according to the plan specified in the Charter].

Two hundred and fifty years ago, namely on 12th May 1769, a Warrant was granted by the Grand Chapter of England, (Moderns) to Thomas Hargreaves, James Lonsdale and James Varley (who were registered members of the Craft Lodge then numbered 216, now the Royal Lancashire Lodge No. 116) empowering them to hold a Royal Arch Chapter at Coln, [the original spelling], in the County Palatine of Lancaster, under the title of The Cana Lodge or The Chapter of the First Miracle, being numbered 5 on the Grand Chapter Register of Royal Arch Chapters.

The Warrant is signed by Lord Blaney and countersigned by John Brooks, Z.; John Maclean, H.; Ja. Heseltine, J.; Ro. Simpkinson, E.; Dd. Hughes, N.; Jno. Allen, P.S.; Jos. Nixon, Scr.; and Henry Chittick, Scr.,

The Founding Members of the Chapter were:- Thomas Hargreaves, Richard Farrer, Stephen Ellis, James Hargreaves, Henry Spencer, James Varley, James Lonsdale, Thomas Lonsdale, John Craven, Charles Alexander, Edward Petty, James Baldwin, George Alderson and James Ellis, who played a prominent part in the founding of the Chapter.

Apart from Edward Petty, who lived at Carry Bridge Hall, all the Founders were tradesmen or artisans; James and Thomas Hargreaves were carpenters, Stephen and James Ellis tailors, Richard Farrer a glazier, Henry Spencer a "painterer", James Lonsdale and Edward Petty weavers, John Craven and James Varley stonemasons [the latter lived at Bury] and Thomas Lonsdale was a soldier in the Royal Lancashire "Malitia". Charles Alexander a barber was also a professional writer [or scribe] and did a great deal of correspondence for Royal Lancashire Lodge, he was for upwards of fifty years post master at Colne.

The Provincial Grand Master for the Province of Lancashire at that time was John Allen, P.S. who served from 1769 to 1807.

Though formed by members of the Craft Lodge, the Chapter for many years, worked independently of, though in conjunction with, the Lodge.

At the Union of the two Grand Chapters (Ancients and Moderns) in 1817 it was resolved that "That such Regular Chapters as have existed prior to the 27th. December 1813, without being attached to any regular Lodge, shall unite themselves to some Lodge" with the result that the Cana Chapter was officially attached to the Royal Lancashire Lodge, and its number altered to

correspond with that of the Lodge, Viz 182.

On the renumbering of Lodges in 1832 the Number of the Lodge and Chapter became 133. Since 1863 the number has been 116.

The Warrant is not assigned, having always been the property of the Chapter to which it was originally granted. The Warrant will shortly be read as a part of this evening's celebration.

According to the present Grand Chapter Register of Royal Arch Chapters the Cana Chapter is one of the five oldest Warranted Royal Arch Chapters on that Register. The five oldest Chapters all date from 1769 when the first eight Warrants were issued. Of those that remain three are in East Lancashire – Nativity No 126 and Cana No 116 both dated 12 May 1769 and Unanimity No 42 dating back to 11 November 1769. The remaining two are The Lodge of Tranquillity or Chapter of Friendship [Portsmouth] and the Lodge of Hospitality or Chapter of Charity, [Bristol], both of which were Warranted on 11 August 1769.

The "Principia" belonging to the Chapter is stated to be the oldest copy in existence. It is a statement of Grand Chapter "Rules and Regulations" or By-Laws. Judged by the calligraphy it would appear to have been written about 1769 by the same hand as the Chapter Warrant.

Clauses 6, 7, 8, and 9 of the Principia are worthy of special note. The Principia will also be read later in the meeting.

In the early Chapters a Tracing Board had been introduced to enable symbols of the Degree to be explained. Many Chapters abandoned them after the Union in 1834 when the Royal arch Ceremony was significantly altered.

Today the Royal Arch does not use or have a formal Tracing Board. However, several older Chapters retain this tradition, Cana No 116 included. We proudly display our Tracing Board at every meeting; it is an important aspect of our Chapter and is on view this evening.

The Lodge and Chapter possessed several articles of antique Masonic Clothing dating from their early years. Conspicuous amongst the Chapter's possessions are the Companions Aprons, each made about 1790, of a whole lambskin. Emblems are worked on them in silk and gold cord, the Principals Aprons bearing also the sacred name in Hebrew Characters. These have been passed to the Provincial Grand Chapter of East Lancashire for safe keeping and are proudly displayed by the Province at Manchester Hall, Formally Freemasons Hall.

A Centenary Warrant was presented to Cana Chapter at a Chapter of Emergency at the Swan Hotel Colne on 29th November 1883, by The Most Excellent Provincial Grand Superintendent of East Lancashire Major Nicholas Le Gendre Starkie, an event that was 14 years overdue. A hundred and fifty years was celebrated at a Chapter of Emergency on Saturday 17th May 1919, also at the Swan Hotel, Colne.

A joint Bi-Centenary of Cana Chapter No.116 and Nativity Chapter No 126 was celebrated at a special convocation of Provincial Grand Chapter at the Lacarno Ballroom Burnley on Monday the Twelfth Day of May 1969 when The Hon. The Earl of Scarborough KG., the Pro First Grand Principal, presented the Bi-Centenary Warrants to the First Principal of Cana Chapter No.116 and the First Principal of Nativity Chapter No 126.

Discussions did take place regarding this being a joint celebration also. However, when the format for such a meeting was communicated it was felt by both Chapters that this was not a practicable option. Nevertheless, the Three Principals from the Chapter of Nativity No 126 are present with us this evening as our guests. Companions you are most welcome.

During the last 50 years since the Chapter celebrated its Bi Centenary Cana has made steady progress Exalting 123 Candidates and welcoming many joining Members from other Chapters.

We have had two Golden Jubilee celebrations for E Comp. Alan Exley and E Comp Roy S. Faulkner, and a joint 225th. Celebration also took place with Nativity and Unanimity Chapters. The strength of Cana Chapter is currently 48 Companions and we look forward to a bright future.