

RWPGM and Brethren

I feel it to be an honour and a privilege to be the Worshipful Master of Verity Lodge No3949 during its Centenary year and also have the opportunity to compile a brief history of the Lodge between its consecration on 19th September 1919 and the present date, copies of which will be available later at the festive board

Although I have to say it has been a little challenging at times, mainly due to the fact that there is only one Lodge minute book in existence, this covering the period between February 2005 and today's date, This being due to the untimely death of former Lodge Secretaries and the whereabouts of former minute books being unknown and untraceable despite various attempts and searches.

I have however managed to gain invaluable information regarding the early years of the Lodge from a brief history compiled by the late WBro Stan Hartley in 1974, and also recorded information supplied by United Grand Lodge of England and during my visits to the Ryland's Library in the centre of Manchester.

I would now like to deliver a brief précis of the Lodge history

Verity Lodge was conceived against a backcloth of the First World War, but with its attendant problems, no positive move was made until the Armistice, however, no time was lost, the first letter from the Province attaching the form of Petition is dated December 7th

1918. The first choice of name submitted , to the Provincial Secretary , was “ INTEGRITY “ but was rejected on the grounds that the name was already in existence in East Lancashire . Others considered were: “ACACIA” “CORDIALITY” and “ BLACKBURN” before “VERITY “ was finally decided upon. There is quite an interesting explanation of the word Verity in the oration delivered at the consecration, which in essence means truth

In support of the Petition, the reasons put forward by our sponsor,” THE LODGE OF FIDELITY No 269 “a member of the Silent Temple Family of Lodges, was that their membership totalled one hundred and three and there were only six Lodges in the Town. The proposed Founders, eighteen in number , were all members of the Lodge of Fidelity , but seven were struck out of the Petition as not being of three years standing in Masonry. The Founder Master was Major John Higginson Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden, a solicitor in the town and a former Mayor of Blackburn. The Senior Warden , Harry Le Moine, Past Master and a great benefactor to the Lodge , who presented to the Lodge this WM collar in 1932 ,and the Junior Warden , Bro WH Mellor . The Consecrating Officer was Very Worshipful Brother Major John Booth , Past Grand Treasurer (Eng) . The installing officer , Worshipful Brother R Verney Clayton , Assistant Grand Registrar (Eng). The Ceremony took place here in the Masonic Hall Richmond Terrace Blackburn, on September 11th 1919, with the first regular Lodge meeting taking place the following month in October 1919.

The business at the first regular meeting was quite remarkable and included a ballot for ten joining

members, including the seven who had previously been struck off the petition, and one entered apprentice, who had been initiated in Bangalore India, who was then passed to the second degree. A further ballot for eight new members, two of whom were then initiated, so two initiations, and one passing, along with other business in one meeting, incredible!)

The first year saw twenty one ceremonies, of which fourteen involved two candidates plus the installation meeting.

The Lodge at the time had an unusual distinction in 1944, our Silver Jubilee Year, in providing three acting officers to Provincial Grand Lodge, these being the Acting Provincial Senior Grand Warden, a Senior Grand Deacon and a Provincial Grand Steward.

Many brethren have given long and devoted service to the Lodge in various offices, none more than Bro AE Wilson, the Lodge Secretary for some thirty years .and after some twenty one years as secretary he was pressed to progress and take the Senior Wardens Chair, but declined , He did however receive Provincial Rank of Past Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies with a rosette collar, others included Brother F Shorrocks, who was the Lodge Treasurer for nineteen years (1919 -1938) and Worshipful Brother J Farrell, Past Provincial Deputy Grand Registrar, who served the Lodge as Assistant Director of Ceremonies and Director of Ceremonies for some Twenty one years, and others whose service may not have been as lengthy in years , but without doubt just as dedicated.

Verity Lodge is proud of its ritual, handed down from our mother Lodge and differs more than a little from

Emulation and similar workings. I can certainly vouch for that.

The occasion of our sixtieth anniversary was the five hundred and fortieth meeting during which time some one hundred and sixty five candidates had been initiated.

March 1974 was a milestone in our history , when our first and only Daughter Lodge (Huncoat) was consecrated in Blackburn , by Very Worshipful Brother FW Towns, Past Grand Sword Bearer, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master at the time. The first Worshipful Master of Huncoat Lodge being Worshipful Brother TF Ellel Past Provincial Grand Chaplain, who was Worshipful Master of Verity Lodge in 1972 and Provincial Grand chaplain in the same year. Also during 1974 the Lodge had to move its meetings to Mill House at Clayton - Le - Moors , this being due the fire at Blackburn Masonic Hall , and it was a further two years later when the Lodge resumed its meetings at Richmond Terrace.

The Lodge due to a number of factors experienced difficult times with membership during the later part of 1996 and 1997 , and as a result there was talk of the Lodge surrendering its Warrant . However the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master at the time RW Bro James Hemsley would not permit a Lodge Warrant to be surrendered .

The District Chairman and his Deputy at the time namely WBro Bill Watson PAGSwdB and WBro Derek Nelson Thornhill PProvGSwdB respectively were commissioned, encouraged or cojoused by the Provincial Grand Master to support the Lodge and ensure its survival. WBro Thornhill who later became District Chairman, became a joining member of the Lodge and encouraged other Brethren within the District to also become joining members, including Alan Clinton Johnson PGStdB who agreed to become Lodge secretary for the next couple of years , but in fact carried on in the office until February 2009 , and took on the office once again in March 2013 until his death in 2017. Alan being the first receipt of the "certificate of excellent service " within the province , which he received at Provincial Grand Lodge in November 2013 Another great supporter of the Lodge was WBro Stan Drummond PProvSGW who was also a member of our mother Lodge, and became the first Worshipful Master of the reformed Lodge in March 1998.

Due to the new members Lodge Meeting dates and other commitments it was not possible to continue meeting on the first Tuesday of the month, and the meeting date was changed to the fourth Saturday of the Month, with meetings being reduced from eight to initially only two a year.

Unfortunately at the time the Lodge was reformed in March 1998, there were only two members and initiates of the Lodge who continued their membership, namely WBro Robert Howson and myself, sadly WBro Robert Howson resigned from the Lodge shortly after the Reformation.

After the first eighteen months however the Lodge gained more support by way of joining members and the number of Lodge Meetings per year were increased to five, which is currently the case to date.

A large number of the current membership being Grand or Provincial officers , including numerous current or past District officers . The Lodge since the reformation has enjoyed a steady increase in membership, and at the present time enjoys one of the strongest Lodge Memberships in the District, unfortunately due to holidays there are six members who can't be with us today. The Lodge is widely known for its hospitality and enjoyable Lodge Meetings , and dare I say it in the presence of the RWPGM , is sometimes referred to as “variety Lodge”, but I am sure this is said out of affection for the Lodge And nothing more, although as you can imagine it causes untold difficulties for the Director of Ceremonies . with all the members having their own Lodge ritual books,

Verity Lodge have a number of traditions unlike other Lodges , one of those was first minuted at the October 2007 meeting , when WBro Derek N Thornhill read three Masonic poems , this tradition has carried on to the current day,

It was a great honour when W Bro Derek N Thornhill was invested by the Provincial Grand Master RWBro Paul E Rink ,as Assistant Provincial Grand Master in April 2006 , .WBro Thornhill received further recognition at the Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting in November

2011 , when he was promoted to Deputy Provincial Grand Master , a post which he held until November 2018, during this period, following the death of RW Bro Jack Price he was the Deputy in Charge for three months between November 2011 and February 2012, this being followed by the investiture of Sir David Trippier as RWPGM in March 2012.

Records show that the Lodge has been honoured with five appointments to Grand Rank throughout its history, the first recorded of these being Brother Tom Walker, who was Senior Warden of the Province, Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies in Grand Lodge and later promoted to Past Junior Grand Deacon. He was a member of the Lodge for fifty four years and more recently and the latest appointment being myself to be privileged to receive the rank of PAGDC in 2015, a full list of brethren who have received grand rank and their services are included within the booklet

It was a very special year in 2016 for Lodge member WBro Roger Flitcroft PAGDC, when he was awarded the MBE for services to not only Freemasonry , but to Scouting and the Samaritans , Roger attended Buckingham Palace to receive the award From His Royal highness prince William , duke of Cambridge

The Lodge more recently sponsored a Royal Arch Chapter , namely the” Verity Chapter of Installed First Principals No 3949 and had thirty four founder members ,the Chapter being consecrated on Saturday 26th October 2016, and is going strong in current membership

I hope you have found the brief précis interesting and that you will take the time to read the extended version

The established traditions of the Lodge, which are now so well consolidated, will without doubt, be maintained in the future, and all concerned with Verity Lodge can look back with pride and forward in confidence. we certainly hope that future Brethren of the Lodge will experience future occasions such as today.