



Week 57, 26th April 2021

Brethren, Week 57 – time moves on, as last week we celebrated Her Majesty The Queen's 95th Birthday and St George's Day, and each day is getting closer to when we can hopefully all meet again!

Coming to the end of the Easter Challenge for the Festival, our Chairman gives a roundup of some of the activities that have been going on; A further look at one of the "special interest lodges", and a new series starts on some of the more esoteric side orders, which perhaps many of you will have not heard of.

Bill Mason brings us up into the 19th century, with the next in his series on the history of the Province of Worcestershire.

As always, keep strong, keep positive, take the vaccine, and stay safe.

The Editor

A round up of the Festival 2022 28 Day Easter Challenge



The challenge was set for every lodge to grab the baton and organise their own virtual fundraising event, culminating in a drinks evening at the end to celebrate the amount raised. There were many possible events suggested, from run a marathon at one mile a day, to a 24 hour sponsored silence and everything in between.

This has seen ten fundraising pages created: Severn Lodge 5583 - £855; Vernon 560 (Ian Redfern) - £800; Martin Lawrence - £385; Vernon Littley - £343; Barry Griffin - £310; Dofra Does Everest Challenge (Ian Bennett) - £270; Scott Winning - £225; Cecil Cariss - £170; Tony Edwards - £80; David Davis - £10. This gives a great running total of £3,448. Some events are yet to take place or complete – such as The Sabrina Lodges' Race night, or Dormer Lodge's 7294 walking and rowing challenge. Wouldn't it be fantastic if we could get this total up to £5,000 by the 30th April! If you wish to contribute to any of these pages, they can be found on the Provincial Grand Lodge of Worcestershire website. There is still time to create a page of your own, or one for your lodge and to encourage other lodge members to take part!

I am sure it is no surprise to any of us that due to Covid-19, our Festival 2022 has suffered tremendously. This has meant many of the normal ways we would have raised money, we have been unable to do. The Virtual 28 Day Easter challenge which began on Good Friday (2nd April) will conclude this week, on Friday 30th April; John Fennell talked to the Festival Chairman, Patrick Firminger, to hear a round up on what our Lodges and Brethren have been getting up to, on some of the activities that have been, are on going, or still to come!

Many a charity steward has had to think out of the box in order to carry on fundraising, with many varied and ingenious methods - a Moseley sponsored head shave raising £1000, to name just one.



We are five!

On 1st April 2021, the Masonic Charitable Foundation (MCF) celebrated five years of being the Freemasons' central charity, building better lives on their behalf across England, Wales and overseas.

Over those five years, they have given over £90 million in charitable funding to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities – a figure only possible thanks to Freemasons and their families.



Knights of the Round Table

There are many parallels between Round Table and Freemasonry – not least the high ideals and work to support charitable causes and those less fortunate. But the two aren't mutually exclusive. Round Table began in 1927, but had an age limit (which has increased over the years - it's now 45 when many "Round Tablers" go on to Rotary).



As WBro Mark Jarvis, Secretary explains: "The organisations have very similar virtues and, back in the early 1960s, a group of Round Tablers, who were also Masons, thought it would be a good idea to found a Lodge built on those ideals. So Round Table Lodge No. 7961 was consecrated in 1964, to enable Brethren of the two organisations to come together. The Lodge was originally exclusively for Masons or candidates who were also in Round Table but with the passing of time, the Lodge opened its doors to anyone interested in joining. As Mark says: it's who they are and what they can contribute that's important. Modern pressures on time mean that many men would have difficulty committing to two not dissimilar organisations. Of course, by joining the Lodge they share the same principles as Round Table. That, I'm sure, has been the saving of the Lodge, otherwise it might well no longer be here. As it is, we have a bright future, with potential Brethren waiting to join when Covid restrictions ease.

There is a long history of links between Round Table and similar organisations and Freemasonry – in fact, most provinces in England have Round Table Lodges which will have similar roots to that in Worcestershire, indeed there are biennial meetings where Round Table lodges get together from all over the country. "We always have a very lively Festive Board and recognise our Round Table roots by toasting the RTBI (Round Table of Britain and Ireland). Of course, our Lodge logo would be recognised by any Round Tabler!

Ian Crowder was talking to Mark Jarvis

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The Development of Freemasonry in Worcestershire

Part 5 - Growth in the 19th century

The middle decades of the last century, marked other ways in which the growth of and interest in Freemasonry in this Province can be seen. For instance, five more lodges were added; Clive Lodge No. 819, founded in Bromsgrove in 1849, moved to Dudley in 1856 and



renamed Vernon Lodge, (under the then PGM RWBro H C Vernon) before moving again to Stourport in 1865; Stability of Stourbridge, also founded in 1849; Perseverance, founded in Dudley in 1850, changing to No. 573 of Halesowen, having moved there in 1861; St. Michael of Tenbury Wells in 1866; and Roysds of Malvern, in 1867.

Then there was the foundation of the first two Royal Arch Chapters, within a week of each other in December 1844 — Harmonic of Dudley, and the Worcester Lodge. These two Chapters, Dudley and St. Wulstan's — are the only two Chapters in the Province to bear different names from the lodges to which they are attached - since they were founded before the custom of retaining the same name was introduced. Three other Orders all saw their official foundation at this time; I say 'official', because in each case, there is a suspicion of their practise within the eighteenth-century lodges before the Union. I refer to the Knights Templar, in the form of the Richard de Vernon

Preceptory of 1857, closely followed in 1861, by that of St. Amand; to the St. Dunstan Chapter of Rose Croix in 1860; and to the Lechmere Lodge of Mark Master Masons, in 1863.



But despite all this activity, there must stand out one glaring omission. Surprising to some, possibly impolite to others, nowhere have I made mention of the City of Birmingham - in which almost half the total number of lodges in the Province are to be found. I have not done this deliberately; nonetheless, you are owed an explanation. This is a double one, combining both History and Geography!

When the first lodge in Worcestershire was born, Birmingham was a relatively insignificant market town. The industrial revolution brought expansion, both of population and wealth to the West Midlands on an unprecedented scale - but it was at first uneven, rather than general. Villages and small towns developed into much larger units, but still not, by the middle of the last century, into the vast conurbation that we recognise today; and given the peculiarities of the county boundary - for example at Stechford, one not infrequently hears visitors give greetings from the "surrounding Province of Warwickshire" - Birmingham's expansion was mainly in the opposite direction, and contained half a dozen Lodges of its own. And so, it was not until the foundation of the Lechmere Volunteer Lodge No. 1874 in 1881, the twenty first lodge to have been founded in the Province, that the Worcestershire part of this city received its first Masonic district.

What a change has taken place since then! If it took one hundred and forty-eight years to produce the first eleven surviving lodges, it has only taken just over another century to produce the next one hundred and thirteen, well over half of them being in Birmingham - not to mention the expansion in existing Orders and the establishment of new ones - to the extent that Worcestershire is now the seventeenth largest Province under the English Constitution, so far as the Craft is concerned, and larger in some of the other Degrees. That this expansion has been one of acceleration, rather than of evenness, can be shown by the fact that there were still only twenty-one lodges at the outbreak of the First World War, while another thirty-six were added between the wars, leaving no less than sixty-seven since then — a doubling and a redoubling in the lifetime of some of us present today.

Article by WBro Bill Mason.



Don't Forget!

Cathedral
Service
12th September

PGL
2nd October

Carol Service
5th December



Do you want a Side Order with that, Sir?

Paul Webber starts a new series diving into the world of some of the more "obscure" side orders in Freemasonry, starting off with The Commemorative Order of Saint Thomas of Acon.



This is an independent British Christian masonic organisation.

Membership is restricted to those who are subscribing members of a Preceptory (Commandery) in amity with the Great Priory of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Order of the Temple of England and Wales and Provinces Overseas (commonly referred to as the Knights Templar). Membership is by invitation only and the basic organisation of the Order is a Chapel.

The Order of St. Thomas of Acon was established in 1974 as a result of twenty years' research in the Guildhall Library in London by John E. N. Walker, who for many years was the Secretary General of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia. The ancient records of the Order, written in medieval French and Latin, had been deposited in the London Guildhall Library and escaped the Great Fire of 1666.

The Order now operates under the official title of **The Commemorative Order of St Thomas of Acon**, with a main focus on Thomas Becket, also known as Saint Thomas of Canterbury, Thomas of London and later Thomas à Becket, who was Archbishop of Canterbury, from 1162 until his murder in 1170. The Order's charities raise monies for the support and upkeep of Canterbury Cathedral.

As of July 2015 there were 112 Chapels of the Order in England, Wales, Spain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America, and, more recently a new province in Brazil.

It is said the ceremony at which you admitted is one of the nicest and FUN in freemasonry and the regalia of the Order bears some similarity to that of a Masonic Knight Templar. Consisting of a stone white tunic, on the front of which is



a Latin Cross, Medici Crimson, four inches wide, the full length of the tunic, on which is superimposed a white Latin Cross one-third the width. The intersection of the Cross is charged with a Bronze Escallope Shell, four inches diameter. Over the tunic is worn a stone white mantle with hood; on the left breast, a Greek Cross of ten inches length, upon which is a smaller white cross, the intersection of which is again charged with a Bronze Shell. Knights also wear a crimson velvet cap, the front of which is a Bronze Escallope Shell. Knights, with the exception of the Prior and Almoner, wear a sword belt and sword with scabbard.

(Pictured above is the Most Worthy Grand Master, Sir Melvyn of Wud Plumpton, KH)

The banner of the Order depicts the Arms of the Order and comprises: Argent, a Cross Rouge extending to the edge of the Banner, upon which is superimposed a smaller Cross Argent. In the first quarter of the Banner is an Escallope Shell.

Watch out as we explore some of the other orders in the series!

