

WAVERLEY COUNCIL NO.205 THE FIRST TWENTY ONE YEARS

Three weeks ago our erstwhile Recorder telephoned me, somewhat at short notice I might say bearing in mind the amount of work involved, and very sheepishly asked if I would say a few words to commemorate the Council reaching its 21st Birthday at this meeting.

Apparently, he said, our R III District Grand Master felt that I was the right man for the job although at that split second it went through my mind that perhaps I might have been mistaken when four ago I recommended him to succeed me as District Grand Master.

However, recovering from the shock, and on looking through the records it soon brought back many happy memories which through time I had long forgotten. It was Ill Comp Don Panton who originally started talking about a new Council at Godalming in early 1996 and he became the founding Recorder and a very good one he was. Don was a lovely man, difficult to say "No" to, and a great recruiter. He soon had 18 Founders plus three potential Candidates and a Petitioner's Meeting was held at Godalming on 29th July 1996 at which 12 were present.

The main Officers were all agreed as follows:-

V Ill Comp Don Boydell PGLect	TIM
Comp Arnold Long	Deputy Master
Comp Trevor Brodrick	PCW
Ill Comp Mik Barnes PGMarshall	Chaplain
Comp Peter Page	Treasurer
Ill Comp Don Panton	Recorder
Ill Comp Roy Bedford PGCondC	DC

It was also agreed that no member should hold any Office for too long a period, say 5 years as a maximum, and somewhat surprisingly this has more or less been adhered to apart from one or two exceptions, but more about that later.

Various names were put forward for the Council. Wey Valley was dismissed as it was the name of the local Tax Office and Ranulph Flambard was also discarded, as perhaps, being too esoteric. You now know the choice made, the name of the local Council but at the Consecration the Grand Chaplain in his oration put us right indicating that the name had originated from Waverley Abbey, the first Abbey to be founded by the Cistercian Order in Britain and built on one of the most romantic, significant and historic sites in Surrey. It flourished until 1537, when it was demolished, and now little remains of the former building.

Subs were agreed at £35 and dining to be charged at £13 inclusive of wine. It was agreed that all the Officers would pay for their Collars & Jewels and in addition several Petitioners volunteered to buy most of the furniture required. Ill Comp Don Panton also arranged for us to hire the three robes for £10 per meeting until our finances were a little stronger. We also agreed to become full members of Godalming Masonic Centre which we agreed to pay for over 2 years which would give us full voting rights.

When the Petition had finally been signed by all 18 Petitioners a massive job in itself the Petition was submitted to Mark Masons Hall in late 1996 and in early 1997 we were advised that the Consecration would take place at 11.30 a.m. on Friday 28th February at Godalming.

The day could not come soon enough so, as you would expect, on 28th February 17 of the 18 Petitioners arrived well in time for our rehearsal due to take place at 10 a.m. Companion Joe Newsome was the one absentee. This was where the first problem arose as part way being put through our paces by R III Comp J Alan Wright, the Grand Director of Ceremonies, V Ill Comp Don Boydell queried something he had suggested to which he received a very sharp response as you would expect. V Ill Comp Don should have kept quiet as he was never going to win this argument but unfortunately Don, for those who knew him, was not the giving up sort, and came back with a further comment, but the Grand Director of Ceremonies brought about a pointed and abrupt end to the discussion. The rehearsal continued and happily all ended well

At 11.30 a.m. the Consecrating Officer, the Most Illustrious Grand Master, Most Illustrious Comp Col Robert Keith Hind accompanied by Rt Ill Comp Peter Glyn Williams the Grand Secretary, acting as Deputy Grand Master and Rt Ill Comp Edward Lawrence Joseph Smith, Grand Principal Conductor of the Work processed into the Temple together with the rest of the Consecrating Team and were received with acclamation.

Sadly, some of the names on the Attendance Sheet are indecipherable so a complete list of the Grand Team is not possible. However, some of you may know, Ill Comp Claude Upton who acted as Grand Chaplain, Ill Comp Brian Wareham as Captain of the Guard, Ill Comp Bill Barclay as Steward and Comp Richard Lambert as Organist. The Consecration was carried out by the Most Ill Grand Master in an immaculate manner and afterwards Rt Ill Comp Michael Banbury, District Grand Master for the District of Surrey installed V Ill Comp Don Boydell in fine style as the first Thrice Illustrious Master of the Council. Afterwards 54 Companions (17 Founders, 11 members of the Consecration Team and 26 Guests) dined in fine style with Beef & Tomato Soup, Gammon Steak, Apple Pie & Ice Cream & Cheese & Biscuits. Overall it was a wonderful day long to be remembered.

At the first meeting of the Council on 18th June 1997 two Companions were admitted. Comp Brian Kemp, who was already a member of a Middlesex Council, as a Joining Member and Comp Brian Owen was chosen but sadly both have now passed to the Grand Council above. However, in July 1997 we welcomed Comp Graham Virgo Rawlinson into our midst and he is still very much with us having been our Director of Ceremonies since 2014.

Since our Consecration we have chosen 43 Candidates and have had 4 Joining Members but as always resignations and deaths take their toll. The membership reached its peak in 2010 at 37 but since then has declined slightly, although after today's meeting we stand at 26, still a very healthy position. Of the current membership there are only 3 of the original Founders remaining, R Ill Comp Mik Barnes, Ill Comp Roy Leavers and myself. Five have resigned and are still very much alive, V Ill Comp Roy Bedford, Ill Comp Michael Blackwood and Comp Keith Salmon, for geographical reasons; Ill Comp Louis Keats & Ill Comp Trevor Brodrick to reduce Masonic commitments.

Sadly the remaining 10, V Ill Comp Don Boydell, Ill Comp Peter Page, Ill Comp Don Panton, Ill Comp Gordon Wildey, Ill Comp George Pegler, Ill Comp Colin Peak, Comp Joe Newsome, Comp Bill Rumble, Ill Comp Sidney Johnson and Comp Robert Charlton have all passed away. They have all played their part in our history and hopefully will never be forgotten.

Roy Leavers also pointed out to me that we had a few former Police Officers within the Founders, namely Peter Page (Colonial Police-Kenya), Robert Charlton (Met), Sidney Johnson (Palestine Police & Met) & Roy Leavers (Met). In addition since the Consecration we have had Ill Comp Ray Hussey as a Joining Member (I couldn't find out what Police Force he was in) and of course both R Ill Comp David Blackburn & Comp Ian Clark (both Met). I also spotted 5 Accountants among the Founders, three of whom were appointed the first three Treasurers of the Council (Ill Comp Peter Page 1997-2002, Ill Comp Gordon Wildey 2002-2005 and Ill Comp Colin Peak from 2005 until he died in January 2010).

There is little doubt in my mind that the first 21 years of this Council have been a great success. Everyone involved has played their part even V Ill Comp Don Boydell our Primus TIM set us on the right path and then after 2 years resigned as previously agreed and was elected an Honorary Member.

The meetings are usually very well attended and often with a healthy number of guests present and the ritual frequently delivered to a very high standard. The financial side is also in excellent order with the Accounts previously accepted by the Companions earlier tonight showing a General Fund in excess of £2,000 & a substantial amount in the Benevolent Fund. Finally, there has always been a very friendly and happy atmosphere within this Council throughout its whole existence. To put it simply we have enjoyed ourselves and long may that continue

Why has this been the case I ask? Without doubt a good Recorder generally means a good unit and we have been blessed with 2 of the best over the last 21 years. Thank goodness for the members choosing to ignore the Petitioners suggestion that no Officer serve more than 5 years. Ill Comp Don Panton set us on our way for the first 8 years and Ill Comp Roy Leavers has carried on the good work thereafter. Whoever takes over from Roy has a very hard act to follow. He was muttering to me recently he would like to hand the job over sometime soon but I explained to him that I am in my 17th year as Scribe E of my Chapter so he has a few more years to go yet before he can even think of relinquishing his post.

Throughout the whole 21 years we have had a number of senior Freemasons in the Province of Surrey (and even Middlesex) as members including 9 Companions who are or have been Heads of Orders. We currently have 3 members in charge of an Order, namely Comp Ian Clark, Provincial Grand Master for the Mark Province; R Ill Comp David Blackburn, District Grand Master, Royal and Select Masters; and Ill Comp Nigel Harding, Provincial Grand Master, Royal Order of Scotland. There is little doubt that this has been a great help in recruiting Candidates

Throughout its life the Council has remained at Godalming and I cannot remember the issue of a change of venue ever been discussed. It is a small, reasonably modern centre with no parking problems, suits us very well and is currently one of the best centres in Surrey for good, reasonably priced food

So what of the future? Freemasonry as a whole as we all know is facing many challenges presented by the 20th Century. However, I am sure Waverley Council can move forward with confidence into the future; the quality of the membership is undoubted, and the financial position of the Council is sound. The Founders have done their job and there is no doubt this Council has come of age, leaving solid foundations in place for our future for the current membership to build on and even improve

Rt Ill Comp Arnold Long

9th March 2018