

‘Peace in our Time’
(The first 100 Years of Peace Mark Lodge No. 681)

One hundred years ago, Freemasonry was not a stranger to the area. The Lodge of Candour, a Craft Lodge had been established in 1812 under the auspices of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Yorkshire West Riding whose first Lodge meeting was on the 25th December 1812 at the house of William Bell which was known locally as the Bell Inn.

The presence of a Lodge working the Mark Ritual did not come to pass until 1918 following a petition from six local Mark Masons from Union Lodge of MMM 171 who were also from the Lodge of Candour; the request to establish a Mark Lodge at 138 High Street, Uppermill, West Yorkshire. These very rooms. The petition was approved. The new Lodge would be called *Peace Mark Lodge* and its number 681. We would assume that the name *Peace* was a resonance of the feelings of many of the population, in that the casualties and privations of the Great War could not be sustained and that they wished it would end.

The Consecration took place on the day that the British finally made a successful attack on the German forces to push out of *Ipres Salient*. It was the turning point from which the British forces moved on to win the war.

Interestingly a petition of 6 Founders resulted in the formation of Peace Mark Lodge and with only 28 in attendance the Lodge still managed to have the presence of the D.G.M. and the P.G.M. and only 3 visitors other than the Consecrating Team. Was this an omen of things to come? Was Grand Lodge just checking up on the wayward antics of a group, who were in the main, an unholy cocktail of Lancashire and Yorkshire DNA? Either way, things did not follow in accordance with the schedule of regular meetings indicated in the proposed bylaws.

The regular meeting due on the 15th October, just 18 days after Consecration, did not take place with the minute book recording that this was due to the Warrant being in the hands of the Grand Secretary, who appears to have taken it back to Grand Mark Lodge. Perhaps they were not sure about this new Mark Lodge after all. Or had the libations gotten the better of them?

The minutes state that an Emergency Meeting was held on the 22nd October. With records showing that the By Laws were approved and 8 candidates, Craft Masons of Candour 337, were balloted and advanced all at this meeting. The WM then proceeded to invest all 8 as officers in the Lodge. Secretary, Reg. of Marks, Senior Deacon, Junior Deacon, Inner Guard and 3 Stewards. No one ever accused Peace of failing to offer preferment.

The WM reported the receipt of a beautiful cushion for the Bible on the WM’s pedestal and a motion to direct our thanks to the donor for his generosity and to express the same was duly passed.

Seven further Master Masons from the Lodge of Candour were proposed and seconded by the WM and SW respectively and approved by the brethren.

An emergency Meeting 26th November 1918 saw 8 craft Master Masons previously proposed as candidates by the WM and seconded by the SW.

On December 17th 1918, the first regular meeting was held. Five further candidates were proposed and seconded by the W.M. and S.W. respectively and one joining member.

The WM was now presiding over a rapidly expanding Lodge and it appears some financial constraint was required.

The WM appointed the Treasurer of the Lodge. It is not known who took care of the previous finances which were probably left with the WM. 100 years later and the WM is still meddling with the finances!

This being the first Regular Meeting since consecration the minutes of such and those of the 2 Emergency meetings were approved. From a petition by 6 Founders just 3 months previously there were now 28 Members. Brethren, that is some growth.

The R.W. Provincial Grand Master was in attendance in February 1919 for an Advancement and presented GL. Certificates to 14 of the newly admitted MMM.

The Provincial Grand Master was unanimously elected an Honorary Member of the Lodge.

He presented to the Lodge a Banner which was gratefully and suitably accepted by the W.M. who resolved “...we place on record our appreciation of this handsome gift.”

The First annual installation took place **21st October 1919** with 23 members and 10 Visitors present. A great first year. Starting with just 6 Founders and ending with 29 Members.

A further 8 advancements were achieved in the next year of the Lodge with another Emergency Meeting taking place on Tuesday 12th April 1920 to advance the Bradbury brothers, Robert and Ralph aged 35 and 43 with the previous meeting having advanced 2 other brothers, Alexander and Harold Rhodes.

The Lodge now had father and 2 sons of Bradbury and Rhodes. How wonderful would it have been to have both your sons join at the same time?

Three advancements were conferred during the next year and the Lodge applied a £1 Levy to all members to enable it to pay Candour, who had provided funds in the early days to purchase furniture and regalia for the Mark Degree.

1921 saw another year of Advancements with 3 candidates. Subscriptions are noted on the Installation Summons in October 1922 as £1 5s 0d.

There are many meetings worth of note and I will mention just a few of these.

On 12th May 1924 a Special Meeting is recorded in the minutes, called to discuss the setting up of a Charity Account. The notes state that the meeting was adjourned to a future date. Clearly things were not all agreed – disagreements at a Peace committee meeting? Unthinkable! But no record of re-convening is found. However, the Lodge did open an account with the Manchester and County Bank on the 18th December 1924. Who needs a committee to take a decision – another theme of Peace!

On 24th April 1926 a motion to donate £10 to Candour for the Hall Restoration Fund was agreed. Subs were still just £1/5s.

The 1920's were good years and at installation on 27th October 1926 two brothers, aged 34 and 47 were advanced with the installation all on the same meeting. Advancements on Installation day were to feature on regular occasions even in recent years.

1934 is the last time we see W.Bro. JH Bradbury on the summons as a member. Sadly, our first WM passed away after giving 16 years dedicated service to Peace Mark Lodge.

In October the same year the Treasurer reported a healthy balance of £71/7s/6d. Annual rent to Candour was £3 and subs were still just £1/5s.

1937-39 saw 3 years where Dispensations were required to install Masters who had not been in a Craft Chair. But with another World War now underway a period of decline was inevitable. The following 5 years saw regular notes of absence with members noted as being on active service.

October 1942 Installation commenced with a period of silence in respect of the death of the HRH Duke of Kent GM killed on the 25th August on active service.

23rd August 1945 the meeting marked the end of war in Europe on the 8th May 1945 and the rest of the world on the 15th August 1945; if only this was to be true and sustainable.

October 1947 sees the Lodge agree to become a Key Stone Lodge. We will come back to this later.

February 1948 the Lodge stands in remembrance of the MW GM The Earl of Stradbroke. At the same meeting the Secretary announced that Grand Lodge were doubling the annual dues from 1st January 1949.

On 28th April 1949 the meeting had to be held in the “Club Room” downstairs due to ongoing decorations in the temple. By the looks of it, it hasn't been touched since. The minutes make reference to making the PGM an Honorary member and also inviting PGL to meet at Uppermill. But we have no record in the minutes of that meeting ever taking place.

22nd February 1951 saw the subs raised to 1½ Guineas. Brethren, remember the subs had been £1/5s/0d since the Consecration 25 years previously.

1952 was a particular year of Masonic Mourning. 3 Months of Masonic Mourning was declared on the death of the DGM Cannon Frederick Halsey and the on 7th February 1952 Grand Lodge announce 4 months of Masonic Mourning following the death of King George VI.

Now Brethren, back to that Key Stone. The Provincial Grand Secretary sends a letter of congratulations to the Lodge meeting of 24th February 1953 confirming that it had achieved the Key Stone target. It states that the PGM is “Delighted that Peace Lodge has come into line.” How many PGM's since that date have dreamt of a similar aspiration?

July 1955 the Lodge receives a letter from Candour Lodge confirming a rent increase. For many years the rent was £3 and a couple of years earlier was £4. The letter now states the rent was to be £12/10s.

This did not deter the Lodge and by 1961 we had 58 subscribing members.

By 1966 subs were now £1/11s/6d and an appeal was sent out for a levy of 10/- be made on every member. Subs increased to £2/2s an increase of 2s/6d. (12½p in new money). But remember that Charity Account? It had been doing very well and a donation of £63 was made to the Mark Charity. That was about £1800 in today's terms. The Lodge was certainly doing its bit for the Order.

Then in 1967 a further donation of 35 Guineas was made to the Mark fund and 35 Guineas to the Cleeves Memorial Fund.

24th October 1968 Installation and Jubilee meeting. 50 years completed and 52 in attendance. The WM led the procession into the Lodge preceded by the PGM. The WM opened the Lodge, concluded some ordinary business and then invited the PGM to take the chair. The Banner Dedication was then conducted and afterwards the WM resumed the chair and the Installation was completed, rounding off a very busy meeting. £105 was presented to the Charity Representative and a further donation of 30 Guineas was made to the Cleeves Memorial fund.

In **1971** subs were increased to £3 and now no mention of Guineas or Shillings. Much to the relief of the younger ones of us here like RWBro Steggles ...

28th October 1976 marked the end of the beginning for Peace Mark Lodge. Way back in the beginning, a young Brother William Pownall was one of the first to be advanced into Peace Mark Lodge. Joining aged 38, being a subscribing member for 47 years and an honorary member for 11 years. Passing away aged 96 he had been a member of Peace for 58 years.

I could go on much longer. But alas the time constraints and the offer of good fayre is far too tempting, but I conclude with observations rather than further facts.

Exploring the records of our recent history does not elicit any information of ground breaking historical significance. The Lodge just got on with the business of existing which might not make great reading; it would therefore be easy to dismiss it and leave the matter at that.

But the recent history is perhaps the most important.

The recent history comprises the recollections of many in this room, the fabric of what it is to be a member of Peace Lodge of MMM now. History gives us a sense of our basis, our origins, but today gives us a sense of our aspirations.

It is during living memory that the Lodge has gone through that most important stage in its life, a stage which many Lodges ignore at their peril – its evolution. It has changed, grown and in doing so, cemented its relevance in the current age thereby ensuring that our members choose to stay as such, that new ones join us and our friends always come to see us again. We are so exceptionally fortunate to have a large number of close friends who we think so much of. That relationship makes this Lodge a special thing. A Lodge we would not choose lightly to be apart from and always look forward to returning to.

It has defined in its recent history the nature, the character, the spirit and vitally, the personality of Peace; I have seen that first hand as a Joining Member.

The Lodge has a very definite sense of fun but is sincere within this evolved approach to Mark Masonry and indeed, all that it does; put simply, I think it 'cares to care.' This was reinforced by the Lodge perhaps achieving its greatest accomplishment when we founded Peace Royal Ark Mariner Lodge.

The family of Peace Mark reached out across the Province and found new friends, rediscovered old ones and importantly, acquired a new extended family. This has also cemented the great relationship we have with East Lancashire, to the extent that it is difficult on many occasions to look around the room and distinguish who is a member of where – apart from the obvious point: we clearly have better taste in ties.

I would not even suggest we have planned what we have done. Peace is not that kind of Lodge.

But I think it has naturally become (I feel) the success it is, due to the hard work, commitment and determination of all of the members to keep alive something we know is worth working for.

Brethren, long may that continue.

WBros Martin Roche (with thanks to Michael Gannon and Michael Jessop)