

Lathom Abbey Lodge No 2229

It is right to acknowledge that from the establishment of the Lodge of Harmony and the concern of those early Masons a foundation was laid from which the Ormskirk Group was eventually established, of which Lathom Abbey is a part.

WBro Charles M.Hesford, Chairman of the Ormskirk Group and a Past Master of the Lodge of Harmony instigated the move to form Lathom Abbey Lodge when in 1945 he spoke to WBro.John E Funk and WBro. E R Skaife suggesting the formation of another lodge.

The establishment of Pilgrim in 1946 just prior to the formation of Lathom Abbey Lodge in 1947 was to provide Masonic facilities to those who had come out of Liverpool during the war years. They met at the Kings Arms whilst Lathom Abbey was to draw its members from the business community of Ormskirk and met at the Wheatsheaf Hotel.

During the meeting on 16 November 1945, at which the details relating to the formation were discussed, the name by which the Lodge was to be known brought the suggestion Abbey Lodge. When this was put to the Grand Lodge permission to use this name was refused on the grounds that the name was already in use by eleven orders. However, if a suitable prefix could be found this would be acceptable. The founders agreed upon Lathom Abbey Lodge. The Abbey referred to is, of course, Burscough Priory whose ruins now stand on Abbey farm which is situated in Lathom and adjacent to Lathom House which was the residence of the Derby family, hereby maintaining the Masonic connections between many pieces of local history.

Bro John Prescott showed a conjectural drawing of the Abbey which was met with approval and as he worked for the Ormskirk Advertiser he was invited to produce the die for the Lodge emblem and so we have the ruins of Burscough Priory (Abbey) with a monk. This meeting was then drawn to a close.

At a regular meeting of the Lodge of Harmony No 580 held on the 16 January 1946 W. Bro T Heap addressed the brethren on the formation of a new Lodge in Ormskirk. He asked the brethren for their support in sponsoring this new Lodge. It was proposed by WBro C M Hesford and seconded by WBro T H G Glover that the support of the Lodge be given, the proposition was carried unanimously.

FOUNDERS

Of the 20 founders of the Lodge there were eleven members from the Lodge of Harmony No 580, the remaining nine were from various lodges as far apart as Fleetwood and Birkenhead, Wirral. Of this total membership there were nine Past Masters and 11 Master Masons.

In October 1964 WBro E J Holmes PPrGDC compiled a history of the Lodge of Harmony in which we find that during recent years Petitions have been recommended and submitted by the brethren of this lodge for formation of the following lodges:

Stanley of Bickerstaffe Lodge No. 3511, Warrant dated 1911.

Ormskirk Priory Lodge No. 4007, Warrant dated 1919.

Pilgrim Lodge No. 6207, Warrant dated 7 November 1945.

Lathom Abbey Lodge No. 6286, Warrant dated 1 May 1946.

Following the granting of the Warrant of the Lodge and the subsequent correspondence Provincial Grand Lodge indicated that the Consecration Ceremony should take place on 1 April 1947. It was realised that the lodge room at the Wheatsheaf Hotel was not large enough or indeed suitable for such an occasion. Alternative arrangements were made and the Consecration took place in the Church House, Ormskirk.

On 1 April 1947 at 2.30 pm Lathom Abbey Lodge No 6286 was consecrated in due and solemn form by the Consecrating Officer RW Bro Arthur Foster, Provincial Grand Master. Assisted by WBro. W S S Hannay, Deputy Provincial Grand Master. Supported by WBro. L E Rutherford, Assistant Provincial Grand Master. and assisted by Grand and Provincial Grand Lodge Officers. This was the beginning of the Lodge and the first minutes were recorded in the Lodge minute book:

The original Lodge furniture was hired, as you would expect during the establishing and building of the Lodge but contribution of artifacts from lodge members started at the consecration and has continued throughout our 50 years. The thoughtfulness and generosity of our friends is now and always has been appreciated.

A copy of the original leather bound Byelaws of the Lodge presented by the first Worshipful Master Bro E R Skaife to the founders at his installation is kept in our historical artifacts together with the early records and notes. At the Consecration meeting in 1947. Bro Rev Gerald E Jones, one of the founders, presented a Bible for use in the lodge. This was a magnificent gift and is still in use today.

After the move from the Wheatsheaf Hotel to the Masonic Hall in Park Road WBro John E. Funk presented to the lodge a clock for use in the lodge room which is still in use and can be seen on the wall of the entrance to the lodge room.

At the installation meeting in October 1979 WBro John E Funk stated that he presented tile lodge, at the Consecration, with the Masters gavel and it had been his ambition to present a similar gavel to the Lodge for the use of Wardens and now with thanks to the woodworking skills of his wife, Ethel, he was pleased to present the matching gavels.

In May 1977 and again in December 1978 WBro C Yardley of Penwortham Lodge No 5874, a close friend of Bro Norman Forshaw was thanked for his gift of the gavels and also a set of candlesticks to be used in the lodge. The Worshipful Master Bro J B Ellison and brethren showed their appreciation for his generosity.

In December 1979 WBro Yardley, with his continued generosity, presented to the lodge columns for the use of the Senior and Junior Wardens, these columns were made from Penwortham oak, the home of his own lodge. In the March meeting 1979 WBro C A Randall presented wooden stands for use with the Deacons wands and also fitments to the furniture lockers. In December 1979 WBro J E Freeman and his son Bro P H Freeman presented a sword to the Lodge for use by the Tyler.