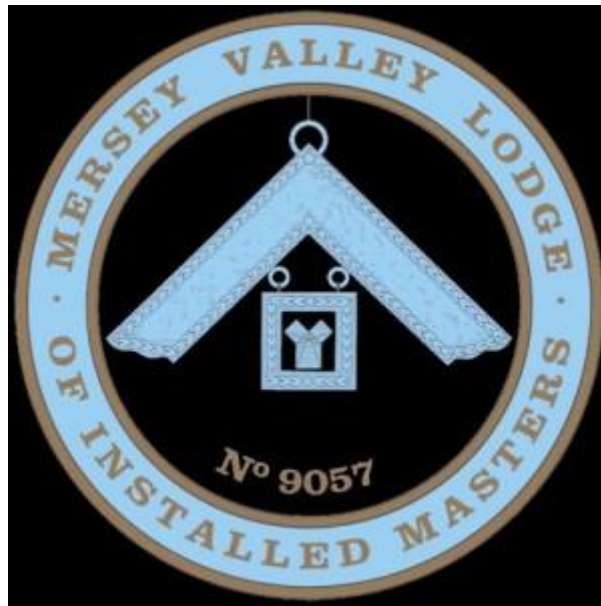


## Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters No. 9057



Lodge has fulfilled the hopes and expectations of its Founders

ALTHOUGH the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters No 9057 is still in its comparative infancy in Masonic terms it has already built up a reputation which results in Freemasonry's leading speakers and demonstration teams being delighted to accept invitations to address its Brethren.

In just 25 years the Lodge has fulfilled the hopes and expectations of its Founders in bringing together Brethren from different Groups to further their Masonic knowledge and extend their circle of friendship.

It is known from the diary of Elias Ashmole that he was Initiated into Freemasonry in Warrington on 16 October 1646 and the Craft has flourished in the area ever since. Indeed, such was the profusion of Lodges in Lancashire by 1827 that Grand Lodge deemed it advisable to split the Province into two, West and East.

In 1981 the Province of West Lancashire was the largest in terms of the number of Craft Lodges under the constitution of the United Grand Lodge of England. There were more than 520 Lodges under the guidance and jurisdiction of the Provincial Grand Master, Rt. W. Bro. Alan Fletcher Ferris who was assisted by a Deputy and 13 Assistant Provincial Grand Masters each of whom was responsible for the overseeing of a number of groups on a geographical basis. W. Bro. Arthur Osborne was the Assistant Provincial Grand Master responsible for the three groups based on Warrington, St Helens and Leigh.

With such a large number of Lodges in each Group (22 in Warrington, 14 in St Helens and Prescot and 8 in Leigh), a practice had grown up whereby each Brother, as he is Installed in the Chair of his Lodge, is invited to join an exclusive fraternity of fellow Masters who regularly visit each other's Lodges during their year in office. This practice has created a spirit of friendship which, in many cases, has extended beyond their official term and a feeling existed throughout the Groups that the long gap which could be expected before a Brother became involved in Provincial Masonry – often more than 10 years – either as an acting officer or a holder of a Past Rank, often resulted in Brethren losing interest and becoming inactive, or even resigning from the Craft.

To meet this need it was suggested that a Lodge of Installed Masters be created, but for some years the suggestion received little support from the higher authorities who were concerned that such an organisation would develop into a rather exclusive “dining club” with little extension of Masonic knowledge.

In 1981, W. Bro. Arthur Osborne, recognising the desirability of fostering greater links between the Lodges under his jurisdiction, held fruitful discussions with the Group Chairmen involved – W. Bro. Kenneth Leslie PAGDC, Warrington and District, W. Bro. James Ball PAGDC, St Helens and Prescott and W. Bro. Leslie Dowsell Bullen PAGDC, Leigh and District. They gave their full support to the idea of creating an Installed Masters’ Lodge to cover all three groups.

The Lodge archives contain a wealth of information about the lead-up to the formation and Consecration of the Lodge but W. Bro. Alec Parkin, the Founding Secretary, was only too happy to provide a selection of his “reminiscences”, some of which are not in those documents.

It was as he completed his first year as Secretary of Ashmole Lodge No 5128 that W. Bro. Parkin was invited by W. Bro. Osborne to be secretary of the Lodge he hoped would be formed for Past Masters. His initial reaction was to say no as he was too inexperienced but a short time later W. Bro. Leslie Bullen had a chat over the garden fence as their homes backed onto each other. W. Bro. Bullen said that declining the invitation had “upset the old man” and asked Alec to reconsider. He did so and then began a monumental task.

W. Bro. Osborne expected considerable opposition from the Provincial Grand Master who was very much against the formation of new Lodges which might be purely for the purpose of dining and socialising. From the start it was thought this could be overcome by ensuring that high quality lecturers were obtained who could talk on a wide variety of topics in order to broaden the members’ knowledge and perceptions of Freemasonry.

Initial meetings involved W. Bro. Osborne, the three Group Chairmen and W. Bro. Parkin as Founding Secretary. It was agreed that whilst Brethren who had received Provincial and Grand Lodge honours would be welcomed as members, all the Officers – with the exception of the Treasurer, Secretary and Director of Ceremonies – should be drawn each year only from the Past Masters of the Lodges in the three Groups. The three “executive” offices would be filled on the basis that each Brother would serve for about five years to ensure continuity.

A Founding Committee met at the Masonic Hall, St Helens, on 9 December 1981 and W. Bro. Osborne said he proposed to invite W. Bro. Jack Forsyth, who had served as a Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies from 1978 to 1981, to become first DC of the Lodge. The St Helens Group was asked to nominate a Treasurer and subsequently W. Bro. Roger Heald, a Past Provincial Treasurer, was invited and proved to be a tower of strength in setting up all the financial arrangements and put the Lodge on a very sound financial footing.

At that first meeting a statement of the proposals for founding a new Lodge was prepared. The Assistant Provincial Grand Master drafted a personal letter to the Past Masters of all Lodges in the three groups in which the aims of the proposed new Lodge were outlined. He wrote: “The principal object of the Lodge would be to make available Masonic instruction in the form of lectures and demonstrations, on topics of current and historical Masonic interest. By its very nature such a Lodge would ensure great opportunities for fraternal association between our three Groups with a resultant broadening of our Masonic friendships.”

Nominations of those Brethren interested in becoming Founders were requested, but, because of the numbers likely to be involved, it was decided to limit nominations to two from each Lodge with a single reserve to fill vacancies not taken up. Since the Lodge was to be created primarily to serve Brethren who were not the holders of Provincial Grand Rank, it was resolved that the honour of becoming a Founder should be limited to such Brethren but that all other Past Masters were to be invited to become Joining Members.

A meeting of all prospective Founders was held on 5 March 1982. More than 80 Brethren were present and it was clear that support would be sufficient for the proposal to succeed providing that the approval of the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master could be obtained. He was approached informally and, after carefully considering the need and desirability for such a Lodge, agreed to give the proposal his wholehearted support.

It was always envisaged that the Lodge would be regarded as a joint Lodge for the three Groups and that it would meet in each Group successively. It was thought equally important that the Worshipful Master and his Officers for the year should be fully representative of the three Groups, at the same time recognising the desirability of the Treasurer, Secretary and Director of Ceremonies remaining in post for some time in the interests of continuity. It was also agreed that the Assistant Provincial Grand Master and Group Chairman would recommend a suitable candidate to be formally elected as Master each year and in consultation with the Group Chairmen he would select his officers from the different Groups.

By this time W. Bro. Parkin realised the “magnitude and complexity” of the task he had undertaken and it was only with the considerable help of W. Bro. Wally Davies (the Provincial Grand Secretary), W. Bro. Tom Blackburn (the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies), W. Bro. Osborne and W. Bro. Bullen that things moved forward. Alex says: “Without their wise counsel and critical examination of very many formal documents and detailed organisational arrangements we could hardly have hoped to succeed.”

It was agreed that as W. Bro. Osborne was to be the first Worshipful Master that his Mother Lodge, St Oswald Lodge No 5170, be asked to act as Sponsor for Mersey Valley. St Oswald Lodge members gave their formal approval in Open Lodge on 14 April 1982.

Even after all the careful preparations Lodge records show that on 25 June 1982 a letter was received from the Provincial Grand Secretary who, “as expected, commented unkindly on our draft bye-laws”. The problem was that the Founding Committee wanted the bye-laws to show that meetings would be held alternately in Warrington, St Helens and Leigh. It was said that one meeting place must be named in the bye-laws but an assurance was given that there would be no difficulty in obtaining a dispensation for meetings to be held in the other towns. So that there could be no doubt about the intention that the Lodge should meet at the Masonic Halls in Warrington, St Helens and Leigh there was a written “Declaration by the Founders” stating that this must happen. It was also pointed out that the Assistant Provincial Grand Master and the nine group officials named as members of the lodge committee could not be listed as they all held Provincial or Grand Rank and will “not necessarily be members of the Lodge”. This was overcome by co-opting them onto the committee.

The Founders had some difficulty in choosing a name for the Lodge which would illustrate the spirit of co-operation to be fostered between the Brethren of the three constituent Groups. After some geographical research, the suggestion put forward by W. Bro. James Ball, Chairman of the St Helens and Prescott Group of Lodges – Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters – was adopted and gained ready approval from the Provincial Grand Master.

In addition to the members of the Founding Committee, 76 Brethren were nominated as Founders and a Petition to the Most Worshipful Grand Master was submitted on 9 August 1982 bearing the signatures of 89 Brethren.

The many months of hard work were given the official seal of approval in a letter on 24 September 1982 from W. Bro. Wallace Davies, PAGDC, Provincial Grand Secretary for the Province of West Lancashire. He wrote that "the Most Worshipful Grand Master has been pleased to accede to the Petition for the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters" and revealed that its number would be 9057. The letter also said that a warrant was being prepared and a fee of £58 was required.

It was anticipated that the Founders' Fee would be about £30 – to allow a generous donation to charity – with a Joining Fee of £5 and annual subscription of £10.

A major problem which had to be resolved was where the Consecration could be held. The large numbers of Brethren involved made it impossible to hold the Consecration in the Province of West Lancashire. It meant that the Consecration of West Lancashire's newest Lodge would have to take place in the Masonic Province of Cheshire. The Crest Hotel, Runcorn had a room which could provide "acceptable accommodation". Its massive banqueting suite could be divided into two thus allowing half to be used for the Consecration ceremony. The other half would already be set up ready to accommodate part of the banquet and within 40 minutes of the divider being removed the remainder of the space would be set up to hold the remainder of the people attending the meal. The Provincial Grand Master for Cheshire, RW. Bro. Frank Ashton, signed the dispensation allowing a West Lancashire Lodge to meet within his Province.

Invitations were sent to all the Founders and potential Joining Members who would be permitted to invite a maximum of two guests. The response was alarming for the organisers as more than 300 Brethren had to be accommodated and a seating plan prepared. With a top table of 30 there were then 30 round tables with Founders on each table along with guests.

With more than 300 Brethren attending, it is thought this was the largest gathering for a Consecration of a Craft Lodge in the history of the Province of West Lancashire. In addition to the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, who was Consecrating Officer, the Consecration Ceremony was also attended by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, six Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, the Provincial Senior and Junior Grand Wardens, 14 other Grand Officers, 78 Provincial Grand Officers (including 97-year-old W. Bro. John Daintith, PPrSGW), 139 Past Masters and 66 Master Masons.

There was also the matter of laying out a Lodge Room in part of the hotel. The Secretary of the Warrington Group, W. Bro. Frank Starkey, was asked to arrange for the supply and transport of the necessary furniture for the occasion. His team of Warrington Masons was responsible for setting up and dismantling the temporary Temple early on the morning of the great day and immediately after the ceremony – to allow the hotel staff to set out the tables for the banquet in the "Lodge" area.

The moving and memorable Ceremony of Consecration was conducted by The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master for the Province of West Lancashire, Brother Alan Fletcher Ferris, with matchless sincerity and dignity. The one "hitch" was that W. Bro. Parkin forgot to give the Provincial Grand Master a red rose buttonhole which he always wore at Masonic events. The rose was in place for the banquet. The subsequent Installation of W. Bro. Arthur Osborne PJGD Assistant Provincial Grand Master, as the first Worshipful Master,

was conducted by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, W. Bro. Lewis Aspinall Pardey, PSGD.

**The Consecrating and Installing Officers were assisted by the following Brethren:**

W. Bro. W Dickinson PPrSGD	IPM
W. Bro. B Gillbanks PrSGW	SW
W. Bro. A Dunn PrJGW	JW
W. Bro. HE Ross PrDGChap	Chaplain
W. Bro. RW Davies PAGDC, PrGSec	Secretary
W Bro T Blackburn PAGDC, PrGDC	DC
W. Bro. B Wolfenden PrDGSwdB	SwdB
W. Bro. J Escott PrDGDC	DDC
W. Bro. P Williams PrDGDC	DDC
W. Bro. A Warburton PrDGDC	DDC
W. Bro. JA Bamber PrGSD	SD
W. Bro. J Parr PrJGD	JD
W. Bro. HA Creamer PAGDC, PrGOrg	Organist
W. Bro. N Tomkins PrAGStdB	StdB
Bro RSMcClelland PrAGStdB	StdB
W. Bro. FS Dickinson PPrGD	IG
W. Bro. RD Clarke PrGStwd	Stwd
W. Bro. JSE Holker PrGStwd	Stwd
W. Bro. K Foulkes PrGPurs	Tyler

The Presenting Officer was W. Bro. Robert W Collin PJGD

Under normal circumstances a special dispensation would have been required to allow W. Bro. Arthur Osborne to become Worshipful Master of the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters as he was also serving as Worshipful Master of Boteler Lodge No 7367 in Warrington. However, this was not necessary as it was implicit in the Warrant which specifically named him as the first Worshipful Master.

A splendid Oration was delivered by the Provincial Deputy Grand Chaplain and the proceedings were directed by W. Bro. Thomas Blackburn PAGDC the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies with his customary dignity, efficiency and charm.

One of the first pleasant duties W. Bro. Osborne had to perform was to present a cheque for £750 on behalf of the new Lodge to the Provincial Grand Master for his charity fund.

In advance of the Consecration it was the wish of the Founders that the Provincial Grand Master, RW. Bro. Alan Fletcher Ferris, should be invited to become the Lodge's first Honorary Member and in a letter in November 1982 to the Founding Secretary he said he would be "very happy to accept Honorary Membership" and was "sure this Lodge will have a very outstanding future".

Lodge regalia along with necessary books for the Tyler and Secretary had been purchased but Founders were invited to contribute towards the cost of specific items. There was a generous response which considerably reduced the drain on Lodge funds. A splendid Volume of the Sacred Law was obtained through the auspices of Grand Lodge who had received a gift of a Family Bible from W. Bro. LH and Bros WG and AJG Arundell. W. Bro. Pimblett of the St Helens Group generously arranged for the renovation of the cover and Brethren of the Group donated a special box – the large blue box which is used to store and transport Lodge equipment.

At the Consecration there were propositions for 32 Joining Members who were admitted at the next meeting in St Helens.

The first "Light Blue" Worshipful Master was Bro Alfred Roughsedge of St Helens Lodge of Integrity No 4151 and Hardshaw Lodge No 8722 in the St Helens and Prescott Group. W. Bro. Alf went on to serve the Lodge as Secretary, became Chairman of the St Helens and Prescott Group and served as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master from 1999 to 2006.

In April 1984 the Lodge entertained the Worshipful Master, Bro Desmond Darling, and Brethren of Trinity College Lodge No 357 of the Irish Constitution which meets in Dublin. They gave a demonstration of an Initiation Ceremony as performed at their regular meetings. The idea to invite Trinity College Lodge came during a meeting between W. Bro. Arthur Osborne and W. Bro. Dr Steven PJ Reid. W. Bro. Reid was a member of Trinity College Lodge and Semper Fidelis Lodge No 4428 in Lytham St Annes. Trinity College Lodge members were to visit Lytham St Annes and were asked if they would extend their visit to include Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters.

The Senior Grand Warden of the Grand Lodge of Ireland, RW. Bro. Eric Fenelon acted as Junior Warden while VW. Bro. Michael Ward, Grand Secretary for Instruction of the Grand Lodge of Ireland was the Director of Ceremonies. The demonstration was so well received and so many friendships quickly formed that there was an immediate suggestion that members of the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters should visit Ireland and give a demonstration of an English Initiation Ceremony in the Grand Lodge of Ireland in Dublin.

After many months of planning a party of Mersey Valley Lodge members flew from Liverpool to Dublin to visit Trinity Lodge.

W. Bro. Derek Hunt had been given the task of being Director of Ceremonies and putting together the team to give the demonstration. The evening started with W. Bro. Dennis Rudd, a Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies and a member of the Lodge, announcing that W. Bro. Arthur Osborne, PSGD Assistant Provincial Grand Master of the Province of West Lancashire, was present and then escorted him into the Lodge. With W. Bro. Gordon Amos acting as Worshipful Master the team gave a faultless performance and not one single prompt was required throughout the whole ceremony.

Eight members of the Lodge took their wives with them on the visit. While members were involved in Masonic business, it had been arranged by our hosts to take the ladies to the theatre to see Blood Brothers, a play they all enjoyed.

After the ceremony and play, members and their wives were taken to the home of W. Bro. Ken Sinanan where they enjoyed typical Irish hospitality.

One of the major problems faced in organising the visit was to find accommodation because an international convention of Soroptimists was being held in Dublin the same weekend but room was eventually found at the Royal Dublin Hotel.

The visit also had its lighter moments. The coach driver who took the party from the airport to the hotel said that there had been great excitement because of a report that one of the numerous statues of the Madonna had been seen to move. Crowds spent hours standing watching for another happening. On another statue someone had put a notice "Out of Order". While walking to the Grand Lodge of Ireland in Molesworth Street members of our group heard one local comment that those men must have been at "a posh funeral".

In September 1984 the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Bro Alan Fletcher Ferris, paid his first return visit to the Lodge since the Consecration. After an entertaining and

informative lecture by W. Bro. Tom Blackburn, the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, the Provincial Grand Master was again offered the Gavel and this time accepted. He expressed his delight at the way the Lodge was living up to its promise to disseminate Masonic knowledge as well as fostering relationships between the Brethren of the three Groups and wished to pay tribute to the Lodge for the work which was being put in to this end. He then asked that W. Bro. Parkin be presented to him. W. Bro. Parkin was shocked and delighted when the Provincial Grand Master formally appointed and invested him as a Past Provincial Senior Grand Deacon. He did point out however, that the bill for the regalia was in the pocket of the apron. Alec says: "I recognise that whilst this was a great honour personally – and one unlikely to be repeated in the Lodge – I regarded it as a tribute to all the work of the Brethren and I intend therefore to see the regalia is returned to the Lodge in due course for safe keeping".

September 1987 saw the Provincial Grand Master, RW. Bro. Alan Fletcher Ferris return to the Lodge to Dedicate its Banner.

The Banner was made by W. Bro. Harry Boscow and his wife Dorothea. The Provincial Grand Master praised the "craftsmanship and skill" of W. Bro. Boscow and his wife. W. Bro. Boscow had the honour of carrying the Banner into the Lodge. The Provincial Grand Master also paid tribute to Lodge members who were members of the 1982 Warrington Masters' Association who had presented the banner to the Lodge, including the Worshipful Master, Bro Gordon Hough.

A special programme was prepared for the Banner Dedication containing a history of the Lodge, a copy of the bye-laws and Declaration of Intent by the Founders. "A Lodge of our Time" had been written by W. Bro. Alf Roughsedge with a little assistance from W. Bro. Derek Hunt.

The full Ceremony of Dedication was printed so that every Brother attending would be able to follow the ceremony with ease and have a permanent memento of the special day.

For the ceremony the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master was assisted by W. Bro. Dr JSE Holker PPrSGW, W. Bro. FP Lawton PPrJGW, W. Bro. the Rev Michael Graham PrGChap, W. Bro. Dr SPJ Reid PrDGDC, W. Bro. PF Butterfield PrDGDC, W. Bro. HA Evanson PPrSGD, W. Bro. R Dimeloe PPrJGD, W. Bro. HA Creamer PrGOrg and W. Bro. RJ Antrobus PrGPurs. Members of the Provincial Choir were W. Bros WG Bullough, JG Fletcher and Bro EA Davies.

In late 1986 the Provincial Grand Master reorganised the duties of some of his Assistant Provincial Grand Masters. The St Helens and Prescot Group was placed under the care of W. Bro. James N Hull while the Widnes Group was absorbed by W. Bro. Osborne. The effect of these changes was discussed by the Lodge and the Brethren unanimously decided to invite Past masters of the Lodges in Widnes to become members and the Widnes Group officials to be incorporated into the management structure. It was agreed that Widnes Group Freemasons should be offered the same opportunities as those in the three founding groups with them taking a full participation in occupying offices of the Lodge from January 1989. At the first meeting at which Widnes Brethren could join more than 30 did so, including Group Chairman, W. Bro. Alan Locke PAGDC. The cycle of meetings was also changed so that meetings would also be held in Widnes Masonic Hall.

The needles and cottons also had to be brought out again at the home of W. Bro. Harry Boscow as the name of the Widnes Group had to be added to the Lodge Banner.

After the lecture had finished at the meeting in September 1986, the Worshipful Master again offered the gavel of the Lodge to Assistant Provincial Grand Master, W. Bro. Arthur Osborne, who gladly accepted it. He asked for the Lodge's Founding Treasurer, W. Bro. Roger Heald, to be placed before him. W. Bro. Osborne said that the Provincial Grand Master wanted to recognise the work undertaken over many years by W. Bro. Heald. He then invest W. Bro. Heald with the high rank as a Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden.

Although there had been sad reports of the deaths of members at several meetings the Lodge suffered especially in March 1989 with the deaths of W. Bro. James Ball PJGD, a former Chairman of the St Helens and Prescott Group and the Lodge's first Immediate Past Master; W. Bro. Roger Heald PPrSGW, the Founding Treasurer and W. Bro. Thomas Farley who was a Founder.

At the meeting in April 1991 it was decided to confer Honorary Membership on the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Bro Kenneth Edward Moxley.

The April 1993 meeting was an extremely sad one for the Lodge when it was announced that W. Bro. Arthur Osborne, PSGD Assistant Provincial Grand Master, had died. Members stood in silent tribute to the memory of W. Bro. Osborne who had been the principal force in the formation of the Lodge. At the next meeting there was another sad occasion with the announcement of the death of our first Honorary Member, RW. Bro. Alan Fletcher Ferris, Past Provincial Grand Master, who had enjoyed attending several memorable meetings with his great friend W. Bro. Osborne.

In September 1996 the Lodge decided to honour another man who had played an important instrumental role in the creation of the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters. W. Bro. Leslie Dowswell Bullen was the Chairman of the Leigh Group at the time of the Consecration and served as the Lodge's first Senior Warden. Even when he was appointed as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master W. Bro. Bullen rarely missed a Lodge meeting and he became an Honorary Member at this meeting. It was an honour that W. Bro. Bullen was not to enjoy for long as at the meeting in April 1997 the death of "our esteemed brother" was recorded.

The Provincial Grand Master, RW. Bro. Colin Penty Wright, was no stranger to Mersey Valley Lodge and at the meeting in January 1997 on the proposition of W. Bro. Dr John Stanley Eastham Holker PSGD Assistant Provincial Grand Master was made an Honorary Member.

The Lodge was honoured in 1998 when it was selected to host one of the official presentations of the Prestonian Lecture.

Again, because of the exceptionally large number of Brethren wishing to attend, there was not a suitable venue in the area of the Province covered by Mersey Valley. The Provincial Grand Master for Cheshire, RW. Bro. Timothy Raymond Roper Richards, gave a dispensation for the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters to return to the hotel where it was Consecrated, even though it now had a new name, The Forte Posthouse Hotel, Runcorn.

The subject of that year's Prestonian Lecture was of particular interest to Warrington Freemasons and others in the Province of West Lancashire for the subject was Elias Ashmole.

W. Bro. Bryan F Page PAGDC, a former Deputy Librarian and Curator of the United Grand Lodge of England, traced the career of Elias Ashmole who was initiated into Freemasonry in



Warrington on 16 October, 1646. The entry in his diary that he had been made a Freemason on that day was the first record of an initiation in England.

The return visit to the hotel evoked many happy memories for those who had attended the Consecration and seen the Lodge grow to its new membership high of 253.

The Prestonian Lecture was attended by 297 Freemasons from many parts of the Province.

It was announced at the meeting in March 1999 that the Lodge's first "light blue" Worshipful Master and former Secretary, W. Bro. Alf Roughsedge was to be made an Assistant Provincial Grand Master. It is normal when an Assistant Provincial Grand Master is invested at the meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge that the Worshipful Master of his mother Lodge carries the chain of office during the procession. However, W. Bro. Roughsedge asked W. Bro. Michael Pickett, the Master of Mersey Valley Lodge and a member of the St Helens Group to carry the chain,

Over the years much has been said about the most enjoyable visit to Dublin to visit Trinity Lodge and in 2000 a suggestion was made that another visit should be made to Ireland. It had been hoped to visit Lodge of Research No 200 in Dublin for its Installation in 2001 but unfortunately there were not sufficient Brethren interested to make the trip viable.

The Lodge decided in 2001 that there should be special fund-raising social events to benefit the Province's 175th Anniversary Appeal. An extremely successful evening at Widnes Masonic Hall and raffles at social boards helped the Lodge to present £4,000 to the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, VW. Bro. Tom Blackburn PGSwdB at our meeting in April 2002. By that date the Province's appeal had reached a total of £352,000.

Because of his employment with the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, Founding Secretary W. Bro. Alec Parkin had to move south but he remained in regular touch with the Lodge and always sent a Christmas greeting. In 2001 we learned that W. Bro. Parkin was to be appointed Past Provincial Grand Charity Steward through his Lodge in Avon.

Congratulations were extended to W. Bro. Dennis Rudd at the meeting in April 2003 when it was announced that he was to be made an Assistant Provincial Grand Master of the Province of West Lancashire with responsibility for the Woolton and Widnes Groups of Lodges.

Four Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, W. Bros the Rev Canon John C Sharples, J Brian Wright, Alf Roughsedge and Dennis Rudd were present at the January meeting in 2004 to see W. Bro. David J Wood installed as Worshipful Master. Earlier the Installing Master, W. Bro. Colin Rowling had paid tribute to the excellent work undertaken over many years by W. Bro. James Lockwood Eckersley PPrJGW as Almoner and W. Bro. Charles Spencer PPrSGD as Treasurer.

There was sadness at the meeting in April 2004 when the deaths were announced of Honorary Member RW. Bro. Kenneth Moxley, Past Provincial Grand Master, and W. Bro. Dr John Stanley Eastham Holker PSGD Past Assistant Provincial Grand Master. W. Bro. Dr Holker joined the Lodge shortly after its Consecration at which he was the acting Provincial Grand Steward.

There was, however, some good news as it was learned that another Lodge member, W. Bro. Eddie Caulfield who had regularly taken part in Installation ceremonies as Chairman of the Leigh and District Group of Lodges was to be made an Assistant Provincial Grand Master of the Province of West Lancashire.

The meeting in January 2005 to Install W. Bro. Stephen James McNee saw the Lodge again welcome four Assistant Provincial Grand Masters to its meeting, W. Bro. the Rev Harry Ross, Alf Roughsedge, Dennis Rudd and Eddie Caulfield.

Tributes were paid at the meeting in September 2006 to W. Bro. Charles William Shand, OBE BEM, PPrSGW. Freemasons from all parts of the country had attended the funeral service in Warrington for W. Bro. Shand who was a tireless worker for Masonic charities and who served Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters for many years as its Almoner.

The first pleasant duty W. Bro. Dennis Pearson had to undertake after being Installed in January 2006 was to present a cheque for £350 for the 2010 Festival.

With changes in dues payable by the Lodge it was decided in April 2006 that for those members who are in a Lodge additional to Mersey Valley the annual subscription should be reduced to £20 while the fee will be £50 for all other members.

With the retirement in May 2006 of W. Bro. Alf Roughsedge as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master the areas of responsibility for Assistant Provincial Grand Masters was adjusted. W. Bro. Dennis Rudd took over responsibility for the Warrington and Widnes Groups while W. Bro. Eddie Caulfield assumed charge of the St Helens and Prescott Group and the Leigh Group.

The January meeting of 2007 saw the RW Provincial Grand Master attend the Lodge specifically to put on record his appreciation of all the work undertaken on behalf of the Province of West Lancashire by W. Bro. Roughsedge. RW. Bro. Colin Penty Wright said that when an Assistant Provincial Grand Master retires from the position he normally makes a visit to the Brother's Lodge in order to pay a public tribute to the work which had been undertaken. However, in this instance he thought it appropriate to visit Mersey Valley Lodge as it covered so much of the area for which W. Bro. Roughsedge had been responsible. The Provincial Grand Master said that in addition to his superb service as an Assistant Provincial Grand Master, W. Bro. Roughsedge had also served the St Helens and Prescott Group in various offices including Chairman. RW. Bro. Wright also said he greatly appreciated the friendship which had been extended to him by W. Bro. Roughsedge.

The first duty of the newly Installed Master, W. Bro. Paul Burrows was to present the Provincial Grand Master with a number of cheques including one for £1,000 for the 2010 Festival. RW. Bro. Wright said he was surprised and delighted to receive such a large cheque from a Past Masters' Lodge as members already supported the Province's charitable efforts so well in their own Lodges and Groups.

W. Bro. Burrows later paid tribute to the excellent work undertaken over the last four years by W. Bro. David Redhead who was retiring from the position as Lodge Secretary. W. Bro. Redhead, who also served as Assistant Secretary before taking over the role as Secretary, was praised for the highly efficient and effective way he had looked after the business of the Lodge. W. Bro. Redhead had also served the Lodge as its Worshipful Master in 1989 when he became the first member of the Widnes Group to take the office. W. Bro. Chris Eyres, who was Worshipful Master of the Lodge in 2002, took over as Secretary.

With the Lodge approaching its silver jubilee W. Bro. Derek Hunt offered to write a history of the Lodge covering its first 25 years. The offer was accepted by the Lodge and it was decided that there should be sufficient copies of the finished booklet not only to give one to each member of the Lodge and guests at the anniversary meeting but also that there should be additional ones printed to give to new members of the Lodge in years to come. It was also agreed to mark the occasion by having a Lodge Honours Board made listing all past

masters of the Lodge. With Warrington being the “official” base for the Lodge it was decided that although the new board will be unveiled at the Installation Meeting in Leigh it should be erected on the wall of the Osborne Suite in Warrington Masonic Hall. W. Bro. Keith Gatley PPrDGSuptWks, a member of Academy Lodge No 9382, who had made similar boards for other Lodges agreed to undertake the intricate task of making the board while W. Bro. Les Ashcroft PPrJGW, a member of the True Light Lodge of Friendship No 2963, agreed to inscribe the names of all Past Masters.

The success of the Lodge can be judged by the large membership it has attracted..

With 204 members, the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters, is the second largest Lodge with five more members than Lathom Lodge No 2229 which is for Grand and Provincial Grand officers only.

Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters seeks to maintain high standards, both in Lodge and at the Festive Board. To this end considerable work is undertaken by the Secretary in an endeavour to attract speakers and demonstration teams of the highest calibre. The success of successive Secretaries can be judged from the impressive list printed within this history of the Lodge’s first 25 years. It will always be the intention of the Founders and Members of the Lodge to promote the highest standards of work and instruction to maintain the Principles of the Institution and to strengthen the bonds of friendship which exist between the Freemasons of the Warrington, St Helens and Prescott, Leigh and Widnes Groups of Lodges. Copies of the commemorative book will be given to all future members of the Lodge to instruct them in our purposes and to illustrate the dedication expected of them.

Installed masters interested in becoming a member should email the lodge secretary, Alan Pattinson at [awpat@sky.com](mailto:awpat@sky.com)