

Newton Lodge No. 6288



Origins

Freemasonry has long been associated with the township of Newton-Le-Willows, the first Lodge to meet there being Lodge of Faith No. 484 (then No.711), which first met at the Horse and Jockey Inn, 2-4 Church Street, on 27th October 1842. Lodge of Faith continued to meet there until April 1845 when it moved to the Gerard Arms, Ashton-In-Makerfield.

The reason for the move was the distance the brethren had to travel from Ashton to Newton which was "much against the officers perfecting their duties; that there was only 3 out of 22 members from Newton; there was a prospect of an increase in respectable gentlemen; the difficulties of making the journey from Ashton to Newton in winter and summer and its effect on the health of the brethren; and the hour they reached home after Lodge."



However, 41 years later the members from Newton had increased for they found themselves in a similar situation, and in 1886, 14 members of the Lodge of Faith, together with two other Freemasons, founded Makerfield Lodge No. 2155, which was consecrated at the Pied Bull Hotel, Newton-In-Makerfield.

In 1901, after the building of the tower at St Peter's Church, the No. 7 bell was presented by the Freemasons of the Province of West Lancashire.



The inscription on the bell reads:

*The symbols of our Order are
The Compass, Level and the Square
Which teach us to be just and fair-
And that's the drift of Masonry.*

Over a hundred years later it is still proclaiming the same message as it calls the faithful to worship.

Formation of The Willows Lodge

On the 17th December 1931 a meeting of 19 Master Masons was held at the Pied Bull Hotel, Newton-Le-Willows, "for the purpose of ascertaining the views of past and present residents of Newton-Le-Makerfield on the desirability of forming a new lodge, the membership of which will, as far as possible, be restricted to brethren belonging to the township". It was decided that because of the valued services of W. Bro. C.H. Sankey and his late father to local Freemasonry that the new Lodge should be named "The James Sankey Lodge, Newton-Le-Willows". However, at a meeting with the Provincial Grand Secretary on 27th January 1932 it was pointed out that this contravened a minute of United Grand Lodge dated 3rd May 1922, and the second choice of "The Willows Lodge" was accepted.



It was also suggested that the Lodge should meet in the Club Room at the new Pied Bull Hotel, which was an ideal place for a small Lodge. After being addressed by the Worshipful Master and Secretary of Makerfield Lodge, it appeared that Makerfield would prefer the new Lodge to meet at the Town Hall, Newton-Le-Willows, whereby the overall cost of catering and refreshments would be reduced and there would be no need to buy new furniture as that of Makerfield could be used. Further, as it would most likely be unacceptable that the Provincial Grand Lodge would sanction a new Lodge to meet on licensed premises, it was agreed to make application to Newton U.D.C for the use of the Town Hall.

This was subsequently granted at a fee of 12s. per meeting on the last Thursday in the months September to May inclusive, and a fee of 2s. 6d. per meeting for the board room for the previous Thursday. It was also decided that dress for Lodge meetings should be evening

dress with white gloves, which continued until the start of the war. Today, this tradition is carried on by the wearing of dinner jackets by the officers at Lodge meetings. Altogether there were six meetings of the Founders Committee between 17th December 1931 and 31st March 1932. The Warrant of the Lodge is dated 2nd March, 1932.

NEWTON LODGE No.6288 History

At the 120th regular meeting of the Willows Lodge held on the 29th November 1945 it was reported that a communication had been received regarding the formation of a new Lodge in Newton-le-Willows and a desire of the proposed founders (Who were all members of the Willows Lodge) that this lodge should sponsor the application. It was decided that a special meeting of the Lodge should be held to consider the application. At the 123rd meeting held on 28th February 1946 it was announced that the special meeting had been held with a favourable recommendation. Bro Dr. J. S. Lyle proposed that the Lodge recommend the petition for the formation of a new Lodge. This was seconded by Bro. F.Mittelberger and carried. The petition was signed in open Lodge by the Worshipful Master and his wardens. Accordingly, on the 26th March 1947 Newton Lodge was consecrated at the Town Hall, Newton-le-Willows.

Due to a 50% increase in charges by Newton-le-Willows U.D.C. Newton Lodge after meeting in the Town Hall for ten years decided to move out and relocated at the Fleece Hotel, Ashton-in Makerfield. The first meeting there being on the 9th January 1958. After numerous unsuccessful attempts by the three Lodges to obtain their own premises for meetings, Newton Lodge moved to its present home at the Warrington Masonic Hall with its first meeting taking place after the summer recess of 1975, this being on the 11th September.

Banner dedication

At the regular meeting on Thursday 14th April 1988 a ceremony was held to dedicate the Banner of the Lodge. The banner has as its centrepiece the design of the badge adopted by the Founders when the Lodge was formed. The badge is in two parts, The top part under a scroll bearing the name of the Lodge is the Rams Head crest rising from a coronet. This is the crest of arms of the Legh family of Lyme who were raised to peerage in 1892, The bottom half depicts the lake below the Church of St Peter, Newton-le-Willows. Above the crest of the Rams Head and the name scroll is the letter 'G', of great significance in masonry, whilst below are the square and compasses. The whole design is enclosed within the two columns with their terrestrial and celestial globes, also of Masonic significance. Around the columns are the names of the Founders. On their plinths are the level and plumb rule, both columns set on a wall bearing the date of the consecration of the Lodge.

NEWTON LODGE No.6288 Today

Heading towards the 300th celebration of Freemasonry in 2017 is probably going to be a great challenge for the Lodge, as along with most other Lodges, membership is declining. One only hopes that the support offered by the strength of our members and from our many visitors will see us through these difficult times.

W.Bro David Whitmore P.Pr.D.G.Supt of Wks

November 2011