

Travellers' Lodge No. 4679

This Lodge was founded by Seventeen Brethren associated with the United Commercial Travellers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland (U.K.C.T.A.) Inc.

The founding members of Travellers' Lodge were already members of Lodges in and around Warrington but, because they were commercial travellers by profession, had difficulty attending Lodge meetings that were held on weekday evenings. In those days (mid-1920's) commercial travellers were away from home and office from Monday to Thursday, only arriving back in time to spend Fridays in their home office. This is why, from the outset, Travellers' Lodge was to meet on the first Friday of the month.

The Meeting at which they pledged themselves to found a Lodge was held at Stringers Assembly Rooms, Bridge Street Warrington – November 16th 1923.

The Petition to Grand Lodge was presented through the Provincial Grand Lodge of West Lancashire, after being endorsed by Gilbert Greenall Lodge No. 1250 – January 22nd 1924.

The original petition to Grand Lodge proposed that the Lodge name should be the "United Commercial Travellers' Lodge". However, Grand Lodge rejected this on the grounds that it might imply that prospective members might be forced to join UKCTA Inc. as a condition of membership. The minutes of the Founders' meeting following this news makes interesting reading to Warrington Masons because it contains words to the effect that the Lodge name should therefore be "... Travellers' Lodge or, if this is not acceptable to Grand Lodge, then 'Academy Lodge'...". The choice of the name Academy Lodge was understandable, because the Warrington Academy had been a Dissenters' seat of learning of some reputation in the mid to late 18th century.

As we now know, Grand Lodge accepted the name "Travellers' Lodge", so "Academy Lodge" was not then used. It is interesting to note that, later, a group of Warrington Masons wishing to found a new Lodge in the late 1980's chose the name "Academy Lodge", which was warranted in 1990 as Academy Lodge No 9382.

Grand Lodge granted a Warrant to “Edwin Allen, Elijah Lunt, Sir William Peter Rylands, KT. James Henry Heywood, William Ernest Ashton, Arthur James Allen, John Gavin Fletcher and others,” to form a Lodge to be known as Travellers’ Lodge No. 4679, to be held at the Lion Hotel, Bridge Street, Warrington, – November 5th 1924.

The Lodge was consecrated with Solemn Rites by the West Lancashire Provincial Grand Lodge – January 9th 1925.

Originally, Travellers’ Lodge met at the Lion Hotel, Bridge Street, Warrington. However, the Lodge became one of the eight shareholding Lodges in the new Masonic Hall which was built in Winmarleigh Street, Warrington in 1932. This farsighted action provided a superb venue for Masonic meetings which is now the sole meeting place for all 15 Lodges (and 5 Chapters and other Masonic Orders) in the Warrington Group.

The Lodge has, in its history, provided at least two Warrington Group Chairmen (a third was made an honorary member) and two Assistant Provincial Grand Masters. The most famous member of the Lodge was undoubtedly Bro George Duckworth (who became Worshipful Master in 1948). George Duckworth was more famous in his professional, rather than Masonic, life – he was a professional cricketer for Lancashire and England from 1923 to 1938. Other names of note in the Lodge throughout its history have been Isaac Newton and Frank Worthington, although it must quickly be pointed out that these were not the famous Cambridge mathematician and multi-club professional footballer respectively, but rather commercial travellers who happened to share the more famous names!

More recently, because the Warrington Masonic Hall wished to leave their accommodation free for social events on Fridays and Saturdays, the Lodge was persuaded to move its meeting night. The current arrangement is that the Lodge meets on the third Thursday of the months of October to May inclusive, with the Installation in December. This has been the case from sometime before 1981, incidentally, committee meetings are still held on Friday evenings.

Travellers’ Lodge is now approaching its 87th birthday. In its heyday it reached a peak membership of 96 subscribing members. This was in the 1960’s, but like so many other Lodges, the numbers dropped dramatically thereafter until, in 2004, the membership reached an all-time low of 21. A few years after this, the Lodge seriously considered the possibility of amalgamation with other Lodges in the Warrington Group but ultimately decided against that course of action, preferring instead to “sink or swim” by its own actions.

I am pleased to report that in recent years and following a small influx of joining members (interestingly, from Warrington Lodge of Concord – previously Gilbert Greenall Lodge, the original sponsoring Lodge), Travellers’ Lodge has started to flourish again. At the most recent meeting, last Thursday evening, two joining members and two candidates for initiation were proposed. We now have a reasonably strong team of relatively new Masons who are keen to learn and are full of enthusiasm and I believe this bodes well for the future of the Lodge as it begins to consider its centenary.

Ian Boswell, PAGDC

(Secretary and Past Master of Travellers’ Lodge No 4679)