

Warton Lodge No 8411

The idea of forming a new Lodge began as a chance remark outside the Parish Church of St Oswald's in Warton Village near the Railway Town of Carnforth, Lancashire, England.

The remark was made by two brethren, resident in the village of Warton, to the effect that a large number of brethren were retired from distant parts of the country and now living in, or around, Warton and distance made it difficult for them to attend their own Lodges on a regular basis. For this reason they considered that the formation of a new lodge would be desirable, thus the seed was sown.

In 1970 the matter was again raised at a committee meeting of the Carnforth Lodge No 4951 and several members expressed an interest. It is worthy of note that at this time Bela Lodge No 7576, meeting at Milnthorpe in the Province of Cumberland and Westmorland, had grown large enough and was contemplating forming a new lodge (Heversham Lodge No.8396).

Silverdale Lodge No 6926 to the northwest had a steady flow of candidates. Carnforth Lodge had reached its best maximum and had a waiting list which was really too long. The need for a new lodge in the area was reasonably established.

A list of 28 probable founders was rapidly compiled but this was finally reduced to 25. An initial meeting of potential founders was held on Wednesday 3 February 1971 in the anteroom of the old Carnforth Lodge rooms situated above the original stables of the Royal Station Hotel Carnforth.

A motion was carried to the effect that a new lodge is formed and that Carnforth Lodge is requested to act as sponsor. Two further meetings followed where the founders were called upon to demonstrate the need for a new lodge. The approval of the Lancaster and District Group of Lodges was given on 1 July and formal arrangements were put in hand to organise the sponsorship by Carnforth Lodge, the preparation of the petition and the initial draft of officers designate. The lodge meetings were established as the second Wednesday of the months of November through until May, recess until September for a business meeting with the installation of a new WM in October.

Costs of Consecration, new regalia etc. would be met by the founders and a levy of £1 was made on each founder, increased to £5 for the last two meetings when final costs were known.

On 29 July 1971 the last details on the petition were agreed, which was duly signed on 8 September, when it was accepted who should be nominated as treasurer and enquiries made concerning a lodge bible, founders and past master's jewels etc.

A letter was received on 8 December 1971 from the Provincial Grand Secretary of the Province of West Lancashire confirming that the petition had received Provincial support and had been forwarded to The United Grand Lodge of England.

The Warrant of Warton Lodge No 8411 on the register of United Grand Lodge of England was granted on 8 of December 1971, the warrant bears the names of the first master and wardens.

Master: WBro Stewart McLellan Hawken.

Senior Warden: Bro Thomas Gordon Hulme.

Junior Warden: Bro Arthur Gartside McAuliffe.

Founders of the lodge:

WBro W Gardner PPrGW 5952, WBro J T Hornby PPrGD 4951, WBro J P Roe PPrGD 5256, W Bro J W Gardner PPrAGDC 7451, WBro S M Hawken 3622, WBro The Rev F B Oddy 4199, WBro A Earl 4422, WBro H Hargreaves 4951, WBro A G Thompson 4951, WBro H S Robinson 4951, WBro L J Mayoh 6327, WBro L A Richards 633, WBro R Thompson 5256, WBro SD Read 1035, W.Bro F.F.Young 5256, Bro G A Ibbotson 3949, Bro A G McAuliffe 355 SC, Bro W Ham 4951, Bro R E Robinson 4951, Bro T G Hulme 3503, Bro J Walsh 3989, Bro E Pagdin 5952, Bro H Renshaw 6426, Bro C L Mason 1074, Bro S J Wallace 1119.

The lodge crest design was drawn by Wilton Gardner and depicts Warton Parish Church viewed through the arch of the Old Rectory, in the present Vicarage Garden. The Old Rectory was built soon after 1300 by one of the de Twengs.

It was a manor in itself and held its own courts. It fell into ruin but it is clear that there was a great hall, a buttery and a pantry, with an upper room over them. There was also a separate building which had two floors, probably with a kitchen and a chapel, now part of the present vicarage. The old rectory is a rare and fine example of the old "end-hall house."

Top left hand corner depicts the Masonic square and compasses.

Top right hand corner is the Washington Arms. The tower of St Oswald's Church was a gift of Robert Washington who died in 1843. This gift was commemorated by a stone set in the north wall, as it had become worn by weather it was faced with glass. Later the stone was removed and is now set in the wall of the choir vestry.

The Consecration

Warton Lodge No. 8411 was consecrated by Right Worshipful Brother Sir Knowles Edge Baronet, Provincial Grand Master for the Masonic Province of West Lancashire, on Wednesday 19 April at the Ashton Hall Lancaster at 3:0pm.

The consecrating officer, in the name of the United Grand Lodge of England and by the command of the Most Worshipful Grand Master, constituted and formed the founders into a Lodge of Antient Free and Accepted Masons, under the style and title of Warton Lodge No 8411 on the register of United Grand Lodge of England.

The New Lodge Formed

The first regular meeting was held on 10 May, 1972 at the Masonic Hall in the Royal Station Hotel located over the old stables when the first initiate Mr Thomas Richard Woodhouse and five joining members, proposed at the consecration, were admitted members of the lodge. Bro William Jackson Tyson, Bro John Cuthbert Bowker, Bro Denis Shaw, Bro Alfred Henry Greenland, and Bro Robert Skelly. The premises located over the old stables were to say the least in need of structural repair having no toilet or banqueting facilities. It was the senior steward's duty to run to the Carnforth Hotel with the banquet numbers during the reading of the minutes, on a good night and with a long set of minutes there was just time for refreshment, return and report supper ordered.

The WM at this first meeting thanked WBro T McGinn and Bro G Lonsdale for the gift of the two Ashlars, Lewis and sheer legs still used today. (The reason for the gift has not been found by the writer or the lodges they represent.)

Notable Events in the Early Years

The new lodge crest was used for the first time to summon brethren to the business meeting on 13 September 1972. The crest was block printed in several colours with a gold border. This proved to be very costly and was last used for the September meeting in 1978 being replaced with the blue printed version in use on the present precept.

The first installation took place on 11 of October 1972 when Bro Thomas Gordon Hulme was installed as WM, WBro H W Whittle represented the Provincial Grand Master.

The first founders and past masters night was held on 14 March 1973 with WBro Robert Thompson taking the ceremony for a third degree. Bro T R Woodhouse was presented with a Masonic Bible by the chaplain again a precedent still part of the ceremony today.

On 12 September 1973 the WM Bro T G Hulme presented the first past masters Jewel to WBro S M Hawken, this jewel is passed on each year to the immediate past master who acts as custodian during his year as IPM.

The formative years of any organisation must consist of many firsts but before I move on the first lodge organist was appointed in 1975, Bro F W Fox, and apart from the years he served as warden and master was still the organist 25 years later.

The move to pastures new

The founders objective of new premises was always a consideration, Carnforth Lodge had a well-established building fund which had accumulated over several years. Warton Lodge had nothing to contribute so measures were taken to acquire finances, an ambitious programme of fund raising events took place over a three year period .The fund raising enabled Warton Lodge to contribute towards Carnforth building fund and the two lodges acquired premises at 1 John Street Carnforth. The premises were previously the Carnforth Co-operative Society Hall. Major alterations were made mainly by voluntary work by members of both lodges and the premises were ready for occupation in 1977,the dedication ceremony was conducted by Sir Knowles Edge Baronet the Provincial Grand Master of the Province of West Lancashire on 5th of October 1977.

The master and wardens chairs and pedestals were given on permanent loan from Ribbleton Lodge No 6386 who were vacating their premises and moving into Saul Street Preston, members of Ribbleton lodge still keep their association with the two lodges.

The last meeting in the Stables took place on Wednesday 11 May 1977 with the candidate Bro R Escolme being made a Master Mason. The first ceremony in the new premises was a business meeting with the candidate Bro J Wilkinson being made a master Mason.

The First Initiate to reach the masters chair

On Wednesday 14 of October 1981 Bro Hadwin Shooter became the first initiate to reach the WMs chair. The occasion was graced by the presence of Very Worshipful Bro Alan Fletcher-Ferris Provincial Grand Master of the Province of West Lancashire accompanied by his acting Provincial officers. It is interesting to note that the greetings from Provincial Grand Lodge were given by WBro C P Wright.

Bro Hadwin Shooter was installed as WM by Bro R Skelly and served the lodge during its 10th year. The festive board was held at the County Hotel and Bro Shooter was presented with an engraved Goblet by Bob Skelly with the Lodge crest recording the fact that he was the first initiate to reach the WMs chair. The Goblet had been engraved by a member of Ennerdale Lodge No 4216 in the Province of Cumberland and Westmorland, Bro Ian Nicholson.

The presentation of goblets was again carried out at the founders night on 14 April 1982 when three goblets engraved with the master and wardens jewels were presented to the founders who occupied those chairs, WM WBro A G McAuliffe, SW W Bro J T Hornby and JW WBro H Renshaw. The practice of presenting engraved goblets on founders night was carried on until all surviving founders had goblets.

1985 - During a lean year of incoming candidates the members embarked on a series of lectures, the first lecture in November attracted 32 members and six visitors with the December meeting attracting 34 members and 34 visitors, subsequent lectures being well attended.

1986 - March meeting 1986 ,Ribbleton Lodge No.6386 attended on an official visit, Ribbleton Lodge from the Preston Group being the lodge which loaned the master and warden's chairs.

The Installation meeting in October 1986 saw the IPM WBro K Lowson become the first custodian of the Stewart Hawken Past Master's Jewel.

1987 - Founders night on 8 April thebrethren of Cleveleys Mark Lodge No 1176 demonstrated the "Building of King Solomon's Temple" illustrated by a model being built during the lecture.

1988 - The September meeting took the form of an unofficial reading of the Prestonian Lecture of 1988 entitled "Music and Freemasonry" delivered by WBro A I Permain Past Grand Organist, organist at the Royal Military Chapel, Wellington Barracks London. This prestigious lecture had never been staged so far North in the Province and the fact that we were a new lodge and had no fears of failure probably stimulated

us to be brave, the lecture was staged in the lodge room attended by 110 brethren and visitors. The banquet afterwards was held at the County Hotel and over £300 being raised for charity.

The Lecture was carefully compiled in musical segments commencing with overture passing through the intermezzo to finale.

The overture dealt with the importance of music in everyday life explaining its particular relevance to the enrichment of Masonic ceremonies and the special contributions by such well known composers as Bach, Beethoven and Mozart to name but a few.

In the intermezzo reference was made to specific musical items. the "Entered Apprentice Song" by Mathew Birkenhead, composed and performed in 1717, as the earliest quoted. It then ranged through the works of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (Masonic Funeral Music 1785), Franz Joseph Haydn to the Finnish composer Jean Sibelius who wrote in 1950 three more pieces to add to the original nine composed in 1926 of special lodge music.

The finale summarised WBro. Permain's own thoughts, that by the omission of music in the Masonic ritual, it was not only a deprivation for the brethren but also a questionable gap in our cultural heritage. In conclusion he paid tribute to those musicians who struggle, sometimes with antiquated or inefficient organs to provide music which is often taken for granted. The entire lecture was illustrated by cassette recorded music of the many works quoted.

1990 – A book of remembrance provided by Bro A G Johnson to record the names of departed brethren. The Book was first used on 12 September and continues to be read at the start of every meeting. The entries and preface are completed in calligraphy by Mrs Val Towers.

1992 - After discussions started early in 1989 among the founders it was decided to attempt the acquisition of a lodge banner. Enquires were made and WBro H Boscoe from St Oswald's Lodge No 5170 Warrington was contacted and agreed to make arrangements. He stated it was not his custom to make any charge as it was a labour of love, the banner would be made from materials donated to him for that purpose, he did however, request that the lodge make a substantial donation to charity. This was readily agreed to and WBro Boscoe was given the go-ahead to act on behalf of the lodge to make the necessary arrangements to gain design approval etc.

Warton Banner - The banner, approved by Provincial Grand Lodge of West Lancashire in February 1991 and dedicated by the APrGM WBro Colin Penty Wright on 8 April 1992 depicts the lodge crest. The Arch of the Old Rectory and water depicting the River Keer are the central motif. The design is completed by two columns bearing the names of all the founders surmounted by the Terrestrial and Celestial Globes, beneath the columns is the date of the lodge consecration.

The Swiss Connection - Over a number of years, visiting Interlaken on holiday and skiing, WBro Lawson had struck up an acquaintance with Bro Willy von Gunten of Phoenix Loge No 32 of Alpina Grand Lodge of Switzerland. In 1992 when Bro Willy von Gunten was elected to become WM of his lodge three brethren, WBro Bob Skelly, WBro Tony Johnston and Bro Owen Madden accompanied WBro Keith Lawson to attend his installation ceremony in Thun. This started an association with the two lodges which flourishes today with several exchange visits being made.

The 1991 banner dedication in Warton Lodge stimulated the idea of presenting a banner to Phoenix Lodge No 32. All the formalities of approval from Provincial Grand and united Grand lodge of England and that of the Alpina Grand Lodge of Switzerland, having been obtained, it was decided that the banner dedication would take place on Saturday 28 May 1994 at Phoenix Lodge in Thun, Switzerland. It had already been established that WBro C P Wright would be in Switzerland at this time and he kindly agreed to present the banner on behalf of Warton Lodge. At the appointed time 14 members of the lodge travelled to Interlaken for this occasion and it is worthy to note that the Grand Master of the Alpina Grand Lodge of Switzerland was present. The banner dedication was performed by the members of Warton Lodge in a manner similar to their own banner dedication, the gavel of the Phoenix Loge was first offered to the Grand Master, who declined, it was then offered to WBro C P Wright. WBro C P Wright accepted the gavel and conducted the ceremony in perfect German, the language of the Bernese Oberland.

The banner was designed by WBro A G Johnson and completed by his wife and daughter, the banner pole was crafted in wood by WBro P T Newby. The banner is of wool tapestry on a canvas 66 x 87 cm and is described as follows:

The background of the banner reflects the geographical features of the Bernese Oberland, the snow covered mountain peaks, the dark green forest and the lighter green symbolising the fertile meadows and valleys. The chequered border is emblematical of the Squared pavement of a Freemason's Lodge and the building in the centre represents the Schloss at Thun. On each side of the banner are Working Tools of freemasonry and flowers characteristic of each of the two areas. On the left are the Common Gavel, 24 inch Gauge and the Chisel along with flowers representative of Warton Crag. On the right are the Heavy Maul, the Skirret and the Pencil along with flowers representative of the high Alpine pastures. Across the bottom of the banner, above the name of the lodge, "Phoenix Lodge 32", are the Flag of the two nations between which on a blue background are the hands clasped in friendship. They represent the fraternal bond that exists between all Freemasons but especially that which exists between the brethren of the two Lodges. They are placed on a blue background to represent the universal nature of Freemasonry, showing that brotherly love reaches across the distances that divide mankind. In the centre of the Banner the Phoenix rises from its own ashes. This symbolises the continuity of Masonry and depicts the renewal of our Masonic vows and friendships during our ceremonies and festive boards. The volume of the Sacred Law is placed on that glorious luminary of nature, the sun indicating that, as the Sun is at the centre of the universe, so ones Sacred Volume is central to all our lives. On the Sacred Writings are the Square and Compasses. The banner pole is supported in a 22cm cube of Lakeland Slate weighing 35 Kilograms.

The Phoenix Lodge were appreciative of this gesture of Masonic friendship and commissioned a pair of swords to be used by Warton Lodge, arrangements were made for a presentation to take place in September 1995. On 13 September, in the presence of WBro E P Saunders PSGD, APrGM, the WM of Phoenix Lodge accompanied by 11 brethren of his lodge together with The Grand Secretary of Alpina Grand Lodge of Switzerland, formed a presentation party. The presentation party accompanied by brethren of Warton Lodge paraded the swords into the lodge, they were presented to the WM and handed to the tyler and inner guard. Subsequent visits resulted in the presentation of the poniard.

The most recent visit was in September of 2003 when a visit was made to Switzerland to celebrate the Bi-Centenary of Friemaurerloge sur Hoffnung in Bern. A party of 18 members and wives attended a 2 day celebration including on Saturday 13 September a rendition of Mozart's Opera The Magic Flute followed in the evening by a Gala Dinner in Bern Kersaal. The brethren being entertained by a Big Band. The Sunday was a grand affair where all the Brethren were assembled in The Kulture Casino Bern. The brethren were conducted into the main hall ,Past Masters assembled on the Dias behind the Worshipful Master and the rest of the brethren around the sides of the hall. The room was set out in the form of a lodge. The ladies, and specially invited guests and local dignitaries, were then escorted into the hall led by the DC in Top Hat and tails accompanied by 2 Deacons, all the Brethren were dressed in full dress regalia. The WM then proceeded to open this demonstration lodge and explained each symbolic part was given an explanation. The ladies said how breath taking it was to see such a large contingent of Masons in Regalia arranged in front of them as they entered the hall. Many of the dignitaries present were high ranking officials from the Bern political and business community.

Sept 12 2003 was a sad milestone in the history of Old Lancastrian Lodge No7451 when they surrendered their warrant. On this sad occasion the Bible of the lodge was entrusted to the care of Warton Lodge. WBro F B Oddy chaplain of Warton Lodge received the Bible on our behalf. On the night of the October installation WBro L T Lee, a past master of Old Lancastrian and member of Warton Lodge presented the Bible to our retiring WM WBro A G Dickinson on 8 October at the installation meeting. The old Bible was removed from the pedestal and Old Lancastrian Bible placed upon it, both Bibles were kept open until the jewels were placed upon the open Bible. Bro James Roger Nisbet the new WM of Warton Lodge then took his obligation upon the Old Lancastrian Bible.

Thanks to WBro Bob Skelly for producing this article

The lodge meets at Carnforth Masonic Hall, Kerneforde Hall, 65 Haws Hill, Carnforth, LA5 9DG on the second Wednesday in the Months of September to May. The Installation meeting is in October.