



The formation of Prescot Lodge and selected extracts from the short history of the lodge by R Clark.

Within these walls may Peace abound,

May all our hearts in one agree,

Where Brethren meet, where God is found,

May Peace and Concord ever be.

Harry Francis Ryte 1793-1847 (from Psalm 122)

These words were adopted by the lodge at its consecration and would ultimately have had a great influence in the choice of 'Bless this House' as the lodge theme song introduced in November 1940 by the WM F Waine.

The practice of Craft Masonry in Prescot owes its origins to the Lodge of Loyalty No 86, which was constituted in 1753, and has continued to meet regularly in the town ever since – a period of 257 years.

One of the lodge's descendants was Antient Manor Lodge No 4511 at Prescot that was founded in 1922. This lodge became the parent of Prescot Lodge No 5470 in 1934, the petition having been submitted to the Grand Master, Duke of Connaught and Strathern, in November 1933.

Our mother lodge, Antient Manor Lodge No 4511, no longer exists as such having amalgamated on 14 June 2006 with St Michael's Temperance Lodge No 3401 and Red Triangle Lodge No 3874, to become Prescot Trinity Lodge No 3401, although still meeting at Prescot Masonic Hall.

Prescot Lodge was consecrated at the Social Club of British Insulated Callender's Cables Ltd, in Aspinall Street, Prescot, by the Provincial Grand Master of Lancashire (Western Division), Arthur Foster, on 12 May 1934, assisted by an impressive team of grand and Provincial grand officers.

The first master of the lodge, named in the warrant dated 7 March 1934, was J B Beesley a past master of our mother lodge (Antient Manor Lodge No 4511). The minutes of the consecration ceremony record:

The reverence and impressiveness of the ceremony could not well have been excelled, the whole ceremony being conducted in a faultless manner. A clarion call was sounded in the oration by the Provincial Grand Chaplain on the nature and principals of the Masonic order, he explained the deep symbolic nature of the Order and the lofty ideals set forth by the principals to uplift humanity.

Leading up to and throughout the Second World War the lodge continued to operate installing masters each year, although at many different venues, at this time the

lodge met on the first Thursday in January (installation), February, March, April, October, November and December. However, in October 1939 the military had commandeered the BICC Social Club and alternative arrangements had to be made. Permission was sought and granted to use the Oddfellows Hall (later to become Prescott Masonic Hall as we know it today) and the minutes record "Our Grandmother Lodge of Loyalty No 86, readily allowed us to use their beautiful antique furniture, for which we tender our grateful thanks."

Throughout the war years the above is the only reference in the minutes to the great difficulties encountered. However, there is ample indirect evidence in the various venues, dates and times of meetings of the lodge. It is remarkable that despite all the difficulties, the lodge continued to meet in the specified months throughout the war, apart from October 1940, when no meeting was possible due to the Oddfellows Hall also having been commandeered by the authorities. By Saturday 9 November 1940, this problem was resolved and a meeting was held in the Deanes House Hotel at 2.30pm.

Meetings continued to be held at this hotel, usually on Saturday afternoons until the summer recess of 1942, with installation meetings at the St John Ambulance Hall, (across the street from the Masonic hall, today operating as a Martial Arts Centre).

On 5 October 1942, the first Monday meeting of the lodge was held at the Deanes House Hotel, and the first Monday in the month became the regular meeting day from that time. Installation meetings in 1943 and 1945 were held at the Conservative Club, High Street, Prescott, the 1944 installation was held at the Deanes House Hotel.

On Tuesday, 10 April 1945, the lodge returned to the Oddfellows Hall with subsequent meetings reverting temporarily to the first Thursday in the month. However, at the meeting on Thursday 1 November 1945, Bye-Law No 1, was altered to state that: "The lodge shall meet at the Oddfellows Hall, High Street, Prescott, on the first Monday in the month, except in the months of May, June, July, August and September- installation on the first Saturday in January." This Bye-Law has remained essentially unaltered to the present time, except for the description of the meeting place, the words 'Masonic hall' being substituted for "Oddfellows Hall" in March 1948, after the transfer of ownership to the Masonic Hall Company.

In the immediate post-war years, the lodge slowly reverted to peace time conditions, with an abundant number of candidates entering Freemasonry. It was not unusual at this time to perform double ceremonies. On one unique occasion, in April 1953, Frank Hankinson (WM) passed four Candidates, in two pairs, conducting the ceremony twice in the same evening.

The lodge continued to make steady progress throughout the following years from 1963 to 1968, although it must be mentioned that on 4 November 1957, Walter

Davies Pritchard was initiated into the lodge, Walter is our longest serving member, celebrating his 50 years in Freemasonry in 2007, and at 94 years of age, also our oldest member. The years during the 1990`s to early 2000, proved to be the 'lean years', with a scarcity of candidates. However, the lodge managed to hold meetings with demonstration ceremonies and lectures. Great credit must be attributed to the worshipful masters, officers and brethren of the lodge during this period, for their dedication, allegiance, loyalty and perseverance.

The lodge has enjoyed a revival, with candidates being regularly initiated, contributing to a healthy membership that also enjoys a wonderful social life. As we approach the end of the first decade after the second millennium, the lodge looks forward with confidence to the future, that our centenary celebrations can be achieved by practicing those virtues of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth that are shown on the banner we dedicated as part of our 75th anniversary celebrations.

Footnote: It is sad to report that all the lodge`s minute books prior to 1993 are missing. My thanks therefore are to the late R B Boak and J S E Holker for extracts taken from their publication 'The First 50 Years.'

Re Footnote. In August 2010 the minute books were discovered packed away in the garden shed of one of our widows which was being cleared out, she has very kindly returned them to the lodge. We now have a complete record of the lodge meetings since its formation, we are very grateful for the kindness and forethought which prevented their destruction.