

LODGE OF HARMONY No. 220 - HISTORY

On 27 December, 1796, the Lodge of Harmony, No. 302, held its first meeting at the Brown Cow Tavern, situated on the south side of Lord Street, Liverpool. Bro. George Washington had just stepped down from the first American presidency and a 28-year-old Napoleon Bonaparte was leading his army against the Austrians. William Pitt the Younger was still British Prime Minister having taken that office at the tender age of 24. Closer to home, scarce fresh water in a much-deprived Liverpool was sold in the streets at 9d per butt.

It could truly be said then, as well as now, that monarchs themselves were promoters of the Art. King George III was on the throne; his father had been initiated into Masonry when Prince of Wales; six of King George's sons became Masons and it was largely due to two of them, the Duke of Kent (father of Queen Victoria) and the Duke of Sussex that Masonry was united into one Grand Lodge. Queen Victoria's eldest son, the future King Edward VII was the third Prince of Wales to be initiated into Freemasonry, at the age of 22 years, by the King of Denmark. King Christian had recognised Freemasonry in 1792 and since that time every Danish sovereign has been a member of the Craft.

As previously mentioned, Napoleon was the power in France, and there were no less than nineteen separate sheets showing that he was a Mason. And, in America, George Washington was only the first of such names as James Monroe, Andrew Jackson, William McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, William Taft, Edgar Hoover, Franklin D Roosevelt, Harry S Truman and Gerald Ford to sparkle on the pages of Masonic history.

Robert Burns had visited his Lodge for the last time several months before our Lodge received its Warrant. "Adieu, a heart warm fond adieu, - Dear Brothers of the mystic Tie, Ye favoured, ye enlightened few, - Companions of my social joy."

In our own City, it is almost an impossibility for us to picture Liverpool as it would appear at that time. Pottery was a flourishing industry; lime kilns were in the neighbourhood of Lime Street. There was glass-making and watch-making; in addition to eight sugar factories, there were thirty-six breweries; and no less than twenty-seven windmills about the town. There would be no electric lighting or even gas lighting. Our Lodge would depend on candle light; and the burnt end of the wick was cut with a special pair of scissors, however in 1825 it was found that 'snuffing' could be obviated by the use of twisted wicks.

The Masonic Girls' School had been built in 1793, and the Boys' School was founded in 1798.

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In 1798 the Secret Societies Act made it unlawful for any society to compel its members to take a secret oath. Freemasons were exempted, but the names and descriptions of all its members had to be registered with the Clerk of the Peace, each succeeding year.

In England at this time there were two Grand Lodges, one established in 1717, and the other formed in 1751; despite its earlier origins, the former was called the 'Moderns' the latter the 'Ancients'. The Lodge of Harmony Warrant was granted by the 'Ancients' or 'Athol' Grand Lodge of England. A mutual agreement between the two Grand Lodges was made in 1813, resulting in the United Grand Lodge of England.

There are no written minutes of the Lodge between 1796 and 1822, but this is not a recent loss, for an inventory of Lodge furniture taken in 1868 shows two Minute Books. The Register at the Grand Lodge Library and Museum shows that in 1796, Robert Ferguson (a bookseller and Editor of the 'Liverpool Phoenix') was W.M., Edward Patten (of Haymarket, Victualler) was S.W., and Robert Simpson (53 Dale Street) was J.W.

Our Lodge, along with other 'Ancients' Lodges in Liverpool formed a Committee of Charity in 1806, for the relief of Free and Accepted Ancient Masons. The limit of relief was £5 at any one time or in any one year.

The first Lodge minute in our possession reads as follows:-

"Lodge of Harmony No. 385, 5 October 28th, 1822, held at the 'Magpie & Stump', 24 Key Street, Liverpool. This being a night of emergency called for the purpose of adjusting the regulations of this Lodge, it was opened on the first, second and third degree. Bro. Anderson in the chair, when it was proposed that this Lodge meet on the first Monday in the month. Also proposed that every member joining this Lodge deposit their Grand Lodge and Mother Lodge certificate in the chest belonging to this Lodge. The Lodge was closed on the third degree in due time and perfect harmony."

It is interesting to note that the Master elected in 1822 was, two years later, suspended for twelve months for unmasonic conduct; another brother was suspended for seven years.

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The first record of visitors being admitted was made on 2 December 1822 when members were received from The Merchants, Mariners and Ancient Union Lodges. Charity, in what today may appear to us to be a simple way, was being practised, for we read in the minutes that "each member pay 1/6d (1 shilling and 6 pence) per month for a fund to support any member that may be afflicted with sickness or lame, and if any brother be sick, each member shall pay 3d per week to support the fund while the members are sick. The sum of 7/- (7 shillings) per week be paid to the sick brother every Monday." The attendance at this early date was about 10 members and several visitors who paid 1/- to 1/6d each.

Many interesting items are read in the Lodge minutes between 1822 and 1830, and it is rather strange that 13 years and more after the Union in 1813, the Lodge of Harmony should still be following the earlier practice of conferring several degrees in a Craft Lodge. For example, there is evidence of Knight Templar masonry on the lodge's warrant.

Emergency meetings were held regularly and apparently to suit personal circumstances, as it is found that five meetings were held in thirty-two days. With the appointment of Bro. J. Edleston as secretary, there was an improvement in the writing of the minutes and for the first time the lodge was opened 'in' and not 'on' the first degree as previously. This brother's name was prominent in the Lodge minutes for over 22 years. At this time the initiation fee was five guineas, and visitors fee 1/6d.

In 1830 the Lodge was represented at the procession in Manchester in honour of the Coronation of his Most Gracious Majesty King William IV., patron of Masonry, and his Royal Consort, Queen Adelaide.

The W.M. in 1829 was the first one recorded to be presented with a P.M.'s Jewel.

In 1833 the number of the Lodge was altered from 385 to 267.

During 1837 the brethren represented the Lodge at the fixing of the Key Stone of the bridge over the river at Warrington. This was a striking ceremony in which 200 Bluecoat Schoolboys "in blue velvet and walking two by two" took part. The ceremony was completed by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Lancashire supported by the officers and brethren of the Lodge of Lights, Warrington. The following year they accompanied The Deputy Provincial Grand Master to lay the foundation stone of St George's Hall, the expenses of 20/- being paid out of the

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Lodge funds. We also find, even at this early date, a code of regulations being prepared for the Lodge of Instruction, this being shared with Lodge No. 245. At this time the Lodge had its own grave in St John's churchyard and we find reference being made to an alteration of the Lodge number on the grave stone. On 21 October 1839, eight persons were balloted for and amongst them was one name that was destined to become well known in Masonry - Mr James Hamer of York Hotel, Williamson Square, where the Lodge was then meeting. This name became one of the foremost in our thoughts throughout the Province - the 'Hamer Benevolent Institution'.

The brethren attended the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Sailors' Home but were disappointed in not having access to the site so returned to the Grapes Inn, opened up in the first degree and partook of an excellent dinner.

Around about this time was a very black period in the history of our city; appalling conditions prevailed, there was commercial depression, banks closed their doors, famine stalked, and was not improved by the influx of 90,000 Irish poor into the port. 27,000 persons were living in cellars and 15,000 died of fever and famine in six months. Mr Disraeli was saying "The character of the nation is greater than the Magna Carter or trial by jury. The character of the nation may yet save the Empire." The steady progress of the Lodge must be observed at this time. Extra pride and care was taken in all its activities; the purchase of a Tyler's book, one Tracing Board costing £8.5s.0d., the acquisition of an organ and many other improvements.

In 1855 the brethren requested the assistance of the Provincial Grand Master in supporting a petition to hold a Royal Arch Chapter, following which the Provincial Grand Treasurer presented a Bible for the use of the Craft and Chapter. This is the Bible still used by the Lodge of Harmony and is embossed with "Lodge of Harmony No. 267, presented by Bro. Joshua Walmsley", who was a regular visitor to our Lodge and Chapter and invariably occupied the Chair and worked the degrees. He also had much to do with the formation of the West Lancashire Educational Institution.

There is a minute dated 17 December 1849, proposing as joining members, Bro. S Horace Alpass (Druggist) and four brethren of the Lodge of Sincerity, No. 368 but the proposition was withdrawn and for no given reason.

The Lodge held its first meeting outside the city on the 15 December 1851, at the Woolton Hotel, now the Elephant Hotel, Much Woolton. The brethren met on the

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first Wednesday in the month, at 4pm. In 1853 they visited the Lodge of Loyalty at Prescott for the Centenary celebrations.

In June 1857, the Lodge of Harmony came to Garston, meeting at the Wellington Hotel, Wellington Street. The W.M. in that year being Charles James Bannister who presented a handsomely engraved salver and two Deacons' wands. This same brother was appointed Grand Sword Bearer of the United Grand Lodge of England only eight years after his initiation and it is believed that he was the second West Lancashire brother to be appointed as an officer in Grand Lodge, the first being Lord Skelmersdale, afterwards Earl Lathom.

In 1860, one name stands out as showing more than usual interest in Masonry, Bro. James Hamer. He held offices, became Treasurer and then Secretary of the Lodge. Later in the year 1861 he was invested as Provincial Grand Treasurer and when he ceased his labours of the Lodge of Harmony, he left his name to one of our former beloved charities, the Hamer Benevolent Institution, founded in 1873 and to which reference has already been made. His association with the Lodge extended over 30 years.

In 1873 meetings were being held at the Garston Hotel and this was the year that Sefton Park opened.

During 1875 we note that at one lodge meeting 5 brethren were raised together. Many other interesting points were obtained from the minutes of these times, including a reference in 1878 to the break between the United Grand Lodge of England and the Grand Orient of France, due to the latter deleting all paragraphs relating to a belief in the G.A.O.T.U.

In 1880 the W.M. presented to the Lodge a Third Degree Tracing Board painted by the same artist, who many years before had painted the other two. During the succeeding years, greater interest was being shown in the selection of candidates and in 1893 a committee was formed to deal with this. During 1899 the Lodge minutes showed a great change, as it was the beginning of a wonderful record of business done in the Lodge. The minutes were clearly written, easy to read, indexed and cross-indexed by W. Bro. Griffith E. Jones who carried on the duties of secretary until his death in 1945.

1900 marked the beginning of the twentieth century and in 1904 the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Bro. R Wylie, visited the Lodge to explain the scheme of the proposed Memorial Chapter House in connection with the new Liverpool Cathedral, and in the list of donations, £65. 18s. 0d. is shown opposite No. 220 with

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W. Bro. George W. Lofthouse, PPrGD as a representative on the committee. This respected brother was associated actively with the Lodge for some 35 years. During these early years of the century, many brethren entered the Lodge amongst them being Bro. E. Arden, an ardent Mason and Bro. E. W. Kneen, who at 81 years of age, painted a picture in oils of the first meeting place 'The Brown Cow'.

During the First World War the Lodge met regularly. Two sea-faring members, Claud Lapsey Stewart and Thomas Henry Stephenson lost their lives in service on the high seas when their separate vessels were sunk by German U-Boats.

After 39 years at the Garston Hotel, the Lodge moved to the Garston Co-operative Hall in 1919. Two years later in 1921, a daughter Lodge, the Royal George Lodge 4119 was consecrated.

On 21 May 1924, the wants and wishes of all masons in the South Liverpool district were realised when the RW PrGM, Bro. John Hearn Burrell, P.G.D., laid the foundation stone of the Masonic Hall, Garston. He was accompanied by the DepPrGM, Bro. Llewellyn C. Bailey, P.G.D., Bros. Arnold Rushton, P.G.D., (Lord Mayor of Liverpool), the PrGTreasurer, the PrGSecretary and many other Provincial Officers. The following year the Lodge of Harmony held its first meeting at the new Masonic Hall, Island Road, Garston, the W.M. being Bro. John Larson, who went on to hold the position of D.C. until his death.

In 1926, the Lodge was well represented at the Consecration of the Church of All Souls, Springwood. The same year, the brethren attended a rather unique service at Garston Parish Church - the occasion of the unveiling of a Memorial Board to commemorate the ringing of a peal of bells by Masons on the date of the church's consecration. The W.M. of the Lodge of Harmony, Bro. R. B. Pennell formally requested the PrGM, John Hearn Burrell, P.G.D. to unveil the Tablet which was then dedicated by the Lord Bishop of Liverpool, VW Bro the Right Rev. A.A. David, DD, Past Grand Chaplain.

During the years 1930-1945 many improvements were made to the new building; a new floor covering and square pavement in the Lodge Room were completed in 1934.

The second World War was felt forcibly by Masons throughout the universe, but our Lodge still functioned, despite black-outs and air raids. In spite of slight rearrangements during the early months, it continued to meet on the fourth Wednesday.

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The Lodge lost two long-serving officers in 1945. W. Bro. Griffith E. Jones (already referred to) secretary, and W. Bro. Syd Shandley, PPrAGPurs and PrGTyler. The triple Jubilee was celebrated in 1946 with Bro. George Willsmore as W.M. The proceedings were graced by the presence of the PrGM Rt.W.Bro. Arthur Foster who attended with a retinue of Grand and Provincial Grand Lodge Officers. A unique feature of this meeting being that Bro. Robert Faulkner sat with his five sons, all members of Harmony.

W. Bro. William Ninniss, PPrGD, wrote the history of the Lodge in 1945/6 for presentation at the Triple Jubilee and from which, some of this current history has been extracted.

In October 1958 the RW PrGM, Bro. L.E. Rutherford attended the installation ceremony where three blood brothers were placed in three chairs - Bro. William James Faulkner, W.M.; Bro. Samuel Jackson Faulkner, S.W. and Bro. Robert Faulkner, J.W. The RW PrGM was accompanied by numerous Grand and Provincial Grand Officers. This was the first time in the long history of the Lodge that three brothers held three chairs, concurrently.

1961 saw the first man in space and in the same year, the office of Chaplain of the Lodge was revived and an organist was appointed. The number of meetings had been reduced to 10 per year and later went down to 8.

The fire in Hope Street in 1968 caused Masons to seek alternative venues, and the Lodge offered its facilities as a temporary expedience. Some remained and some returned to Hope Street or moved elsewhere.

By April 2020, Garston Masonic Hall hosted 7 Lodges, 2 Royal Arch Chapters and several other degrees and orders, including Mark, Rose Croix and Knights Templar. In the same month, the Garston Group amalgamated with the Woolton Group to form the Woolton and Garston Group of Lodges and Chapters, with the 10 Woolton Lodges continuing to meet at Woolton Golf Club.

A special celebration took place in 1976, commemorating W. Bro. Ralph Pennell's 60th anniversary of being Master of the Lodge.

During 1977 we lost W. Bro. William Faulkner, the year he had been offered Grand Lodge Honours, but before he could be invested.

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After more than a century's constant usage of the Lodge's tracing boards, it was felt that further deterioration should be avoided, so they were photographed and the prints used to be made into alternative editions for general use. The original Tracing Boards have been refurbished and strengthened and are available for use on special occasions. However, the Lodge's original intention to have the Tracing Boards' actual paintings cleaned and restored professionally was thwarted because some, no doubt, good-intentioned mason in the Lodge's past had 'sealed' the artwork with an immovable translucent varnish.

In 1991 the Lodge of Harmony sponsored the creation of the Garston Lodge of Installed Masters, No. 9403.

During this decade, all three Trustees of the Lodge had celebrated over 50 years in masonry, and in the ensuing decade, our then senior Past Master, W.Bro. William Benjamin Jones, PPrSGW, celebrated 75 years in the Lodge of Harmony on 26 May 2010 and then his 100th birthday on 26 January 2011. Sadly, he passed away the following year.

December 27 1996, saw the bicentenary of the Lodge's Warrant being issued. The ensuing celebration was graced by the presence of the then PrGM, the late RW Bro. Kenneth Edward Moxley, together with a retinue of his Provincial team and other distinguished guests. Bro. Robert A. McMillan was the W.M. On the same occasion, The RW PrGM formally opened the newly constructed Lewis Room to serve as a second Temple and dining room. A plaque commemorates the occasion.

W. Bro. Frank Gale PPrJGW, a senior and much respected member, was not to live to see the unofficial bicentenary of the lodge and his wisdom on masonic matters and his guidance to the Lodge were greatly missed. His place as a trustee was filled by W. Bro. Stan Willsmore, the son of the Master of the Lodge during the sesquicentennial celebration. W.Bro. Stan also left us suddenly, immediately after a lodge meeting and in the Masonic hall he loved.

Although, following a general trend in Freemasonry, the number of members in the Lodge of Harmony has decreased over the years, by the end of 2022 it had been fortunate in maintaining a membership of around 42.

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Lodge Numbers from 1796 to date:

No. 302 on Original Warrant, 27 December 1796.

No. 385 on the union of the two Grand Lodges in 1813.

No. 267 on the re-arrangement of the numbers in 1832.

No. 220 on the re-arrangement of the numbers in 1863

No. 220 on Centenary Warrant, 19th March 1923

Lodge Meeting Places

From 1796 to date (all in Liverpool)

1796	Brown Cow Tavern, Lord Street
1799	Ferguson's Neptune Coffee House, Old Shambles
1800	Kneen's, 3 John Street
1802	Wagon and Horses, College Lane.
1806	Mrs Burgess' Coach & Horses, Whitechapel
1806	Coghlan's, Sir Thomas Buildings
1808	Lord Nelson Hotel, Hotham Street
1809	Brown Cow Tavern, Lord Street
1809	Birmingham Tavern, Cross Street
1811	Keys Inn, King Street
1813	Shakespeare Tavern, Liver Street
1816	Vine Tavern, Pitt Street
1822	Magpie and Stump, Key Street
1823	Robin Hood and Little John, Gt. Crosshall Street
1823	Mrs. Dowker's, Mersey Street
1824	Mrs. Clough's Vine Tavern, Pitt Street
1825	Roberts' Punch Bowl, Bachelor Street
1826	Cunningham's Nag's Head, Cockspur Street
1831	Stewart's Union Tavern, Sir Thomas Buildings
1833	Pilling's Traveller's Rest, Scotland Road
1836	Grimshaw's New Haymarket Tavern
1838	Hamer's York Hotel, Williamson Square
1841	George's George and Vulture, Houghton Street
1845	The Globe, Cable Street
1846	Francis' The Grapes Inn, Lower Milk Street
1851	Hamer's Woolton Hotel, Much Woolton
1857	Wood's Wellington Hotel, Garston
1872	Garston Hotel
1877	Wood's Wellington Hotel, Garston
1881	Garston Hotel
1919	Garston Co-operative Hall
1925	Garston Masonic Hall