

Plains of Mamre No.89

This degree, to give it its full title, "The United Religious Military and 1 Masonic Orders of the Temple, and of St. John of Jerusalem, Palatine, Rhodes and Malta in England and Wales and Provinces Overseas," has, as one can deduce from its title, a history based on the medieval orders of chivalry, and there are many books devoted to this Degree and its origins.

In Haworth the initial application to form this Degree was made by the members of Prince George Lodge in 1805, reference to which is made in the history of Prince George Lodge.

The Principal Officers were to be John Barraclough, John Sutcliffe and Timothy Bancroft.

Due to the misdemeanours of Stephen Paslaw (who else?) the Warrant issued in the name of Plains of Brunswick No.14 was cancelled and a new warrant issued in February 1806 to the intended Principal Officers, some members of Brunswick Royal Arch Chapter and also some members of the Plains of Rama Encampment at Keighley.

Instead of using the intended name of "Brunswick," the Grand Priory in London selected the name of "the Plains of Mamre," the new number being 15.

The meeting place was at the White Lion at Haworth.

During this period the name "Plains" was in popular usage in this area but today there are only the Plains of Rama, Plains of Tabor and two Plains of Mamre in existence within the Constitution of England and Wales.

It is believed that the 1805 invalid warrant was not returned to London but used illegally in an Inn situated outside Haworth for some 20 years.

There is a letter in existence dated 6th April 1808 confirming receipt of the new Warrant and requesting registration of new members. As an aside the writer states that Stephen Paslaw was in prison for debt and had been there for some considerable time, consequently some circular letters had fallen into the hands of his Wife. The letter continues "I thought it a duty incumbent upon me to appraise you of this circumstance to preventing future anything of consequence falling into the hands of a woman."

Stephen Paslaw, a character by any standards, must have been forgiven his misdemeanours, for in 1814 he took the Chair of the Haworth Preceptory.

The same problems which beset Three Graces and Brunswick Chapter also affected this Degree.

Support flagged, meetings were irregularly held in 1821, 1829, and 1935 and eventually the last meeting was held on 3rd July 1836.

Some 31 years later in 1867 a meeting was held in the "Private Rooms" in Lodge Street by the Knights from the Encampment of Faith in Bradford when it was explained that as three of the original members were still living namely, John Craven Taylor, William Brown and William Hartley, an approach had been made to the Grand Chancellor in London for a "Warrant of Revival" to be issued which was effected on the 1st. March 1867.

At this meeting officers were appointed. However there is no record of any meeting being held until 5th September 1892 by authority of a further Warrant which revived and reissued the 1867 Warrant.

John Craven Taylor must have realised that the re-establishment of the Preceptory, i.e. this Degree, in Haworth, was not assured as he returned both Warrants to the Province for safe keeping and the Minute Book was handed to Three Graces "until someone of higher authority claim it."

But for his foresight it might not have been possible to revive the Preceptory under the old 1867 Warrant. Thus from 1892 to this day, the Degree of Knights Templar has continued to meet at Haworth in the Craft Lodge Rooms without any further incidents. They now meet three times per year in March, May and October.

In 1993 the Centenary was celebrated and a Warrant issued (the fourth since 1806) confirming, but the relevant dates thereon are given as 1867-1967. So in effect this Degree was 26 years late in celebrating its Centenary perhaps understandable in view of the somewhat uncertain beginnings.