

Brunswick Chapter No.408

For the benefit of those Readers who may not be Freemasons it should be explained that English Freemasonry comprises many different Orders or Degree. Each one represents different facets of Masonry but all are dependent on the main Degree known amongst Masons as "the Craft." which operates under, and by virtue of, the United Grand Lodge of England.

In Haworth apart from the Craft i.e. Three Graces, there are six other Degrees operating, namely, the Royal Arch Chapter, the Knights Templar Order, the Mark Lodge, the Royal Ark Mariners Lodge, the Allied Masonic Degrees and the Order of the Secret Monitor.

On the 12th July 1802 a warrant was issued in the name of Royal Arch Brunswick Chapter being No.119 which held its first meeting on the 14th March 1803 at the White Lion Inn.

The three Principals of the Chapter at this meeting were William Robinson and Adam Pearson from the Keighley Chapter of Judea, and Joseph Watson from the Colne Chapter.

When they installed Stephen Paslaw, Jonathan Wright and Richard Greenwood as Principals of this new Chapter, they were all Brethren of Prince George Lodge.

The name of the Chapter was derived from one of the titles of the Grand Master of the Antient and Honourable Society of Free and Accepted Masons of England, namely, George, Prince of Wales, who as an Hanoverian was also the Duke of Brunswick.

Thus the new Chapter was formed, meetings on occasions being on the same day as those of Prince George Lodge.

Attendances were satisfactory and all seemed well until the problems with regard to Stephen Paslaw, already referred to in connection with Prince George Lodge, arose.

Paslaw appears to have been absent for some eight years and then in 1813 he reappears in the Records when he was made a Principal by which time of course the Craft Lodge Prince George had left Haworth leaving Three Graces as the sole Craft Lodge in the village.

However as in Three Graces, meetings became irregular and administration in a state of near collapse.

After the Union of the two Premier Lodges in 1813, Supreme Grand Chapter was formed in 1817 which then became the supreme authority for all Chapters.

Previously Chapters had acted under separate Grand Chapters depending on whether the Chapters operated by virtue of the "Moderns" or the "Antients" Grand Chapters.

So both Three Graces and Brunswick now in effect became answerable to the same supreme Authority and in 1822 because returns had not been made nor dues paid, the Warrant was withdrawn.

It was not until 1892 when a Petition was made to Supreme Grand Chapter to found a new Chapter that the Royal Arch was once more established in Haworth when a Charter was issued on the 3rd August 1892 in the name of Brunswick Chapter No.408. Since the Union, Chapters have been attached to a Lodge and adopted the number of that Lodge. The first meeting was held in "the Private Rooms" in Lodge Street on the 28th January 1893 when all the Officers were installed and thereafter tea was taken at the Black Bull Inn at 5 p.m. at a cost of two shillings per head.

The dress for this occasion was dark morning suit and black or white tie, which was possibly one of the last occasions when white ties were worn at any Masonic meeting in England.

The new Chapter thus established continued to meet in the "Private Rooms" until December 1907 when a transfer was made to the new Masonic Rooms built by Three Graces. There was no shortage of applications for membership mainly from Three Graces and from 1928 onwards also from Shirley Lodge. No mention is made in the Minutes of the 1914/18 War and very little regarding the 1939/45 War except that initially all meetings were suspended on instructions from Supreme Grand Chapter but later revoked by November 1939.

At a meeting of the 23rd of April 1940 a letter was received from the Provincial Grand Superintendent, Lord Harewood, appealing to Brethren and Companions to carry on wherever possible and if necessary adapt both meetings, nights and venues if this would prove more suitable and convenient to others and to Masonic Lodges. As a precaution the Chapter warrant was deposited for safe keeping at Martins Bank, Keighley.

Meetings were originally held every month but in 1902 it was agreed to adjourn for the summer months, meeting again in October.

In 1917 it was agreed to meet on the fourth Thursday of October, November, February and March having the Installation on the third Saturday in January.

The dates of the meetings were varied from time to time but the summer recess was retained, and the Chapter now meets on the fourth Tuesday in January, March, April (Installation), October and November. Post war years saw an influx of new members from both of the Haworth Craft Lodges, so much so that Emergency meetings had to be called to keep pace with the applications, but in the 1950's applications decreased only to revive in later years on a cyclical basis.

The Chapter is a member of the Bradford & District Royal Arch Council and when possible pays fraternal visits to other Council Chapters in Bradford, Baildon, Bingley, Ilkley, Otley, Skipton, Waddington and of course Judea Chapter in Keighley.

From a general interest point of view Masonic life continued with regularity until the major event in 1992 when the Chapter celebrated its Centenary. A Centenary Chapter was presented to the Chapter on the 28th January 1993 by David J. Welsh, the Grand Superintendent of Yorkshire (West Riding).

And so the Chapter continues into its next century and the next Millennium, playing an active part in Royal Arch Masonry.