

Lapal Lodge No. 6031

Its Inception and Consecration

Lapal Lodge owed its inception, foundation and ultimate consecration to three principal factors:

- The rapid development of the Lapal area as a residential district in the late 1930's, bringing together business people from Birmingham and all parts of the Black Country.
- The incidence of the Second World War which brought about the creation of the Home Guard, Fire Service and other Civil Defence Units.
- The formation of a local social club and some charitable organisations.

These three elements brought together the whole of the Lapal and surrounding communities. The men and women in the various units, met together frequently at the several headquarters, at the newly formed club, and other communal places, and it soon became apparent that amongst it's members, were quite a number of Freemasons, not only from different Lodges, but also from different Masonic Provinces.

In this context could be mentioned Brothers W Henderson, EJ Hack, L Dallow, AH Spring, FW Reeves, WA Hiscock, WJ Hopkins, JA James, E Smith and EB Tromans.

It was perhaps a natural course of events that conversation turned to Masonic matters, and there were frequent expressions of regret that there were not the facilities and means of meeting and fraternising together on common ground.

In due course it was suggested that it might be possible to form a Lodge of our own to serve this particular district. Several informal meetings were held at Bro. Dallow's office situated over the old club premises, and Bro. Dallow was asked to discuss the matter with W. Bro. WD Abbiss – the Secretary of The Lodge of Perseverance (of which several of the interested brethren were members) to see the reaction of the Lodge.

W. Bro. Abbiss was highly enthusiastic and said that he was sure that his Lodge would be willing to support the project and that they would be honoured to sponsor the new Lodge, and act as it's Mother Lodge.

W. Bro. Abbiss agreed to help Bro. Dallow with any preliminary work, and further informed him that W. Bro. FL Rose had expressed a wish to be considered as a Founder of the new Lodge as had Bro. WB Powell.

Following these tentative discussions, an informal meeting was held at the home of W. Bro. Lionel Rose in early April 1944 at which was present W. Bros. FL Rose and EB Trumper and Bros. EB Tromans, W. Henderson, AH Spring and L. Dallow.

At this meeting, it was agreed that it was desirable that a new Lodge of Freemasons be formed to serve in particular Lapal and adjacent areas.

A more representative meeting was held at the Masonic Hall, Halesowen on 21st April 1944 at which were present:

W. Bros. FL Rose and EB Trumper and Bros. W. Henderson, EB Tromans, W Jennings, FW Reeves, TA Nicklin, L Dallow, JA James, WJ Hopkins, FV Brown, A Wright. J Moffat and WR Surman together with W. Bro. WD Abbiss attended to advise. There were a number of apologies from brethren unable to attend due to Home Guard and other duties.

W. Bro. Rose was elected to chair the meeting, and Bro. L. Dallow elected to act as Secretary.

The following resolutions were unanimously taken:

- That the desirability of forming a new Lodge be confirmed.
- That the new Lodge would meet on the second Friday of the months of October, November, December, January, February, March, April and May.
- To suit the Masonic Hall, this was later changed to the first Friday of those months.
- That fees and subscriptions be as agreed.
- That the name of the new Lodge be "The Lapal Lodge".
- That the Worshipful Master Designate be W. Bro. FL Rose.
- That the Senior Warden Designate be W. Bro. W. Henderson.
- Bro. L Dallow proposed that Bro. EB Tromans be Junior Warden Designate, but Bro. Tromans advised that it would clash with a similar office he had agreed to take in Godson Lodge, and he proposed that Bro. WR Surman be voted to the office. This was agreed.
- That the Petition praying for a Warrant of Constitution be presented in open Lodge to the Mother Lodge, the Lodge of Perseverance, for approval and signature prior to submission to the Most Wor. The Grand Master.

W. Bro. Abbiss said that the Lodge of Perseverance would warmly welcome the new Lodge and pointed out the necessity for all founders to produce to the Secretary, their Grand Lodge Certificates and clearance certificates.

W. Bro. WD Abbiss

W. Bro. WD Abbiss (for many years the Secretary of the Lodge of Perseverance) was of great help to the Founders during the early part of 1944, attending several meetings and giving much needed advice and encouragement, liaising between the Founders and the Mother Lodge Designate, and promising much needed help to the acting secretary.

W. Bro. Abbiss was not, however, to have the pleasure of seeing the new Lodge consecrated, as during the interval between a meeting held on 21st April 1944 (which he attended) and the next meeting held on 19th May 1944, W. Bro. Abbiss was called to the Grand Lodge above after a very short illness.

It was left therefore, to the Worshipful Master Designate of the new Lodge (W. Bro. FL Rose), son-in-law of W. Bro. Abbiss, to submit the Petition to the Lodge of Perseverance. This he did, and subsequently reported that it had been warmly received and that full and unanimous support had been offered.

The Lodge Banner, Collars, Cuffs and Founders' Jewels

The Founders owed a considerable debt to Bro. FW Reeves, who failed to qualify by a few months as a Founder of the new Lodge and in which he evinced such an interest.

During the early preliminary meetings held at the beginning of 1944, Bro. Reeves was asked if he would undertake the preparation of alternative designs for a Banner for the new Lodge, and to this he readily agreed to do.

At a meeting held on 7th July 1944, Bro. Reeves submitted a number of designs to the Founders and, following information from Grand Lodge as to what was permissible to be incorporated in the designs, he presented further designs.

At a meeting held on 6th March 1945, one of a number of designs was agreed upon to be forwarded to Grand Lodge and was approved. At the same meeting, it was proposed by W. Bro. W Henderson (Senior Warden Designate) and unanimously agreed that Bro. Reeves be invited to become the first joining member of the Lodge in recognition of his valuable work in connection with the design of the Lodge Banner, and he was so proposed at the Consecration Meeting by W. Bro. Henderson and seconded by W. Bro. FL Rose, Worshipful Master.

The emblems depicted in the Lodge Banner, were reproduced in the Founders' jewels, and when the jewels were presented to the Founders at the 5th regular meeting on 7th December 1945, W. Bro. Rose described the significance of the emblems incorporated.

At a meeting held prior to the Consecration, it was decided that the cost of the necessary collars and cuffs for the officers (including six Stewards), should be borne by the brother holding each respective office, and in each case, the name of the first holder be engraved on the back of the jewel. Bro. FV Brown was successful in obtaining the necessary collars, cuffs and jewels.



The Petition

The petition was signed by some twenty five brethren who had expressed a desire to become Founders. It was ultimately discovered that a few of the younger brethren who had signed, had not quite completed the three years obligatory period as masons and would not, therefore be qualified to become Founders of the new Lodge, but it was agreed that there was nothing to prevent their names remaining on the petition.

In presenting the Petition praying for a warrant for the new Lodge to the Provincial Grand Secretary for his vetting and comments, Bro. L. Dallow (Secretary Designate) asked whether it would be well to address a letter to The Most Worshipful Grand Master to accompany the petition to Grand Lodge. W. Bro. Stanton thought it was a good idea. Bro. Dallow wrote such a letter stating the reasons why a warrant for the holding of a new Lodge was being sought. The Provincial Grand Secretary said the letter was just what was required and was forwarding the Petition and the letter to the Most Worshipful Grand Master, who approved of the reasons stated and granted the Warrant dated 6th day of December 1944, and bearing in particular the names of W. Bro. FL Rose, Bro. W Henderson, Bro. WR Surman, W. Bro. A. Basterfield, Bro. L Dallow, Bro. EB Tromans and W. Bro. EB Trumper.

The Right W. Bro. Provincial Grand Master, General Sir Francis J Davies was not able, however, to arrange for the Consecration of the new Lodge to take place until the following April, due partly to the fact that in his other capacity as Deputy Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, he had recently undertaken and completed several missions abroad on behalf of the Most Worshipful Grand Master, and his health was somewhat impaired and was causing concern.

The date fixed for the Consecration was Saturday the 28th April 1945 at 2:30 in the afternoon.

This lapse in time gave the Provincial Grand Secretary ample time to notify all the Lodges in the Province of the forthcoming event, to supply all brethren who intended being present with a printed Order of Procedure and the necessary application forms and admission slips.

Also with the compliments of the Founders, invitations and admission slips were able to be printed and sent by the Secretary Designate of the Lodge to all personal guests whom the Founders wished to invite.

The Consecration

The Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies was W. Bro. RWA Painter MC from Kidderminster and he attended several meetings at the Halesowen Masonic Hall during the winter of 1944-1945 to instruct the Founders in relation to the Consecration Ceremony and the various perambulations annexed to the ceremony. He was of great assistance and gave the members very valuable advice.

At the Consecration, his knowledge was to be called into more than customary use.

Arrangements for the Consecration Ceremony and subsequent banquet were completed. W. Bro. Stanton had intimated that the Right W. Provincial Grand Master thought that an early attendance by the Consecrating Officers and Founders was desirable, and that if possible, lunch should be provided for those brethren before the actual ceremony took place. The Founders were happy to accede to this request and arranged for lunch at 1:00pm at the Masonic Hall.

Also at his request, arrangements were made to send a car to fetch the Provincial Grand Master from Elmley Castle on the morning of 26th April in time for lunch and the subsequent ceremony.

However at midday on the day of the Consecration, a message was received saying that General Sir Francis J Davies had suffered a serious relapse in health and would be unable to be present to conduct the ceremony and delegating that duty to the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, W. Bro. Alfred Allen PGD.

Unfortunately, W. Bro. Allen said that he had come prepared only to install W. Bro. FL Rose as the first Master of the new Lodge, was rather hazy about the rest of the Ceremony and would require some help.

W. Bro. Painter Provincial Director of Ceremonies, asked the Secretary Designate what could be done in this direction and it was decided that the ritual appertaining to each individual perambulation should be written out on separate cards for W. Bro. Allen's use, and Bro. Dallow was able to get this done.

With this help, and with some discrete prompting from the Assistant Provincial Grand Master (W. Bro. W Harvey Gibbs) and the guidance from the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies, the Lodge was duly consecrated in pure and ancient form.

The Venerable Canon AP Shepherd DD Provincial Grand Chaplain delivered an inspiring oration.

Bro. CA Wilson Provincial Grand Organist, directed the musical arrangements aide by the provincial choir, and their contributions added much to the impressive and beautiful ceremony.

Following the Constitution of the Lodge, the Lodge Banner was unveiled, and the Patriarchal Benediction pronounced by the Provincial Grand Chaplain.

In addition to the Founders and Consecrating Officers, there present at the Consecration, a number of Grand Lodge Officers and many other Worshipful Brethren, to a total number of 119.

Attendance

It may be of interest to note that the Founders of the Lodge owed connection and membership to former lodges as follows:

- Lodge of Perseverance 5
- Halesowen 4
- George Beech 3
- Impartiality 1
- Prometheus 1
- Connaught 1
- Hesketh 1
- James Watt 1
- Sphere 1
- Godson 1
- Mystic Quest 1
- Regis 1
- Petts Wood 1

Thus five Masonic provinces were represented namely:

- Worcestershire 12 brethren
- Warwickshire 7 brethren
- Staffordshire 1 brother
- West Lancashire 1 brother
- Kent 1 brother

Honorary members

At the first regular meeting of the Lodge following the Consecration, the following consecrating officers were unanimously elected to honorary membership of the Lodge:

- W. Bro. Alfred Allen PGD Deputy Provincial Grand Master
- W. Bro. W Harvey Gibbs PGD Assistant Provincial Grand Master
- W. Bro. HV Stanton PGD PPGW Provincial Grand Secretary
- W. Bro. RWA Painter MC Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies

Increased Membership

Such was the popularity and success of the new Lodge that, within two years of its consecration, its membership (including honorary members) had increased from 22 to 42. There were applications from eight Freemasons wishing to become joining members of Lapal Lodge and from eight gentlemen applying for membership and initiation in the Lodge.

To cope with this large number of applications, the Worshipful Master in addition to presiding over eight regular meetings in addition to the Consecration meeting, found it necessary to hold two emergency meetings, one on 16th March 1946, and another on 18th April 1946.

Lodge of Instruction

In the early part of 1946, it was thought expedient to form a Lodge of Instruction.

This was proposed at the regular meeting held in April 1946 by Bro. WA Hiscock, seconded by Bro. WJ Hopkins and agreed.

The Secretary Bro. Dallow, submitted this to Provincial Grand Lodge together with suggested times and place of meeting. W. Bro. Stanton replied to Bro. Dallow giving his full approval and the Sanction of the Right W. Bro. Provincial Grand master.

Lapal Chapter

A natural sequel to the success of Lapal Lodge was the formation of a Lapal Chapter and this was consecrated in May 1955 with Excellent Companion FL Rose as its First Principal and Companion L Dallow as its first Scribe E.

Details supplied by W. Bro. RJ Denham P. Prov. S.G.W.

Compiled by W. Bro. W. Timmins P. Prov. J.G.D. (Warks)