



HOWE MARK MASTERS' LODGE T.I.

Keystone Lodge

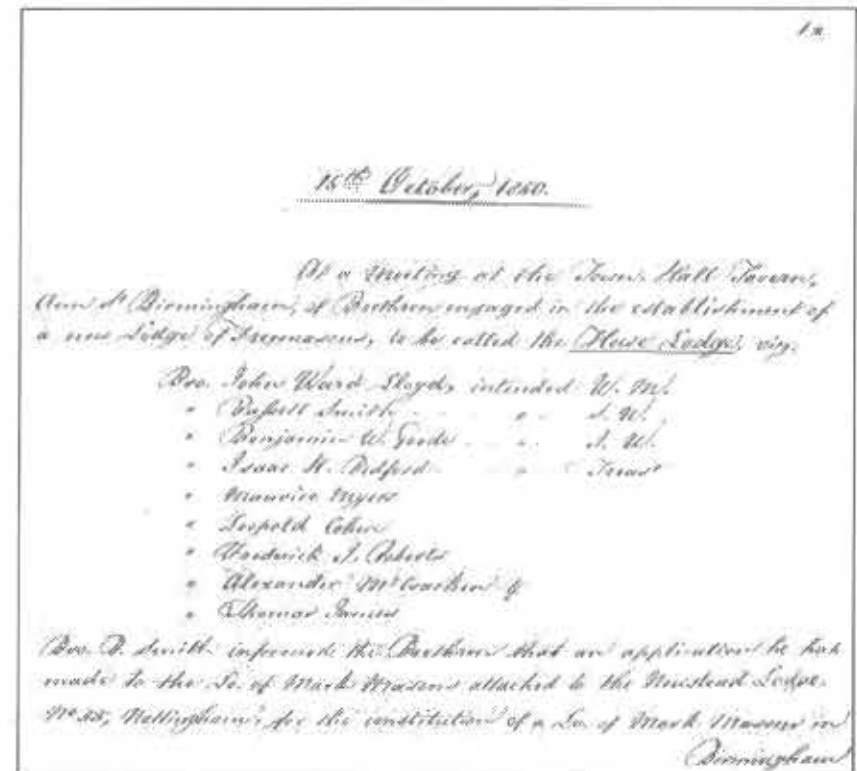
PROVINCE OF WARWICKSHIRE

1850 - 2000

A HISTORY OF THE LODGE

This short history is dedicated to the memory of W. Bro. Donald McGill, PGJD, Secretary of the Lodge from 1967 to 1997. Before his death, on Whit Sunday 18 May 1997, he had laid down the framework for the Celebrations to mark the year 2000 and 150 years of the Howe Mark Lodge.

HOWE MARK MASTERS' LODGE T.I. 1850 - 2000



The first page of the original Lodge Minute Book - dated 15th October 1850

Mark masonry came to Birmingham in 1850 when a twelve man team from the Newstead (Craft) Lodge No. 55 of Nottingham [of which the Newstead Mark Lodge was an integral part] visited the borough. Thus the Howe Lodge of Mark Master Masons came into existence on 15 October 1850 when fourteen craft masons were advanced into the Mark degree. At that time there was no Grand Mark Lodge of England or a Provincial Grand Mark Lodge. These were to follow in 1857 and in 1876 respectively.

In retrospect it seems hard to believe that, in the middle of the last century, the United Grand Lodge of England refused to recognise the Mark degree. Indeed, the Mark degree in those days could only be properly worked under the auspices of a Craft Lodge.

Over the last one hundred and fifty years the Howe Mark Masters' Lodge has always had a reputation for its somewhat individualistic way of doing things. It was only after some 100 years that it fell into line completely over the Ritual. However, the individualistic act that can never be erased from its psyche stems from the date of its birth in October 1850. In that year the Howe (Craft) Lodge had not yet been constituted. So, the basic requirement in the Mark of working its ceremony from under the aegis of a Craft Lodge was not capable of being observed. There is some evidence that the Howe (Craft) Lodge never forgave the Howe Mark Lodge for this impertinence. The records also show that the Howe Mark Lodge actually worked under the supervision of St Paul's (Craft) Lodge from 1850 until 1854 when the Howe (Craft) Lodge No 857 was eventually formed. In that year the Warrant that had been issued by the Newstead (Craft) Lodge in 1850 was altered by erasure and interlineation to serve as the Warrant for the Howe Mark Masters Lodge No 857.

The Mark degree proved an immediate success in Birmingham and the Howe Mark Lodge advanced candidates from all over the Midlands. The Lodge also assisted in the formation of the Shakespeare Mark Lodge, the Bedford Mark Lodge, and the Athol Mark Lodge. Indeed, it actually granted the Warrant of Constitution to the Athol Mark Lodge on 16 June 1862.

In 1857, and as a consequence of the refusal of the UGLE to recognise the Mark degree, Grand Mark Lodge was formed with Lord Leigh, the Provincial Grand Master (for the Craft) in Warwickshire as the first Grand Mark Master. This move provoked a long-standing crisis between the Howe (Craft) Lodge now re-numbered 587 and the Howe Mark Masters' Lodge No 587. Quite simply Howe (Craft) Lodge sided with the UGLE and refused to allow the Howe Mark Masters' Lodge to affiliate with the new Grand Mark Lodge. For more than ten years after 1857 the Howe Mark Lodge attempted, without success, to persuade Howe (Craft) Lodge to allow the Mark Lodge to affiliate with Grand Mark Lodge. When in 1873 the Howe Mark passed a resolution to affiliate with Grand Mark Lodge it was rebuked by Howe (Craft) Lodge with the reminder that the Mark Lodge was the property of the Craft Lodge and existed only to confer the Mark degree.

As a consequence of this domestic dispute the Howe Mark Lodge missed the opportunity of becoming a founder member of the Provincial Grand Mark Lodge of Warwickshire and Staffordshire on 24 October 1876. This honour went to Bedford Mark Lodge and Athol Mark Lodge from Warwickshire, together with the Wulfruna Mark Lodge from Staffordshire.

Eventually, and almost five years after the dreadful snub meted out in April 1873 by the Howe (Craft) Lodge to the Howe Mark Lodge, the situation was sorted out. On 29 January 1878 the Howe Lodge of MMMs was admitted as a

member of the Provincial Grand Mark Lodge. As a mark of the esteem for the part played by the Howe Mark Lodge in bringing the degree into prominence, the Lodge was accorded the suffix T.I.: Time Immemorial.

This domestic quarrel left memories that did not fade for several generations according to W. Bro. Donald McGill, the long serving Lodge Secretary of recent memory.

By the 1870s Mark Masonry was a freestanding degree in its own right. The old glorious disorder where Lodges and Chapters conferred the degrees of Mark Mason and Mark Master according to a whole variety of rituals and usages had become part of history.

THE LODGE'S MEETING PLACES AS PART OF THE HISTORY OF BIRMINGHAM

1850 - 1873 at the Masonic Rooms, Newhall Street

The inaugural meeting of the Howe Lodge of Mark Masters took place in the Town Hall Tavern in Ann Street, a street now part of Victoria Square.

On that occasion the Lodge was warranted by the Newstead Lodge of Mark Masters No 55 from Nottingham. Unfortunately, due to the fact that the Howe Craft Lodge was still in the process of formation it was not possible to hold the next official meeting until 9 February 1854, as Mark Lodges were then appendages of Craft Lodges.

This First Meeting on February 1854, as it is described in the Minutes, took place in the Masonic Rooms, Newhall Street, Birmingham. These rooms were to be the regular meeting place until 1873. During this period from 1854 to 1873 some of the most dramatic events took place in the move by the Mark Degree to achieve independence. Quite clearly, neither the Craft nor the Royal Arch saw any need for the Mark Degree to be other than a graceful addition to Craft Masonry. These were the words used by a brother on 17 December 1855 when reporting on sentiments expressed recently in Grand Chapter. During 1857 the meetings were dominated by discussions on the merits of joining the new Grand Lodge of Mark Masters that had been established with Lord Leigh, the Craft PGM for Warwickshire, as its first Master. The Howe Lodge of Mark Masters resolved on 16 November 1857 not to affiliate with the new Grand Lodge and this decision was confirmed during further discussions right up to 1868.

Some understanding of just how integrated the Mark Degree was with Craft Masonry can be gained from usages in those early years. For example, until 1858 the Minutes refer to the Mark Lodge being opened in due form. From 15 February 1858, until independence in 1875, the Minutes record that the Lodge was opened with solemn prayer in the First and Second Degrees of Craft Masonry; and afterwards according to the ancient form of Mark Masonry. At the meeting held on 13 October 1858 it was confirmed that Craft regalia was quite suitable for the Mark degree and distinctive Mark clothing was not required.

In those early years it is obvious that the standard of the work often left much to be desired. Many exhortations were made to attend classes of instruction; and for the office holders to attend the regular meetings of the Lodge. Notwithstanding these domestic limitations, the Lodge felt sufficiently sure of itself to extend the Mark Degree and on 16 June 1862 it granted a Warrant to the Athol Lodge of Mark Masters.

Discontent with the subservient role of the Howe Mark Lodge relative to the Howe Craft Lodge came to a head on 17 December 1868 with open rebellion taking place during the proceedings. The Junior Warden had enquired about the steps necessary to separate the Mark Lodge from the Craft Lodge, whereupon the WM stated that the brethren had to remember that the Craft Lodge had the power of veto over any resolutions passed by the Mark Lodge. Notwithstanding this reservation, the WM accepted a mandate to approach the Craft Lodge with the request that the Mark Lodge be allowed to affiliate with the Grand Lodge of Mark Masters of England. Thus began a quarrel, the bitterness of which was still remembered in the folklore absorbed by members who came into senior office in the 1960s, about a century later.

The Minutes show that the Howe Craft Lodge declined to hear the WM of the Howe Mark Lodge and the Lodge drifted somewhat until 1873. By then the Howe Craft Lodge had removed itself to the Masonic Hall in New Street, Birmingham. The Howe Mark Lodge was to all intents and purposes in a state of limbo. At the Mark meeting on 20 March 1873 due note was taken of the repeated rebuffs by the Craft Lodge. Then, on 30 April 1873 the Craft Lodge conveyed its considered response to the members of the Mark Lodge. This response stated quite unequivocally that the Howe Mark Lodge had no independence and that the sole reason for its existence was to confer the Mark Degree.

The Howe Mark Lodge may well have foundered at that stage and the majority of its members did indeed join the Bedford Lodge of Mark Masters.

1873 - 1883 at the Masonic Hall, New Street



Meeting now at the Masonic Hall in New Street, the remnants of the Howe Mark Lodge came together on 29 January 1878 to make arrangements for reconstituting the Howe Mark Masters' Lodge under a Warrant of the Grand Mark Masters' Lodge of England. The Meeting then changed its character into a Meeting of the Provincial Grand Mark Masters' Lodge of Warwickshire and Staffordshire. The Brethren of the old Howe Mark Masters' Lodge were introduced to the PGM, a dispensation was presented from the Grand Mark Masters' Lodge of England, and Howe's Master, W. Bro. T A Best, expressed the wish to affiliate as a Time Immemorial Lodge. The members were then re-obligated and the PGM himself, R. Wor. Bro. W K R Bedford became the Master.

After the affiliation to the Grand Mark Masters' Lodge there was an immediate improvement in overall style. Copies of the Circular as the Summons was then called and the Annual Accounts began to appear in the Minute Book. The Deputy Provincial Grand Master, R. Wor. Bro. Foster Gough became the second Master of the reconstituted Lodge. On 19 December 1879 the Lodge was given the signal honour of hosting the Meeting of Provincial Grand Mark Masters' Lodge.

For the next four years the Lodge continued to meet at the Masonic Hall in New Street. Then, on 5 September 1883 the members resolved to move the meeting place to the Great Western Hotel. There can be no doubt that one of the principal reasons for the move was the prospect of the excellent food on offer at that hotel. Indeed, at the final meeting in New Street on 5 December 1883 the members did not even dine there. Instead they took themselves to the Great Western where for 4/6d (22½ p in today's money) they feasted on two soups, one fish course, an entrée of joints and poultry, dressed salad, cheese, and a light dessert.

1883 - 1905 at the Great Western Hotel

For the next twenty-two years the brethren enjoyed the comforts of the Great Western Hotel. As a change from sandwiches in the earlier days the meal, now re-named the Banquet, was obviously a distinctive feature of the Lodge. Indeed, from time to time over the years the Lodge has shown a degree of style over the catering arrangement. Within living memory, Granville Niness imposed a standard higher than the caterers knew they were capable of.

Much more formality and order was obvious in the proceedings after the reconstitution. In May 1886 the Lodge was the obvious choice as the venue for the Installation of the Marquess of Hertford as the PGM.

1905 - 1908 at the Acorn Hotel

Towards the end of 1904 the Great Western Hotel closed and the Lodge moved its meeting place to the Acorn Hotel in Temple Street, Birmingham. It remained there until 1908 when it moved to the Imperial Hotel in Temple Street, Birmingham.

In 1904, while still at the Great Western, the Master was W. Bro. Hans Graff and at the last meeting held there on 20 September 1904 W. Bro. Graff was re-elected to serve for a further year, the Senior Warden having asked to be passed over. Accordingly, at the Installation Meeting held on 14 February 1905 at the new venue of the Acorn Hotel, W. Bro. Graff was installed for a second year. Later that year, on 19 September 1905, Bro. J Headon Boocock was elected as Master for the ensuing year and on 13 February 1906 Bro Boocock was duly obligated and installed as Master of the Lodge. On 6 March 1906 W. Bro. Boocock was in the Chair at a Special Meeting to receive the Provincial Grand Master and the Provincial Grand Mark Lodge of Warwickshire. Then, on 15 May 1906 W. Bro. Boocock found himself being re-obligated as Master of the Lodge under a dispensation from the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales dated 16 March 1906. The reason for this extraordinary re-obligation was that the Lodge had omitted to obtain a Dispensation covering the fact that Bro. Boocock was actually Master of the Wulfruna Craft Lodge at that time. The Howe Mark Masters' Lodge was formally censured over its misconduct in a letter from the Grand Secretary dated 2 March 1906. Well!!! W. Bro. Boocock does not appear to have been un-nerved by the experience and went on to serve the Lodge with distinction. Sadly W. Bro. Hans Graff resigned early in 1907.

A marked feature of the Lodge during this period was the smallness of numbers. Rarely more than twelve members were in attendance and in 1907 it was resolved to hold a meeting in November. It was also in 1907 that the

Lodge gave sanction for the Warwickshire Mark Lodge of Instruction to be held under its banner.

1909 - 1927 at the Imperial Hotel



The Howe Mark Masters' Lodge held its first meeting at the Imperial Hotel in Temple Street on 9 February 1909. Judging from the isometric sketch on that establishment's letterhead, the Hotel provided rather superior facilities. The Lodge remained there until 1927 when it moved to the new Warwickshire Peace Memorial Temple, opposite the Hall of Memory in Broad Street.

These were years of orderliness and measured ordinariness, with the Minutes revealing a well run Lodge served well and long by its Secretary, W. Bro. J S Pritchett who held the office for 27 years before retiring to the back benches in 1925.

During this period the members were drawn from a variety of backgrounds: the Church; the law; medicine; manufacturing; general business; and always one or two gentlemen of independent means. Highlights from these years invariably focus on personalities who made quite an impact on their times. Bro. Zacchaeus Walker of Fox Hollies Hall came into the Lodge on 19 May 1903 as a joining member from the Hertford Military Mark Lodge. He became W. Master in February 1910, and then he went on to become Deputy Provincial Grand Master in 1913. Finally, and on the resignation through ill health of the Earl of Warwick, he became Provincial Grand Master in 1919. Canon Charles William Barnard was advanced on 28 November 1911 and began his illustrious career in the Order.

A name that will ring the bells of memory for those members who were boys at the Birmingham Grammar Schools before 1944, is that of Cornelius Combridge. He, of course, was the noted Birmingham bookseller and publisher. In the days when textbooks had to be bought by the parents of the boys, his second hand service was a vital link in the educational chain. He was advanced on 11 February 1913 and became W. Master on 13 February 1917. His Installation Meeting was unusual. After being installed he held a ballot for Sir William Bowater who was elected and immediately advanced. The

candidate was then appointed and invested as Senior Warden and subsequently became the Master of the Lodge on 12 February 1918. The evening must have been quite an affair coming as it did so soon after the end of the Battle of the Somme in the autumn of 1916. No less than 37 Mark Masons were present (Howe's membership would have been at its all time high at 28), speeches were given by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and by Sir William Bowater. To round off the after-proceedings Miss Queenie Jay led the singing of patriotic songs!

After the outbreak of the War in August 1914 the Lodge held a meeting in September, with no banquet, merely to confirm the Minutes of the May meeting. There was obviously some doubt as to whether the Regular Meetings should be continued. It fell to W. Bro. Boocock to provide a lead. He had referred to the Minute Books of St Paul's Lodge, under whose aegis the Howe Mark Lodge had met in those early years after 1850 before the Howe (Craft) Lodge had been formed. In those records he had found that neither the Indian Mutiny nor the Crimean War had caused St Paul's to desist from meeting and dining. These precedents were deemed sufficient for the members to carry on.

During the Great War the First Report on the Mark Degree in Warwickshire was published. It showed that in 1915 there were eight Lodges in the Province. Howe had a membership of 19, while Hertford Military had 45. The May meeting of 1916 saw the first use of the War Prayer as prescribed by the Earl of Warwick. Bearing in mind the xenophobia against the Germans that was a marked feature of those times, the prayer is remarkable for its emphasis on care for our men and for Peace among the nations. By 1917 the membership of Howe was 28 with Hertford Military at 50.

Strangely, at the meeting on 26 November 1918, no mention at all was made of the Armistice that came into effect on 11 November. Perhaps it was all too traumatic for a City in which every family had suffered a casualty, either killed or wounded. The Prayer of Thanksgiving for Victory was read immediately after the Minutes on 11 February 1919.

During the War, four members served namely Bros. L H Demuth, H M L Crawford, George Thomas MC, and J G Humphreys.

In 1919 Bro. Sydney R Barrett resigned because of ill health that made him move away from Birmingham. With his letter of resignation he enclosed some notes that bore witness to his love of the esoteric. The first note concerned the Marks on the W. Master's jewel. According to Bro. Barrett the alphabet to which the upper letters on the stone belong are similar to those used on old Hebrew and on old Phoenician coins. Thus, they were the alphabet of Tyre and of Hiram Abiff. The words appear to refer to 'those who are dispersed' and may have been some kind of password among the scattered Jewish tribes

of the Diaspora after AD70. The characters beneath are from the old Mark Cypher which used to read backwards, viz:

I	H	G
F	E	D
C	B	A

During the 1990s, when the writer was the Registrar of Marks, he was challenged by a newly advanced brother as to whether he had correctly depicted his Mark. It had to be pointed out that Marks in Howe Mark Lodge are per the Howe Cypher. Even the current Mark Ritual concedes that in all cases the appropriate cypher is the cypher used by the Lodge. It remains to be said that the lower characters refer to Jaweh or Jehovah the Name of the Living God of Israel.

His second note concerned the Two Great Pillars at the porchway or entrance of King Solomon's Temple. Barrett's reading of the literature on the Sumerians, who were the predecessors of the Babylonians, indicated a cult as long ago as 3800BC that had a Temple dedicated to Ya. This temple had two sacred pillars outside formed from hollow tree trunks. The temple worship was based on life and death as evidenced by Spring and Autumn. He also refers to Gibil the Babylonian fire god who was skilled as a worker of metals. His references to Bel, the lord or counselor exalted among the spirits of the earth, revives memories of the problems caused for our brethren in the Royal Arch over a similar name.

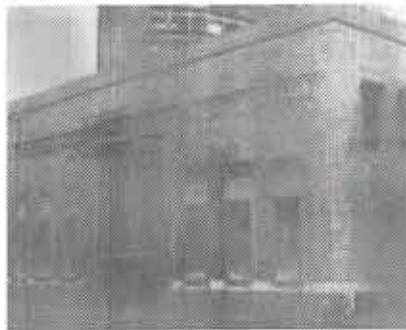
Barrett's final point was that bearing in mind the fact that Babylonia was not even known of in England at the time of Sir Christopher Wren, by what route did these legends come down? In his minute W. Bro. Pritchett refers to these notes very briefly while expressing the feeling that the explanations of the marks on the W. Master's jewel could be of great interest to future members. Nearly eighty years later his prophecy was borne out. At that time the place of charity in the Mark Degree was highlighted by the collection of £236.5.0d for the Mark Benevolent Fund. There were, for the times, some extraordinary donations, ten guineas being the norm rising to £52 in one case.

During the mid 20s one of the great luminaries and servants of the Lodge came in as a joining member. This was Granville Edwin Niness who joined on 20

May 1924. He became Secretary in 1927, W. Master in 1931, and Treasurer in 1934. He can still be remembered as the man who even in his eighties could bring a bit of style to the Festive Board. He died while still in office as Treasurer in May 1973.

At the February Meeting of 1927, the Lodge resolved to move to the Warwickshire Peace Memorial Temple having decided as long ago as 1919 to give support to the new Birmingham Masonic Temple scheme. On 15 November 1927 the Howe Mark Masters' Lodge met for the first time at the new Temple at Broad Street. The Lodge was to stay there until the building was requisitioned by the government in 1939 following the outbreak of the Second World War.

1927 - 1939 at the Warwickshire Peace Memorial Temple, Broad Street



The move to Broad Street seems to have been effected without any major problems and the Lodge continued with its traditional orderly way of doing things. The only change of note was the decision to hold the regular meetings on the third Tuesday in January, March, September and October. Indeed, this period is best remembered for

certain of the key personalities among the members. Several of these brethren were known to the more long service members of today.

Frank Burnett became Master in 1928, followed by Leslie Burnett in 1934. For some the year 1928 was a year of some significance: Bill Dudley Evans came in as a joining member from the Athol Lodge; Canon Barnard died; and Leslie Biddle and C E Moore were advanced into the Order. Of particular interest in this year was the dispensation given for the Howe Mark Masters' Lodge to advance brethren from French Craft Lodges. Thus, in March 1928, Bro. E R Hill of Georgian Lodge No. 11 and Bro. C H Kay of Unity Lodge No. 15 were duly advanced.

In December 1930 R. W. Bro. Lt. Colonel Zacchaeus Walker, the PGM, passed away. His death was marked in the Lodge on the night in January 1931 on which Granville Niness became Master. In November 1933 the Lodge resolved to increase its support for the Grand Mark Lodge New Premises Fund, with a

view to becoming a Hall Stone Lodge. Then, during the middle 1930s, Leslie Biddle began his celebrated series of talks on Masonry and for the rest of his career his lectures were obviously a feature of considerable interest. At the meeting held in November 1935 the Secretary obviously had something of a field day. He was able to confirm that there was no Original Tyler's Book for the period 1851 to 1878. The reason for this was that during this period, as we know, the Howe Mark Lodge was a subsidiary of the Howe Craft Lodge. There was, accordingly, only one Tyler's Book (that of the Craft Lodge) and attendance at the Mark Lodge was recorded in that book.

Other interesting snippets from that era include a reference to the Mark Benevolent Fund, the redoubtable Mervyn Pugh, and the Mark Lodge of Instruction. In the mid 1930s the benevolent fund was referred to as the Warwickshire Mark Tontine and Benevolent Fund. This is quite fascinating as a Tontine is a fund where the last survivor takes the cash balance. One has to wonder why this particular form was chosen in Warwickshire, and by whom it was later amended? Mervyn Pugh was the famous and feared Birmingham Police Prosecuting Solicitor. He became Master in 1937, having been advanced in 1925. On the summons for September 1937, there was printed for the first time the Calendar of Meetings of the Warwickshire Mark Lodge of Instruction. Why, 60 years on, should we not revive this useful custom especially as the Lodge of Instruction still meets under Howe's sponsorship?

On 23 September 1939 the Second World War began and all Masonic Meetings were immediately suspended. Resumption occurred later the same month, but under guidelines issued by the Grand Secretary. The Peace Memorial Temple was requisitioned in or about December 1939 and the Lodge moved under Dispensation to the Edgbaston Assembly Rooms. The first Master to be installed there on 16 January 1940 was L J Biddle.

The War Years, 1940-45, at the Edgbaston Assembly Rooms, Francis Road

During the War Years the Lodge had the advantage of a stable membership made up mainly of mature men over the age of military service. This is not to say, however, that these years were not without dramatic incident. For instance, at the November meeting in 1940 the Secretary, Bro. Walter Hiorns, was congratulated on having produced the Minutes notwithstanding the bombing of his office and his home by the German air force. Then, at the January meeting of 1941, the Lodge marked the death through enemy action of V.W. Bro. William Roe, the Provincial Grand Secretary.

Despite the austerities imposed by war, the Howe Lodge of MMMs was able, when required, to put on the grand occasion. If its soubriquet of being known as the House of Lords was not in vogue before, then during the 1940s it became well earned. When Charles Frederick Monk, the Birmingham solicitor and Assistant Provincial Grand Master (Craft), was advanced in March 1941 more than 40 Mark Masons were present including many of the rulers of the Province. In 1942 the Warwickshire Mark Lodge of Instruction moved to Severn Street. There was a six months period of mourning for the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, G.M. of the Craft; The Duke of Kent, G.M. of the Craft, was killed in September; and the Lodge changed its meetings to January, March, May, and September. It was also the year when, after the Battle of El Alamein in the autumn, the tide of war began to turn in favour of the Allies.

Early in 1944 the much loved and much respected R. W. Bro. Matthew H Clarke, PGM in the Mark, passed away. His death on 5 February gave rise to a great sense of loss mingled with thankfulness for the many hours he had spent with Howe Lodge. These emotions were channelled into positive action at an Emergency Meeting called for August of that year. There was one item of business on the agenda: to consider a Petition for the formation of the Matthew Clarke Lodge of MMMs. All the Lodges in the Province were invited to put forward joining members. Howe's Charles Frederick Monk was nominated as the first Senior Warden.

Among the domestic minutiae of this period, two matters particularly caught the writer's attention. In those days it was the custom of the Lodge to mark the death of a member's wife by the traditional moments of Silence. In a lighter vein, it was noted that C E Moore was beginning to rival L J Biddle as a lecturer. On the 19 September 1944 W. Bro. Moore left an open question that should still intrigue members today: 'Why is the Mark opened and closed in the name of Adoniram, when in all other degrees it is always in the name of the Deity?' Adoniram is a variation on the name Hiram as recorded in 1 Kings or in 11 Chronicles written 700 years later. The name itself: Adon (H) Iram could also mean Master Hiram supervisor of the levy required to build King Solomon's Temple.

Peace came on 8 May 1945 and the meeting held on 15 May was obviously a very emotional affair. Before the Lodge was opened the 27 brethren present sang the first verse of the National Anthem. The Chaplain then read Chapters 12 and 25 from the Book of Isaiah - 'And in that day though shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee' ... 'O Lord ...I will praise thy name; for thou hast done

wonderful things'. He then offered a Special Prayer of Praise and Thanksgiving. That same evening Allen Holden and Harold Tyler (both will be remembered by current members) were elected to membership.

On 7 July 1945 an especial Emergency Meeting was held by dispensation in Warwick to mark Victory in Europe. There were present 18 members of the Lodge, five members of Provincial Grand Lodge, and the Master and 17 members of Shakespeare Lodge. Before the meeting the members were able to watch the conferring of the Freedom of the Borough on the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and to walk the grounds of Warwick Castle. The highlight of the evening was an Address given by W. Bro. the Ven. H. McGowan in which he recalled the perils endured during the war years. He expressed thankfulness and gratitude to the Almighty for the end of the horrors of war in Europe. He prayed for a quick end to the war in the Far East, and he prayed for peace among the Nations. W. Bro. A J Collings, Secretary at the time, surely captured the mood of all the members in his minute referring to 'the words of such beauty, tolerance, and hope that left them spiritually uplifted and fortified'.

At the final meeting of 1945, held on 18 September, W. Bro. L J Biddle presented a gavel of which the head was stone from King Solomon's quarries in Jerusalem, while the handle was made of olive wood from the Mount of Olives. It was bought by him while serving in the RAF in the Middle East during the war. This gavel was used in error, and to his horror, by the acting MO at a meeting in 1997. Its significance was lost on the acting Tyler at that time.

The early years of the Peace from 1946 to the Centenary Year of 1950, all at the Edgbaston Assembly Rooms

The first meeting of the post-war era was held on 15 January 1946. This again was one of those spectacular meetings for which the Howe Mark Lodge was becoming known. There were present 24 members of the Lodge and 22 visitors, plus the Tyler. Of these, nine were Grand Lodge Officers, and 20 were Provincial officers. The occasion was the installation of Bro. Thomas Jenkins as Master.

The distinguishing feature of these five years was the overall steadiness of the Lodge. It had a membership of some 25 brethren, most of whom were extremely experienced in the Mark degree. A steady influx of candidates balanced losses from retirement and deaths, and a meaningful programme

ensued. The first year of the Peace was marked by the dropping of the May meeting and the reinstatement of the November one. In September the Lodge hosted the meeting that approved the Petition for the formation of the Peace and Unity Lodge of MMMs. Of particular significance was the reception at the November meeting of the New Mark Ritual. Another writer has suggested that this was the first time that Howe had fallen completely into line with the Province!

During 1946/47 price increases obviously affected the finances of the Lodge. The Treasurer discovered to his horror that the Master was actually paying bills out of his own pocket. This was remedied in March 1947 by raising the annual subscription from three guineas to four guineas.

The minutes for this period reveal a quite delightful eccentricity or peccadillo of Granville Niness the Treasurer. He made a point of never presenting audited accounts for adoption. Only after adoption would he submit the accounts for audit.

This period ended with the Celebration of the Centenary of the Lodge, held by dispensation on 11 November 1950. This meeting was undoubtedly one of the 'spectaculars' that the Howe Mark Lodge was renowned. There were present some 111 brethren including 30 members, a delegation of six brethren from Provincial Grand Lodge, six brethren from neighbouring Provincial Grand Lodges, 19 brethren from the Newstead Lodge, 11 Masters from other Lodges in the Province, and 38 other visitors, plus the Tyler. Of these present no less than 52 of the brethren were either Grand Officers or Provincial Grand Officers. As a forest of red and gold the gathering for a private Lodge must have been awesome to behold.

1951 - 1970 at the Edgbaston Assembly Rooms

The 1950s and 1960s were very much the glory days for the Howe Mark Lodge. It had a substantial membership and the large number of visitors was a distinguishing feature at most meetings. There was a significant cross-membership at high rank between the Provinces of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and Staffordshire & Shropshire. Perhaps the apogee in this inter-provincial characteristic of the Lodge was achieved in 1958 when R. W. Bro. Vernon Grosvenor, the PGM for Worcestershire, became Worshipful Master. A further tangible example of this alliance between the three provinces was the adoption by the Lodge in 1954 of a 'New Book of Hymns and Chants' approved by the three PGMs.

No doubt building on the fellowship of the Centenary Meeting in 1950, a fraternal visit was made in 1952 to the Newstead Mark Lodge TI. On that occasion a demonstration of the 'Old Working' was given. It is our loss that no commentary on the evening was placed on the record. All those who attended are long since gone and we can only speculate what that ceremony might have been like.

These two decades were ones when the great and the good were members of Howe Mark. It would be invidious to name too many names as so many distinguished members of the professions, businesses, trade, and commerce, added lustre to the Lodge. There are, however, a handful of names that will bring back memories to the older members of the Lodge. In 1953, W. Bro. Leslie Seymour, already a high-ranking Mark Mason, came in as a joining member. This archetypal Brummie, former MP, civic dignitary, etc., etc., gave his occupation as 'Toolmaker'. He sat easily with all the luminaries of the City: he was after all closer than any of them to Tubal Cain. Then, in 1954, Donald McGill began his long career in Howe Mark. He became WM in 1962 and in the same year he was appointed Provincial Grand Senior Overseer. On the death of W. Bro. A J Hendry in 1967, McGill took over the office of Secretary and he remained in that office until his death on Whit Sunday 18 May 1997. It probably never occurred to him that he would outserve W. Bro. A J Collings who was Secretary from 1939 to 1961, a period of 22 years. Collings, on his retirement in 1961, was created Consultant Secretary of the Lodge. In academic parlance this would equate to Secretary Emeritus. Of the 1920s generation the famous Police Solicitor Mervyn Pugh DSO MC, passed away in 1961 and a new generation of Mark Masons began to fill the offices. Of those in office in mid 1965 only three remained by the mid 1990s and they were effectively retired from regular attendance. However, just as a well pruned rose grows again with vigour, a new and varied membership emerged to carry the Lodge forward towards the Millennium.

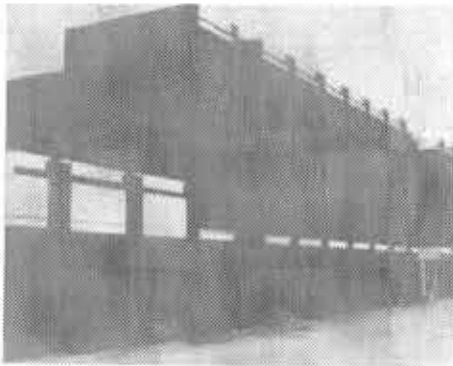
Towards the end of the 1960s, in November 1968 to be precise, there took place one of the last of the astonishing 'spectaculars' in the post war history of the Lodge. There were 3 candidates that evening: W. Bro. Eric Brown (about to become V. W. Bro.) as a joining member; Bro. Kenneth Mallin from the Kafue Lodge No. 1212, Northern Rhodesia, also as a joining member; and W. Bro. William Leonard Barrows the Assistant PGM, the candidate for advancement. The colonial boy had not been in a Mark Lodge since 1962, had never before seen a Grand Officer, and could hardly identify the Provincial Officers. There were 57 Mark Masons present including many of the most senior Officers of the three Provinces. The Lodge, when it came to order, was a forest of red and gold. 'Is this for us?' one of the intending joining members said to the other. 'No, it's for Leonard Barrows of course' said the other one.

It was, indeed, quite an evening and one of the last meetings of the Howe Mark Lodge as the 'House of Lords'.

At the next meeting, in January 1969, the passing of W. Bro. L J Biddle was marked, and his famous Lectures and tales from the wartime years spent in the Middle East passed into the history of the Lodge.

The May meeting of 1971 was the last to be held at the Edgbaston Assembly Rooms. No comment was made in the Minutes about this and strangely, looking back through the Minute Books, no farewells were ever expressed when a change in venue came about.

1971 - 2000 at the New Masonic Temple, Clarendon Road, then Stirling Road, Edgbaston



The first meeting at the New Masonic Temple took place on 16 November 1971. No particular notice of this was recorded in the Minutes. It was, however, quite an occasion in the style of a mini-spectacular. W. Bro. Stanley Bennett, a senior Craft mason, was advanced and the 45 brethren in attendance, including many of the great and the good of the

Province. Like his fellow luminary from the Craft, Leonard Barrows, Stanley Bennett was well liked and the brethren were very generous in allowing both these senior masons to jump a place or two in the progression whenever the opportunity arose. By a sad coincidence both men died suddenly when occupying the office of Junior Warden: Barrows died in 1976 and Bennett in 1982.

The move to Clarendon Road coincided with the start of runaway inflation in the 1970s. Subscriptions of £10 in 1973 rose by 50 per cent to £15, while the cost of meals rose by 20 per cent a year later. Prior to these increases large attendances were a feature of the meetings, often with 30 members present plus numerous guests. From this decade it is possible to chart the fall-off in the total numbers attending. Cost must have played a part in this.

The 1970s were the years when virtually the last of the between Wars members passed on into the care of the Great Overseer. W. Bro. Granville Niness died suddenly in 1973 after a membership of almost 50 years since coming in as a joining member in 1924. R. W. Bro. Leslie Seymour, the PGM, died in 1976 to be succeeded by R. W. Bro. Ronald Gardner. Both these brethren were active joining members of the Lodge. V. W. Bro. Leslie Barnett died in 1978 after a membership of 56 years. He was regarded by his peers as a 'truly illustrious' mason in all the many orders in which he held high office. He also had the added 'distinction' of being the only candidate in the history of the Howe Mark Lodge who did not sign the Declaration prior to being advanced. No explanation exists for this oversight and it was never corrected. The deaths of Niness, Seymour, and Barnett, left only W. Bro. Christopher Moore from those days prior to the Second World War. Moore had been advanced in 1929, elected an Honorary Member in 1985, and he died in 1989. He had been a member for 60 years. The 1970s also saw the death in 1979 of R. W. Bro. Sir Stanley J Harley, PGM in the Craft and a member for 20 years. Thus, in that decade the last members of the House of Lords passed on, leaving the Lodge to another generation living in different times and with different mores.

The death of Stanley Bennett in 1982 created an unusual situation as the Senior Warden was unable to progress in 1983 to the Master's Chair. Bro. Stanley Farrington, who was 80 years of age and the Chaplain, was invited to serve in his stead. Farrington was a former bank manager who became a priest in the Church of England on his retirement. He agreed to serve although he had held no other office other than that of Chaplain since his advancement. Because of this a Dispensation was issued by Mark Grand Lodge to cover the fact that he had not served as a Warden. On this occasion all the paper work was in order - in marked contrast to a fall from administrative grace in 1975.

That was the year when the Newstead Lodge of MMMs paid a fraternal visit and demonstrated the Old Working. On the same evening, 20 May 1975, V. W. Bro. Ronald Gardner had become a joining member. Earlier in the year at the Installation Meeting, Bro. Kenneth Crompton Nicholas was installed as WM. Although the writer was present he has no recollection, and the Minutes do not help him, as to why this meeting should have attracted an attendance by 30 members and 23 visitors, including many of high Masonic rank. Crompton Nicholas was a most retiring man remembered for his courtly manners and for the fact that he travelled incredible distances to attend the Lodge in which he was Organist for many years. That meeting was probably the last really grand occasion in the history of the last quarter century.

Imagine the consternation when it transpired some time later that Crompton Nicholas, although appointed Senior Warden in January 1974, was not actually present on that occasion. Thus, he had not been appointed and invested and served a full year in that state. In June 1975 the Grand Lodge of MMMs granted a dispensation nunc pro tunc (in respect of the circumstances prevailing at the time) to cover this irregularity!!

The coup that failed

The writer was minded to omit any specific reference to this particularly distressing episode in the history of the Lodge, an episode that took place in the later years under review. To have done so would, however, have distorted the story and would have left too many consequences unexplained. It is hoped, therefore, that by the omission of names and dates that the sensibilities of certain brethren still alive can be spared.

The Howe Mark Lodge has had a long history of long serving Secretaries and Treasurers. All have served the Lodge with great distinction. Then, at a certain point in the history of the Lodge a quite unwarranted, yet well intentioned, interference from an outside source prompted one or two Past Masters to move the Lodge into the 20th century. The idea was to constitute a Lodge Committee under the obvious chairmanship of the Master, and to which the Secretary and Treasurer would be answerable. All good pragmatic stuff, but the idea exploded in the faces of the proposers mainly through the way in which it was presented. Great personal hurt and distress was caused to two members of the Lodge one of whom, the Master, resigned. The writer had been 'invited' by one of the proponents of the new order to serve as the new Secretary. He declined without giving the idea a second's thought; and his long absences abroad that year kept him on the outer edges of the affair until it resolved itself. The meeting of all the Past Masters at which the matter was discussed, and disposed of, was remarkable by any standards!

Unfortunately, on the night that the Master's resignation was announced, four other members also resigned for completely unconnected reasons. Within a year, one death and three other resignations, by business friends of the former Master, resulted in one third of the active membership of the Lodge having departed in a period of twelve months. This left the Lodge in a seriously weakened position for many years. Most of the Past Masters regularly weighed-in by filling vacant offices; and by a sustained programme of recruitment the end of the century saw the Lodge nicely balanced once more. This is that balance that depends entirely on an orderly progression of the various generations through the Lodge.

The reference to a significant bloc of the membership coming from a particular business activity has prompted a pertinent observation from W. Bro. Victor Brookes. The Howe Mark Lodge has always enjoyed tremendous support from the Lister (Craft) Lodge No 3599 and from the Vernon Chapter Rose

Croix No 5. At the time of writing in mid 1997, no less than nine members are from Lister Lodge and nine from Vernon Chapter, there being an element of duplication it is freely admitted. Of the four Grand Officers in the Lodge three are from Lister Lodge, while of the sixteen subscribing past masters no less than seven of them are from the medical world in general.

Towards the Millennium and the 150th Anniversary of the Lodge

The Lodge that emerged in the 1990s was every bit as dynamic as the Lodge that survived the trials and tribulations of the 1850s. Membership continued to be drawn from a broad spectrum of the City's business and professional activities. There was, however, an influx of talent from a previously untapped source: this was the Police service. These members, used to a disciplined approach to matters, certainly made their mark in the Lodge. Maybe they acted as a catalyst or a flux? Whatever, the standard of ritual in the 1990s gladdened the hearts of all those who were members at that time.

By the mid 1990s, the thoughts of Donald McGill were on the Millennium and the 150th Anniversary of the Lodge. Although he was a dying man he set in motion the arrangements to mark these two events. The last 'committee' over which he presided set out the framework and form for the Lodge's celebrations. He died on Whit Sunday 18th May 1997 at the age of 85 years. W. Bro. Donald McGill as Secretary, writer of obituaries, and motivator extraordinary took on the office in mid 1967 following the death in office as Secretary of W. Bro. Tony Hendry. His tenure is never likely to be emulated either in length of duration, dedication, or excellence of performance. He served for 30 years. His epitaph must surely be in the words often used by one of the senior Past Masters. Instead of Howe Mark Lodge he always referred to Donald McGill's Lodge. Thus, unofficially, and within a very small circle, Donald McGill in his own lifetime had the accolade given posthumously to such revered brethren as Canon Barnard, Matthew Clarke, and Harry Wilson. By a happy coincidence the Past Master who took over the Secretary's duties was also a member of the Old Dixonians (Craft) Lodge, McGill's own Lodge.

A fitting and formal tribute was given at the May 1997 meeting by Victor Brookes. This tribute is recorded in the minute book.

Business during the remaining years of the century followed a conventional course of quiet endeavour. New members were advanced and a whole new generation of officers progressed towards the chair. Then, in 1998 and largely on the initiative of W. Bros. Paul Weston and Phillip Gough, a decision was made to invite the Provincial Grand Master to join the Lodge with a view to his

being Master during the year 2000. R.W. Bro. Robert G Russell was duly elected a member on the 16th March 1999. His election was a relatively quiet affair when compared to the Installation of Bro. G.A. McNicholl as Master on the 19th January 1999. On this occasion the P.G.M. brought a large Provincial Delegation of 25 Officers. Additionally, the Provincial Grand Master of Staffordshire and Shropshire, R.W. Bro. J.A. Hammond was in attendance with a further 27 members of his Province. Thus Bro. McNicholl was installed by his predecessor W. Bro. Weston on one of those Grand occasions that have punctuated the history of Howe Mark Lodge.

In due course, on the 18th January 2000, R.W. Bro. Robert Giles Russell was installed as Master of the Lodge for the Millennium year. Under his leadership no less than four candidates were advanced in two double ceremonies, a full social calendar went ahead including a Formal evening, where once again the traditions of superb food and drink within the Lodge were revived.

The culmination of the Millennium year however, was the celebration of the Lodge's 150th year of existence, held at the Clarendon Suite, Stirling Road, Edgbaston, on the 21st November 2000. On this splendid occasion, the Lodge was honoured by the presence from Mark Grand Lodge of R.W. Bro. Keith Carmichael, CBE, PGSW, President of the General Board, accompanied by V.W. Bro. Michael Masters, PGJO, the Grand Director of Ceremonies, together with a wonderful attendance of Mark Masons from across this and many other Provinces.

The Lodge was privileged to witness the dedication of the first banner in its 150 year history that had been generously donated by W. Bro. V.S. Brookes, his 80th birthday coinciding with our celebrations. An explanation of the banner's symbolism was given by W.Bro. Idris Jones, Provincial Grand Chaplain.

Commemorative Mark tokens and Lodge histories were presented to all present; and bound copies of the history were presented to R.W. Bro. Carmichael, to the Master of Newstead Lodge and to the Library of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Warwickshire.

What a close to the year 2000! And what a start upon the road to the Bi-Centenary. The new banner, the design of which was inspired by that of Howe Craft, expresses faith in the continuance of the Lodge, and demonstrates the co-operation and harmony that now exists between Howe Craft and Howe Mark.

Today's members respect the heritage of their past, represented within these pages, and relish the challenge of the future, when brethren yet to come will add to this history of the Howe Mark Masters' Lodge Time Immemorial.

Past Masters of Howe Mark Masters Lodge T.I.

1850. John Ward Lloyd.	1915. L.H.Demuth.	1967. Hugh Carson. P.A.G.D.C.
1854. Bassett Smith.	1916. E.L.C.Austin.	1968. L.G.Seymour. Prov.G.M.
1855. L.H.Bedford.	1917. Cornelius Combridge.	1969. B.C.Conochie. P.A.G.D.C. *
1856. F.J.Roberts.	1918. Sir William H.Bowater.	1970. H.B.Clark. Prov.G.I.Wks.
1857. J.Ross.	1919. C.F.Gaunt.	1971. M.A.Cooke. P.Prov.G.Reg. *
1858. A.McCracken.	1920. George Thomas. P.G.D.	1972. J.R.D.Wilde. P.Prov.G.M.O.
1859. J.Pursall.	1921. James Lucking. P.G.O.	1973. T.C.Watson. P.G.J.D.
1860. G.Hudson.	1922. Thomas C.Mason	1974. W.N.Dudley Evans. P.Prov.G.S.W.
1861. Hy.Weiss.	1923. Thomas C.Mason.	1975. K.H.C.Nicholas. Prov.A.G.Chap.
1862. T.Turner.	1924. E.W.Maund.	1976. Fred Grocott. P.Prov.G.S.D.
1863. J.B.Hebbert.	1925. G.Austin Baker.	1977. Robert Gaukroger. P.Prov.G.S.W. *
1864. W.B.Smith.	1926. John Burgess. P.G.D.	1978. V.S.Brookes. P.A.G.D.C. *
1865. F.D.Johnson.	1927. Thomas Burman. P.G.M.O.	1979. Jim Watt. P.Prov.G.S.W.
1868. T.A.Best.	1928. Frank Burnett. G.M.O.	1980. Kenneth Mallin. P.Prov.G.S.W. *
1873. T.A.Best.	1929. Clive J.Levy. P.Prov.G.Reg.	1981. W.W.Blackburn. P.Prov.G.S.W.
1878. W.K.R.Bedford. Prov.G.M.	1930. John Hill. P.G.O.	1982. H.B.Watson. P.Prov.G.S.W. *
1879. Foster Gough	1931. G.E.Niness. P.G.S.D.	1983. Rev.A.S.Farrington. Prov.G.Chap.
1880. J.Rowlands.	1932. Alexander Ramsey	1984. T.C.Austin. Prov.G.Std.B.
1881. W.H.Sproton.	1933. H.E.Shay. P.A.G.D.C.	1985. J.P.D.Warren. Prov.G.S.D.
1882. I.L.Kennedy.	1934. Leslie Burnett. P.G.O.	1986. A.W.Maddison. Prov.A.G.Sec.(Worcs)
1883. G.K.Patterson.	1935. A.M.Hutton.	1987. Henry Roberts. P.G.Std.B. *
1884. Stephen Wood.	1936. Rev.C.A.Brown. P.Prov.G.Chap.	1988. G.C.Cookson.
1885. Loxdale Warren.	1937. M.P.Pugh. P.Prov.G.Reg.	1989. W.H.Toogood. P.Prov.G.J.W. *
1886. Rev. Trevor Parkins.	1938. Douglas Jenkins. Prov.G.Reg.	1990. S.A.Tait.
1887. Charles Pendelov	1939. H.A.Yeoward. P.Prov.G.Std.B.(Worcs)	1991. P.R.Harrison. P.Prov.G.J.O. *
1888. I.Jacobs.	1940. L.J.Biddle. G.J.D.	1992. H.E.Tonks. P.Prov.G.S.D. *
1889. T.H.Smith.	1941. A.J.Collings. P.G.S.D.	1993. M.J.Roper Hall. P.G.Std.B. *
1890. T.H.Smith.	1942. Samuel Guise. P.G.O.	1994. R.A.Bailey. P.Prov.G.I.Wks. *
1891. Rev.M.Trevor Parkins.	1943. C.E.Moore. P.Prov.G.Reg.	1995. Phillip Gough. Prov.G.M.O. *
1892. Rev.M.Trevor Parkins	1944. W.F.Hordern. P.A.G.D.C.	1996. S.M.Viney. P.Prov.Dep.G.Chap. *
1893. D.C.Lloyd Owen.	1945. W.C.Howard. P.Prov.G.W.	1997. P.F.Weston. P.Prov.G.Reg. *
1894. D.C.Lloyd Owen.	1946. Thomas Jenkins. Prov. G.M.O.	1998. P.F.Weston. P.Prov.G.Reg. *
1895. D.C.Colmore.	1947. Chas.F.Monk. P.G.O.	1999. G.A.McNicholl. Prov.G.J.D. *
1896. Wright Wilson.	1948. Bertram S.Jeavons. Prov.G.M.O.	
1897. A.H.Hebbert.	1949. H.T.Roper Hall. Prov.G.S.D.	
1898. N.H.Turner.	1950. C.H.Blackford.	* Subscribing Past Masters
1899. H.J.Collins.	1951. F.M.Bradley. P.Prov.G.S.W.	
1900. J.S.Pritchett. P.G.O.	1952. W.I.Gwynn Watkins. P.Prov.G.Reg.	
1901. Charles Rainsford. P.G.D.	1953. Frank Powell. Prov.G.M.O.	
1902. Charles Rainsford. P.G.D.	1954. H.E.Tyler. P.A.G.D.C.	
1903. N.H.Turner.	1955. A.N.Holden. P.G.J.D.	
1904. Hans Graff.	1956. N.C.Plummer. Prov.G.Reg.	
1905. Hans Graff.	1957. A.M.Hendry. P.A.G.D.C.	
1906. J.Headon Boocock.	1958. V.W.Grosvenor. Prov.G.M.(Worcs).	
1907. C.W.Lloyd Evans.	1959. P.R.Hackett. Prov.G.Reg.	
1908. R.D.Hume.	1960. H.W.Archer Hall. Prov.G.Reg.	
1909. G.D.Willmott	1961. R.H.Cobham. P.Prov.G.S.W.	
1910. Zaccheus Walker.	1962. D.A.McGill. P.G.J.D.	
1911. E.H.Jones.	1963. E.N.Holden. P.Prov.G.J.W.	
1912. G.W.Radley.	1964. Sir Stanley J.Harley. G.S.W.	
1913. C.W.Barnard.	1965. Norman Haines. P.Prov.G.S.O.	
1914. T.A.Taylor. P.Prov.G.I.W.	1966. R.C.Pontifex. Prov.G.S.W.	