

Keystone Lodge

of Mark Master Masons No:109

A Brief History of its Formation and Early Years



Keystone Lodge of Mark Master Masons No:109 A Brief History

The Warrant of the Keystone Lodge No:109 of Mark Master Masons is dated 29th of March 1870 and the Lodge was consecrated on the 25th of July 1870. The Consecrating Officer was V.W.Bro Frederick Binckes who was at the time the Grand Secretary. The Keystone Lodge pre-dates the formation of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Monmouthshire by seven years.

Six Brethren were admitted as joining members and forty-six candidates were proposed, seconded and duly elected, twenty-nine of these candidates being in attendance were then advanced into the honorable degree of Mark Master Masons.

The Grand Secretary worked the whole ceremony of advancing the candidates and then proceeded to consecrate the lodge after which he duly installed Col. Charles Lyne who was the Provincial Grand Master for the Craft Degree at the time, as the first Worshipful Master of the Keystone Mark Lodge.

Bro Samuel Homfray became a Joining Member at the consecration meeting and soon after Bros L. A. Homfray and W. H W. Homfray were advanced into the order. Bro J.G. Homfray was installed as Master of the lodge in 1873 and Bro L. A. Homfray in 1875.

Several of the founders of the Lodge had been previously advanced in the Langley Lodge of Mark Master Masons No 28 in Cardiff. This Lodge originally worked under the Scottish constitution but in January 1870 they were admitted into the Constitution of England and Wales, and on 13th of January 1870, Bro TG South wrote to the Newport Brethren as follows:-

"We have just been admitted into the Constitution of England and Wales and I have been with others obligated under a fresh warrant. We now have the power to confirm all our members under this warrant. You had now better attend here on one of our meetings and take the fresh obligation, until this is done you cannot sign a requisition for a charter under another constitution". You would say a letter to the point.

Bro Hellyer who became senior warden of the Keystone lodge wrote to the Grand Secretary for a copy of ritual and the Grand Secretary replied under the date of the 26th of February 1870 that *"It is not customary with us to send them to any but Worshipful Masters of lodges, or to know certificated brethren"*.

However, a ritual was duly prepared and sent early April 1870 the cost being £1-2s-1d, and the Warrant was then dispatched on the 25th of April 1870.

On the 28th of November 1870 Bro David Roberts G.S.B of the Langley Lodge No 28 took the chair of the Keystone Lodge due to the Worshipful Master being ill and duly advanced Bro Lorenzo Augustus Homfery who was the Mayor of Newport at the time along with 9 other Brethren.

Unfortunately, the early minutes of the lodge do not contain many items of general interest. As a rule they merely a record of various candidates being duly proposed, elected and advanced into Mark Masonry, but it has been recorded that the Keystone Lodge aided the growth of Mark Masonry in Monmouthshire due to the Lodge holding a Lodge of Instruction which was attended by brethren from Maius Lodge of Risca, and Cubestone and Albert Edwards lodges both of Newport.

At the Keystone Lodge Meeting in November 1876 the Lodge Minutes reveal the following resolution was signed by the Brethren “ *for the purpose of extending Mark Masonry in Monmouthshire it has been after due consideration, decided to petition the Most Worshipful Grand Master, the Earl of Limerick to appoint our well beloved and Worshipful Master Bro Lorenzo Augustus Homfery as the first Provincial Grand Master for Monmouthshire.*” This was truly a fantastic honor for the Keystone lodge.

At the January meeting of the Keystone lodge in 1877 Bro Lorenzo Augustus Homfery announced to the Brethren of the Lodge that he had received from the Grand Master his ‘Patent of appointment’ as the Provincial Grand Master for Monmouthshire. The history of the Keystone Lodge dose indeed go hand in hand with the history of the Province of Monmouthshire.

The Keystone Lodge has been very fortunate to have four of its Brethren become Provincial Grand Master of Monmouthshire and 7 brethren become Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Monmouthshire during its 150-year history. A fact the lodge should be very proud of. 17 brethren from the Keystone Lodge were Members of the first Provincial Team.

The Keystone Lodge has gone from strength to strength over the years and in 1920 celebrated its first milestone, this being its 50th anniversary the Worshipful Master at the time was WBro H J Wall, but the minutes show no records of the anniversary being mentioned.

However, the 100-year anniversary was a different matter, on April 16th 1970 the lodge was opened at 6.15pm by the Worshipful Master at the time WBro R.K. Palfrey. Accompanied by 79 Brethren who attended the meeting.

The Lodge carried out its normal business and balloted for 2 candidates for advancement both from the Jasper Tudor Lodge no:4074. Then the Worshipful Master received the Provincial Grand Master, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Officers of Grand Lodge and Officers of Provincial Grand Lodge.

The Worshipful Master gave an address to the Brethren, then the Provincial Secretary rose and read the Centenary Warrant. The Provincial Grand Master presented the Centenary Warrant to the Worshipful Master who accepted it on behalf of the lodge.

Very Worshipful Brother J Ralph Jones addressed the Brethren following which a presentation of Centenary Jewels was made by Provincial Grand Master to the Lodge Members there present. Then followed the ceremony of the presentation of a Banner.

WBro J. A. Spencer Provincial Grand Standard Bearer requested the Brethren of the Keystone Lodge of Mark Master Masons to accept a Banner to commemorate the Lodges Centenary. The Worshipful Master then invited the Provincial Grand Master to take the Chair of the Lodge where he dedicated the Lodge Banner.

The lodge has continued to grow but in recent times has had its challenges, but on this its 150th Anniversary the Lodge has been as strong it has been for a long time and hopefully it will continue to grow and in due time will celebrate its 200 year Anniversary.