

THE CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF 5 ROSE CROIX CHAPTER CHAPTERS

1. INTRODUCTION

In July 2018, five Lancashire Rose Croix Chapters were to celebrate their centenaries within a few days of each other. It is customary for the Supreme Council, which is the governing body for the Ancient and Accepted Right Rose Croix Order, to mark a Chapter centenary with a visit from some of its members and this would involve them travelling from London for each Centenary. The celebration of the Centenaries of five Rose Croix Chapters was a unique occasion in the Rose Croix Order, and I suspect in Freemasonry generally. However, it was felt that the logistics of five separate visits would be quite impractical. The solution was to hold one meeting with all the Chapters present. It was a practical and unique solution which worked very well. The meeting was held at Westhoughton Freemasons Hall on the 30th July 2018. However, one should note, how the 5 Consecrations were managed 100 years ago by their predecessors and I will expand on the punishing itinerary of July 1918, later in the paper.

During preparation meetings for this unique event, several questions arose as to the reasons for 5 Chapters being consecrated over a period of 4 days in 1918. Up to that time there were only thirteen Rose Croix Chapters in the whole of Lancashire and of those thirteen, four of them were consecrated in 1912/13. So, in 1918 another increase of almost 50%, was again, quite a notable change. World War 1 was still very much overshadowing life in Great Britain, yet the Brethren of Lancashire felt there was a need for expansion. I was curious to discover the reasons for these 5 new Rose Croix Chapters being Consecrated at that time. This also led me to look at the personalities involved in the Rose Croix in those days.

It is not my intention to look at each Chapter's History in detail, but rather into the background and some of the connected personalities of that period and of the mid to late 19th century during which the Rose Croix Order developed in Lancashire and the North of England.

2. EARLY LANCASHIRE & NORTH OF ENGLAND ROSE CROIX

It will be useful to fill in some background to the Rose Croix Order in The North of England and particularly Lancashire in the late 19th Century up to 1918.

Bolton was the cradle of Craft Freemasonry in the 18th and 19th centuries; Anchor & Hope Lodge 37 was authorized by Deputation in 1732 and was one of the Premier Lodges in Lancashire for many years. I am making a supposition, that some members of Lodge 37 were early Rose Croix Brethren. The Rose Croix started in England and Wales in 1845, in London. In

1852, on March 21st, The Supreme Council issued 5 Warrants for Chapters in England, three in the South, one in Birmingham and the fifth in Lancashire, this being Palatine No. 7, The Warrant for Palatine, "Authorised the holding of a Sov. Chapter of Rose Croix at stated times at Bolton, Manchester and Liverpool" and was given to Matthew Dawes, the Provincial Grand Commander of the Knights Templar in Lancashire. Liverpool 19 and St Peters 31 followed within the next 20 years. Although I don't have evidence to support my thoughts, I am suggesting that some members of Palatine were involved in the founding of those two Chapters as well as Talbot Chapter No. 16 at Sheffield in Yorkshire.

As there were only a small number of Rose Croix Chapters in the mid to late 19th century. It was only in 1872 that The Supreme Council started the District Organisations with Inspectors General, (the Rose Croix Equivalent of Provincial Grand Master). Our administrative area was known as the Northern District, and included Cumberland, Westmorland, Northumberland, Durham, Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cheshire. Bro. C J Bannister, a member of Liverpool 19, was Deputy Grand Inspector General in Charge of this Northern District from 1874 until 1883 when the District was divided into two. The North Western Division, which was formed from Cumberland, Westmorland, Lancashire and Cheshire. The Inspector General for this new District, was Capt. C.R.N. Beswick-Royds, and he was in office until his death in 1911, when Col. J. D. Murray was appointed Inspector General and he remained in office until 1919. He died in 1921. George Harradon then took over as Inspector General.

The North Eastern Division was overseen by C.J Bannister who was Inspector General from 1872 until his death in 1893. He was succeeded by W. H. Brittain who was Inspector General until 1913, when the North Eastern Division was further divided up.

The Chapters which met in Lancashire up to 1912 were as follows:

Palatine 7 Consecrated 1852 meeting at Manchester, **Liverpool 19** C1864 Liverpool, **St Peters 31** C1871 Bolton, **Philips 52** C1873 Lancaster, **Crawford 114** C1890 Wigan, **Humphrey Chetham 134** C1895 Manchester, **Blackpool 136** C1896 Blackpool, **Mystic Rose 157** C1906 Southport, **Pharus 158** C1906 Liverpool, **Lakeland 173** C1912 Ulverston, **Murray 177** C1912 Eccles, **Hartley 178** C1912 Shaw/Oldham, **Red Rose of Lancashire 179** C1913 Southport. (2011 Amalgamated with Mystic Rose)

As you can see, the Chapters were spread over most of the County, and the Inspector General's journeys must have been quite grueling, I assume by Train, in those days. The North East of Lancashire and Preston did not have any Chapters at this time.

3. A PERIOD OF RAPID GROWTH

Many articles have been written about the trend of membership in Freemasonry, and I have picked out some statistics, which may help to answer my initial question about the rapid growth

in Lancashire. The peak years for growth in Craft Masonry in England and Wales were 1921 and 1949. In 1921 almost 31000 Grand Lodge Certificates were issued, however it should be noted one of the lowest years for the issue of Certificates was 1915 when only 12,250 were issued. Recent research into numbers has indicated that the growth in numbers cannot wholly be attributed to the ending of the War but may have been due to socio-economic reasons. The fact that 4 new Chapters were consecrated in Lancashire in 1912/13, represented an almost 50% increase in Chapters, indicating that there was rapid growth pre-World War 1. In 1914 there were 166 Chapters under the jurisdiction of the Ancient and Accepted Rite, 56 were overseas, of the remaining 110, 21 were in the North of England.

It was not just the Craft and Royal Arch, which enjoyed a rapid growth in numbers. In the years between 1910 and 1924 the Ancient and Accepted Rite almost doubled in size from 4,260 to 8,144. This rapid growth was reflected in the North during that period. Up until 1910, there were 21 Rose Croix Chapters in the Northern Division (Cheshire/Yorkshire Northwards), by the end of 1918 there were 32 Rose Croix Chapters. Taking Lancashire on its own, it had grown from 9 to 18 Chapters. This figure included the 5 Chapters that celebrated their Centenary 2 years ago.

4. THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIVE CHAPTERS

The Supreme Council Consecrating Officers who officiated at the Consecrations, were as follows,

Lieutenant Grand Commander: Very Puissant Bro. Edward Nash 33°

Grand Marshall: Most Illustrious. Bro. Edward Armitage 33° (Acted as Grand Chaplain)

Grand Capt. General: Most Illustrious. Bro. Col. Sir Arthur Henry McMahon 33°

Grand Secretary General: Most Illustrious. Bro. John C F Tower 33°

Assistant Director of Ceremonies: Very Illustrious. Bro. B. Marr Johnson 33°

On the 1918 summonses of the 5 Chapters the Sovereign Grand Commander, The Earl of Donoughmore, is mentioned as the Senior Consecrating Officer, so it seems there was a last-minute change to the Consecrating Team.

MANCHESTER 193: There were 40 Founders including W. B. Ackerman 32°, J. D. Murray 33° and Richard Gill 32°. Also, among the Founders was Robert Verney Clayton 30°, who has a Rose Croix Chapter named after him in Accrington, No 261

Manchester Chapter had close links with Humphrey Chetham 134 and was probably considered a Chapter of Ease for Humphrey Chetham Chapter.

The Consecration meeting was held at Freemasons Hall, Cooper Street Manchester.

MARK WILKINSON 194: There were 14 Founders including Mark Wilkinson 32°, George Harradon 32°. James D Murray's signature is on the list of founders, but he was not actually a founder, but he must have had an involvement in the Petition and Founding of Mark Wilkinson Chapter. On the day he was a Consecrating Officer, and Installed, as Most Wise Sovereign, (Equivalent to Worshipful Master), of the Chapter. Among the other Founders was William Horrocks 18°, who had a Chapter in Blackburn (No. 603) named after him. Among the list of attendees was William Baker Akerman and E. A. Ehlinger both from Manchester 193.

The business agenda for the Consecrations has as item 1, "**To open a Rose Croix Chapter**". In effect prior to the Consecration and by dispensation from the Supreme Council, Mark Wilkinson opened a Special Chapter of Princes Rose Croix, when 10 Brethren were Perfected, (Initiated), and would become members of the Mark Wilkinson Chapter after the Consecration.

The Consecration meeting was held at the Masonic Hall, Richmond Terrace, Blackburn

WALTER M. HAMILTON 195: There were 20 Founders including Colonel James D Murray 33°, Major Walter M Hamilton 30°. It acted as a Chapter of Ease for Murray Chapter 177, and initially retained close ties with Murray 177.

The Consecration meeting was held at Freemasons Hall, Cooper Street Manchester.

COL. J. D. MURRAY 196: 34 Founders including Colonel James D Murray 33°, Mark Wilkinson 32°, William Horrocks 18°

The Consecration meeting was held at the Masonic Hall, Wigan.

This Chapter acted as a Chapter of Ease for Crawford Chapter 114 and only became a working Chapter in 1947

JAMES D. MURRAY 197: There were 20 Founders, again including Colonel James D Murray 33°.

The Consecration meeting was held at Bolton Masonic Hall.

This Chapter acted as a Chapter of Ease for St Peters 31, Bolton. It was stated to be "formed out of St Peters Chapter for the purpose getting the Brethren through the Chairs more expeditiously. In April 1923 it was decided to Make James D Murray a fully working Chapter and a year later the Chapter moved to Burnley.

The term, **Chapter of Ease**, has been mentioned several times previously, so I hope this following brief explanation helps. In the petition documents of James D Murray Chapter 197, another document is included from St Peters Chapter 31, and in which it is stated, "At our last Chapter

meeting, a petition was signed by a number of the Brethren praying the Supreme Grand Council to grant a Warrant for a Chapter to be called the "James D Murray Chapter," with the object of facilitating the progress of the Brethren through the various offices and keeping up their interest".

5. PERSONALITIES

Freemasonry like all collective organisations is made up of a like-minded membership. Among the members, as happens today, we make friends and those friendships are the essence of our Masonry. So, it is most likely that in 1918 these friendships were part of the driving force that saw five Rose Croix Chapters Consecrated together in Lancashire.

Some of the leading names include, Col. James Daniel Murray, Major Walter M Hamilton, George Harradon, Mark Wilkinson, William Horrocks and William Baker Ackerman.

On reading the Summonses convening the five Consecration meetings. The most prominent name is of course Col. James Daniel Murray. He was founder of 4 of the Chapters, and was on the list of Founders for Mark Wilkinson 194, but his name was crossed out.

As Inspector General, it is likely, he was in a position to drive and influence the Consecration of the five Chapters.

He was born in 1844, initiated in 1877 in Lindsay Lodge 1335. He was perfected in St Peters Chapter Rose Croix No. 31 in 1880. He was a founder and involved in Multiple Lodges in the Liverpool, Wigan and Ormskirk area of West Lancashire. He was Inspector General of the Western Division from 1911 to 1919. In his personal life he lived in Wigan was an Agent and eventually became a Colliery Manager. He died in 1921. I have yet to establish details of his Military involvements.

Major Walter Moffat Hamilton, was born in County Down, and was a Surgeon and quite a senior figure in the world of medicine. He eventually settled in Eccles and was initiated into Imperial George Lodge No. 78 which met at Middleton. He was a member of Lathom Lodge 2229, which met in Liverpool, as were James D Murray, Mark Wilkinson, and George Harradon.

W.M.Hamilton was a founder and first Most Wise Sovereign of Murray Chapter Rose Croix 177.

I have mentioned several other names of prominent Freemasons who were committed to The Rose Croix Order and I am sure there are others, whom I have yet to discover, who were active in Lancashire Rose Croix at that time. All these brethren were also committed Craft Masons, showing the close link between The Craft and the Ancient and Accepted Right.

CONCLUSION

The hardest part of my researches has been in finding out about some of the personalities involved in the Rose Croix in this period and this is going to be an ongoing challenge for me.

What has struck me so far, are the number of personal connections that I uncovered between the Brethren of that era and I am sure there are more to be revealed. These connections must have contributed to the success of the Consecration of the 5 Rose Croix Chapters. Without Brethren of forethought and drive the Rose Croix Order would not be the successful Order it still is today. It is likely that part of the expansion was helped by changes to the transport system of those days with the rapid development of the Railways. Just as around 100 years previously in mid to late 18th Century, craft Masonry expanded, though without a good transport system. Again, I am sure this was driven by the personal friendships and the commitment of Brethren of the era.

The Five Centenary Celebration meeting was held at Westhoughton under the auspices of Morning Star Chapter No.33. For many years the Supreme Council, at every Consecration meeting, constitutes itself into "The Supreme Council Chapter Rose Croix", in its earlier days this had been done for the purposes of Perfecting Brethren of particular distinction. At the Consecration of new Chapters, the proceedings start by the formal opening of the Supreme Council Chapter. In 1921 it was considered that it would be convenient if the Supreme Council also had a regularly warranted Chapter. The Warrant of Morning Star Chapter, fortuitously with the number 33 had been surrendered in 1892. The Supreme Council petitioned itself to transfer the warrant to 10 Duke Street, the location of the headquarters of the Ancient and Accepted Right in England & Wales. Not surprisingly, the Petition was acceded to and the resuscitated Chapter was opened on the 27th July 1921 with the Sovereign Grand Commander, the Earl of Donoughmore in the chair.

At the beginning of the paper, I alluded to the punishing itinerary that the Supreme Council undertook to consecrate the five Chapters in 4 days in July 1918.

On Thursday the 25th July the Supreme Council left Marylebone at 12:15pm to arrive at Manchester (Queens Hotel) at 5:21pm. At 6pm at the Masonic Hall, Cooper Street, they then Consecrated Manchester and Walter M Hamilton Chapters, before having dinner at 7:30pm.

On Friday they left Manchester at 1:55pm to arrive in Wigan at 2:44pm. When it looks like they attended a meeting, possibly of Crawford Chapter at 3pm before Consecrating Col. J. D. Murray Chapter at 5pm. Dinner at 6pm, and back to Manchester at 9.07pm.

On Saturday 27th July leave Manchester at 12:23pm to arrive at Bolton. Lunch at 1pm in Bolton, then at 3:15pm, Consecrate James D Murray Chapter. At 4:16pm leave Bolton for Blackburn, to arrive at the Masonic Hall, Richmond Terrace at 5pm. At 5:30pm Consecrate Mark Wilkinson Chapter, dinner at 6:30pm and leave Blackburn at 8:25pm, to arrive back in Manchester at 9:54pm.

Sunday 28th July leave Manchester at 12:20pm, to arrive at Marylebone at 5:40pm.

That was quite some itinerary.

I hope this short paper illustrates the enthusiasm and commitment of Masons 100 years ago and today. It shows just how much personal friendships and hard work went together to expand the Rose Croix, in those early days. This would be mirrored in the Craft and other Masonic Orders.

Bro David Hawkins

Anchor and Hope Lodge 37