

Marquess of Ripon Lodge No 1379

150th Anniversary History.

(supplementing the Bob Hattersley 1872 – 1997 record*)

Warrant dated 27th November 1871.

Consecrated 4th April 1872

Researched and compiled by

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Introduction

*A comprehensive history of the Marquess of Ripon Lodge was produced by the late WBro Robert (Bob) Hattersley to mark the Lodge's 125th anniversary in 1997. What follows is a record of Lodge activities in subsequent years up to and including the 150th anniversary of its foundation. Let us however remember that this should not be regarded as a definitive record of events save for those documented in approved minutes of Lodge and 'Club' meetings. Rather, it is a personalised memory of the writers and those who have provided recollections and might therefore be better described as a contemporary 'snapshot' in the life of one of Darlington's oldest Masonic institutions.

It is still worth repeating here, for those who have not seen or read Bob's excellent compilation, the story associated with the formation of the Lodge and particularly factors leading to the selection of its name. [\(photo\)](#)

Foundation of the Lodge

It was in May 1871 that seven people of varied backgrounds met to form what was to become the second Craft Lodge in Darlington. They comprised two Doctors, a Chemist, a Professor of Music, a Railway Secretary, a Civil Engineer and a Land Agent. A Petition proposing that the Lodge be named "St. Cuthbert's Lodge" – after Darlington's main Anglican church - and supported by the Master and Officers of Restoration Lodge No 111, at the time Darlington's only Craft Lodge; was presented to the Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham for onward transmission and hoped-for approval by United Grand Lodge. Unfortunately and bizarrely,* the then Provincial Grand Master opposed the name and suggested alternatives such as "Energy" or "Enterprise," names the Proposers found unacceptable. Showing a degree of political skill, the Proposers then responded with their own alternative!

George Frederick Samuel Robinson, the son of the Prime Minister, the first Earl Ripon, and who later became The Marquess of Ripon; had recently been installed as the Most Worshipful Grand Master of England. They therefore suggested that, in recognition of his (near!) local connections and out of courtesy for his position in Masonry, the Lodge, subject to his agreement, should be named after him! Astutely, the Provincial Grand Master agreed to the request and the Charter was duly approved and granted by Grand Lodge on the 27th of November 1871.

(A more detailed account of these events is also published as a preface to the Lodge's current By-Laws.)

*Some forty years later a third Darlington Lodge was formed – its name: "The St Cuthbert Lodge!"

The 125th Anniversary Meeting of the Lodge

The Marquess of Ripon Lodge celebrated the 125th year of its foundation at a meeting in Freemasons' Hall, Darlington – as it always has done - on Thursday 10th April 1997. In addition to the 30 officers and Brethren of the Lodge, those attending included 65 visitors, representing 22 lodges and 17 members of a Provincial Deputation headed by The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, The Right Honourable, The Lord Barnard.

In the 'Chair' at that meeting was WBro David Crompton, initiated in the Lodge in 1987, now PPJGW and the Lodge's Chaplain. He remembers an element of panic when the Provincial DofC (WBro Eric Heaviside – later to become Provincial Grand Master) spoke to him just before the meeting convened to say he was "changing a couple of things" but he now has no idea what they were! He does however recall giving himself a short 'pep talk' along the lines of, "don't mess this up" and confirms things went off well! He also remembers wondering how he would cope sitting alongside a 'Lord' in the form of the Provincial Grand Master at the Festive Board and again, confirms that they got on well and probably 'bonded' as a result of their common problems with hearing!

WBro Rev Michael Snowball, the Provincial Deputy Grand Chaplain, delivered an Oration to mark the occasion in which he stressed the importance of Justice, Mercy and Humility in the past and the future and dedicated the new Banner of the Lodge.*

As the then Junior Warden, Bro Bob Hattersley, gave a short history of the Lodge and was thanked for providing a fascinating and informative look into its past and for compiling the detailed published account of its history. (In gratitude for financial support with publishing costs, we hear that WBro Michael Wilson is the only holder of a **hardback copy** of that book!)

Cheques to the value of £2,500 in support of the 1999 Festival were presented to the Provincial Grand Master.

Other notable events in 1997 included the milestone achievement of WBro Peter Smailes who celebrated 40 years in Freemasonry and the initiation, passing and raising of Bro Robin Turbitt, a local dentist in Darlington who became Worshipful Master in 2007. There were also the usual Fraternal visits to and from both Restoration Lodge No111 and Commercial Travellers Lodge No5089 and the sad news of the passing of WBro Harry Coulson* who, although not a member of the Lodge had been instrumental in the design and production of the new Lodge banner.

| Attendances: 1997 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Members | 29 | 31 | 27 | 31 | 31 | 27 | - | - | - | 28 | 26 | 26 | 256 |
| Visitors | 27 | 26 | 36 | 82 | 17 | 22 | - | - | - | 29 | 27 | 45 | 311 |
| Lodges represented | 14 | 13 | 12 | 22 | 9 | 13 | - | - | - | 13 | 12 | 21 | 129 |

Its probably also worth starting this account of the Lodge's next 25 years of existence by recognising some of the technological developments beginning to affect society in general and Freemasonry in particular. Oh, and Lodge subscriptions in 1997 were £95.00 per annum!

This was a time of rapid technological progress in many fields and none more so than computerisation. Fax machines, word processors and the like were not only being used in offices but also at home. Lodge Secretaries had already begun communicating by email and experimenting by producing and printing their own Lodge Summons. As the availability and use of the technology grew and became more widespread, printing costs were significantly reduced and postage costs all but eliminated from Lodge accounts. By the end of this period of the Lodge's history, virtually all Lodge administration could be said to be "online."

1998

Bro Nolan Kee had been installed as the Lodge's 126th Worshipful Master at the December Installation meeting, which saw WBro Derek Richmond, AsstProvGM, represent the Provincial Grand Master. Also present was RW Bro RG Farmer, District Grand Master of Natal District of South Africa and the Lodge again, donated £600.00 in support of the 1999 Festival.

Freemasonry's 'Festival' system – they come round for each Province roughly every 10 years – is the means by which the 4 main Masonic charities generate funds. These were grouped together in 2016 and now operate as the Masonic Charitable Foundation.*

At the meeting in March, the Lodge heard a lecture from WBro Nicholas Sebright, Past Master of Votum Lodge No6517, the Training and Education Officer for the United Grand Lodge of England. His talk, entitled, "Openness and Education in Freemasonry" highlighted many of the negatives associated with the public's perception of Freemasonry and promoted the growing policy of openness. The talk stimulated a great deal of discussion and questions and although we have no record of its content, its likely that it touched on the increasing availability of Masonic information 'online.'

Having just also completed a year in the chair of another Darlington lodge, Lodge of Jurists No8956; WBro John Parker felt it appropriate to present both Lodges with suitably engraved sets of squares and compasses, still in use today.

**The Freemasons' Grand Charity; The Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution (RMBI); The Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys (RMTGB) and The Masonic Samaritan Fund.*

| Attendances: 1998 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 27 | 26 | 28 | 20 | 23 | 24 | - | - | - | 28 | 23 | 31 |
| Visitors | 22 | 33 | 29 | 28 | 31 | 18 | - | - | - | 17 | 38 | 79 |
| Lodges represented | 10 | 14 | 13 | 11 | 14 | 12 | - | - | - | 12 | 11 | 35 |

1999

Given Bro Bob Hattersley's interests in Masonic history, his installation meeting aptly saw WBro Tom Coulson PPSGW – the then Curator of the Provincial Museum and Library - welcomed as the Representative of the Provincial Grand Master.

Fittingly, Tom returned later in the year to deliver a talk entitled "Some things a Mason should know" which might well have turned out to be a test of many Darlington Masons' knowledge given what you're about to read in the following paragraphs!

Following his installation, WBro Bob Hattersley embarked on a busy and eventful year which, as well as taking in the usual reciprocal Darlington lodges' Fraternal visits included one from his own brother's Lodge, Roger de Fery No5879 in Ferryhill where WBro John Hattersley was serving as Worshipful Master. The year included an initiate who also undertook 2nd and 3rd degree ceremonies and the Lodge admitted 2 joining members whilst also hearing talks from him on "Masonic Halls in Durham," "Masonic 'Marks' on local buildings," "Taverns' with Masonic connections," Masonic tombstones and Masonic jewels!

And...just to make sure the Brethren weren't found wanting, for added Masonic variety he narrated during a Lodge re-enactment of the ceremony of 'Laying a Foundation Stone.'

And that was only 'upstairs!

The October meeting, as well as acknowledging Honorary Member WBro Francis William (Bill) Dixon's award of the Provincial Grand Master's first ever 'Certificate of Service to Freemasonry,' included 'harmony' at the Festive Board. "A Feast of Masonic Music" was presented and performed by Bob and several of his Lodge colleagues. Perhaps we forgot to mention that Bob was also a member of a well known local folk-singing group?!

As his busy year came to an end, in the wider world, society was picking up 'vibes' suggesting that business systems and indeed all and everything dependent on computer technology, would 'crash' at 2359 on New Year's Eve as time clocks failed to recognise the new Millenium.

In the event, of course, it didn't materialise, and life, including Masonic, goes on! But..... see 2020!

| Attendances: 1999 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 28 | 26 | 24 | 22 | 26 | 23 | - | - | - | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Visitors | 27 | 23 | 22 | 38 | 19 | 20 | - | - | - | 34 | 49 | 30 |
| Lodges represented | 11 | 13 | 12 | 17 | 12 | 13 | - | - | - | 15 | 16 | 14 |

2000

The Lodge's Masonic year had concluded with the installation for a second time of WBro Dr Philip Waterfall. Having already taken the chair in 1994, he began a period of what is sometimes referred to as 'the recycling of WM's' with 3 of the next 4 Worshipful Masters taking the Chair for a second time.

As is often the case, this is ultimately attributable to a lack of initiates and a Lodge's inability to 'fill' the main progressive offices with Master Masons. Sometimes it occurs when, for a variety of reasons - a member's work and/or family commitments or illness - hinders otherwise preferred progression. Many Lodges have experienced this and its fair to say, continue to do so, as recruitment of new members to the organisation generally declines. A local approach to this problem was first tried in 2002, took up the increasing theme of 'openness' and is described later in this history.

The year's main ritual centred on Stanley George Edwards who was initiated in May, 'passed' in June and 'raised' in October with the rest of the year given over to three lectures. The first, "What's in a Name", was by, guess who? WBro Bob Hattersley and focussed on the origins of Lodge names in the Province of Durham and the theme continued in March when WBros Robin Craddock and Michael Wilson elaborated on "The Marquess of Ripon - The Man." The third of the talks by WBro Ron Davies-Evans of Hugh de Pudsey Lodge No4490 was entitled "Six guns and Masons" and transported the Brethren back to the old 'Wild West!'

The year also marked the start of meaningful progress on the Province's previously announced "Millennium Project;" the re-building, at Beamish Open Air Museum, of a soon-to-be-demolished Masonic Hall in Sunderland, in support of which the Lodge donated £500.00.

The foundation stone was laid in July by the Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro Dr AM Davison.

| Attendances: 2000 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | - | - | - | 24 | 25 | 25 |
| Visitors | 19 | 14 | 13 | 22 | 20 | 18 | - | - | - | 47 | 17 | 23 |
| Lodges represented | 8 | 9 | 11 | 11 | 13 | 8 | - | - | - | 18 | 14 | 13 |

2001

Again, the Lodge's Masonic year had concluded in December with the re-installation of a former Worshipful Master, WBro John Scott, back in the Chair after 6 years.

John's second 'term' was to be marked by 'joining members'- established Masons 'joining' from other Lodges often because of re-locating and/or due to work commitments. Bros David Allender, John Burtenshaw and WBro Brian Everett all joined the Lodge and when Bro Clifford (Cliff) Field also 'joined,' the Lodge further benefited from welcoming his son Austin - a 'Lewis' - with the result that his initiation and progression became the year's main ceremonial focus.

Talks and/or lectures involving Bob Hattersley were still a feature and included his illustrated presentations entitled, "Rosslyn Chapel: Veiled in Allegory and illustrated by symbols" and "The Festival Jewels in the Province of Durham." In June, the Senior Warden - remember what we said about "recycling WM's? - WBro David Crompton gave an excellent presentation of the rarely heard and highly complex, "First Degree Tracing Board".

The social activities of the Lodge involved, during the Summer break, an evening of ‘games’ at Darlington’s Quoits Club and in early July, a Ladies ‘dinner’ at the ‘Shoulder of Mutton’ in Middleton-Tyas. Later, and more traditionally, there was a ‘Ladies Night’ at Freemasons’ Hall in November.

Social activities are often dependent on the enthusiasm and/or willingness of the year’s Worshipful Master to both organise and/or support them. Often, they are arranged, not only to allow Lodge members to engage more widely with the families and friends of Lodge colleagues; but also to raise (charitable) funds for particular causes in which the Worshipful Master has an interest.

More traditionally, ‘Ladies Nights’ have long been associated with the need by Worshipful Masters to acknowledge the ‘debt’ owed by them, at the end of their year, to their spouses for their tolerance in support of their many nights out! In some parts of the country, this ‘tradition’ has developed further to become “Ladies Festivals,” embracing whole weekends of partying!

There now being a number of Craft Lodges in Darlington with closely-aligned Installation dates, Worshipful Masters accept that, these days, Ladies Nights ‘compete’ for largely the same ‘pool’ of Masonic guests. Although families and friends make up some of their numbers, they may not always generate sufficient ticket sales to be viable. Some Lodges have taken to combining their Ladies Nights to combat ‘saturation.’ (photo)

| Attendances: 2001 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 22 | 23 | 24 | 29 | 19 | 26 | - | - | - | 25 | 23 | 28 |
| Visitors | 19 | 20 | 24 | 14 | 18 | 32 | - | - | - | 19 | 34 | 15 |
| Lodges represented | 13 | 10 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 10 | - | - | - | 8 | 9 | 17 |

2002

December’s meeting again saw WBro David Crompton, installed in the Chair and WBro Ronald Barker ProvSGW, representing the RW Provincial Grand Master. This turned out to be a case of ‘teacher meets former pupil’ as David had taught Ronald many years earlier!

Now the Lodge experimented with its first ‘Gavel Night’ in an attempt to encourage membership. And it worked!

‘Gavel nights’ are regular meetings of the Lodge in which business is brief and following ‘closing,’ the Brethren remain in their places and in full regalia. Non-masonic guests who have been previously invited and welcomed are escorted into the Lodge room where an experienced member – in this case, Bob Hattersley, of course! - provides a short but concise explanation of modern Freemasonry including the relevance of the different aprons on view and the positions occupied by some of the Officers. Meeting frequencies, dress codes and subscription commitments are also covered following which everyone then enjoys the Festive Board where the toasts are also explained and guests are able to question their hosts on anything they still think appropriate. The title, ‘Gavel Night’ is thought to reflect the fact that the formal business of the evening is kept short with the Worshipful Master and his Wardens ‘knocking’ rapidly between agenda items to hurry things along so as not to keep the soon-to-be-welcomed guests waiting.

As a result, two of the guests submitted applications to become members!

One of those, Stuart Gill, was initiated at the February meeting, Passed in April, and Raised in June and is now a Past Master of the Lodge.

The Lodge formally acknowledged the death of Queen Elizabeth, The Queen Mother in April and donated £100.00 to Middleton St George Primary School to help finance commemorative medallions to be presented to each child to mark The Queen’s Silver Jubilee. £200.00 was also donated to the RNLI Hartlepool.

As was usual, during the year, the customary Fraternal Visits involving Restoration and Commercial Travellers Lodges took place.

Fraternal visits are common throughout Freemasonry. They usually arise from close relationships either existing or formed between Lodges and in the case of Marquess of Ripon, those bonds are those of 'mother' (Restoration) and 'daughter' (Commercial Travellers) Lodges. The 'family' ties derive from the origins of the Lodges and in the case of Restoration Lodge being the 'mother' Lodge of Marquess of Ripon; one only has to look back at the origins described at the beginning of this account to see that, metaphorically, Restoration, 'gave birth' to Marquess of Ripon!

As well as encouraging 'visiting' between Lodges, Fraternal visits also serve to develop and maintain traditions in 'workings' for instance. As an example, some Lodges always begin by 'parading-in' the Master and Wardens whilst others begin their Lodge openings with them already in place. Often, these traditions evolve when new Lodges are formed and differing views on particular ways of 'working' emerge or are tried. A phrase often heard in Freemasonry is, "We've always done it this way."

Unless otherwise stated, Fraternal visits between this Lodge and Restoration and Commercial Travellers Lodges have taken place in every year covered by this 'history.' Their timings are usually mutually arranged by the respective Worshipful Masters

| Attendances: 2002 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 26 | 23 | 26 | 27 | 24 | 25 | - | - | - | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| Visitors | 20 | 16 | 14 | 16 | 15 | 44 | - | - | - | 22 | 11 | 45 |
| Lodges represented | 10 | 11 | 10 | 6 | 10 | 12 | - | - | - | 7 | 8 | 18 |

2003

Yet again, December's installation meeting saw a former Worshipful Master, WBro Ken Park installed in the chair of King Solomon some 27 years after he had first occupied it. That was soon followed by another 'milestone' - the 40th anniversary of his initiation into Freemasonry and to mark the occasion, the minutes from that 1963 meeting were read out in tribute.

WBro Bob Hattersley then delivered an illustrated presentation entitled "Festival Jewels of the Province of Durham," which traced the history of the Festivals, their associated jewels and fund raising from 1881 to 1999.

Ken's busy year included an official visit from one of the Province's Assistant Provincial Grand Masters, WBro Derek Richmond – later to become Provincial Grand Master - and the Lodge admitted 2 further initiates whilst sadly, also saying goodbye to one of its most loyal and respected members, WBro Tom Litchfield; who had served as Worshipful Master in 1975 and as Organist for many years. The Worshipful Master announced at the March meeting that, with regret, he had learned of his resignation due to ill health and a move of residency.

Even more sad was the sudden death of the Lodge Chaplain WBro Dr Alan Ford-Hunter who had served as Worshipful Master in 1990.

As well as the usual Fraternal Visits the Lodge hosted members of the Worshipful Master's other Lodge, the musicians Lodge, St Cecilia Lodge No9685. Ken was himself a talented violinist!

Naturally, he and fellow members later provided 'harmony' at the Festive Board to the enjoyment of all those present.

"Harmony" at the Festive Board was once a standard feature of post-meeting dinners. At an appropriate point in the proceedings the Worshipful Master would ask the Junior Warden – "the ostensible Steward of the Lodge" – "Have you any harmony?" Often, this would result in one or more 'creditable' singers singing a song of their choice or, by pre-arrangement, the introduction of, usually, a local 'talent.' The writer however does recall 'harmony' having been variously, a display of Karate techniques, a rendition of some of Shakespeare's works and/or stand-up comedy. Often, gratitude for these 'services' is met by a 'whip round' tray collection.

NB. As Lodge minutes don't often record Festive Board activities, many instances of 'Harmony' occurring may have been overlooked.

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|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Attendances: 2003 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
| Members | 25 | 23 | 28 | 28 | 27 | 26 | - | - | - | 22 | 24 | 26 |
| Visitors | 21 | 14 | 24 | 24 | 16 | 34 | - | - | - | 34 | 38 | 39 |
| Lodges represented | 10 | 12 | 7 | 9 | 13 | 9 | - | - | - | 8 | 10 | 10 |

2004

December's meeting saw the Lodge return to the welcome progression of one of its Master Masons with the installation of Bro Geoff Dodds, a joining member in 1996.

Two more initiates, Jonathan Stapley and Bill Bodycombe meant that the Worshipful Master was kept 'on his toes' throughout the year with regard to ritual and later, another joining member, Bro Ian Kirkbride ensured the Lodge was now well placed to continue with Master Mason progressions for some time.

In February, the Worshipful Master reported the sad loss, after a long illness, of WBro Jim Pinkney, a stalwart of the Lodge, who had served in a variety of 'offices' including Worshipful Master in 1985/6. (His son was later to become a member and serve the Lodge in somewhat unique circumstances.)

Yet another 'Gavel Night,' now a popular means of introducing guests to Freemasonry again proved successful and yet again – yes, you've guessed it - Bob Hattersley gave an illustrated talk on Masonic Philately in which he reviewed postage stamps illustrating Masonic symbolism issued by countries throughout the world.

Social activities during the year included the annual Quoits competition and game pie supper, a 'Summer Dinner' held at the (then) Stressholme Golf Club and a Ladies Night in Freemasons' Hall.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Attendances: 2004 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
| Members | 24 | 19 | 24 | 23 | 24 | 24 | - | - | - | 24 | 25 | 23 |
| Visitors | 21 | 20 | 20 | 22 | 28 | 26 | - | - | - | 17 | 35 | 46 |
| Lodges represented | 12 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 11 | - | - | - | 7 | 11 | 14 |

2005

Having joined the Lodge some 4 years earlier Bro Cliff Field, became its next Worshipful Master and yet again, he turned to WBro Bob Hattersley for a second 'look' at "Masonic Philately," this time concentrating on the lives and Masonic careers of some 800 Masons who had appeared on postage stamps.

The remainder of the year was largely taken up with explanations, which included role-played demonstrations of the three Craft degrees and performed by several members of the Lodge. These had been originally developed by Bob's brother, WBro John Hattersley and were, several years later, to be the basis of similar demonstrations regularly offered to Durham's Lodges on request, by members of the soon-to-be-formed Durham Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge. Cliff continued to support regular social events organising the annual Quoits evening and the Summer Dinner – both in June - and of course, how could the Lodge forego an opportunity to host a Gavel Night?

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Attendances: 2005 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
| Members | 27 | 28 | 24 | 23 | 26 | 21 | - | - | - | 19 | 21 | 23 |
| Visitors | 14 | 19 | 19 | 15 | 18 | 23 | - | - | - | 10 | 19 | 16 |
| Lodges represented | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 13 | 10 | - | - | - | 10 | 10 | 16 |

2006

December's installation meeting saw Bro Ian Kirkbride 'take the Chair.' An experienced Mason, Ian had thirty years service in Freemasonry, starting in Hartlepool and joining Lodges in Essex and Hertfordshire during his working life, without ever becoming Worshipful Master. Having returned to his native North East in retirement, his timing coincided with the opportunity to allow another former Worshipful Master, WBro Mike Mountain, Senior Warden, to step aside in his favour.

Perhaps less coincidental was the welcome back in January of Ian's good friend, Bro Philip Robinson who returned as a re-joining member.

Also known to them both, Ian Whitfield, a former Insurance Broker and local hospice fund raiser and still, the Lodge's long-serving Treasurer, was initiated.

Two further initiates resulting from the Gavel Night held in the previous October added to Ian's busy year, but, undoubtedly the highlight was his representation of the Lodge at the only public display in living memory of Freemasons in full regalia at the opening, by The Grand Master, HRH The Duke of Kent; of the re-built Masonic Hall at Beamish. **(photo)**

Bob Hattersley also took part in the public parade - shown on local TV - as Provincial Grand Sword Bearer.

While the Worshipful Master co-ordinated the various forms of entertainment being offered in one of the many marquees on site; the Senior Warden, Bro Robin (Rob) Turbitt, assisted by several Lodge members and their wives, oversaw the running of the Lodge's main contribution to the Raby Gala – a cake stall.

The Gala alone, held in the grounds of Raby Castle, raised over £40k and contributed to the eventual Festival total of over £3million raised throughout the Province and donated in 2010 to the RMBI.

| Attendances: 2006 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 23 | 24 | 27 | 28 | 24 | 24 | - | - | 24 | 23 | 21 | 23 |
| Visitors | 16 | 13 | 15 | 20 | 19 | 29 | - | - | 25 | 30 | 31 | 38 |
| Lodges | 10 | 8 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 13 | - | - | 10 | 10 | 16 | 13 |

2007

Bro Rob Turbitt succeeded Ian as Worshipful Master and at the Installation representing the RW Provincial Grand Master was one of the Assistant Provincial Grand Masters WBro Kenneth Howe who spoke with his usual vibrant enthusiasm about the importance of supporting the forthcoming 2010 Festival after receipt of the Lodge's cheque for £1379.00.

By now 'Gavel Nights' were becoming the accepted 'norm' to encourage recruitment for many Darlington Lodges and another was held following the January meeting.

Again it was successful and resulted in the subsequent initiation of a work colleague of Bro Phil Robinson, Faisal Izzat, who was initiated passed and raised during the year; his Second degree ceremony coinciding with the official visit of another Assistant Provincial Grand Master WBro GA (Tony) Currie.

In the meantime following a request for assistance from Darlington's St Oswald's Lodge, one of their candidates, Bro Carpenter, was raised to the degree of a Master Mason.

These events are sometimes necessary when a Lodge has a number of candidates awaiting advancement and feels the need to move quickly to maintain the member's interest in Lodge affairs.

2007 also saw WBro Peter Smailes, the Lodge's oldest and long-serving member achieve 50 years in the Craft and receive his certificate from WBro Tony Currie, who reminded everyone present that Peter had become a 'Lewis' when initiated by his father, Thomas, the Lodge's Worshipful Master way back in 1957!

The Quoits evening saw the Worshipful Master himself finish as runner-up to Bro Keith Bulman and 2 more candidates, Karl McCoubrey and Andrew Watson were welcomed before the year ended.

On the Provincial 'front,' 'The Durham Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge No9833 was formed and consecrated in September. Recognisable in their red-bordered aprons and collars, members form the 'workhorse' of the Province. Usually Immediate Past Masters or Worshipful Masters about to end their year, members are selected by the Provincial Grand Master and expected to serve until receipt of their regular 'blue' Provincial collar – currently usually 7 years – to support and/or organise many of the various events and projects undertaken by the Provincial Executive. Ian Kirkbride became one of the Stewards Lodge's founding members and went on to become its 3rd Worshipful Master and the last of its founder members to resign, as they all must, when required.

Its well known that Lodge Secretaries often stay in post for many years, and in Bob's case it had been 7. Now, he handed over to.....Ian Kirkbride! It is also fair to say that Bob's commitment to the Lodge in particular and Freemasonry in general, – so amply documented in this history - would ultimately have led to greater recognition than the Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden rank that he held at the time.

Another 'first' in Provincial terms was the appointment of WBro John Parker as Provincial Grand Orator, of which, more later!

Yet more 'honours' came the Lodge's way with the addition of WBro Ken Park to the 'Grand Officers' honours board displayed in the Lodge room with Ken appointed Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies by United Grand Lodge.

| Attendances: 2007 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 23 | 24 | 23 | 26 | 20 | 22 | - | - | - | 23 | 25 | 24 |
| Visitors | 13 | 14 | 13 | 40 | 21 | 25 | - | - | - | 10 | 15 | 27 |
| Lodges | 11 | 9 | 9 | 15 | 10 | 7 | - | - | - | 8 | 9 | 12 |

2008

The Lodge's newest Worshipful Master, Bro Austin Field chose, like others before him, to start his year with the now traditional Gavel Night during which WBros John Parker and Bob Hattersley shared the task of explaining things to the non-Masonic visitors.

It should be made clear that, often, other local Lodges regularly avail themselves of 'Gavel Night' presentations and that they are 'advertised' locally as a means of assisting other Lodges to attract recruitment. By this means, they also help promote 'visiting.'

Bros McCoubrey and Watson were made Master Masons and the Province's new – and first ever Grand Orator - John Parker explained the nature of the role and delivered "Oration No 3. The Middle Chamber – the Intellectual Faculty." More on 'Orations' later but this was also the year that the Provincial Grand Master, V WBro Derek Richmond sadly died whilst 'in office' and was eventually succeeded by V WBro Norman Eric Heaviside.

WBro JA (Tony) Cleugh who was initiated in 1964 and had served as Worshipful Master in 1976/7 was elected an 'Honorary Member' and the Lodge repeated two of the series of degree demonstrations first undertaken in 2005, aptly during the stewardship of a second Worshipful Master named Field! Bro Jonathan Stapley, the then Senior Warden, began the process of bringing the Lodge's affairs into 21st century focus by creating a website though, its fair to say that aspect of communication has not been regularly monitored.

WBro Rob Turbitt, like Ian Kirkbride before him was selected to join the Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge. 2 in a row!

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Attendances: 2008 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
| Members | 26 | 26 | 23 | 23 | 25 | 24 | - | - | - | 23 | 24 | 28 |
| Visitors | 15 | 8 | 18 | 12 | 6 | 11 | - | - | - | 22 | 11 | 32 |
| Lodges | 7 | 7 | 12 | 9 | 5 | 9 | - | - | - | 10 | | |

2009

Bro Jonathan Stapley followed the now familiar pattern by starting his year in the Chair with a Gavel Night though, now, WBro Mike Mountain had taken over as ‘presenter.’ Mike – a former College lecturer and keen runner who had also served as Lodge Secretary - adapted Bob Hattersley’s notes and easily became the ‘voice’ of local Freemasonry on these occasions.

In February, the Lodge enjoyed an official visit from WBro John Webster, Assistant Provincial Grand Master who witnessed the ceremony of raising Bro Pegg and, in the 1st Rising, the Secretary confirmed the implementation of ‘Adelphi,’ the new national electronic membership database.

By now, many Lodge Secretaries were regularly communicating electronically with both United Grand Lodge and their local Provincial Offices as more and more administrative features were made available and required to be completed ‘online.’

Mr Michael (Mike) Carson, a teacher at Darlington College was successfully balloted for and initiated in March and John Parker now joined Ken Park on the Grand Officers’ honours board with his appointment as Past Assistant Grand Registrar.

In Charitable terms, propositions to support the RMBI with £1,250, The Teddies appeal with £50 and Durham Benevolence with £250 were also approved.

The ‘Teddies for TLC’ appeal had begun in 2005 and still provides cuddly toys in the form of small teddy bears, to children who find themselves in the A&E departments of Durham’s hospitals. Durham Benevolence is a Provincial fund managed by Lodge representatives which supports local organisations and individuals as well as managing two local sheltered housing sites.

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Attendances: 2009 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
| Members | 30 | 23 | 27 | 23 | 26 | 23 | - | - | - | 23 | 20 | 27 |
| Visitors | 8 | 17 | 18 | 27 | 17 | 1 | - | - | - | 13 | 10 | 30 |
| Lodges | 5 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 11 | 10 | - | - | - | 10 | 11 | 14 |

2010

December’s installation had been a ‘Robinson’ affair with Bro Phil congratulated on taking the chair by the Provincial Grand Master’s representative WBro Keith Robinson PAGDC.

WBro George Aiken who had joined the Lodge in 1981 and served as Worshipful Master in 1986/7 was elected an Honorary Member of the Lodge in recognition of his outstanding contribution over the years though George and his wife had moved to Sussex in 2009 to be nearer to members of their immediate family.

Unusually, the year began with an initiation – Mark Pinkney – a ‘Lewis’ – his father having been a former long-serving member of the Lodge.

(For January meetings, often a new Worshipful Master’s first (ever) ‘working’ night, and there having been intervening festive season distractions; ‘work’ with a minimal of ritual to learn was often chosen to allow the new Worshipful Master to ease himself into the role. Gavel Nights in January are a good example of this policy.)

A now traditional ‘Gavel Night’ soon followed, led again by WBros Mike Mountain (upstairs) and John Parker, Director of Ceremonies, explaining the toasts at the Festive Board.

By now, the Brethren were becoming used to the extraordinary challenges taken on by Brian Everett in the cause of fundraising for numerous charities. This year he asked the Brethren to

support him doing a ‘Coast to Coast’ walk in this country and the ascent of Mount Kenya in erm.....! In 2010 Brian was already 75!

Brian’s London-based Masonic membership also saw him achieve Senior London Grand Rank. *(SLGR equates to our Provincial ranking system in Metropolitan Grand Lodge, the London area itself being categorised as (sic) a Province.)*

Andrew Harrison joined as an initiate and Bro Richard Eldon who had moved to the area from Berkshire was also welcomed as a joining member though they weren’t part of the team that contributed to the Lodge winning the inaugural ‘Inter-Lodge’ quiz launched by Castle Lodge in Staindrop that year. **(photo)**

Yet again, the previous year’s Worshipful Master, Jonathan Stapley was invited to join the prestigious Durham Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge and later became its 4th Worshipful Master; installed by his predecessor, Ian Kirkbride.

(Worshipful Masters of the Stewards Lodge serve a term of 2 consecutive years.)

A rather unusual event occurred in June when Bob Hattersley – a Masonic jewel enthusiast - was notified that a Past Master’s jewel had been listed for sale on ebay. Back then, only ‘tech savvy’ Masons were familiar with the intricacies of online sales so the Lodge’s newest member, Bro Mark Pinkney – whose own business interests embraced the techniques - was tasked with bidding for, and subsequently claiming the jewel at a Lodge-approved cost of £127.00.

*The jewel’s origins dated back to a Past Master, Thomas Watson to whom it was awarded in 1894. Born in 1840 he was widely regarded as an outstanding sportsman, having captained Darlington Cricket Club, Durham County Football Club and Durham County Rugby Club. He was an outstanding runner on both flat and fell who also excelled at salmon fishing, holding the catch record at Loch Tay. In an obituary published in The Northern Despatch in 1935, he was hailed as ‘without doubt the greatest sportsman the town ever had.’ **(photo)***

Sadly, that year also saw the resignation of another Watson - the Lodge’s long-serving Treasurer WBro Alan Watson.

| Attendances: 2010 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 25 | 24 | 25 | 23 | 24 | 27 | - | - | - | 27 | 19 | 25 |
| Visitors | 14 | 14 | 24 | 18 | 14 | 37 | - | - | - | 17 | 10 | 41 |
| Lodges | 9 | 8 | 12 | 13 | 9 | 17 | - | - | - | 14 | 6 | |

2011

WBro Brian Everett’s year as the new Worshipful Master opened on a particularly sad note with the announcement of the death of Bob Hattersley from kidney disease. This ‘history’ has already recorded some of Bob’s Masonic achievements and his contribution to the Lodge’s ‘life and times’ cannot be overstated. When he served as Secretary, he produced, with each Summons, a newsletter containing many articles of interest on Freemasonry much of which was derived from his own travels in the UK and abroad. Keen to honour his memory, the Lodge supported his wife Jean’s chosen charity with a generous donation. **(photo)**

After the traditional ‘Gavel Night,’ again presented by Mike Mountain, the Lodge later welcomed Assistant Provincial Grand Master, WBro John Webster to present WBro Arthur Hare with his “50 Year Certificate” noting that Arthur, a retired Solicitor, had never taken the Chair in this Lodge, but had done so in the Lodge of Jurists in 1993.

Alan Williamson was admitted and initiated.

Widely travelled himself and with his own London lodge connectins, the Worshipful Master gave a talk entitled “A visit to a London lodge in 1750;” an account of a visit made by an American Freemason through his report to his own lodge on his return to the US. Another talk, when he was assisted by WBros Mountain, Parker and Kirkbride, re-visited the life story of the Marquess of Ripon himself, first heard in 1993 and again in 2000 from WBros Craddock and Wilson.

Sadly and bizarrely, Robin Craddock who had resigned from the Lodge and was in the process of re-joining, died on the December evening he had intended to re-join.

| Attendances: 2011 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Members | 24 | 24 | 24 | 24 | 20 | 24 | - | - | - | 24 | 23 | 27 |
| Visitors | 19 | 18 | 7 | 13 | 13 | 24 | - | - | - | 18 | 19 | 34 |
| Lodges | 9 | 10 | 5 | 9 | 9 | 9 | - | - | - | 10 | 9 | 18 |

2012

The new Worshipful Master, WBro Austin Field got off to a busy start with the initiations of Andrew Stainthorpe and Benedict Stephens but there were also some sad events and particularly the reported deaths of Bro Sydney Douthwaite, who had been a member of the lodge from 1987 to 1994 and Honorary Member WBro Tony Cleugh, the Lodge's Worshipful Master in 1977/8.

The Lodge also hosted 2 guest speakers during the year. WBro Malcolm Sweet of Milbanke Lodge No7486 delivered a very impressive talk without notes or prompts on "The Life and Times of Rudyard Kipling" and WBro Peter Smith, Assistant to the Lodge's 'own' Provincial Grand Orator, John Parker; delivered the Oration, "That the World may know."

Orations are deliveries of approved text based on elements of ritual to inform and stimulate debate.

| Attendances: 2012 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Members | 25 | 24 | 23 | 24 | 16 | 25 | - | - | - | 24 | 24 | 27 |
| Visitors | 16 | 9 | 13 | 16 | 12 | 25 | - | - | - | 17 | 16 | 54 |
| Lodges | 9 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 8 | - | - | - | 6 | 10 | 19 |

2013

The start of WBro Andrew Watson's year as Worshipful Master saw a veritable procession of members of the Provincial Executive arrive in the Lodge room.

Having already welcomed the Deputy Provincial Grand Master, WBro George Clark as the representative of the Provincial Grand Master at his Installation; the man himself, V WBro Eric Heaviside, together with George (again) and 3 Assistant Provincial Grand Masters arrived in 'Deputation' mode to honour WBro Ken Park with the presentation of his '50 year Certificate.' (photo). Ken's life and Masonic career were colourfully recalled in an entertaining exchange between himself and Eric in the Lodge room and added to by others at the 'ticket-only' Festive Board.

In February, the Worshipful Master, himself a practising Architect and assisted by WBros Parker and Kirkbride delivered a talk entitled "Architects, Freemasons and the seven liberal arts and sciences." He also presided over both a Gavel Night and another of the popular (1st) degree ceremony re-enactments.

Degree ritual during the year featured the initiation and progression of Bro George Armstrong.

The Brethren also heard from WBro Ray Snaith of Darlington Lodge who recalled the events of a trip he had taken some years earlier to Scotland's Rosslyn Chapel near Edinburgh with the late Bob Hattersley.

Rosslyn Chapel contains displays of many Masonic symbols and has legendary connections with The Knights Templar and the so-called Holy Grail.

Degree ritual during the year featured the initiation and progression of George Armstrong.

| Attendances: 2013 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Members | 27 | 22 | 24 | 24 | 23 | 25 | - | - | - | 21 | 24 | 27 |
| Visitors | 87 | 15 | 13 | 11 | 11 | 20 | - | - | - | 22 | 13 | 21 |
| Lodges | 32 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 9 | - | - | - | 6 | 8 | 13 |

2014

Having been installed as Worshipful Master in December, WBro Karl McCoubrey began his working year with a Gavel Night hosted by WBro Mike Mountain and with WBro Phil Robinson, now the Lodge's DofC, explaining the Masonic toasts at the Festive Board.

The Gavel Night afforded the opportunity for one of the non-Masonic guests to take back possession of a piece of his family's history. A local Freemason, Steve Noble – a member of Commercial Traveller's Lodge No5089 – who had been working in the roof space of a house in the nearby village of Barton, had discovered an embossed leather pouch containing a Master Mason's apron and gloves, the origins of which, the owners of the property had no knowledge. The embossed lettering identified it as having been the property of "Bro Hugh Curry Marquess of Ripon Lodge No1379." Having explained his own connections with Freemasonry, the owners were happy to allow Steve to attempt to return it, either to the Lodge or to any (still) connected family member that might be interested in it. Lodge records and the local knowledge of WBro Mike Wilson, enabled the Secretary to track down the son of its original owner, Mr Peter Curry, who was happy to recover a piece of his family history and learn more about his father who had been initiated in 1939! (photo)

The Lodge also received an Official Visit from WBro John Webster, Assistant Provincial Grand Master who witnessed the initiation of Mr Kevin Francis Gay.

At the conclusion of official business and following closure of the Lodge in March, WBro Parker introduced WBro Dr Mike Kearsley, a fellow Provincial Grand Orator (Middlesex) and Prestonian Lecturer, who gave an interesting and informative talk entitled "The Roberto Calvi Affair – A Masonic Scandal."

Talks or Lectures following closure of a Lodge are sometimes preferred in the interests of time-saving. The 'business' of the Lodge meeting itself can be planned accordingly to maximise the 'focus' of the evening on the main event. Gavel Nights are good examples of this and, of course, non-Masonic guests cannot be present during meetings anyway.

Our own Provincial Grand Orator WBro John Parker also delivered an Oration entitled, "Why bother with the Ritual?" which was again well received and generated considerable discussion.

The Lodge was pleased to welcome WBro Stephen Walker from Castle Lodge No6713 in Staindrop as a joining member.

During 2014, the Secretary, WBro Ian Kirkbride commenced the first of a series of readings of Lodge minutes with direct references to WW1 recorded by his predecessors during the period 1914-1918; as an acknowledgement of the contributions made by Lodge members of the time. When appropriate, they were read out in the 3rd risings of meetings held in the corresponding months of the War and often provided some interesting 'stories.' Ian also circulated archived copies of the Summons for those meetings for the Brethren to examine during the course of the meeting.

WBro Keith Schaible of Castle Lodge No6713 – originally an American Mason and regular visitor - also struck a war-related theme with an address to the Lodge on, "The decline of Freemasonry in Nazi Germany" and, following a request for assistance from Universities Lodge No2252 in Durham, the Lodge undertook a 2nd Degree ceremony to pass one of their members, Bro Andrew Lloyd.

Many Universities Lodge members are often active students of the city's famed academic establishment. The Lodge therefore does its best to accommodate their progression in their time after joining, so that they are best placed to hopefully continue their participation in Freemasonry when they leave both the University and/or the city after graduation.

Sadly, the Lodge was also stunned by the sudden death of WBro Ken Park and in a eulogy given by WBro Mike Wilson, paid tribute to his significant contribution to the Lodge, in particular, having served twice as its Worshipful Master.

Another sad occasion followed with the announcement of the death of WBro Philip Waterfall who had also served twice as the Lodge's Worshipful Master.

Better news was that, yet again, a former Worshipful Master, WBro Andrew Watson, had been invited to join the Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge.

| Attendances: 2014 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 23 | 24 | 23 | 24 | 27 | 24 | - | - | - | 26 | 24 | 25 |
| Visitors | 16 | 12 | 16 | 24 | 9 | 24 | - | - | - | 18 | 24 | 30 |
| Lodges | 7 | 6 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 9 | - | - | - | 7 | 9 | 15 |

2015

Having been installed as the Lodge's new Worshipful Master in December, WBro Andrew Carson quickly welcomed back WBro Keith Schaible to give the second part of his talk on "The decline of Freemasonry in Nazi Germany" and was even more pleased to admit and initiate his son, Mr Paul Andrew Carson a month later.

What's that you say? No Gavel Night?!

Next, came a very unusual event, rehearsals for which proved particularly complex! A triple Second Degree ceremony for which dispensation had been granted, involved 3 candidates from another lodge!

Again it was at the request of Universities Lodge in Durham and it certainly also boosted attendance numbers that month as well as testing the skills – and patience! – of the Lodge's DofC Phil Robinson.

Another candidate kept the Worshipful Master and his Officers busy with ritual whilst also allowing for the progression of his son, the Lodge's newest 'Lewis.'

| Attendances: 2015 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 26 | 22 | 31 | 26 | 23 | 25 | - | - | - | 26 | 27 | 27 |
| Visitors | 15 | 15 | 24 | 12 | 5 | 16 | - | - | - | 15 | 13 | 29 |
| Lodges | 10 | 8 | 10 | 7 | 5 | 6 | - | - | - | 8 | 7 | 16 |

2016

At his installation, Bro Mark Pinkney acknowledged the past services of WBro Arnold Hird, at the time, one of the Lodge's longest-serving members and who had served, more recently, as Lodge Chaplain for many years. Later in the year Arnold was granted Honorary membership. WBro Mike Mountain now took over as Chaplain and.....yes! Mark did start his year with a Gavel Night!

WBro Stephen Walker, now an Assistant Provincial Grand Master, was persuaded to address the Brethren with a talk entitled "Junior Grand Deacon of the United Lodge of England" in his capacity as the Lodge's newest Grand Officer. He described his career in Freemasonry and gave an amusing insight into how things sometimes go wrong.

All Lodge's were informed of the 'passing' of the former Provincial Grand Master, The Lord Barnard and the appropriate protocols were observed.

Despite this, another Raby Gala, held in the grounds of Lord Barnard's ancestral home took place as part of the fundraising efforts for the 2021 Festival. On this occasion, the Lodge participated with a stall serving tasty sweets and puddings and the Worshipful Master organised the services of a 'park and ride' double decker bus, crewed by Ian Kirkbride.

2 candidates, Messrs Andrew Forrest and David Walker were welcomed, the latter being the son of WBro Stephen Walker and yet another 'Lewis' for the Lodge.

The Lodge entered a team to try to regain the Castle Lodge quiz trophy they had first won in 2010 and.....won it back!

| Attendances: 2016 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|-------------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|---|----|----|----|
| Members | 24 | 26 | 22 | 21 | 26 | 23 | - | - | - | 24 | 21 | 27 |
| Visitors | 12 | 12 | 13 | 7 | 17 | 39 | - | - | - | 12 | 7 | 29 |
| Lodges | 8 | 8 | 10 | 6 | 8 | 16 | - | - | - | 7 | 5 | 16 |

2017

Freemasonry's Tercentary Year saw Bro Stuart Gill eventually take 'the Chair.' Having arrived as an initiate back in 2002, Stuart's family and work commitments had meant him often having to opt out of earlier progression opportunities. At the Festive Board, Stuart had presented his predecessor, WBro Pinkney, with the 'Thomas Watson' Past Master's jewel he had been instrumental in recovering from the online sales site "ebay" back in 2010. The Secretary had 'saved' the jewel specifically for the occasion and also prepared a 'file' detailing its discovery on ebay together with newspaper cuttings associated with its original owner.

In this Lodge, Past Master's jewels are always presented to newly-invested IPM's at the Festive Board following Installation and are usually accompanied by a 'collection' of the year's Lodge Summons as a memento of 'work' done during his year. These days, the jewels are almost always 're-cycled,' having been awarded to previous WM's and given back to the Lodge when a recipient is awarded Provincial rank – currently, normally 7 years after leaving the Chair.

In this particular case, the jewel has hardly ever been worn, since Mark, like Ian Kirkbride, Rob Turbitt, Jonathan Stapley and Andrew Watson before him, was invited to join the 'Stewards' Lodge with the result that the (early) wearing of the Provincial Stewards collar obviated the wearing of the jewel.

Stuart's year began on a sad note however with the deaths of both a former Provincial Grand Master RW Bro Dr Alan Martin Davison and one of the Lodge's former stalwarts, WBro George Aiken. WBro Mike Wilson, the Lodge's Almoner and a personal friend of George who had attended his funeral in Sussex, paid tribute to him and many Lodge members later attended a memorial service organised by his widow, June, at their former local church in Sadberge.

Stuart, like many Worshipful Masters before him, also hosted a Gavel Night with WBro Mike Mountain explaining modern Freemasonry to several non-masonic guests

The meeting in March provided the opportunity for the Lodge's own WBro Stephen Walker to 'visit' - in a formal capacity - and as Assistant Provincial Grand Master, present a 60 year Certificate to the Lodge's longest-serving member WBro Peter Smailes.

A domestic 'emergency' delayed the planned progression of Bro David Walker with the result that WBros Kirkbride and Parker 'filled the gap' with a talk about Bro JHWarwick who had been initiated into the Lodge in 1911 before becoming involved in active service in 1915 and subsequently dying, in Arizona, in 1917. Ian Kirkbride had 'discovered' his story during the compilation of his WW1 years minutes readings.

WBro John Parker led a team of readers and singers in a re-enactment of "A Lodge of Sorrow and Mourning" last seen in the Lodge in 1994. The performance or demonstration is meant to reflect the events – albeit within the Lodge room – of a real occasion recorded in the Lodge's minute book for 1892 following the death of a WBro GJ Wilson. It involves the use of a shrouded coffin carried in by pallbearers, a narration of the recorded events and the singing of the hymns sung at the time. (photo). The demonstration has been offered in several Lodges in the intervening years.

Bro Keith Bulman, one of the Lodge's longest serving members – he was initiated in 1984 – was 'promoted' to Past Provincial Grand Pursuivant. Keith had never 'progressed' to the Chair mostly because of work commitments and was best known as the Lodge's Chief Steward. His dedication to Freemasonry in general and the Lodge in particular had first been recognised in 1998 with an appointment as Past Provincial Grand Steward.

Following the creation of the Provincial Grand Stewards Lodge in 2007; any and all existing Provincial Stewards continued to 'enjoy' that rank until such time as 'promotion' occurred. Prior to the formation of the 'Stewards' Lodge, most Provincial Stewards were, as was Keith's case, loyal Masons who had not been 'through the Chair.'

WBro Brian Everett became yet another member of the Lodge to be added to the Grand Officers' Honours Board with an appointment as PAGSwdB. Brian continues to astound his Lodge colleagues with his variety of interests and challenges. Already an MBE from his RAF days he also worked for London Transport and regularly travels to and from the capital for both Masonic – he holds London Senior Grand Rank (see 2010) - and other related interests. He has been regularly 'spotted' at the Annual Remembrance Parade in Whitehall broadcast by the BBC and his regular requests for sponsorship for some of his charitable ventures – he climbed Mt Kilimanjaro – belies his advancing years!

Bro David Walker did eventually progress to Master Mason and another Gavel Night preceded the election of WBro Jonathan Stapley as Master Elect for a second time.

His Installation in December however started on a particularly sad note with the announcement of the death of WBro Arnold Hird who, following his award of Honorary Membership in 2016 had not been able to attend the Lodge for some time.

WBro Karl McCoubrey took over as Lodge Secretary and the new Worshipful Master thanked WBro Ian Kirkbride for his past services to the Lodge though he was to continue in an 'Assistant' capacity to at least see out his WW1 readings project.

| Attendances: 2017 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 21 | 24 | 27 | 26 | 23 | 22 | - | - | - | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| Visitors | 17 | 10 | 15 | 13 | 13 | 20 | - | - | - | 16 | 11 | 22 |
| Lodges | 9 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 7 | 6 | - | - | - | 11 | 7 | 9 |

2018

With fundraising for the 2021 Festival in full swing and mindful of the Lodge's target, the Worshipful Master, Jonathan Stapley – formerly Charity Steward - presented a cheque for £1379 to the Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro Eric Heaviside. Already having achieved 'Gold' status, this propelled the Lodge towards its 'Platinum' award, acknowledging that it had already exceeded the target set for the Festival.

Lodges are given targets based on their membership at the beginning of a Festival period to encourage donations and other fundraising efforts. For this Festival, Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum incentive emblems were awarded to Lodges to be printed on Summons as percentage targets were either met and/or exceeded with corresponding lapel badges awarded to relevant Charity Stewards.

During the year, Mr Mervyn Balcombe was initiated in March, passed to the Second Degree in April and completed his entry when he was raised to the Degree of a Master Mason in October. Another Initiate, Mr Peter Irvine, was balloted for and entered the Lodge in June at a meeting where the members listened to the continuing tributes read out by the Lodge Secretary to Brethren from the Lodge who had participated in the Great War.

The year's Fraternal visits included another presentation of "The Marquess of Ripon – the Man," this time given by WBros Andrew Watson and Mike Wilson and the Lodge congratulated WBro Stephen Walker on his appointment as Deputy Provincial Grand Master.

In November, the Lodge welcomed its new Visiting Grand Officer (VGO) WBro George Addison PAGDC taking over from his predecessor WBro Alan Thompson who had fulfilled the role for over 10 years.

VGO's were senior and experienced Freemasons – mostly of Grand Rank - allocated by the Provincial Grand Master to attend meetings and 'report' independently on an allocated Lodge's governance and continuing viability. In 2021, the 'scheme' was altered to widen the scope of those appointed to these roles. They are now called VSO's (Visiting Support Officers).

The Secretary read out the last of the tributes paid to Lodge members who had contributed to the war effort in WW1 and was thanked by the Worshipful Master for the work he had carried out in researching and presenting the information over the last 4 years.

WBro Peter Smailes was proposed and elected as an Honorary Member of the Lodge in recognition of his contribution to Masonry in general and the Lodge in particular over many years.

| Attendances: 2018 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Members | 23 | 19 | 24 | 23 | 25 | 23 | - | - | - | 21 | 23 | 23 |
| Visitors | 17 | 6 | 9 | 14 | 26 | 17 | - | - | - | 10 | 14 | 31 |
| Lodges | 9 | 5 | 7 | 9 | 10 | 9 | - | - | - | 6 | 10 | 13 |

2019

Again, the year , now with WBro Alan Williamson 'in the Chair,' opened on a sad note with the reported deaths of Bro Andrew Stainthorpe and WBro Marsden Howitt.

Eulogies given record that Bro Stainthorpe – already medically 'handicapped' as the recipient of a donated kidney – had contracted bowel cancer! He had, earlier, ended his short Masonic career by resigning to pursue long-held acting ambitions whilst WBro Howitt – a well known Darlington Mason but not a member of the Lodge - had been the Lodge's long-serving Tyler until ill health prevented him attending meetings.

It had become clear that Marsden Howitt's attendances as the regular Tyler of the Lodge would not continue, so, the Lodge, at its annual 'Club' meeting, adopted a system often used by others; that of appointing the outgoing IPM to serve as Tyler for the ensuing year.

'Club' meetings are the Lodge's version of 'Committee meetings.' All subscribing members are deemed to be 'Club' members with the meetings usually held towards the end of the Summer recess and used, typically, to discuss Lodge finances and the (likely) Masonic year ahead.

WBro Malcolm Sweet of Milbanke Lodge returned to give his impressive totally unscripted talk on "The Life and Times of Rudyard Kipling" last heard in 2012 and there was a traditional 'Gavel Night again presented by WBro Mike Mountain.

WBro Don Marshall of County Lodge was invited to present "A History of Anti- Masonry" and WBro Kevin Carter updated the Lodge on the "Teddis for TLC" project (see 2009.)

WBro Alan Thompson was made an Honorary Member of the Lodge in recognition of his past service as Visiting Grand Officer – and sometimes, 'stand-in' Organist!

Another second degree ceremony on behalf of Universities Lodge saw Bro Chaoxuan Oijang passed to the degree of a Fellowcraft and following 'closing,' members of Restoration Lodge, who were visiting on a 'Fraternal' basis, left with the prestigious Teesdale Masonic Quiz trophy.

November's regular 'elections' meeting was a 'mixed bag' of happy and sad events with the election for a second time of WBro Mark Pinkney as Worshipful Master for the ensuing year and the resignations of both WBro Jonathan Stapley and Bro Andrew Carson.

The meeting also included an explanation by VW Bro Stephen Walker of the 'Solomon Vault' – a research tool provided on the Provincial website.

| Attendances: 2019 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D | |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Members | 23 | 21 | 17 | 18 | 22 | 20 | - | - | - | 18 | 21 | 20 | 180 |
| Visitors | 17 | 22 | 7 | 14 | 7 | 22 | - | - | - | 20 | 5 | 19 | 133 |
| Lodges | 9 | 5 | 7 | 10 | 10 | 8 | - | - | - | 17 | 3 | 11 | 80 |

2020

WBro Mark Pinkney could not have envisaged how his second year in the Chair was about to unfold. Starting, as usual with a Gavel Night, WBro Mike Mountain gave his last explanation of modern Freemasonry to non-masonic guests because of a move south to be nearer to family members and due to health concerns for both himself and his wife.

Mike was honoured with Honorary membership before they left.

Time only for the Brethren next to receive a presentation on ‘Solomon’ given by WBro Wharton of Commercial Travellers Lodge No5089 before.....

2020’s Lodge meetings – NATIONALLY - were curtailed by the Covid 19 pandemic!

There had been rumours that a particularly dangerous virus with origins in China, was beginning to circulate and affect populations worldwide.

The first cases of the virus in the UK were dealt with in February and ultimately, together with many other restrictions imposed by the Government, people were asked to ‘stay at home’ to prevent its spread.

United Grand Lodge announced in March that Freemasonry in the form of meetings usually held in the UK should cease forthwith!

What followed was dictated by the Government’s various strategies to control the virus which at times allowed meetings of people in groups of no more than six; regionally-based restrictions dependent on the scale of infections being recorded (‘tiers’) and sector-specific controls targeting those who might otherwise gather in numbers in businesses and other organisations. The wearing of face masks and the term “social distancing” were synonymous with everyone’s responsibilities for their own and others’ health and welfare.

2020 will be remembered by many for the Christmas that never was and in Lodge terms, WBro Mark Pinkney and his team of Officers simply carried over their roles into the New (including Masonic) Year.

Like many other organisations, we all learned to keep in touch via ‘zoom!’

‘Zoom’ was/is an online communications facility allowing many participants to see and hear each other in both domestic and commercial circumstances similar to what many – in their working environments - might have described as ‘video-conferencing.’

| Attendances: 2020 | J | F | M | A | M | J | J | A | S | O | N | D |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Members | 21 | 18 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Visitors | 7 | 9 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Lodges | 4 | 9 | | | | | | | | | | |

By late 2021, following a remarkably progressive vaccination programme, there were indications that the worst was over and Lodges were allowed to consider meeting again against a background of local risk assessment. In some cases, Lodges continued to insist on the wearing of face masks and hand sanitisation and the requirement to avoid touching either individuals and/or lodge equipment was a high priority. Festive Boards were largely cancelled and singing was banned.

Gradually restrictions were lifted and the Lodge was able to hold its Installation meeting in December when, for a third successive year and with appropriate dispensation, WBro Mark Pinkney **again** ‘took the chair!’

This was a time for Lodge Secretaries to become 'super-familiar' with the Book of Constitutions particularly with regard to the protocols associated with missed elections and/or Installation meetings.

Having already had to know how and when it was possible to abandon meetings, it now became even more important to implement the correct procedures necessary to install and/or re-install Worshipful Masters. It is said that Provincial Grand Secretaries certainly 'earned their corn' during the transition back to normality!

As a contribution to the Grand Auction – one of many 'treats' offered as fundraisers for the 2021 Festival - the Worshipful Master, himself a keen enthusiast, led a party of six brethren from Seaham lodges on a guided tour of the disused lead mines at Nenthead, Cumbria. The highlight of the trip was a packed lunch in the 'Ballroom Flat', a large cavern excavated in the process of mining, and where in 1901, 28 members of Alston Lodge had held a dinner pre-prepared in a local inn and delivered in mine wagons.

Certain 'gatherings' were allowed under the ever-changing Covid rules which 'favoured' outdoor activities where there was less likelihood of transmission of the virus.

2022

The Lodge's 150th Anniversary year began with mixed emotions in the knowledge that meetings could now resume without restrictions and with the formalising of plans to celebrate the occasion in May.

In the absence of restrictions, the virus and/or its variants continued to affect society in general and Masonic meetings in particular. It marked the Government's approach to the problem and society's general acceptance that we now had to (learn to) 'live with' the effects of the virus in much the same way as we had become accustomed to living with our, sometimes, annual outbreaks of influenza.

Sadly, it also began with the death of WBro Andrew Watson who had been undergoing treatment for cancer for some years, causing him to 'miss' many local meetings as well as restricting his contributions to the work of the Provincial Stewards Lodge. His Darlington funeral was marked by a huge turnout of local and Provincial Freemasons recognising also his architectural design skills in the construction of Boundary Court, one of the Province's sheltered accommodation facilities. A moving eulogy was given by WBro Jonathan Stapley – now a member of Darlington's County Lodge No6678 - at both the funeral service and the January meeting of the Lodge.

A new Lodge Bible was sourced and bought on ebay – many successive Tylers had been accustomed to 'borrowing' a VSL ("Volume of the Sacred Law") from another of Darlington's Lodges, Nevill Lodge of Installed Masters. Appropriately it was dedicated in Andrew Watson's name. [\(Photo\)](#)

There now being numerous Lodges meeting at Darlington's Freemasons' Hall, there have been many instances of the 'borrowing' of Lodge furniture and equipment and, not surprisingly, corresponding pleas for its return. From time to time, 'amnesties' are declared with representatives from the Lodges asked to attend and open up their respective storage facilities to check on and rectify any misappropriations! No-one seems to know why we had operated for so long without our own bible!

In another ebay 'find,' the Lodge's newest member, Bro Paul Hurworth presented the Lodge with a piece of its history in the form of the Past Master's jewel awarded to the eminent WBro Hill Drury in 1890! [\(photo\)](#)

This historical record does not cover the jewel's future recipient but the events of 2017 may provide a clue and the eminence of its original owner is well documented in Bob Hatterley's 125th Anniversary booklet.

WBro Ian Kirkbride stepped into a 'breech' and provided an entertaining talk titled, "Message in a Bottle" when an otherwise brief meeting in April would have resulted. When Bro Andy Forrest was unable to attend to receive his Grand Lodge Certificate, Ian told the story of WBro Owen Stanley Scott, a former Curator of the famous Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, who had left a message in a bottle in a heating flue over 100 years ago and which was found, intact, by modern day building contractors. Scott's message included details of his local Masonic interests and Ian had further researched his life story.

And we conclude with the 150th Anniversary meeting in May when Assistant Provincial Grand Master, WBro Andrew Moule attended with a small deputation representing the Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham. The Secretary, WBro Karl McCoubrey read the minutes of earlier significant meetings and those present also heard from WBro Ian Kirkbride regarding the origins of the Lodge and, additionally from WBro Mike Wilson and Bro Mervyn Balcombe, of the life and times of the man after whom it is named. Lodge Treasurer, Bro Ian Whitfield added to the 'picture' by describing a variety of world events from 1872 - including the introduction of Darlington's (still) famous "Taylor's pork pies!" (Photo)

Subs in 2022 over £200.00