

The Centenary of the Mark Province of Northumberland

By

Ian W Brown



R W Bro Colonel Charles Warren Napier-Clavering
Provincial Grand Master
Mark Province of Northumberland and Durham 1911-1920
Mark Province of Northumberland 1920-1931

Foreword

On the 25th July 2020 the formation of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Masons of Northumberland celebrated it's one-hundredth birthday and we should have celebrated this milestone of our Province in the wonderful surroundings of Alnwick Gardens, which was chosen, not least because of its fabulous backdrop but also as the home of our first Provincial Grand Master, Earl Percy.

Sadly after a great many hours of planning by a dedicated team who were appointed to organize and make this a special and memorable evening for those would be attending it had to be cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The decision to cancel proved to be the correct one as even now as we prepare for the 2021 Annual Provincial Meeting there is still a degree of uncertainty as to when complete normality will return to our lives.

This wonderful little booklet was commissioned by my predecessor R W Bro Gordon Craigs, and I need to thank him for his foresight, as it gives an excellent and informative précis of the history of our Province, and will therefore, become an excellent additional resource to the pack that we have prepared for new members.

I am also certain that any visitors to our Province will also find it an informative and interesting read.

Although we didn't manage to hold our one hundredth birthday party our Province is now into its one hundred and one years of existence, a fact which I am immensely proud of.

As we look forward to the future with optimism let us remember the efforts of our predecessors who strived to ensure the continuity of this wonderful and friendly degree in our Province and so let us further develop their precepts.

I must take this opportunity to thank all the Provincial team, past and present for their help, support and assistance over a very difficult past year.

As I enter my second year in Office, let me state how proud I am to lead this Province and how proud I am of how we have managed to survive this dreadful pandemic with such fortitude along with the enthusiasm displayed for the resumption of meetings which has been welcoming and heartwarming. Thank you.

R W Bro Raymond Arthur Walton
Provincial Grand Master

ASSISTANT PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTERS

1980	G W Umpleby
1982	Revd J W Philipson
1984	G N Fletcher, TD
1989	W McGibbon
1991	G Usher (Retired 1996)
1997	P Magnay, DL
1999	M J Louis, JP
2000	J F Whitehouse
2007	F C Main
2009	I D Daniel
2014	S Cairns
2015	R Northey
2018	R A Walton

DEPUTY PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTERS

1870	A Clapham
1873	J Trotter
1874	T Y Strachan
1887	R B Reed
1897	T Purvis
1898	Col W M Angus, CB
1906	J M Ridley
1909	H Brown
1910	C N Blackhouse
1912	J Redhead
1920	J Hepple
1924	Brig-Gen WH Sitwell, CB, DSO
1932	Revd P T Lee, MA
1933	W C Youll
1941	J Colvin-Watson
1944	A T Howell
1955	G W Bourn
1972	C H A Brown
1982	G W Umpleby
1989	G N Fletcher
1991	W McGibbon
2000	M J Louis, JP
2009	F C Main
2015	S Cairns
2018	R Northey

The two northern counties of Northumberland and Durham were formed into a united Province of Mark Master Masons under a Warrant or Patent dated 20th February 1870. and the Rt Hon Earl Percy was appointed to be the first Provincial Grand Master. On 29th September, 1870, he was duly obligated and installed as such at the first Provincial Grand Lodge meeting held at the Freemason's Hall, Bell's Court, Newcastle upon Tyne.

There were only two Mark Lodges represented at this meeting: Northumberland and Berwick-upon-Tweed Lodge of Mark Masters Time Immemorial and Eclectic Lodge of Mark Master Masons No 39, which met at West Hartlepool.

The Origins of the Mark Degree

Some early records mention, or purport to mention, the names of Degrees which were worked, and which related to the concept of the awarding of a *Mark* of some kind, and this appears to have been the main theme or connecting strand between those Degrees genuine or spurious, some of which boasted such fantastic and unusual names such as:

The Ark, Mark, and Link

The Ark, Mark, Link and Chain

The Black Mark

The Old Mark

The Original Mark

The Link and Wrestle

The problem in identifying the emergence of the Mark Degree in England can be a contentious and difficult one, more so if any attempt is made to relate the Mark Degree as we know it today, with any of the so-called Degrees mentioned above. There is little doubt, however, that many of those Degrees were actually worked and certainly several of them were still extant during the latter half of the Nineteenth Century. They may all have had the granting or reward of a 'mark' as their central theme, but there is little evidence that they in any way resembled the present day Mark Degree

By the 1750;s the Royal Arch was being worked both by Craft Lodges and independent Chapters, and it would seem that the basic version of a Mark Degree, was at least, being worked under the auspices of those two bodies.

There were occasional reports of Lodges or Chapters being specially convened for the purpose of conferring the Degree, but such reports are difficult to verify. Some Brethren formed themselves into ‘Travelling Lodges’, of which one of the best- known was the so-called ‘Sunday Lodge’, which was based at Ashton-under-Lyme, and only travelled and carried out Degree work on that day.

The spread of the Mark Degree in the South of England was almost entirely due to the persuasive influence of a remarkable man named Thomas Dunckerley, who was a natural born son of King George II, but unrecognised by the Royal Family and the Establishment. He was said to have been, on various occasions, Provincial Grand Master of the Craft eight times, and certainly served as Provincial Grand Superintendent of the Royal Arch in no less than eighteen counties!

Dunckerley was a very enthusiastic Mason, and was responsible for founding many Lodges, and the development of several Masonic Orders in England.

He was present at a meeting of The Phoenix Royal Arch Chapter of Friendship No 257, meeting at the George Tavern in Portsmouth on 1st. September 1769, in his capacity as Provincial Grand Master of Hampshire; and as the Minutes of that meeting state:

“The Pro. Grand Master bro’t the warrant of the Chapter, and having lately rec’d the ‘Mark’, he made he Bre’n ‘Mark Masons’, and ‘Mark Masters’ and each chuse their Mark. He also told us of this manner of writing, which is to be used in the Degree, which we may give to others, as they may be F.C. for Mark Masons, and Master Masons for Mark Masters.”

This Minute is very important as it fixes, without any doubt, one of the earliest references to the actual working of a Mark Degree in England.

The attentive reader will have noted that Dunckerley had lately received his Mark’ which of course implies that he had received his Mark elsewhere, perhaps in Scotland, or even in Newcastle, although,

Provincial Grand Masters

1870	Earl Percy
1873	Revd Canon Tristram, DD
1906	Col W Mathwin Angus, CB
1909	J Cartmell-Ridley
1911	Col C Warren Napier-Clavering
1932	Brig-Gen W Henry Sitwell, CB, DSO
1933	Revd Percy T Lee, MA
1944	J Colvin-Watson
1955	Arthur T Howell
1972	J Rendell-Bartlett
1982	Charles H A Brown
1991	George N Fletcher, TD
1999	Peter Magnay, DL
2009	Gordon Craigs
2020	Raymond Arthur Walton

saluted according to ancient custom, and upon taking the Chair, appointed his Officers *pro tem*, and was informed that the Provincial Grand Master Designate, the R W Bro Gerald Wellesley Liddle, Baron Ravensorth, was without and requested to be installed.

Following the reading of the Patent of Approval and Appointment, the Provincial Grand Master of the Province of Durham was installed by the R W Installing Officer, placed in the Chair, proclaimed and saluted, after which his Deputy Provincial Grand Master (W Bro John Redhead), was obligated, invested and installed; after which the Grand Officers and the Provincial Grand Officers of Northumberland then retired.

At the Annual Meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Northumberland, held at the Masonic Hall, 18, Grainger Street West, Newcastle upon Tyne, Colonel Napier-Clavering made reference to the event during his Address to the Brethren: "The great event, so far as we are concerned, is the separation of the Lodges in the two counties of Northumberland and Durham. I was at first doubtful in my own mind whether to recommend it, but ultimately, I thought it better for both Provinces concerned, now that they have sufficient Lodges, to be separated and to work on their own, and I hope that both Provinces will be successful. This is the first meeting of the Brethren of the Province of Northumberland since the separation of the two counties on 12th June last. There has, therefore, been no time to, as it were, to 'make history'"

Since that date in 1920, history of course, has proved Napier-Clavering's initial doubts wrong. Both Provinces went on from strength to strength, never looking back, and now, this year, both Provinces are celebrating their Centenary, and while not as numerous in terms of membership as of old, there is still an abounding interest and sense of pride in the Mark Degree in both Provinces.

That pride will ensure the security and continuation of both Provinces for the next hundred years, and perhaps, beyond.

sadly, this must remain conjecture, as there are no records which show where Dunckerley received his Mark. In all, probability, it was in Scotland, perhaps during the course of his travels, for Dunckerley was widely travelled, and indeed, during his travels, he did much to foster and encourage the spread of the Mark, and many other Orders.

He never doubted, for one moment that he had the authority to do so, being a holder of many high offices, and on the occasion of his presenting the warrant of the Chapter as mentioned above, such was his enthusiasm for the Degree, he promptly conferred it upon several of the Brethren present that evening! Another important point to note about the ceremony, was that it was apparently performed in two parts - Mark Mason and Mark Master, the former being conferred upon Fellow Crafts, and the latter upon Master Masons.

Earlier, mention was made of the possibility, unlikely, but not improbable, that Dunckerley may have been Advanced into the Mark Degree at Newcastle, and whether or not this was the case, we may now never know, but what we do know is that the Mark Degree was being worked in Newcastle in 1756 - thirteen years before Dunckerley was conferring the Degree in Portsmouth!

The evidence for this statement is found in a copy of the 1723 *Book of Constitutions* owned by the Province of Durham, and which may still form part of the important 'William Waples Collection'. Inside this book were bound a number of pages which contained "The Regulations or by laws strictly to be observed by the Brethren of this Lodge which shall be held at the House of John Kirton of Newcastle."

One of the pages contained the words: "Robert Salmon; his book. June 1759. Gateshead".

Another page bears the title "Newcastle January 1756" and continues:

"There being met part of the body of the Lodge, they taking in their serious consideration that no member of the said Lodge shall be made a Mark Mason without paying the fee of one Scots Mark that for the propagation of the pedestal as witnessed the foresaid date by John Maxwell, Master, To. Provund, and Robert Nivecear, Wardens."

Note that the Mark Degree was worked in a Craft Lodge, and that in Portsmouth, the Degree had been worked in a Chapter. Elsewhere, we find other references that the Mark Degree was growing; for example, we find that on 21st December 1773, the Marquis of Granby Lodge No 124 of Durham recorded that: *“Bro. Barnwick was also made a Mark’d Mason and Bro. James McKinlay aised to the Degree of Master Mason, and also made a Mark Mason, and paid accordingly”*

From the evidence, we can be sure that the Mark Degree was being worked in several Lodges in England and Scotland at least seventy years before the Act of Union between the rival Grand Lodges of England in 1813, although there is little evidence to show that there was any one Lodge solely dedicated to the Mark. Everything appears to indicate, that as in Scotland, the Mark Degree was conferred and worked within the aegis of a Craft Lodge or Chapter.

There had to be some event which precipitated the forming of the Mark Grand Lodge and the regularisation of that Body, and that event was the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Article II of the Act of Union between the Ancients and the Moderns stated:

“Pure Ancient Masonry consists of three Degrees and no more, the Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft and Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch. But this article is not intended to prevent any Lodge or Chapter from holding a meeting in any of the Degrees of Chivalry, according to the Constitutions of the said Orders”.

This Article caused great offence amongst some Royal Arch Companions when it was published, and the ramifications continued to rumble for many years. The offence was that in the first paragraph, the Royal Arch was no longer recognised as a Fourth Degree; henceforth it was to be considered as the Master Masons’ Degree completed; and one of the outcomes of this debate, was that Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter was formed.

The second paragraph of the Article implied that the ‘Chivalric Orders’, such as the Knights Templars were allowed to continue to work a Templar or Malta Degree within private encampments;

being, at the end of 1918, 958 would be difficult to administer; however internal evidence according to Provincial Records does not support this. It was felt, perhaps at the highest level, that a change would be needed, and indeed, prove beneficial to the Mark Degree as a whole.

The catalyst for that change came from the Provincial Grand Master himself, Colonel Charles Warren Napier-Clavering, who despite some initial doubts, came to the conclusion it would be better if the Province was separated into two distinct entities. Accordingly, he consulted with the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons, and there appeared to be no objections to Napier-Clavering's proposal that the Province should be divided.

Thus, on Saturday 12th. June, 1920, a Special Meeting of the Province of Northumberland and Durham was held at Freemason's Hall, Old Elvet, Durham under the presidency of Colonel Napier-Clavering. The Meeting was called for the purpose of announcing that his Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught and Strathearn, Most Worshipful Grand Master had been pleased to sanction the formation of separate Provincial Grand Lodges of Northumberland and Durham, to consist of the respective Lodges at present under the Provincial Grand Lodges of Northumberland and Durham; and the installation of the R W Bro the Rt. Hon Gerald Wellesley Liddell, Baron Ravensworth, Past Grand Warden, as the R W Provincial Grand Master of the new Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham.

The Provincial Grand Lodge was then opened in due form. The circular convening the meeting was read by the Provincial Grand Secretary, W Bro Chartres Youll. The Provincial Grand Master then stated the objectives of the meeting, as outlined above, adding that it was on his own recommendation that the Province be divided.

Colonel Napier-Clavering then declared the two new Provinces duly constituted, and that the Provincial Grand Lodge of Northumberland and Durham be dissolved and ended from that date.

The Colonel then retired, while a Provincial Grand Lodge of Durham was opened, and the Colonel, acting now as Installing Officer, re-entered the Lodge Room, accompanied by several Grand Officers, and was

In due course, the need arose, partly for reasons of administrative convenience and partly to give regional Lodges which met at some distance from London, a sense of identity, to form Provincial Grand Lodges; each to be virtually self-governing bodies, but owing allegiance to, and to be directed by, Grand Lodge.

The first Provincial Grand Lodge to be formed was that of Devon, in 1857, under the leadership of the Rev John Huyshe. Devon was quickly followed by Somerset (1858), Kent (1858), Cornwall (1867), and in 1870, by the Province of Northumberland and Durham.

The Mark Province of Northumberland and Durham, at the beginning, was only represented by two Lodges. By 1920, the province consisted of the following Lodges:

Northumberland and Berwick-upon-Tweed Time Immemorial

Eclectic No. 239

Percy No. 122

Union No. 124

Hotspur No.135

St. Cuthbert's No.192

Darlington No. 250

Industry No. 293

Tristram No. 346

Dunelm No. 356

Wouldhave No. 362

Gosforth No. 463

Hartford No. 546

Blagdon No 547

Angus No. 561

Aukland No. 598

Bede No. 695

Morpeth No. 691

Thomas Purvis No. 702

Unity No. 708

It became apparent that such a large Province with a membership numb-

and it could also be interpreted as allowing for the provision of the working of certain additional 'side' Degrees, including the Mark; although never once did it appear that this position was clarified in respect to the working of the Mark; in effect, the Mark Degree was in a sort of wilderness. Where it was worked, it worked; and while there seems to have been no overt efforts on the part of either United Grand Lodge or Supreme Grand Chapter to discourage the working of the Mark, neither was there anything done to either promote or actively discourage it.

The apparent stance of official aloofness and bare toleration of the situation of non-recognition was a far from ideal position in the eyes of the members of many Lodges, and for many years, the situation was hopelessly chaotic, with different Lodges claiming great antiquity, the production of dubious or invalid warrants, or even Lodges working the Degree under the auspices of a Scottish Lodge.

It was this latter circumstance which brought matters to a head during the 1850s.

In 1851, six Brethren from London were made Mark Masons under the auspices of the Bon Accord Royal Arch Chapter of Aberdeen, and those Brethren resolved to form their own Mark Lodge, and so the 'London Bon Accord Mark Master Lodge' Grand Chapter of Scotland, and the warrant of the Aberdeen Chapter was suspended, on the grounds of alleged unconstitutional conduct. Some English Brethren then sought clarification from the Grand Chapter of Scotland as to their position, and requested that they be issued with legal warrants, and while this was done, the feeling arose that there was an urgent need for the Mark Degree to be officially recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England.

The story of the struggle to ensure that recognition is too long and complex to relate here, but by 1855, a Committee was formed, composed of seven members of the United Grand Lodge of England, and seven members of the Supreme Grand Chapter of England. Their brief was simple: to consider how far the Mark Degree was in accord with Ancient Freemasonry, and whether there was anything within the rubric of that Degree inconsistent with the rites and customs of the Craft and Chapter.

In 1856, this joint Committee having considered all the evidence, and heard representations from members of various Masonic bodies, finally reached their conclusions and reported back to the Board of General Purposes:

“That after obtaining all the information in its power, this Committee is of the opinion that the Mark Mason’s Degree, so called, does not form a portion of the Royal Arch Degree, and it is not essential to Craft Masonry, but they are of the opinion that there is nothing objectionable in such a Degree, nor anything which militates against the universality of Masonry, and it might be considered as forming a graceful addition to the Fellow Crafts Degree.”

The Quarterly Communications of United Grand Lodge in March 1856, considered the report, and laid down the following resolution:

“That the Degree of Mark Mason or Mark Master is not at variance with the Ancient Landmarks of the Order, and that the Degree shall be an addition to, and form part of the Fellow Craft Degree, and may consequently be conferred by all regularly warranted under such regulations as maybe suggested by the Board of General Purposes, approved and sanctioned by the M.W. Grand Master”

This resolution was heard and approved, but the Minute recording that approval was never put for confirmation, for at the June Quarterly Communications, Brother Henderson, a Mason of many years’ standing opposed the confirmation of that Minute on the grounds that the Act of Union of 1813 did not give United Grand Lodge the power or authority to admit new Degrees in the Order. This somewhat pedantic and pugnacious Brother stated that “no man or body of men could make such innovations as now proposed, without endangering the whole stability of the institution.”

This caused a tremendous and argumentative debate which raged across the meeting room, including raised voices, and outbreaks of temper. The matter was brought to an abrupt hold by the Grand Master, the Earl of Zetland, who announced that it was his opinion that the Act of Union did bar the inclusion of any additional Degrees

This must rank as one of the classic about-turns of history, as the Grand

Master had previously supported the report and the recommendations of the Committee; indeed he had done so in his own hand; *“Approved-Zetland”*.

Faced with this decision, there seemed little that the English Mark Masons could do, apart from seethe in discontent.

One of the most prominent of the Mark Masons of this time was Lord Leigh, and he was resolved that something should be done about this situation, and he accordingly met with the members of the London Bon Accord Mark Lodge to discuss the matter.

Within a very few months, three other Mark Lodges had formed with Bon Accord to form the first Grand Mark Lodge. They were:

Bon Accord (London)

Royal Cumberland (Bath)

Old Kent (London)

Northumberland and Berwick-upon Tweed (Newcastle upon Tyne)

The Grand Mark Lodge

The Grand Mark Lodge then elected Lord Leigh as Grand Master and he appointed Lord Methuen as his Deputy Grand Master.

In May 1857, a more formal Constitution of Grand Mark Lodge took place, and a number of other Lodges who claimed considerable antiquity, as well as those Lodges working under the Charters issued by the Grand Chapter of Scotland, pledged their allegiance to Grand Mark Lodge.

There were still a few dissenting Lodges, but within two years, all the Lodges recorded were in unity with their parent body. From 1857 onwards, Grand Mark never looked back, and the number of Lodges under its sway grew in leaps and bounds, from fifty Lodges in 1861, to eighty Lodges in 1866, and to one hundred and ninety-seven Lodges a decade later.