

I have been asked to give a short presentation on the history of Hanwell Chapter.

Hanwell Chapter has just passed its 90th birthday which was on 22nd April 2022. The world on the 22nd April 1932 at our consecration was a very different place. The US President was Herbert Hoover, Ramsey MacDonald was our Prime Minister and George V was on the throne.

The first experimental television broadcast by the BBC took place. First Ford Model Y produced. Huxley's Brave New World was published. Adolf Hitler was granted German citizenship. Johnny Cash is born.

Hanwell Chapter's story started a little earlier on Sunday April 12th 1931. Many members of Hanwell Lodge appear to have been golfers as a meeting was called at the Golf Course in Hanwell by Ex Comp Frank Toley at which 15 Companions intimated their willingness to be associated as founders of the proposed Chapter. They signed the Petition on May 17th 1931 and on June 26th a resolution giving consent to the petition was duly passed at a meeting of Hanwell Lodge.

SGC granted the Charter and the Consecration meeting was held at Freemasons Hall on Friday 22nd April 1932 this being the first Chapter to be consecrated in the new building on Great Queen Street. The ceremony was conducted by E Comp Sir Colville Smith GscribeE with the three Primus principles of Hanwell Chapter being E Comp Freddy Sheath as First Principal, E Comp Jack Lynch as H and E Comp George Tapley-Smith as J.

The Annual Subscription was two and a half guineas – Two pounds thirteen shillings – or £2.65

At the second convocation five candidates were exalted – quite a handful for the Principal Sojourner Comp F Batson!

The Chapter flourished until the outbreak of the 2nd World War in 1939 when attendances dropped into single figures with a low of only 7. In spite of these small numbers the Chapter continued until 1942 when Bro Joe Wren of Coronation Lodge offered himself a candidate for exaltation. He was responsible for bringing in many new members from his lodge. In the Coronation year of 1953 it was very appropriate that three members of Coronation Lodge occupied the three principals Chairs.

The meeting in June 1944 was memorable for two reasons first the proceedings were interrupted and punctuated by the explosion of Flying Bombs and secondly was a visit by one of the founders Ex Comp George Tapley-Smith who had been absent for some time due to ill health and was practically blind.

In the years that followed the Silver Jubilee the Chapter built up a solid membership of over fifty companions.

In the years that followed the fortunes of Hanwell Chapter ebbed and flowed until we had the great loss of the demise of Hanwell Lodge which had provided many of our exaltees.

Also, as you would expect, many of the Chapters members lived and worked in London and many companions having reached retirement age decided to move away. I think Comp Peter Martin started it by moving to Brixham in Devon although for many years he

continued to attend and he caught a coach up to town on the morning of the meeting and then a return overnight coach after the meeting. We have also had a few others who have continued to attend regularly despite having to travel long distances.

From its inception the Chapter had something of a nomadic existence as to where its convocations were held, usually in various hotels.. Starting off in 1932 at the Horseshoe Hotel W1 then the Park Hotel Hanwell then back to the Horseshoe followed by The Shaftsbury Hotel, No2 Whitehall Court, Clarendon Hotel and the Windsor Hotel at Lancaster Gate.

The proposition for our last move in 1987 was made at a meeting at the Windsor Hotel was one of my early meetings and one that I remember well. Ex Comp Derek Briggs who many will recall with much affection got up in any other business and proposed a move the WLMC which had not been established very long and who were looking for Lodges and Chapters to join them. This seemed to cause much consternation to the Scribe E who was not expecting such a proposition. As a newish companion at that time I am not sure of what happened behind the scenes but the proposed move eventually took place and we have been very happily ensconced here for the last 35 years.

Charity is one of our great principals and I have been through the books over the last twenty years and it might surprise some people that over that time we have donated just short of £25,000 allowing for inflation. Not bad for a small Chapter.

We have many historical documents with which I could bore you with names and dates but the more important than these are the people of the Chapter. Over the years we have had many Characters and just three come to my own mind. The first I never knew personally was Comp Nares-Pillow who had an extraordinary talent as an amateur hypnotist and there were many tales of his “work” results at festive boards. The second was Comp Jimmy Hoadley a man of small stature, who was closely associated with Christine Keeler and Mandy Rice-Davies and who had lurid tales of goings on at various night clubs. The last one in my memory is one who many will remember, Comp Ken Ackril. He was anything but small in stature and had many tales to tell at the festive board. In the Chapter meeting as a Grand Officer he had a unique ability when things were not going well, words not remembered, actions done incorrectly and tensions rising – to make a one line observation which made people laugh, settled tensions and enabled everyone to give of their best. There are many others who deserve mention but time is restricted.

I know many will regard this meeting as a very sad time and the end of an era. I know it is but I believe we should look upon it as an opportunity for a new start – to join a new chapter and continue our delight of Chapter meetings in new circumstances.

I have thoroughly enjoyed being a member of Hanwell Chapter and hope I will continue to see members at other meetings in the coming years Thank you to all members for the help, advice and support you have given me personally over the years.