

Masonic Support of the Orphanage and School since 1863

1863
to
date

Masonic support has been significant since the Orphan Asylum was founded.

Freemasonry and individual masons have played a major part in the life of the Orphanage and School. Many Governors and staff were Masons (see below). Although John Lees appears not to have been one, many members of the Management Board were masons, right from the founding of the Orphan Asylum.

Freemasons, at the time of the orphanage's inception and for some time afterward, were typically from the upper and professional classes - the "great and the good" of the period.

One of Freemasonry's key principles, along with Integrity, Respect and Friendship is "Charity" – charitable support for those in need, giving both money and time. They would have considered it a charitable duty to support such a noble cause as the rescue and support of orphaned children.

From 1863, Masons supported the orphanage and later the school with funding and providing their time as Governors and as champions. The first example of support was from St Peter's Lodge in 1863. The Lodge of Honour started in 1875 and has continued to support the school to this day. There is prize presented to pupils in its name. The School has had its own masonic lodge since 1967.

Research of donation records shows that individual Freemasons and Masonic bodies donated the equivalent of over £500k in today's money, to the Orphanage and School.

This may have influenced John Lees and his colleagues as the orphanage later took on the nature of Masonic schools, with worthy children in need being nominated by worthy townspeople and with funds being provided by local Masonic lodges. Indeed, it was often referred to as "the Birmingham Masonic School, in Wolverhampton".

Equally, it could have been just a pragmatic approach to fundraising with the professional classes being encouraged to support such a worthy cause as they had the funds to do so and most likely felt "There but for the Grace of God, go I". Many large orphanages took the same approach to fundraising.



This bed plaque was placed at the foot of a bed in the "Long Dorm". It commemorates a Staffordshire Masonic Trust payment in 1894 of £735 (equivalent to over £90k) for the provision of a bed for one child in perpetuity. The Trust was founded for this purpose and in commemoration of the Provincial Grand Master laying the foundation stone of the chapel.

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A large amount of financial support was provided by over 300 Masonic organisations before the 1944 Education Act, and the introduction of the Welfare State.

This was the time of greatest need with the Orphanage supported by public donations.

Votes	Name	1950
288	Charity Lodge	Lodge no.
258	Peace and Harmony Lodge	1551
164	Lodge of Israel	3929
122	Concord Lodge	1474
109	St Peter's Lodge	3259
100	Lodge of Bon Accord	419
90	Lodge of Prudence	4935
86	St Martin's Lodge	3659
77	Prince of Wales Lodge of Instruction	4011
70	Lodge of Sincerity	4021
70	St Mary's Lodge	3850
68	Howe Lodge	3879
68	Three Shires Lodge	587
62	Stetchford Lodge	5103
60	Fidelity Lodge	3185
60	Arts and Crafts Lodge	3708
58	Provincial Grand Lodge of Staffordshire	4134
52	Noah's Ark Lodge	347
52	Shenstonian Lodge	5344
50	Honour Lodge (was 709, now 526) or Lodge of Honour	526
50	St Bartholomew Lodge	696
50	Lodge of Integrity	4653
48	Palladian Lodge	120
48	Holte Lodge	1246
48	Faith and Hope Lodge	4772
46	Hatherton Lodge	2474
4	Samaritan Lodge	
	Chase Lodge	
	Wernlegh Abbey Lodge	

As Governor		As Chairman		Chairmen	Governor	Chairman	Mason
From	To	From	To		Service	Service	
1850	1859	1850	1855	John Lees	9	5	
1855	1856	1855	1856	Alderman John Neve	1	1	
1855	1857	1857	1857	Moses Ironmonger	2	1	Y
1855	1858	1858	1858	T. R. Andrews	3	1	
1858	1892	1859	1892	William Henry Rogers	34	33	
1865	1907	1892	1907	William Lees J.P	42	15	
1900 Duke of York (later George V) announced. Queen Victoria allowed prefix "Royal": The Royal Orphanage of Wolverhampton							
1907	1910	1907	1910	E. J. Chambers	3	3	Y
1887	1933	1910	1933	Sam Wells Page	46	23	Y
1929	1943	1933	1943	Henry Southan	14	10	Y
1935	1961	1943	1961	F. L. Steward MA, ACA	26	18	Y
1944 King George VI commanded institution be called "The Royal Wolverhampton School"							
1946	1964	1961	1964	Cyril C. Lathe	18	3	
		1964	1972	Frederick O. Skidmore	8	8	Y
		1972	1982	Peter V. Sellers, BSc, FRICS	10	10	
		1982	1988	Mrs Ivy Baxter BA, JP	6	6	
		1988	1992	Eric Gurmin FBIM	4	4	Y
		1992	1992	Frederick E. Collins	1	1	Y?
		1992	2000	Dr Donald B.M. Buffer MA, PhD, Dip Ed, FRSA	8	8	
		2000	2004	Mrs C. M. Birch BSc	4	4	
1993	2020	2004	2021	Peter Hill FCMA, MIMC, CGMA, CPFA	28	18	Y
2016 School converts to be an independent Free School: The Royal School, Wolverhampton							

As it happens, the office of Chair of Governors has been held by a Mason for over half the 170+ years of its existence.

This ended in 2021 when Peter Hill retired after 28 years as a Governor and 18

years as Chair of Governors, the 3rd longest serving Governor & Chairman after William Henry Rogers and Sam Wells Page.

Many of the extensions to the Senior School buildings, and the new Junior School, were opened by the Provincial Grand Master (PGM) of the Day with large numbers of masons appearing in full regalia (this was before Hitler began murdering masons and their families, one of the events that caused masons to withdraw from appearing in public in their regalia). Dartmouth House Boarding was named in honour of a famous PGM, Lord Dartmouth.

Masonic support continues to this day.

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The photograph left from Queen Victoria Hall shows the 19 Chairs of Governors since its inception in 1850 to 2021.