

GRECIAN LODGE

1914 – 2014



100 Years Young

Lodge History

Our story begins in 1802 when a number of notable Brethren gathered together and made application for the formation of a new Lodge under the constitution of the United Grand Lodge of England which they decided between them should be named the “Eastern Star Lodge”.

Fortunately for us all, the application was approved and a Warrant of Constitution was granted on 22th December 1802. The Lodge was consecrated as Lodge number 151. The Brethren held meetings at various establishments including the Globe Tavern, Blackwall in 1802 and the King's Arms, also in Blackwall in 1810 and the Artichoke Tavern in 1820. They then moved their meetings to the Commercial Coffee House, Poplar in 1827.

It was while they were meeting at this location that, in 1832 a reorganisation of the Lodge numbering system dictated that their Lodge number should now be 112.

In 1837, the year that Queen Victoria ascended the throne, they moved again, but this time to Wade's Arms in East India Road, Poplar and it was whilst meeting there that certain of the Brethren determined it would be

advantageous for them to form a daughter Lodge and their request was granted on 18th April 1848 when the new Lodge's Warrant of constitution was granted, the Lodge being consecrated on 6th July 1848 as Yarborough Lodge 812. The Great Exhibition of 1851 opened at Crystal Palace and in 1854, the Crimean War took its dreadful toll, Brunel built his suspension bridge across the Tamar linking Devon and Cornwall and Charles Darwin's the Evolution of Species was published, clearly a time of great scientific advancement.

Whilst Victoria was still mourning the death of her beloved Albert, the Yarborough Lodge, whilst meeting at the George Tavern, Commercial Road, again due to a reorganisation of the Lodge numbering system, discovered themselves to be Lodge 554 in 1863 and it was during this year that they also changed their venue to the Green Dragon in Stepney. In the same shake-up their sponsoring Lodge, the Eastern Star Lodge was 'promoted' to Lodge 95 a wonderful distinction they hold to this day.

Seven years later, the reform act having being passed, the 'common man' now having been granted the power to vote by Disraeli, the Suez canal having opened and

Freemasonry clearly flourishing in London, the Brethren of the Yarborough Lodge undertook the sponsorship of a new unit. Thankfully the United Grand Lodge of England granted the patent and a warrant of constitution was issued on 3rd March 1870, the Lodge being consecrated as "St. John of Wapping Lodge" on 13th April 1870. They met initially at the Gun Tavern, Wapping, moving to the Moorgate Hotel, Moorgate Street ten years later. In 1883, the first electric light having been installed elsewhere in Britain, having again relocated, but this time to the City Arms Tavern, St. Mary Axe in 1883, they finding the Lodge's name now somewhat inappropriate, made request to change it to its current name of Lodge of St. John.

A couple more moves to the Three Nuns Hotel, Aldgate in 1884 and the Guildhall Tavern, Gresham Street in 1894 preceded what was in our opinion the greatest and most inspirational idea of the 20th Century. No, not Marconi's first wireless transmission which demonstration changed the course of communications forever, but the consecration of our own Grecian Lodge.

Queen Victoria had died, Edward VII, the peace making 'playboy' king had succeeded her in 1902 as Regent and George V had then succeeded him in 1910. It was during this time of turmoil, with George as our king, when the Saxe - Coburg dynasty found themselves unable to control their vast empires without 'distant cousins' Tsar Nicholas and Kaiser Wilhelm threatening each other. Thus it was with the threat of war with Germany looming that application was made by the Brethren of the Lodge of St. John. A warrant of constitution was granted on 17th February 1914 for the consecration of the Grecian Lodge on 21st March 1914 in the Grecian Temple situated in the Great Eastern Hotel, Liverpool Street with W.Bro. G.A. Harris being installed as Founding Master.

World War I, far from 'all being over by Christmas', took a grip and a bloody war ensued throughout Europe with many, precious lives wasted in futile battle before the armistice was signed at the end of 1918 and the ineffectual Wilhelm exiled to live out his years in Holland having been declined sanctuary in England by his cousin King George.

The Newly formed Grecian Lodge having contributed its share supporting the war effort with an average donation

of 10 guineas per member (the equivalent of somewhat over £200 per person today) and Brethren having lost their lives in the defence of the Realm, were rewarded along with many London Lodges by being presented with a Hall Stone Jewel on 17TH December 1921.

The servicemen who returned home embraced the sense of ritual, discipline and comradery found in Freemason's Lodges and Freemasonry enjoyed a boom in membership. In 1934, the Brethren of the Grecian Lodge, itself only 20 years young, found itself in a position to sponsor the formation of a daughter Lodge. Thus in 1932 petition supported by the reigning Worshipful Master, W.Bro A. J. Bolton, was made to form the John Evelyn Lodge consecrated on 21st February 1935, which would meet initially at the Holborn Restaurant, then at the Clarkenwell Masonic Centre. The Lodge was named after the writer and diarist John Evelyn who having kept the company of those such as Sir Christopher Wren, Robert Boyle and Theodore Haak in the "Invisible College" wrote a history of the Royal Society in 1667 and included so much familiar symbolism in the opening plate that it increased speculation that Evelyn was indeed a Freemason himself.

Then, following George V's death in 1936 and Edward VIII's year as monarch, King George VI father to our Queen Elizabeth II, ascended to the throne in 1936.

Germany having invaded Poland in 1939, the Second World War began to rage, Britain organised evacuations out of London on a huge scale, the Blitz damaged Britain's industry and infrastructure and many thousands of lives were again lost before Hitler's surrender in 1944 and Japan's in 1945.

As Britain drew itself together no longer an Imperial Power, but still to be a leading force in world politics, finance and economics, the Grecian Lodge too rose like a phoenix out of the ashes and restored its membership back up to a point when with W.Bro C.J. Chadwick in the Chair of King Solomon, in 1979 sponsored the formation of the Northumberland Park Lodge Number 8916, consecrated on 7th January 1980 and meeting for ten years at the Chanticleer Restaurant in Paxton Road before relocating to

its current home, the Halsey Masonic Hall in Turner's Hill. Some of you will recognise the name as the original hope was that the Lodge might be named after the neighbouring Tottenham Hotspur Football Club, but the UGLE precluded them from using it.

But it is the Northumberland Park Lodge whom we must congratulate, on it's most recent of offspring when I report that it sponsored the formation of the Herts. Scots Lodge number 9527 which was consecrated on 30th November 1993, just over 20 years ago. Being of Scottish origin or descent, not being an essential qualification for membership, an affinity with, and an appreciation of all things Scottish is a clear advantage. The Lodge working is unique in as much as it is based on Scottish ritual modified to comply with the requirements of The United Grand Lodge of England so a visit is highly recommended.

So Brethren, I'm happy to report to the Brethren of the Grecian Lodge that they are all proud Grandparents!