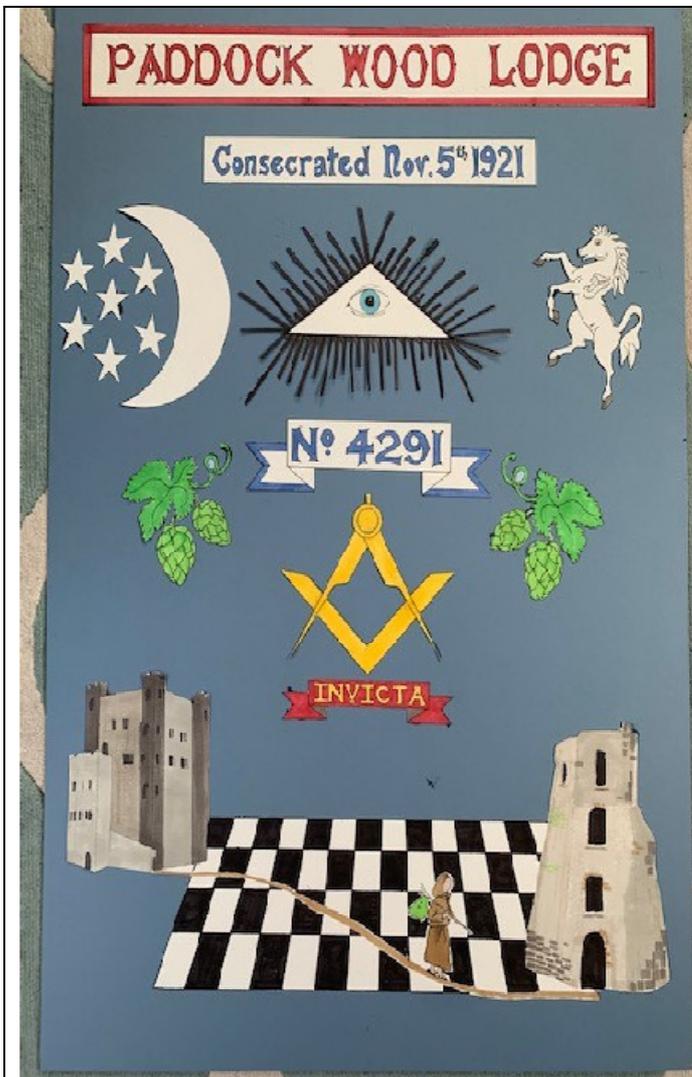


The Oration for the dedication of the Centenary Banner given

By W.Bro. Revd. Howard Pashley on Wednesday 13th April 2022

Centenary Celebration for Paddock Wood Lodge No 4291



It's a brave lodge to invite a chaplain with a great interest in the brewing and drinking of beer to Paddock Wood. But then again it would take an even braver chaplain to comment on your history after the splendid presentation by W.Bro. Hunt, so I'll just make comment on a couple of pieces of local forensic history. I believe that in the course of a local murder investigation the larval development of insects was used for the first time in Britain to confirm the date of death; while on a less gruesome note, the first speeding ticket was issued. The driver was going at 8 mph. He was overtaken and pulled over by a policeman on his bike! Your Lodge was one of a number of lodges formed just after the end of WW1, and one supposes that in part it was a way of recapturing some of the comradeship that had been experienced during those turbulent years. But that was 100 years ago, and today we come to celebrate your Centenary.

As far as I have been able to establish, the bible makes little mention of centenaries, it does however make great mention of Jubilee Years. This year, of course, we are focused on Her Majesties Platinum Jubilee, but the biblical idea of a jubilee had a different emphasis.

Seven was an especially important number, every seventh year was a Sabbath Year when the land was allowed to rest or lie fallow, but the year following 7X7 years, i.e. the 50th year was especially important. This was a Jubilee year. It's an extra fallow year for the land, which now reverted to the original owner. Not only is this an ecologically important thing, but it's of great importance to the little people.

It's a time when those who have fallen on hard times have their freedom and property restored to them. Jubilee, the year of restoration, served a dual purpose. It reminded the people that the land belonged to God; and it prevented the wealthy from amassing land.

If we treat a Centenary Year as a double Jubilee, perhaps Grand Lodge and Provincial Grand Lodge should let you off your dues for the year! However, I know that, having proposed it before, that idea does not have legs.

As I've suggested, the members of your lodge are the experts on your lodge history, so I'm not going to rehearse that, but I shall talk in more general terms about the events which were occurring about 100 years ago.

The national psyche is fixed on 11th November as the end of WW1, but it ended on 28th June 1919, with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles.

But for many the war had not ended. British troops, some members of the Pals Regiments who had volunteered near the start of the war, were still fighting in Russia, and they didn't return from Archangel until 1920.

Canadian troops were still being used in theatres of war not related to what they had joined up for. Some of them rioted with bloody consequences.

Coal Mine owners demanded their mines back but refused to pay their miners what they had been receiving from the Government. This led to strikes, and the mineworkers having to accept the lower wage settlement. With the benefit of hind sight it's perhaps all too easy to draw parallels between then and now.

There was a global pandemic being spread by troop movements and the return of servicemen.

The Government itself had problems. Cracks were forming in Lloyd George's coalition Government of national unity. Unemployment was nearly 1 million, and within a year it would be over 2 million.

But there was excitement in the air; Alcock and Brown flew non-stop across the Atlantic, and observation of the Sun's eclipse by Venus showed that light could be bent by gravity, thus proving the correctness of Einstein's General Theory of Relativity.

The Irish gained independence, but there were still considerable cross border tensions, while on the international front the breakup of the Ottoman Empire led to the war between Greece and Turkey; and the undignified carve up of the Ottoman empire by western powers has not helped subsequent diplomacy. Unfinished business elsewhere paved the way to the Second World War.

In the words of the Chinese Curse, these were "interesting times", but rather like the prophet Jeremiah buying a field when the enemy were about to break into Jerusalem, your predecessors chose to found a lodge and so demonstrated their hope for the future. Today we salute their faith, their hope and also their charity.

But there is a cherry on the cake of your centenary celebrations because your banner is also to be dedicated. The white horse of Hengist shows that this is a lodge of Kent, while the wonderful green hops are indicative of Paddock Wood. However, I'm struggling with the astronomically impossible moon and seven planets, but heck, if you can't have artistic licence on a splendid piece of artwork, where can you have it?

Inanimate objects can gain spiritual significance, and this applies to banners, and it especially applies to warrants. A warrant can be considered as the soul of a lodge as a lodge cannot meet without it. Today your soul has been refreshed.

And so, members of Paddock Wood Lodge, my prayer for you is that your lodge grows and prospers, and that it enjoys other jubilees and even another centenary, but may you not live in very interesting times!

Amen