



**Torrige Lodge No.  
1885**

**Torrington**

Warrant 14 October 1880



On 27 January 1981 the brethren met in the Market Hall, Torrington for the Dedication of Torrige Lodge No. 1885 by the Viscount Ebrington, ProvGM assisted by his Deputy and numerous brethren from other lodges. The Market Hall is the finely proportioned room built by the Borough Council in 1852 and later occupied by the Torrington Branch of Devon County Library The room was originally hired from the Council's tenant, Mr Chapple, for twenty pounds per annum, later reduced to eleven. In 1885 - 86 it was rented direct from the Council by a bid at auction of sixteen pounds. This allowed the lodge in its turn to hire out the hall privately. In 1896 the bid made by the lodge of fifteen pounds rent for the Market Hall was unsuccessful and so, on 10 February 1896 the lodge was held in temporary premises at Bank Buildings, probably the upstairs rooms over what was Barclays Bank.

In the early years it frequently happened that the lodge could not be held because not enough members were present, particularly in the summer months, and in December 1901 it was agreed not to meet in the summer. The last years of the nineteenth century and the early nineteen hundreds were noticeable for the frequency of appeals for charity made on behalf of members or widows and children of members of this and of other lodges, which in nearly every case were met. The Minutes of the lodge in those days reflect the deep concern our ancient brethren felt for those in distressed circumstances and remind us that at that period even successful men of business and tradesmen could be rendered destitute by prolonged illness and of the cruel hardship caused by the death of a husband and father. The Almoner, too, had many claims made on him by mendicants and masons who were 'travelling men' to whom he would award small amounts varying from one shilling to five shillings. Occasionally he would be warned of ripostes who sought to pass themselves as masons.

It seems that in those days the lodge was much more in the public eye than is customary now. There are Minutes of many emergency lodges, which met to attend the funeral of a brother, walking in procession from the lodge to the house and on to the graveside clothed in masonic clothing. However, in 1897, the lodge declined an invitation to join the Town's Jubilee Procession, pointing out that many of its members would be taking part in other capacities; nevertheless the Master reported that he had attended the masonic gathering in St. Paul's Cathedral. In 1897 the Provincial Grand Master advised the lodge that in future attending funerals in masonic clothing would not be generally permitted. On 11 January 1898 the temporary room was left and a new lodge room dedicated by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master. These premises were in Church Walk, later occupied by the Liberal Club. The masonic emblem in plaster can still be seen over the door.

When it started, the First World War appears to have had little effect. In September 1914 it was resolved that 'In consequence of the present war it is decided not to hold the usual quarterly supper, and in November 1914 it was resolved that the money usually spent on the quarterly supper be sent to HM the Queen's Fund to provide work for women suffering in consequence of the war. Other donations were made, to a fund to relieve masons interned in Germany, the Freemasons War Hospital and Nursing Home and the Army Christmas Pudding Fund. The regular lodge held on 11 November 1918 met and passed the following resolution 'The Lodge records its deep gratitude and admiration for the courage and fortitude of those who have made today possible and its sympathy with the relatives of those who have not lived to see the fruit of their labours and then, working no ceremony, closed in peace order and harmony at 8.30 p.m. presumably to join the more boisterous celebrations outside.

In 1919 an approach was made to the Torrington Liberal Club and the Discharged Soldiers and Sailors Federation, predecessor of the Royal British Legion, for the lodge to take over the premises they occupied at 26 South Street. Among the events of the nineteen- thirties was a masonic service at St. Michael's Church, Torrington, attended by a large congregation, while later during the ministry at Petrockstowe of Bro W H. Smale, brethren attended a service at his church every summer and there were also services at Shebbear by the invitation of the vicar Bro H. A. Robins, the lodge Chaplain. In 1920

Conciliation had requested that Torridge alter their day but had been politely reminded that they had been informed of the clash of dates on their formation some years before. Following the 1931 meeting Conciliation met on the first Monday and at the regular lodge on 10 October 1931 the Minutes says the Torridge committee was 'congratulated' on a victory. There were no ill feelings, however and in October 1948 Conciliation made the Master and Wardens of the Torridge Lodge Honorary Members, and in December 1953 Torridge conferred the same privilege on Conciliation.

The Installation meeting in February 1963 took place in the middle of that Arctic winter and, though the ceremony was well attended, few of the guests were rash enough to disregard the blizzard which blew and stay to the dinner which was less enjoyable in consequence. The lodge decided to move its Installation to a month when such a misfortune seemed less likely and the Master of that year soldiered on for an extra two months so that the 1964 Installation and those which followed could be held in April. Another innovation in 1963 was that the ceremony at the regular lodge in October was conducted throughout by Past Masters. This has not been repeated. In December 1969 it was decided to give a small Christmas present to the widows of all deceased brethren of the lodge, which practice continuing gives hope that the traditions of Lodge Torridge are maintained, not only in the ceremonial of the early days but also by that concern and charity which is so much a feature of those lodge meetings of long ago.

The lodge now meets at the Masonic Hall, 4 Well Street, Torrington, on the second Monday of each month with the exception of July, August and September.