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The Greenall family and its service to Freemasonry#

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By

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and

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Some of us here tonight had the honour of knowing WBro Major Charles William Shand, OBE, BEM, a perfect gentleman and an outstanding Freemason. When Charles died I assisted in sorting out some of his Masonic memorabilia and one of the items I found concerned the involvement of the Greenall family with Freemasonry in Warrington. I have worked on Charles's original script, added to it and updated it for tonight's presentation.

If any one local family can claim to have had the biggest influence on Freemasonry in Warrington, the Province of West Lancashire, the United Grand Lodge of England and even stretching its involvement to Ireland, there can be no argument that it is the Greenall family. Two members of the family became Senior Grand Wardens of England and one became a Provincial Grand Master in Ireland.

However, before going into the history of the Greenall family and Warrington Freemasonry, it is necessary to give a wider picture on Freemasonry in the town in general.

It was in Warrington on 16 October 1646 that Elias Ashmole and Colonel Henry Mainwaring were made Masons, as recorded in Ashmole's diary. No other meeting of that lodge are recorded. We have to move forward more than 100 years and to the Cock Inn, Bridge Street, when on 21 August 1755 a lodge was constituted as Number 40 on the register of the Antient, or Athol Grand Lodge, but it ceased to function and lapsed in December of 1756.

Nine years later on 8 November 1765 at the Fleece public house a new lodge was constituted under the Premier Grand Lodge and it is still working today. At first it had no official name but was known as the lodge in Warrington. However, in 1806 it was given permission to call itself the Lodge of Lights. It met at different hotels in the town over the years and had different number on the register until it received its present number of 148 in 1863. Along with six other lodges it was instrumental in building the present Masonic Hall in Winmarleigh Street. The other lodges were the The Lodge of Charity No 2651; the Lodge of Friendship No 2963; the Lodge of Recitude No 3597; St Austin Lodge No 4335; Ashmole Lodge No 5128 and St Oswald Lodge No 5170.

Three lodges decided not to be involved in the move to the new hall - Gilbert Greenall Lodge No 1250, Travellers' Lodge No 4679 and St Elphin Lodge No 3287.

Among all the Warrington lodges there have been numerous members who have become prominent Freemasons and there have been many family connections in the different lodges. Of these the Greenall family has given outstanding service to the Craft.

The family originated from St Helens where Thomas Greenall was born in 1733. At the age of 21 he was appointed manager of his mother-in-law's Parr Stocks Brewery

in St Helens. In 1762 he built his own brewery and he was among five other brewers who also owned inns in the area. He supplied beer to many areas, particularly in the south of Lancashire.

In 1787 he went into partnership with two Warrington men, William Orrell, a corn merchant and owner of several inns, and Colonel Thomas Lyon, a sugar refiner, banker and Colonel in the Warrington Militia. They purchased the Saracen's Head Brewery at Wilderspool for £15,000.

Warrington was an ideal site for a business such as this. Its population was steadily increasing and it was ideally situated by road, river and canal to serve the area of Lancashire and Cheshire with its products and to receive its raw materials.

Thomas Greenall had three sons – Edward (1758 to 1835); William (who died in 1817) and Peter (who died in 1815). Edward had five sons and one daughter. She married into the Whitley family who were thus brought into the firm to make it Greenall Whitley.

Of the five sons of Edward, the youngest, Gilbert – who was born in 1806 and died in 1894) was chairman of the company from 1880 to 1894. He was the first member of the Greenall family to become a Freemason. He was initiated into the Lodge of Lights on 28 January 1850. He was also active in politics and became a Justice of the Peace for Lancashire and Cheshire. In 1847 he became the Member of Parliament for Warrington and held this position until 1868 when a member of another famous Warrington family, Peter Rylands was the Liberal candidate who won the seat.

Gilbert was out of office for six years during which time he applied himself to local work becoming a Deputy Lieutenant for Lancashire and High Sheriff of Cheshire. Two years after his return to Parliament in 1874 he was created a Baronet.

Even though it may seem that during these years Gilbert was a busy man he still found time for his involvement in Freemasonry. In 1865 when the Lodge of Lights celebrated its centenary its Worshipful Master was Brother Gilbert Greenall.

To celebrate the centenary the Provincial Grand Master, Sir Thomas Hesketh, Baronet, Member of Parliament, held a special meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge on 8 November in the Public Hall, Rylands Street. The Public Hall site later became the home of the Royal Court Theatre. It then became a supermarket, a local government office responsible for the collection of the Poll Tax, and now stands empty.

At this special meeting Brother Greenall was invested as the Provincial Senior Grand Warden. A special Centenary Jewel was sanctioned by the Grand Lodge of England for the occasion. At that time only 42 such jewels had been sanctioned and only two were in West Lancashire, the other being the Centenary Jewel of the Lodge of Loyalty No 86 which meets in Prescot.

The Provincial Grand Lodge meeting was held in the morning and in the afternoon the brethren, in full regalia and headed by the Blue Coat School Band marched through the centre of Warrington to the Parish Church of St Elphin, for a special service of thanksgiving. The town assumed quite a holiday appearance with banners, bunting and Masonic emblems visible in all the main streets. The procession was met at the Parish Church gates by the Church Wardens and the Aldermen of the town. The service was conducted by WBro the Rev AA O'Neil, PPrGChap, and he was assisted by WBro the Rev F Terry (Provincial Grand Chaplain of Cheshire) and WBro the Rev JW Tanner PPrGChap. The address was given by WBro the Rev GH Vernon, who was the Provincial Grand Chaplain of West Lancashire.

It was an impressive sight for in addition to Sir Thomas Hesketh also present were the Provincial Junior Grand Warden, Colonel Birchall; the Provincial Grand Secretary, WBro Mawdesley; the Provincial Grand Treasurer WBro J Hamer; The Provincial Grand Deacons, the Provincial Grand Sword Bearer and the Provincial Grand Standard Bearer. There were also representatives from neighbouring Provinces and Masons from lodges in neighbouring towns.

After the service there was a banquet held in the public hall presided over by the Provincial Grand Master. The following day a grand concert was held in the Public Hall and "all 1,200 seats were full". The full Dress Regalia worn with pride by Freemasons, the scarlet uniforms of the local Rifle Corps and the beautiful attire of the ladies formed a splendid splash of colour. The banner of the Lodge of Lights was hung at the back of the platform while the Provincial Banner was hung at the front.

Gilbert Greenall was prominent at the proceedings with the Provincial Grand Master and WBro G Cornwall Leigh, a Member of Parliament and a Past Grand Warden of England.

The following year, 1866, Gilbert Greenall was appointed and invested as the Senior Grand Warden of the United Grand Lodge of England by the Grand Master, the Second Earl of Zetland.

In the meeting of the Lodge of Lights held on 28 December 1868 a petition was read requesting support for a new lodge to be called the Gilbert Greenall Lodge. The promoters of the new lodge wrote to Gilbert to ask him to allow his name to be used for the new lodge and for him to become its first Worshipful Master. The letter said: "Your courtesy as a brother, and your distinguished position as a Mason, eminently entitles you to our fraternal esteem and, therefore, it is our great wish, having the prosperity of the Craft at heart, to offer to you and to ask you to accept the highest honour it is in our power as Masons to bestow, in affectionate admiration of your many virtues as a just, upright man and a Mason."

The new lodge was consecrated on 12 April 1869 as Gilbert Greenall Lodge No 1250 on the Register of the United Grand Lodge. The lodge met at the Nag's Head, Sankey Street, which was also the venue for the Lodge of Lights meetings.

The minute books of the lodge show that the WM and members approached their work with great enthusiasm. At the first regular meeting on 10 May 1869 there were five initiations all done separately, making for a very long evening. They were all Passed to the Second Degree at the following meeting but that was nothing compared to the lodge's third regular meeting on 9 August when there were two initiations, one Passing and four Raisings performed.

In 1870 the wives of the brethren presented the lodge with a beautifully bound Bible.

Gilbert Greenall presented a lovely banner to the lodge which was replaced when the lodge celebrated its centenary.

In June 1876 an illuminated address was presented to RWBro Sir Gilbert Greenall, Baronet, Member of Parliament, Past Senior Grand Warden of England and Past Provincial Senior Grand Warden of West Lancashire follow him becoming a Baronet.

The lodge was in mourning in 1894 for its chief founder and first Worshipful Master.

When the Greenall family first came to Warrington they lived in a house next to their new brewery at Wilderspool. In 1830 Edward Greenall built Walton Hall for his son Gilbert and it became the family home for more than 100 years.

In 1864 James Fenton Greenall, the son of Gilbert's elder brother Thomas, joined the Lodge of Lights on 28 March. He became senior warden in 1867 but does not appear to have progressed to the chair.

Another member of the family, Edward Greenall, was a member of the Marquis of Lorne Lodge No 1354 before he became a joining member of the Lodge of Lights in February 1881. He served as its Worshipful Master in 1886. The Marquis of Lorne Lodge was a daughter of the Lodge of Lights and was consecrated in Leigh in 1971.

Sir Gilbert Greenall's son, also called Gilbert was born in 1867, but it was not until after the death of his father and he had succeeded to the Baronetcy that he sought initiation into his father's lodge on 14 July 1908. The following year he was installed on 12 October as Master of the Lodge. A year later on 9 August 1910 he became Provincial Senior Grand Warden of West Lancashire.

Unlike his father this Sir Gilbert Greenall had little taste for active politics. His lifelong interests were in country matters. The improvement of agriculture, especially on his estates, the breeding of horses, hunting and the breeding of pigs were just some of his specialities. He had a passion for the best and it is said his farms were like gardens.

For his work in all fields of agriculture the University of Cambridge conferred on him the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws in 1922. Two years later he was made President of the Royal Agricultural Society and was also made a Companion of the Royal Victorian Order. His interest in breeding horses led him to become one of the promoters of the International Horse Show at Olympia. He also ran a horse show in the grounds of Walton Hall each year. He had learned his hunting skills at an early age by riding with the North Cheshire Hunt and at the age of 29 was invited to become Master of the Belvoir Hunt, an office he held until 1911. He had many interests in local life including the Infirmary, the Grammar School and the Musical Society. He was a director of the Royal Academy of Music and was also very active in church matters being the patron of five livings.

In 1912 Sir Gilbert was one of the founders of the Lodge of Rectitude No 3597 and again in 1921 he became a founder and the first Immediate Past Master of a new lodge, St Austin Lodge No 4335. Soon after the consecration Lady Greenall gave a lodge a beautiful banner. The banner depicts a Black Friar in front of the St Austin's Friary in Warrington which was founded in 1261 and dissolved in 1536.

On 14 October 1919 Gilbert Greenall Lodge celebrated its 50th anniversary. At the installation banquet the toast to Provincial Grand Lodge was responded to by Sir Gilbert who said he was deeply touched as it was 50 years since his father was installed as the first Master of the lodge.

In 1927 Sir Gilbert was raised to the Peerage as Lord Daresbury. The title was taken from the village of Daresbury near to the Walton estate. The village was the childhood home of Charles Dodson, the author of Alice in Wonderland. His father was the vicar of the parish,

Lord Daresbury had two sons, Gilbert and Edward, born in 1901 and 1902. Unfortunately the Honourable Gilbert Greenall was killed in a motoring accident in 1928 so the Honourable Edward Greenall became the heir.

It might have been expected that he would join his father's lodge soon after his 21st birthday but he did not come into Masonry for another seven years.

Like his father he joined the family firm of Greenall Whitley in 1926 after transferring from the active list of the Life Guards. He became a member of the board in 1929 and succeeded his father as chairman in 1938, a position he held for seven years. Like his father he was a keen huntsman and followed him as Master of the Belvoir Hunt from 1934 to 1947.

Edward was initiated into a new lodge, St Oswald Lodge No 5170 which had been founded by members of St Elphin Lodge No 3287 which was so popular that it was taking many years for anyone to reach the chair and so petitioned to form a new lodge. He was proposed by Sir William Peter Ryland who was the Provincial Senior Grand Warden and was the first Worshipful Master of the lodge. He was seconded

by the Rt Rev Herbert Gresford-Jones, the Suffragan Bishop of Warrington and Rector of St Oswald Church Winwick, who became Provincial Grand Chaplain in 1934 and Grand Chaplain the following year.

The Honourable Edward Greenall was initiated on 6 November, 1930 and was only the second person to be initiated into St Oswald Lodge. He was Raised to the degree of a Master Mason on 8 January 1931.

At his Initiation the Senior Warden's Chair was taken by WBro GM Galloway, the Provincial Senior Grand Warden and the Junior Warden's Chair of the lodge was taken by WBro JW Mailland, the Provincial Junior Grand Warden. The Charge of the Degree was delivered by the Provincial Grand Secretary, WBro JA Wilson.

After serving as Junior and Senior Warden, Bro Greenall was Installed as Worshipful Master in 1933. He was presented for his Installation by his father, Lord Daresbury.

It is obvious from St Oswald records that WBro Greenall was not just going to be a figurehead in the lodge. He was active not only during his year as Worshipful Master but in the following years gave Charges, Addresses to Worshipful Masters at their Installations, to candidates, explained the Working Tools of all degrees and often took the chair on Past Masters' Nights. In 1935 he undertook the duties of Assistant Director of Ceremonies of the lodge and held that post for 10 years.

On his father's death in 1938 he succeeded as the second Baron Daresbury of Walton.

His talent and love of Freemasonry were rewarded with his appointment as Provincial Senior Grand Warden.

There was a special presentation to Lord Daresbury at St Oswald Lodge's meeting on 13 September 1945. WBro Sir Peter Rylands took the chair to present an Illuminated Address to Lord Daresbury, which had been subscribed to by all members of the lodge, to mark his Investiture the previous April as Senior Grand Warden of the United Grand Lodge of England. He also held the office in 1946 due to the contingencies of the Second World War.

Lord Daresbury, who had also joined his father's lodge in 1937, became a founder of Warrington Temple Lodge No 6420 in 1947 and was its first Worshipful Master. He also became a Joining Member of the Lodge of Lights No 148 and was a founder in 1945 of Winmarleigh Lodge No 6101.

In 1947 Lord Daresbury went to live in Ireland but his association with St Oswald Lodge was not to end even though he actively pursued his Masonic calling in Eire. In 1950 he became a Joining Member of the Antient Union Lodge No 13 on the Register of the Grand Lodge of Ireland becoming its Worshipful Master in 1953.

It did not take the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Ireland long to recognise the immense talents of Lord Daresbury and on 27 December 1957 he was Installed and Invested as the Provincial Grand Master of North Munster. He held that office for 27 years, only relinquishing the post in October 1984 at the age of 82. The Grand Lodge Annual Report for 1985 says: "RWBro the Rt Hon Lord Daresbury relinquished his office as Provincial Grand Master of North Munster after 27 years of distinguished service to the Order and to North Munster in general. We wish him well in his retirement."

In Ireland, Lord Daresbury had also joined Galway's Premier Connaught Lodge No 14 in 1958 and was made an honorary member in 1981.

He also joined the Royal Arch in Ireland being a member of Chapter 73, Eden from October 1950 and being Excellent King in 1966. He was also a member of Royal Arch Chapter 60, Limerick from October 1963. Like his predecessors he had been involved in Royal Arch Freemasonry in England and was the Grand Scribe Nehemiah at the same time as he was Senior Grand Warden of England.

Lord Daresbury celebrated the 50th Anniversary of his Initiation into Freemasonry at a meeting of St Oswald Lodge in November 1980. Glowing tributes were paid concerning the contribution made by Lord Daresbury to Freemasonry in England, Ireland and particularly to St Oswald Lodge which he regularly visited on Past Masters' Nights.

Lord Daresbury died on 15 February 1990 just a couple of months before he was due to celebrate the 60th anniversary of his Initiation. Many Freemasons attended a Service of Thanksgiving for the life of 'Toby' Daresbury which took place at St John's Church, Walton.

Unfortunately there is no long a lodge in Warrington bearing the Greenall name. Gilbert Greenall Lodge No 1250 amalgamated on 14 June 2006 with St Elphin Lodge No 3287 and Red Rose Lodge No 6007 to form the Warrington Lodge of Concord No 1250 (the lodge number of Gilbert Greenall Lodge).

Gilbert was also a found and first Immediate Past Master of St Austin Lodge No 4335 which was dissolved on 18 November 2004.

Another of the lodges of which Gilbert was a founder has also been involved in an amalgamation with two other lodges. The Lodge of Rectitude amalgamated with Great Sankey Lodge No 5939 and the Lodge of Good Endeavour No 8258 to form the Lodge of Great Endeavour No 3597.

The last lodge to have a long association with the Greenall family is St Oswald Lodge No 5170 several members of which still remember Lord Daresbury attending, often carrying his splendid regalia in a small bag. The lodge's history appears in both print – "A Lodge of Distinction" – and on the Warrington website and contains a more detailed record of one of its dedicated and talented members, Toby Daresbury.



Lord Daresbury was a member of St Oswald Lodge No 5170 for more than 50 years and was the last member of the Greenall family to be a Freemason.