

RICHARD WILLIAM PENN

CURZON-HOWE

(1796-1870)

1ST EARL HOWE

(SECOND CREATION)

&

1ST PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER

OF THE PROVINCE OF

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The year 2020 sees the 150th anniversary of the death of Richard William Penn Curzon, First Earl Howe (second creation). It also sees the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Province of Leicestershire and Rutland, of which Earl Howe was the first Provincial Grand Master. In light of this, and to recognise the talents of the man after whom the Howe and Charnwood Lodge No. 1007 is named, I decided to find out what I could about him. This was harder than I thought. There was, and still is, no published biography of the man.

The compilation of the pages that follow is the result of many months of research from numerous books, documents, websites and conversations. Where these are easily identified they are acknowledged in the bibliography at the end of this book.

I am particularly indebted to W. Bro. David Sharpe and W. Bro. Kenneth Hillier for their forensic proof reading of the many revisions of the text and for their provision of historic and Masonic insights into the context of Earl Howe's activities; to Revd. Canon Dr. Stephen Foster for his friendship and encouragement as well as my gratitude for his assistance with the transcription of the almost incomprehensible correspondence between Earl Howe and the Duke of Wellington; to R. W. Bro. Michael Wilson (Provincial Grand Chaplain of Leicestershire & Rutland) for giving permission to include his Oration from the Consecration Ceremony of the Hinckley Lodge of Installed Masters in the appendices of this book; to Rev. Jonathan Surridge for providing access to the Masonic window in St. Peter's Church and background information to the same; to Dave Weston Esq. for his perspective of the text as an amateur historian and author of historical fiction as well as his assistance in creating the various 'trees' that feature in the appendices; to the current Earl Howe for his encouragement and support in drawing together the threads of his most noble ancestor; and finally to you, the reader, for taking the time to pick up this book and follow the fascinating story which unfolds.

Hopefully, it will encourage you to want to know more about the people, places and events mentioned, a journey I encourage you to take and hope you enjoy.

W. Bro. Paul R. Blakemore – P Prov. S G D

May 2020

CHAPTER ONE – AN INTRODUCTION

“The town and county of Leicester have sustained a poignant and irreparable loss. A nobleman who, for more than half a century, attracted to himself an amount of respect and veneration which it falls to the lot of but few among us to attain, has been removed from our midst.

“We allude to the removal by death of Earl Howe. The sad event, although long anticipated and for some time seen to be inevitable, has nevertheless fallen upon the population of our borough and county with all the force of a sudden and unexpected calamity. Esteemed by all classes, lamented by all parties, and leaving behind him a memory which will continue to be respected, as long as any merit is attached by men to a faithful discharge of the duties of their public, or private avocations.”

(Leicester Journal, 1870)

Thus was the death of Richard William Penn Curzon, 1st Earl Howe, announced to the world in “The Freemasons” magazine of 28th May 1870 having previously been printed in the “Leicester Journal”. The article goes on to highlight the main achievements of the man over a long and productive life - but who was he and what kind of man was he? What did people think of him? How was he regarded by his peers and those of all classes who knew him?

Here is my attempt to try and tell that story by drawing together the fragments of his life I have found through reading many sources and putting them all in one place to enable you the reader to reflect on a remarkable man and a remarkable Mason. I acknowledge the many contributions of others from whom I have pieced together this story and hope that they are also happy with the picture which has emerged. Their contributions, where they are known, are listed at the end of this book.

This is not a biography of Earl Howe. What I have tried to do is present a picture of this remarkable nobleman and to help enlighten the reader as to his character and highlight four aspects of his life. We begin with his Leicestershire home of Gopsall Hall, now demolished but a place of which he was most fond. We then move on to the role he played in regard to the Reform Act of 1832 and his close relationship (often misunderstood) with Queen Adelaide. This is followed by a study of his role in the development of Freemasonry in both the Provinces of Warwickshire and Leicestershire (and latterly Rutland) in the years following the Union of the Antients and Moderns in 1813. We conclude by reflecting on his benevolence to those in need, and in particular to those who lived in the environs of his Leicestershire home, Gopsall Hall.

CHAPTER TWO – EARL HOWE AND HIS LEICESTERSHIRE HOME

Gopsall Hall became Earl Howe's Leicestershire home in 1821 and remained in the family until 1919 when it was sold by the 4th Earl. What follows is a potted history of its occupation through the years and a brief description of the House and Grounds.

Early History of the Gopsall Estate

In 1086, the Domesday Book (see fig. 2.1) refers to Gopsall as 'Gopeshill'. At this period, it was held together with the village of Twycross by Earl Henry de Ferrers.

The Lordship was passed to his son Earl Robert de Ferrers in 1148 who built a beautiful chapel on the park in which a divine service was performed three times a week by the Rector of Orton-on-the-Hill. Unfortunately, there is no trace of this chapel today. In the same year the park was given by Earl Robert to the Abbey of Merevale in Warwickshire.

From 1286, Oxtun, Congerstone, Bilstone and Gopsall all answered as one village for almost a century. From 1393 the Lordship of Gopsall was held by the Langham family for some 167 years, when they sold it in 1560 to Sir Francis Hastings, Earl of Huntingdon.

In 1618 Gopsall was purchased by Sir Thomas Merry and his wife Dame Elizabeth. They had fourteen sons and five daughters, but Dame Elizabeth tragically died in childbirth of their twentieth child at 39 years of age.

Sir Thomas Merry conveyed the manors of Gopsall and Twycross to Sir John Sowther in 1677.

The Building of Gopsall Hall

Eight years later, in May 1685, Humphrey Jennens, an extremely wealthy businessman from Birmingham, bought Gopsall. He had amassed his incredible fortune with an iron foundry business. He was married to Mary Milward in 1657 and they had twelve children. On his death in 1690 the estate passed to Charles Jennens, his eldest living son. His second wife was Elizabeth Burdett of Foremark, who died in 1708. Charles and Elizabeth had six children, the eldest also having the name Charles and it was he who had Gopsall Hall built. Their youngest child was Elizabeth (named after her mother) who married her first cousin, William Hammer and whose daughter married Assheton Curzon in 1756.

Gopsall Hall (see fig. 2.2) was built in 1750 on a park of 300 acres. He was landlord of Gopsall at the time of the local enclosure in 1747 and twenty acres of land at Shornells was allotted to him in consideration of his consent to enclosure. Charles Jennens showed little interest in the family iron works; he did, however, show a great interest in works of another kind – he was a renowned collector of fine art. His collection was one of the best in Britain at the time. Charles mixed with many poets, musicians, philosophers, authors and artists. They met at his 'round table' and became known as "The Gopsall Circle". He befriended the composer G. F. Handel and Jennens' name is on the first subscription list for the opera 'Rodelinda' in 1725. Handel often stayed at Gopsall and is supposed to have written part of his oratorio 'Messiah' there, based on a libretto written by Jennens. Jennens was also responsible for producing the libretti for 'Saul', 'L'Allegro' and 'Belshazzar'. Another souvenir of Handel's friendship with Jennens is the hymn tune 'Gopsall', composed by Handel, to which "Rejoice the Lord is King" is sung.

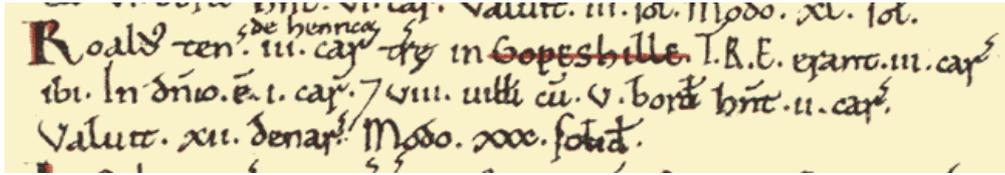


Fig. 2.1 Entry from the Domesday Book



Fig.2.2 Gopsall Hall c.1868



Fig. 2.3 Gopsall Hall South aspect



Fig. 2.4 Six Corinthian Pillars supporting Friezes and Bolsters



Fig. 2.5 Gopsall Hall viewed from the North

Description of Gopsall Hall

In 1747, Jennens started work on the new Gopsall Hall. It was designed by local architect John Westley of Leicester, though some of the rooms were designed by James Paine. It was built by William & David Hiorne of Warwick. The building and extensive gardens came to an estimated cost of more than £200,000 (£20,381,650 in 2018).

The south front (see fig.2.3) had an extremely imposing aspect with six Corinthian pillars supporting friezes and bolsters of very graceful design (see fig. 2.4). A receding pediment bore a sculpture of a ship in a storm to commemorate the naval victories of Lord Richard Howe, whose daughter Sophia was to become the mother of Richard William Penn Curzon, 1st Earl Howe (second creation).

The whole length of the house was 180 feet. A small stone portico over the entrance at the north front (see fig. 2.5) led to the entrance hall (see fig. 2.6) which was 28 feet square. A richly carved ornamental balustrade (see fig. 2.7) formed the passage to the bedrooms above.

The wings on the south front form respectively the chapel and library.

The Chapel

The chapel (see fig. 2.8) was regarded as the finest private chapel in the country. It was 36 feet long by 24 feet wide. The communion table was made, as much of the furniture in the Hall was, of Lebanon cedar with legs carved from Boscobel Oak. Van Dyke's painting of the Crucifixion adorned the chapel together with works of other old Masters and there was also an Egyptian white marble chimney piece with an entablature of a dove pecking olives. The elaborately-gilded lectern was surmounted by a golden eagle. The magnificent organ was designed especially by Charles Jennens in honour of Handel, his lifelong friend. This organ (see fig. 9) is now preserved in St. James' Church, Great Packington (near Coventry) in Warwickshire.

The Library

The library (see fig. 2.10) was 52 feet long by 24 feet wide. The room was very lofty with a window at the south and contained a magnificent stained-glass window, the painting of which was executed by Baroness Howe. Over the chimney was a crucifix. The library also had a very fine collection of rare works and was considered the best assembled in the Midlands.

Drawing Room

The principal drawing room was about 40 feet by 25 feet and was splendidly furnished. Between it and the library was an ante-room 18 feet by 24 feet and by means of folding doors these three rooms could be made into one.

The Picture Gallery

The picture gallery (see fig. 2.11) was 70 feet by 40 feet and was lighted principally from the roof but had one large window on the north side. The picture gallery supported on five Corinthian columns was most impressive with a portrait of the Queen Dowager, as well as many family members. In 1858, a full-length portrait of the 1st Earl Howe (second creation) was presented to the family by the tenants of the estate and hung in the gallery. In addition, there were many paintings by celebrated masters such as Claude, Murillo, Poussin, Rembrandt, Van de Velde and Van Dyke.



Fig. 2.6 The Entrance hall c. 1918
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Fig. 2.7 A corridor c. 1910 with balustrade leading to bedrooms above



Fig. 2.8 The Chapel

Fig. 2.9 The organ from Gopsall Hall Chapel
(now in St. James Church, Great Packington, Warks.)



Fig. 2.10 The Library

The Dining Room

The dining room was 32 feet by 23 feet. It had four windows with four smaller ones above. The ceiling in this room was most elegant as it represented Neptune riding in a nautilus' shell, drawn by horses and accompanied by a small figure playing on a conch shell. In this room hung a portrait of Charles Jennens (see fig. 2.12) and a full-length figure of Handel. The chimney piece was supported by two angels, carved in Greek marble with their wings folded across the breast.

The Grounds of Gopsall Hall

The red brick walled garden was magnificent and covered an area of almost 20 acres. In the garden was a sunken cricket pitch which was regarded as one of the finest grounds in the county.

Gopsall also boasted one of the finest 9-hole golf courses in the country, with the last green being within 20 yards of the Hall entrance.

In front of the mansion a large ornamental lake was dug (see fig. 2.13), and various temples and pavilions were erected in Gothic, Chinese and Classical styles to create the appropriate picturesque effect.

The 300 acres of park and woodland were well stocked with hundreds of deer (see fig. 2.14). The game-keepers were provided with special buildings where different species were reared.

In 1819, at the Twycross entrance to the Hall, stood the main gate (see fig. 2.15) designed by Sir Jeffrey Wyattville of Burton upon Trent. It was fashioned as a triumphal entrance gate and arch, based on the arch of Constantine. It guarded the main drive to the Hall (see fig. 2.16) which was one and a half miles long.

The Obelisk

Near to a row of cedar trees (see fig. 2.17) stood a huge stone obelisk (see fig. 2.18), which the great poet Pope had erected in memory of his mother at his home in Twickenham. Inscribed on it were the words in Latin "*Ah, Edith! best of Mothers, most loving of women, farewell!*" It was purchased by Earl Howe and conveyed by a coal-barge via the Ashby-de-le-Zouch canal which passes through the north side of the estate. This obelisk is now in the garden of the present Earl Howe at Penn House, Amersham, Buckinghamshire.

The Temple

The principal temple in the grounds of Gopsall Hall was a circular ionic structure (see fig. 2.19). In 1761 Louis Francois Roubiliac (who designed the memorial to G.F. Handel in Westminster Abbey), a French sculptor who worked in England at the time was commissioned to sculpt the fine structure of 'Fides Christiana' ('Religion') carved in white marble. It was placed on top of a dome under which was a cenotaph topped by a fluted vase, the work of Richard Hayward and dated 1762 and was carved with a Latin inscription. It commemorated the English classical scholar Edward Holdsworth who died of fever at Lord Digby's house near Coleshill, Warwickshire in 1746. It was erected in 1764 in Racecourse Wood and stood for seventy-one years until collapsing in 1835.

Jennens composed the words which refer to Holdsworth as "banished through the evil of times" and "defending the young against the vices of a degenerate age, both private and public, no less by his example than by his teaching" – referring to the fact that Holdsworth was a non-juror (as was Jennens, and therefore barred from university).



Fig. 2.11 The Picture Gallery



Fig. 2.12 Charles Jennens (1700-1773)



Fig. 2.13 Gopsall Hall and Park with Lake

Fig. 2.14 Deer in Gopsall Hall Park





Fig. 2.15 The Entrance Arch to Gopsall Hall

Fig. 2.16 Main Drive to Gopsall Hall



Fig. 2.17 The Cedar Avenue at Gopsall Hall



Fig 2.18 The Stone Obelisk



To explain. Back in 1715, Holdsworth had been offered a fellowship at Magdalen College, Oxford; but he refused to swear allegiance to George I, believing that James Stuart, the 'Old Pretender', was the rightful heir. He consequently had to resign and leave the university, spending the rest of his days acting as a guide and tutor to young aristocrats in Italy. Charles Jennens also refused the oath and so he too was not allowed to take his degree. The sympathy Jennens had for the cause probably accounts for the name of a local farm, Culloden, in memory of the last major battle on British soil where James Stuart and his clansmen were defeated.

Richard William Penn, 1st Earl Howe, later presented the statue to the Leicester Museum in 1857 as "a tribute of regard and good will towards the metropolis of his native county".

Both the statue and the cenotaph from within the temple were acquired by the Leicester Museum in 1951 when Gopsall Hall was demolished and are now preserved in the gardens of Belgrave Hall Museum, Leicester.

On November 20th, 1773 Charles Jennens died, aged 73. In his will he left, among many other bequests, £1,000 (£179,160) to the schools around Gopsall and £200 (£35,832) to the local poor. His monument can be found in the vestry of Nether Whitacre Parish Church near Coleshill, Warwickshire.

Jennens died unmarried and without a direct heir. The house and estate passed, after some epic legal wrangling, to his grandnephew Penn Assheton Curzon, eldest son of the First Viscount Curzon. He married Lady Sophia Charlotte Howe, daughter of Richard Howe (1st Earl Howe first creation).

Penn Assheton Curzon died on 1st September, 1797. He was MP for Clitheroe in 1774 and for the County of Leicester in 1792. During his tenure at Gopsall he acquired a considerable collection of paintings and placed many temples and other ornamentations in Gopsall Park.

After the death of her father in August 1799, who died without male issue, the barony devolved to the eldest daughter, Sophia Charlotte. She became Baroness Howe and so brought the title of Howe into the family of Curzon when she married Penn Assheton Curzon on 31st July, 1787. Penn Curzon and his wife Sophia had four children: George, who died at the age of 16, Marianne, born 30th August 1790, Leicester, who died in infancy aged 3 months and Richard William Penn, who was baptised at Gopsall Chapel on 7th January, 1797.

The Canal

The construction of the Ashby Canal (see fig. 2.20) (1794-1804) was planned by wealthy land and coalmine owners to provide efficient and cheap transport for coal, lime and other minerals from the area and around Measham and Moira to the Coventry Canal, and thence onwards to London. A company was formed, and shares issued at £100 (£14,810) each. The original estimate for the building of the canal was £150,000 (£12,342,222) but the eventual cost was about £184,000 (£15,139,792).

An Act of Parliament was passed in 1794, fixing the route and authorising the diversion of streams running through the grounds of the Gopsall Estate to fill the finished canal with water.

Gopsall Wharf was built at the instigation of Penn Curzon of Gopsall Hall, to supply the needs of his estate. Initially, he had not welcomed the 'cut', and insisted that it be at least one thousand yards from Gopsall Hall, as he did not want it to interfere with his plans to extend the park (originally 300 acres but later extended to 830 acres) and that no springs in Gopsall Park be diverted into the canal.

To move the canal would have been too costly, so the Hon. Penn Curzon was approached once more. The canal committee decided to proceed after a survey by the company engineers found that the spring water on the estate would not be affected by the canals construction. The company even went as far as to guarantee that if any water was abstracted from the springs, they would compensate Curzon by up to £50,000 (£4,114,074). However, matters became eased by the death of Penn Curzon on the 1st September, 1797.

The Railway

The Curzons proved to be more in favour of railways as on Wednesday 19th October, 1859, Lord Curzon, 1st Earl Howe, 'turned the first sod' in the building of a railway line from Trent Valley, Nuneaton, to Hinckley. Thousands of people turned out to watch the ceremony with Lord Curzon expressing, in his address, the hope that the railway would be of use to his agricultural friends in the neighbourhood and that it would be used by the locals for visiting friends and relations in different parts of the country.

With the extension of the line north of Hinckley came the chance to have a local station for Gopsall Hall at Shackerstone (see fig.2.21). The original site of Shackerstone Station was, at the request of Lord Howe, to be moved further north and be called Gopsall, but the committee soon realised that their preferred site was the more practical and bought the land from him, creating a tree lined avenue from Shackerstone to the Hall (see fig. 2.22).

The line stayed in operation for many years, finally closing to passengers on 13th April, 1931 and to goods on 2nd March, 1964.

Gopsall Hall – the Howe Family Seat

Gopsall Hall became the seat of the Howe family with 1st Earl Howe in 1821 and was to remain so until 1919. Richard William Penn Curzon succeeded his grandfather as Viscount Curzon in 1820 and a year later he assumed the name of Howe by Royal Licence and was created Earl Howe in 1821. He succeeded his mother in the Barony of Howe on her death in 1835. His coat of arms (see fig. 2.23) had the motto:

"Let Curzon holde what Curzon helde".

The 1st Earl Howe did many good works during his years at Gopsall. He provided prizes, awarded by his head gardener, for the best produce grown in the allotments that the stocking weavers had in Hinckley. It encouraged them to grow and provide food for their families. During his lifetime, Earl Howe contributed between £300-£400 for this worthy cause.

Dowager Queen Adelaide, widow of William IV, visited Gopsall each autumn from 1839 to 1844. She arrived at Gopsall via Tamworth. There is a small window in Twycross Church (see fig. 2.24) bearing her Coat of Arms. The 1st Earl Howe was her Lord Chamberlain. He was the

In April 1844 the building of the road from Twycross to Bilstone commenced at Earl Howe's expense, now known locally as 'The Straight Mile'.



Fig. 2.19 The Temple Ruins at Gopsall



Fig. 2.20 The Ashby Canal

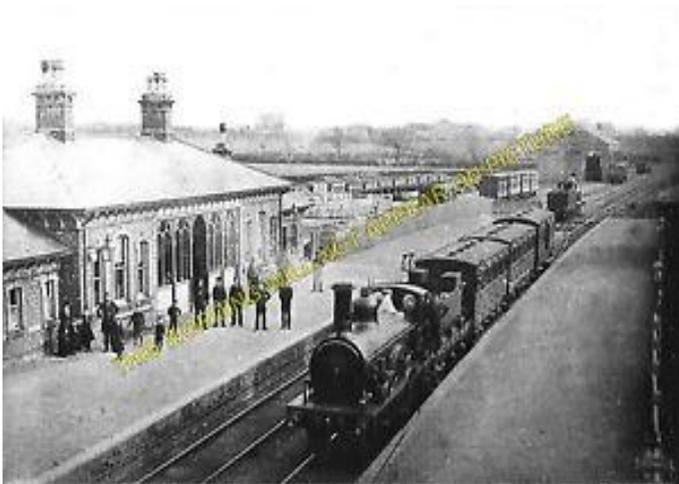


Fig. 2.21 Shakerstone Railway Station



Fig 2.22 Shakerstone Avenue within Gopsall Park

Fig. 2.23 The Howe Family Crest



Earl Howe was also patron to the 10th Leicestershire (Hinckley) Rifle Volunteer Corps when it was first established in 1860. He invited the Corps to Gopsall for a review and entertainment after an inspection. The Corps returned home to Hinckley Wharf later that day by canal boat from Gopsall Wharf.

In about 1862, Earl Howe planted thirteen specimens of 'Wellingtonia Gargantua' as memorials of his thirteen children and his friendship with the Duke of Wellington.

With the death of the 1st Earl Howe in 1870, his son George Augustus Frederick Louis Curzon Howe (see fig. 2.25) succeeded to the title and the estate. The 2nd Earl Howe, who was born in 1821, was MP for South Leicestershire from 1857 until he succeeded to the peerage in 1870. He married Harriet Mary Sturt in 1846 and was Black Rod to Queen Victoria. Sadly, he only held that office for six years as he died on 4th February 1876.

He was succeeded by his brother, Richard William Penn C.B., 3rd Earl Howe (see fig. 2.26) who took over the reins to maintain the good name and works of the Howe family at Gopsall.

In 1900, the 3rd Earl died and was succeeded by his son Richard George Penn Curzon, the 4th Earl Howe (see fig. 2.27). Like the 1st Earl, the 4th was also a great friend of royalty, especially King Edward VII, who was a frequent visitor to Gopsall Hall during the shooting season. The 4th Earl spent £4,028 (£486,377) in 1901 on the installation of electricity to the Hall and to other properties on the estate.

The visit in 1902 of King Edward VII for a hunting trip was such a prestigious event that a silver bath with gold fittings was installed just for the King's pleasure. His initial visit to hunt deer on the estate culminated in a full Royal Visit by the King, Queen Alexandra, Princess Victoria and various other members of the Royal Family for a shooting weekend during December of that year. The gold plate used in the dining room had been a present to the 1st Earl Howe by Queen Adelaide whilst he was Lord Chamberlain.

The Earl had the platform at Shackerstone Station extended especially to accommodate the Royal Train. The station, usually lit by oil lamps, was lit by electricity provided by accumulators brought in for the occasion. The station was decorated under the supervision of Mr. George Cooke, the station master, and assisted by gardeners from Gopsall Hall. Lady Howe, through an indisposition, was unable to meet the Royal Party – she had had a problem with a blocked vein the previous spring - but after a trip abroad for her health arrived back in England just in time for the Royal visit.

However, her health continued to decline and on 9th February 1906, Georgiana the wife of the 4th Earl Howe passed away after a long illness at the age of 46. She had had a paralytic seizure two or three years previously and had never recovered from it. Her body was brought from Curzon House in London's Mayfair to Shackerstone where it was placed on a hearse drawn by two magnificent black horses. After a short service at the chapel at Gopsall, the Countess was buried in Congerstone churchyard (see fig. 2.28). Simultaneous with the service at Congerstone, a memorial service was held in London at St. Margaret's, Westminster.

The 4th Earl had succeeded in 1900 and held the title for 29 years. He was Treasurer to Queen Victoria's household and later was Lord in Waiting to her and King Edward VII and then Lord Chamberlain to Queen Alexandra from 1903 to 1925.

In 1907 he married for a second time, on this occasion to his cousin, Mary. She was thought to be one of the most beautiful women in England at that time and was the only daughter of Montagu Curzon.

In 1919 the 4th Earl Howe, like many others of his class, was reported to be in financial difficulties and consequently the entire estate had to be sold. He, like the Earl's before him,

were distinguished for their benevolence to the Hall and its wider family, and it would seem that his over generous nature was a contributing factor in this outcome.

It was probably not as simple as that. Economic as well as political and social circumstances may also have played a part.

Economically, a number of estates in the area had suffered a vast decline in their income bearing potential as a consequence of the great agricultural depression of the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The way the estates had coped historically was to borrow against the value of the land by way of mortgage, and heirlooms were not available for sale without the consent of the trustees of the estate.

Politically, in 1906 the Liberal Party won a crushing General Election victory over the Conservatives; this became known as the 'Liberal Landslide'. Most of Leicestershire voted Liberal. The 1906 election led to wide ranging social reforms including old-age pensions and The Trade Boards Act, 1909, which applied minimum wage rates to what were termed 'sweated trades'. There was also the so-called 'People`s Budget' of 1909. The Budget raised considerable amounts of taxation to wage what David Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, termed "implacable warfare against poverty and squalidness". In 1909, Lloyd George made his 'Lime House Speech' in which he particularly defended the proposed tax on the capital value of land, and attacked those who made a great income, with capital appreciation, out of land which they had simply inherited.

Regardless of the reason, the house was sold in 1919 to Samuel James Waring, of the famous furniture firm 'Waring and Gillow', and the 4th Earl moved to his property at Penn, Amersham.

The Final Years of Gopsall Hall

In 1922 Samuel James Waring became Lord Waring of Foots Cray Place. The fact that Waring chose Foots Cray Place as his title rather than Gopsall indicates that he considered Gopsall either as a temporary possession or as a mere county retreat rather than his main home. In fact, he never lived at Gopsall all the time he owned it.

1927 saw the country on the verge of recession and once again Gopsall Hall and the estate of 6,230 acres which comprised the villages of Bilstone, Congerstone, Shackerstone and Twycross were offered for sale at auction by Lord Waring. Only a few cottages were sold and almost 800 lots were withdrawn.

In 1932 Lord Waring sold the remaining land to the Crown estate. The government stepped in and purchased the entire estate and the Hall for around £1 (£64) per acre. Plans were made to turn the Park into a motor racing circuit comprising an eight-mile course with an accompanying aerodrome. However these plans were never realised. The house was never to be a stately home again and was shut up until the Second World War.

Gopsall Hall was taken over in 1942 by the No.1 Radio Mechanics School of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) who used the house and estate as an experimental radar base until 1945.

After the Second World War, the house was again abandoned as there was no family to take back possession. The house was not in particularly good condition after three hard years as a military base and succumbed to severe decay. Lead was pillaged from the roof and fittings were taken as souvenirs.

On 30th May 1951 the *Hinckley Times* announced that Gopsall Hall was to be demolished. 1952 saw the buildings demolished and Gopsall Park Farm was built over the original site.

For 200 years this magnificent mansion was part of our heritage. All that remains today apart from the crude outline of the former parkland and avenues of trees are sections of the walled garden, an underground reservoir, the gatehouse and the temple ruins.

Fig. 2.24 St. James Church, Twycross



Fig. 2.25 George Augustus Frederick Louis Curzon Howe, 2nd Earl Howe



Fig. 2.26 Richard William Penn 3rd Earl Howe



Fig. 2.27 Richard George Penn Curzon 4th Earl Howe

Fig. 2.28 St. Mary's Church, Congerstone



CHAPTER THREE – EARL HOWE AND HIS TIME IN POLITICS

“... In his political sentiments he was Conservative, and though not an active politician, his support and interest were always given to that party. He never aimed at playing a conspicuous part in politics; he was through a long life a remarkable feature in our social existence as a nation. His position, indeed, constitutes a more curious illustration of English society, and of the combination of circumstances that tend to give a man influence under it, from the fact that he was not a man of leading intellect and oratorical acquirements.”

(Leicester Journal, 1870)

As we shall see, Earl Howe was far more of a political animal than his obituary suggests. His influence upon the events of the time are, however, very subtle. It is through others, particularly the Duke of Wellington and Queen Adelaide, that his advice proved to be of import in the political decision-making processes of King William IV's reign and particularly in regard to the Reform Act of 1832 and the events that led up to it.

Earl Howe's Honours and Political Appointments

Chief among his many honours was that of the award of the G.C.H. (Grand Cross of Hanover) in 1830.

The G.C.H. (see fig.3.1) belongs to the Royal Guelphic Order, sometimes referred to as the Hanoverian Guelphic Order, and is a Hanoverian Order of Chivalry instituted on 28th April 1815 by the Prince Regent (later King George IV). The honour is named after the House of Guelph to which the Hanoverian Kings belonged, and its insignia were based on the white horse of that Kingdom's arms.

The Order has six officers: Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, Register, King of Arms, Genealogist and Secretary.

In 1831, Howe was appointed Privy Councillor, and was awarded the D.C.L. (Doctor of Civil Law) in 1835 which was presented to him by King William IV at a memorable commemoration at Oxford.

He was a Trustee of Rugby School, a Governor of Charterhouse, and from 1860 Lieut-Colonel Commandant of Prince Albert's Own Leicestershire Yeomanry Cavalry.

His political appointments included that of Lord of the Bedchamber (1829) and Lord Chamberlain (1830).



Fig. 3.1 Grand Cross of Hanover (GCH)

He was made Lord of the Bedchamber (1829-30) to Prince William the year before his accession to the throne. This office was previously known as 'Gentleman of the Bedchamber', who was a courtier in the Royal Household of the King of the United Kingdom and the Prince of Wales. His duties consisted of assisting the King with his dressing, waiting on him when he ate in private, guarding access to him in his bedchamber and closet and providing companionship. As such this made Earl Howe a trusted servant of the future King. There were always several holders of the office, who were invariably gentlemen and almost invariably peers, often important ones, as the regular access to the Monarch which the role brought was the most valuable commodity of the courtier.

He became Lord Chamberlain in the household of her Majesty Queen Adelaide (see fig. 3.2). He held this office from her accession to the throne in 1830 until her death in 1849 (except for the years 1832-4) when he was out of office having voted against the Reform Bill) and was one of her Majesty's most faithful and confidential servants.

In this capacity he accompanied her Majesty to Malta, and subsequently to Madeira and Germany. His close attendance on, and intimacy with Queen Adelaide, gave rise to some scandal. Contemporary reports suggested that they were closer than was proper and rumours were rife concerning a possible affair. However, no firm evidence exists to support such rumours.

The Battle for Reform in brief

William IV (see fig. 3.3) saw his role as King as supporting his ministers, rather than attempting to influence or direct them as his predecessors had done, and thus tried to act as an arbitrator between political rivals. This was nowhere more important than in the events surrounding the rocky passage of the 1832 Reform Bill through Parliament, and especially the pressure exerted by Lord Grey (see fig. 3.4) (the leader of the Whigs) in trying to unblock the opposition of the Duke of Wellington (see fig. 3.5) (the leader of the Tories) and his allies in the House of Lords.

The preoccupation of the country in the long years of war with France had eclipsed the movement in England for a more representative Parliament. Now the reformers (the Whigs) wanted change. Their key demand was for new constituencies, for the newly industrialised cities which were now the centres of economic power and population were not represented, while many medieval boroughs, completely depopulated, still had a Member of Parliament. This change also planned to abolish the long-established and corrupt system of purchasing parliamentary seats, by bribing the small number of electors in these antiquated constituencies. A further important step was the need to widen the electorate to include those (men) of more modest wealth as well as pressing for the establishment of a secret ballot for all votes. This battle for these rights would take two years.

William found on his accession to the throne on 26th June 1830 that the most difficult politician to deal with was the incumbent Tory Prime Minister, the Duke of Wellington (who had engineered the termination of William's earlier position as Lord High Admiral). The two men never liked each other. A general election was called, as was customary on the accession of a new Monarch. Though the result was indeterminate, Wellington's government resigned in November 1830 and Lord Grey formed the first Whig administration for twenty-three years.



Fig. 3.2 Queen Adelaide



Fig. 3.3 King William IV



Fig. 3.4 Lord Grey

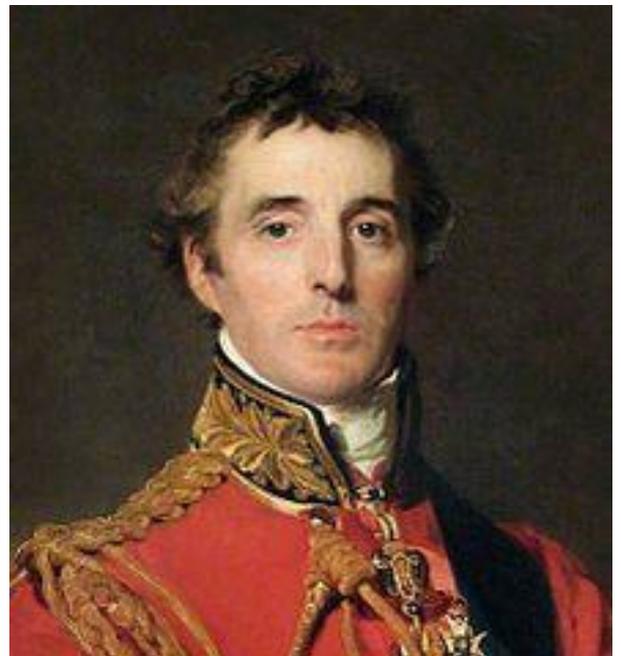


Fig. 3.5 The Duke of Wellington

The relationship between the King and Grey was of major importance in these early years, for the Whig's began to push for parliamentary reform. Grey's government immediately drafted a Reform Bill. On 23rd March 1831, the Bill passed the Commons by one vote, after which the Lords threw it out. Grey then asked the King for a Dissolution of Parliament so that a general election could be held on the whole question. To this William agreed. Wellington was disgusted.

The General Election took place in May 1831, and when the Commons assembled in mid-June 1831 the Whigs held 380 seats and the Tories 250.

The Second Reform Bill was then introduced. On 7th July it passed the Commons with a majority of 136. After months of debate, on 7th October the Lords again rejected the Bill, this time by 41 votes. As a result William prorogued Parliament. In response, major riots took place in London, Bristol, Derby and Nottingham, in which buildings were destroyed such as Nottingham Castle (see fig. 3.6).

Huge meetings took place in Birmingham and Manchester.

William issued a Royal Proclamation that political unions were henceforth to be banned.

Another Reform Bill, the third, was introduced on 12th December 1831, which again passed the Commons, this time with a majority of 162, but again on 7th May 1832 the government was defeated in the Lords by 43 votes.

The next day the Whigs offered their resignation, and Grey demanded the creation of new peers by the King so that the Bill could get passed the Lords.

William refused. A sense of crisis fell upon the country.

On 9th May Grey and the Whigs resigned and Wellington was asked to form a minority government. However, the other great figure in the Tory party, Sir Robert Peel (see fig. 3.7), refused to join Wellington (he had ambitions of his own), so the Duke was unable to form a government.

And suddenly it was all over. On May 15th Wellington caved in, realising that he could not win.

Grey and the Whigs resumed office that very day and three days later a very upset William agreed to create new Peers. This, however, became unnecessary as the Lords capitulated and the Bill was passed in a thinly attended House of Lords on 4th June 1832. Many Tories stayed away. The electorate was increased by 45% (still only a fraction of the total population) and the constituencies moved towards the centres of population. Thirty rotten boroughs were lost in Cornwall, eighteen from Wiltshire, fourteen from Sussex and ten from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Reform Bills were passed for Scotland and Ireland in the following two months.

These were the main events in the battle for reform, resulting eventually in a degree of success but far from what was ideal. The people would have to wait a little while longer for the representation they deserved. It would not be until 1918 that all men over the age of 21 got the vote and a further ten years after that when all women were equally franchised.

So what of Earl Howe and his role in all this?

Behind the scenes with Earl Howe

In October 1831, the Second Reform Bill was defeated decisively in the House of Lords. The oppositions majority of 41 included Bishops and, among others, Earl Howe. Lord Grey, the Prime Minister, had earlier requested the King to create more peers to assist the Bill's passage through the House of Lords. The King refused. The Whigs reaction to the King's response to this situation was horror, while the Tories, led by the Duke of Wellington, reacted with amazement and delight.

The King wrote:

"... this evil cannot be met by resorting to measures for obtaining a majority in the House of Lords which no Government could propose and no Sovereign consent to, without losing sight of what is due to the character of that House, to the honour of the Aristocracy of the country, and to the dignity of the throne."

After initially threatening to resign, the Whigs agreed to remain in office, they would continue to battle for a substantially unamended measure of reform but would not seek to tamper with the structure of the House of Lords.

It was not long, however, before this nervous stability between King and Prime Minister was soured by what many felt was a silly and unnecessary squabble. The affair, in which Earl Howe was a major player was, in itself, of minimal importance; the rancour which it created between court and ministers inflated it into something close to a national disaster.

Earl Howe was one of those curious individuals whose actions, letters and reported speeches had a powerful charm for his contemporaries. The King liked and valued his judgement (he had been the King's Lord of the Bedchamber before William acceding to the throne), while Queen Adelaide, whose Lord Chamberlain he was, doted on him. Their relationship was reported as one in which Howe gave all and the Queen coolly received the homage. This, however, was not the popular view. Adelaide was believed to be besotted with her Chamberlain and the two were often alleged to be lovers. No-one who knew anything of the Queen or Earl Howe could credit so absurd an accusation, but everything indicated that she felt bound to her Chamberlain by strong emotional ties.

Earl Howe was a convinced Tory; an aberration which Lord Grey would have been prepared to swallow if Howe had been modestly prudent in his political activities but found hard to tolerate when Howe insisted on playing a prominent role in opposition.

In May 1831, Grey protested when Howe signed an Address from the people of Kent against the Reform Bill. He wanted the King to rebuke his errant servant and Sir Herbert Taylor, (see fig. 3.8) the King's Private Secretary, promised that this would be done, if the subject came up. It never did.

Unabashed, Howe signed a similar declaration from the people of Warwickshire. Taylor thought things were going too far and wrote a stiff letter to Earl Howe passing on the King's apparent displeasure. But he did so with some disquiet. In a letter to Lord Grey he confesses:

"... the knowledge of my communication has given extreme uneasiness to the Queen who dreads the loss of Earl Howe's services..."

Howe contemplated resignation and consulted the Duke of Wellington who counselled him to stay in office and act with prudence. Howe may well have followed this sage advice if he not been enraged by the leaking of Taylor's rebuke to "The Times". Furiously he wrote to Wellington of a Whig plot to separate the King from all his true friends:



Fig. 3.6 Nottingham Castle on fire in 1831



Fig. 3.7 Sir Robert Peel



Fig. 3.8 Sir Herbert Taylor
(King's private Secretary)

"Nothing shall now induce me to resign. I have the King's leave to vote as I like; my opinions are firmly but temperately declared; and my Lord Brougham may yet find me a thorn in his side."

In October Howe was responsible for – or, at least, was not prepared to disavow – a letter strongly attacking the government in the "Standard". Grey insisted that Howe must go and had his way. Earl Howe was dismissed as Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide.

"All is right at Windsor" he wrote jubilantly to Lord Anglesey on October 11th, "and Lord Howe's resignation has been accepted."

Yet all, as he was soon to discover, was far from right. Queen Adelaide interpreted the dismissal of her favourite as a direct insult, as indeed it was meant to be. Almost overnight she was transformed from a demure housewife into a virago, determined to avenge the martyr in the blood of his adversaries.

Queen Adelaide reflected on the loss of Earl Howe in her diary entry from October 10th, 1831 which includes the following:

"...I had trusted in, and built firmly on, the King's love to me. But unfortunately, he has not been able to resist the representations of his Ministers, and yielded, and I feel it will be the beginning of much evil. May God support us and protect and shield this Country and save the King from ruin. I had a hard struggle before I appeared at table, after this blow, which I felt deeply as an insult, which filled me with such indignation. I felt myself deeply wounded both as wife and Queen..."

However, the dismissal of Howe as Chamberlain did not entail his exile from court; on the contrary, he seemed to be there as much as ever. In April 1832, with the crisis over reform nearing its height, Howe chose to leave his invalid wife to spend a week at Windsor. The Queen wrote to him when he was away, assuring him early in 1832 that the King's eyes were now open to the perils round him:

"... but I am afraid [he] has the fixed idea that no other administration could be formed at present ..."

With astonishing impropriety she suggested that Howe show the letter to the Duke of Wellington.

The Duke's reply was brusque:

"I can do no more in Parliament," he concluded. "I can do nothing out of Parliament. Remember me most kindly to Lady Howe..."

Through Adelaide's sometimes inopportune comments, the King began to feel that Howe's dismissal had been a poor return for his loyal support. Lord Grey was left in little doubt that the injury had not been forgiven or forgotten.

In April 1832, the King was faced with a demand from Earl Grey to appoint additional Peers to the House of Lords to alter the mathematics in that House in favour of passing the Reform Bill they had twice before rejected.

Two considerations were in the mind of the King. First was potentially, he did not believe the demand could, at the time, be justified. The Tories had not even sought to amend the Bill but had merely used a procedural device to ensure that the most controversial part should be discussed last.

The second consideration was potentially far more dangerous for the Whigs. The King came to believe, partly through the counsel of the Queen, that an alternative course

existed which might save the essential features of the Reform Bill and yet avoid the need to create more Peers. If a Tory government could only be induced to sponsor the Bill, in their hands the 'worst' effects at least might be mitigated. All difficulties would then be smoothed over.

There was now, partly through Earl Howe's intervention, a chance of forming a Tory administration pledged to reform.

In August 1832, Lord Grey chose to revive the question of the Queen's former Chamberlain and present favourite, Earl Howe. Once again, a trivial affair assumed false significance because of the harm it was to do the King's relations with his Prime Minister.

Grey's naïve intention had been to conciliate the Queen. He suggested that, now the Reform Bill was out of the way, Earl Howe could resume his duties as Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide. His only condition was that Howe should not overtly oppose his government. The King was delighted and congratulated Grey on his "good sense and good taste."

The negotiations were left to Sir Herbert Taylor who was private secretary to the King. Unfortunately, because of an earlier quarrel, Howe and Taylor loathed each other.

After some bad-tempered correspondence between the two, Earl Howe became more conciliatory and the King, to Taylor's dismay, took the opportunity to intervene. Howe was to be allowed to vote against the government provided he maintained a "prudent reserve" in his opposition.

Taylor broke the news to Grey. Both men regretted that the matter had been revived. As Howe increased his concessions so Taylor stepped up his demands. This 'pas de deux' did not end until almost the end of the year. Howe then finally refused office.

One disagreeable by-product was a revival of rumours about Howe's relationship with Queen Adelaide. But none of this prevented the Queen from keeping her favourite advisor close at hand. At the end of November 1832, Grey went to Brighton, finding Howe in favour among an entirely Tory gathering.

The consequences of Howe's dismissal led to the King being increasingly distrustful of his ministers. He became tortured by doubts about the wisdom of their policy, plagued by his Queen and courtiers, and confronted by the certainty of a clash between Lords and Commons which he had sought so earnestly to avert. Lady Louise Percy, dining at the Pavilion (see fig. 3.9), Brighton, in November 1832 could not have described the situation better:

"The poor King looked worried to death. Tory as I am I could not help pitying him. When one looks at him, it does strike one that Fate made a cruel mistake in placing him where he has to ride the whirlwind and direct the storm."

In May 1834, Adelaide went on a visit to Germany in the company of Earl Howe and others. He had by this time been reappointed Chamberlain to the Queen.

January 1835 saw rumours that the Queen was again pregnant caused sniggering gossips to calculate how long it had been since Earl Howe had last been at Windsor. The rumours, of course, all proved false.

Earl Howe and Queen Adelaide

When, in 1830, Adelaide became Queen Consort her house of servants increased. Chief among these new appointments was Earl Howe, appointed as her Lord Chamberlain. As her chief advisor, the Earl often spoke with the Queen Consort in private. This was to cause issues later.

Ill-founded rumours circulated that the Queen was plotting with the Duke of Wellington against reform. There were those (mainly Whigs) who in public as well as in private would not have been ill-pleased to see the Queen fail, and in so doing manoeuvre the King more to their way of thinking on the question of reform.

England speedily became agitated by this wave of revolution which was shaking many of the monarchies of Europe. England endured as great a revolution as any of them, but with this difference, that here it was effected according to law [the Reform Act of 1832] and was carried through to its natural consequences, to the mutual advantage of the government and the governed - not, however, to the advantage of Earl Howe.

Earl Howe was a virulent opponent of Reform. He had been warned in May 1831 that his opposition should be conducted in such a way as not to compromise the Queen and King. This he did, but nevertheless the Lords again rejected the Bill in the early hours of 8th October 1831 by 199 votes to 158 – a majority of 41. King William had tried to get the Bill modified since the start of its passage through Parliament, so he received the news with some sense of satisfaction.

As a result of Earl Howe voting with the majority on this matter, Lord Grey, the Prime Minister, induced the King to pressure Earl Howe into resigning as Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide. The Queen was incensed at what she saw as a secret conspiracy to deprive her of a valued friend and made no attempt to hide her displeasure. In her correspondence with Earl Howe she came very close to political intrigue, giving him confidential details of the King's state of mind.

In a letter of January 1832, she informs him that:

"He [the King] sees everything in the right light, but I am afraid he has the fixed idea that no other administration could be formed at present among your friends [the Tories] ... I should like to know what the Duke of Wellington thinks."

Howe promptly passed the communication on to Wellington, Grey's arch enemy and the leader of the opposition. Howe wrote a further letter to the Duke in March 1832:

"Pray my dear Duke, depend upon the King. Assure your party if they will be staunch, he will be so."

If Wellington gave him an encouraging reply it may well have reached the ear of the King – no doubt with assistance from the Queen. It helped to deter Lord Grey's attempt to force the King to appoint more peers to allow his government to defeat the opposition of the House of Lords to the Reform Bill he so eagerly wished to see passed.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the King's growing recalcitrance became such that, on 30th March 1832, he sent Grey an ominous letter in which, although referring to his earlier promise to create a certain number of peers as 'sacred', he stated that he might not 'think fit to sanction' too many.

On April 9th the Lords passed the Reform Bill by a majority of nine. Despite this apparent success, on 7th May the House voted to postpone passage of the Bill. The King refused to create more peers and so Lord Grey resigned. Earl Howe and his party had the scalp they wanted, and Earl Howe was able to return to his post as Lord Chamberlain to his beloved Queen.

Queen Adelaide held wonderful Christmas parties at Brighton (see fig. 3.10) each year of her reign. Earl Howe was a constant attendee on these occasions, a fact not missed by many, including Charles Grenville who in November 1832 observed: "Howe is devoted to the Queen and never far away from her. She receives his attentions but demonstrates nothing in return; he is like a boy in love...it is impossible to ascertain the exact nature of this connexion. Howe conducts himself towards her like a young ardent lover; he is never out of the Pavilion, dines there almost every day, or goes every evening, rides with her, never quitting her side, and never takes his eyes off her. She does nothing, but she admits his attentions and acquiesces in his devotion; at the same time, there is not the smallest evidence that she treats him as a lover. If she did, it would soon be known, for she is surrounded by enemies.

"I find it most remarkable that Lord Howe should pay so much attention to the Queen while his delightful wife is laid up (with a sprained ankle and dislocated joint) on her couch."

The Queen was not yet 40 – only four years older than her Chamberlain. Although she was not greatly attractive to men, it is significant that the only two men who came to know her well both loved her devotedly. Her loyalty to her husband, her isolated position and her natural shyness made it difficult for her to make male friends. Earl Howe was the only man whose office placed him on an intimate footing with her.

They had many tastes in common and held similar views on many questions – especially in the matter of politics. Always so kind and loyal to her, handsome in appearance and charming in manner, Earl Howe was the only presentable man with whom she ever came into close contact.

When told by her ladies that the newspapers were attacking her on account of her friendship with Earl Howe, she said: "I know that, but truth will always find its way."



Fig.3.9 The Brighton Pavilion



Fig. 3.10 Queen Charlotte



Fig. 3.11 Alexander Baring
(Chancellor of the Exchequer)

That is what happened. Although Lord Howe remained in the company of the Queen until her death, nothing has ever come to light to suggest either of them acted incompatibly with their honour or with the loyalty each owed to their King. Indeed, so greatly did King William love and trust his wife that he encouraged her friendship with Earl Howe, realising perhaps that she found in it a contentment which he himself was unable to offer her.

Queen Adelaide and the Press

It was when the bill was in jeopardy that the King hesitated to create a sufficient number of new Lords to secure the passing of the bill in the Upper House, and it was then that the press began to admonish the King and to menace the Queen. The "Times" asserted that it was by "domestic importunity" that the action of the King's mind was being impeded. The article went on – "There is a lady of high rank, who must be taught a salutary, though a very painful, lesson. Why has bidden her gossips not to despair? Why such haste to tell them all will be well? The King will do without the Whigs! But England will not! Still less will England do without the unmutilated Bill!"

Her influence on the King being assumed to be still active, allusion was made to "the foreign woman whom the nation may have too easily adopted." Reports were rife that intrigues were on foot, the object of which was to induce liberal Peers to betray their party, highlighting the "blandishments and entreaties, urged with a force and pertinacity which, coming from a Monarch, are difficult to be refused."

Party spirit was aggravated on either side by the tone of the press. Influential cities announced their refusal to pay taxes, and taverns possessing pictures of the King and Queen turned them heels uppermost, with an intimation that they should be righted only when the originals had made themselves right with the people.

While Tories of eminence talked of coercing the King, Whigs equally exalted hinted at the possibility of sending his Consort to Germany, and of rousing the men of the provinces in order to make an impression upon people in high places.

Publicly, however, she had her champions too. Alexander Baring (see fig. 3.11), from his prominent place in Parliament as Chancellor of the Exchequer, protested against the language of the Whig papers. He described it as "foul slander against the highest personage of her sex". Joseph Hume, Scottish P.M. and ultra-reformer as he was, exhibited very excellent taste, pointing out "that the name of the exalted lady in question should never be dragged in the debates, the discussions and the dissensions of the House."

Led by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops offered words of assurance and encouragement, of trust, counsel and consolation.

Taken together, the year 1832 may be said to have been the most eventful, and the least felicitous, in the life of Queen Adelaide.

When the first rumours began to spread of an opposition establishing itself at court against the progress of reform, the established press manifested a particular desire to exonerate the Queen from the charge of participating in misguiding the populace. Earl Howe's implied role in this rebellion, however, was not treated so kindly.

In support of the Queen, but not those around her, the "Times" (April 9th, 1831) denounced the falsehoods, showing the improbability and the unfairness of such allegations. It also urged that whatever opinions might be expressed by members of the Queen's household, they were not to be attributed to the mistress of that household.

Eldon, the Ex-Chancellor, was said to have assured Queen Adelaide that, if reform was carried, the days of her private conversations in her 'drawing-rooms' would be numbered and that royalty would do well to follow the counsel given by Earl Grey to the bishops – namely, set your house in order.

While the Queen was treated with a certain degree of moderation by the press, she is said to have been seriously coerced by the Whig ministry led by Earl Grey. This was distinctly made clear by the Rev. Mr. Browne, vicar of Atwik, in the sermon he delivered at her funeral:

"The Queen Consort had witnessed, in her fatherland, some of the dreadful effects of the French Revolutionary movements, and she was known to disapprove, out of womanly feeling and fear for her husband's safety, of popular tumults and agitations. With the narrow-minded and impure, suspicion is proof, and is followed by resentment. This pure being was a sufferer by the machinations and exactions of the ephemeral favourites of the misguided populace. Her influence over her royal husband was too great to be trusted, and she was forbidden ... to have a kindred spirit near her during the agitation and intimidation, by which the measure called the Reform Bill was supported and carried."

It does not take a great deal of imagination to realise this 'kindred spirit' referred to is Earl Howe. His removal as Lord Chamberlain at such a crucial time was no accident

Earl Howe's dismissal as Chamberlain

The following is an extract of the debate recorded in Hansard which took place in the House of Commons on 18th October 1831.

Mr. Trevor rose to put a question to his Majesty's Government on the subject of the dismissal of a noble Lord from his appointment of Chamberlain to the Queen. He had put a question on this subject a few days ago to the noble Lord, the Paymaster of the Forces, and that noble Lord had stated that Earl Howe had tendered his resignation, which had been accepted.

He had since received a letter from Earl Howe, with whom he had not the honour of being personally acquainted, in which that noble Earl stated that the noble Lord's account of the transaction was inconsistent with the real facts of the case. That letter he now held in his hand, and as he was authorised by the noble Lord to make any use of it he thought proper, he would read it to the House:

Gopsall, Atherstone, Oct. 16.

Sir,

"Although I have not the honour of your acquaintance, I am certain you will pardon the liberty I take in making a few observations on a question which the papers of yesterday mentioned to have been put by you in the House of Commons respecting my dismissal from the Queen's household. If the answer Lord John Russell is reported to have given in The Times is the one he really made, I must say his Lordship made a statement at direct variance with the real facts of the case. Which are these:- In the month of May last, and for the second time, I submitted to his Majesty my intention of opposing the Reform Bill, and my perfect readiness to resign my situation as Chamberlain to the Queen, at any moment that he might be pleased to fix on.

"I received in reply a most gracious command to retain my office, and a distinct recognition of my privilege of being perfectly independent of any Government, from the circumstance of my being in her Majesty's household. My having offered to resign again was out of the question, as I was allowed by the King's own communication to act and vote exactly as I pleased.

"Nothing, therefore, but the positive request of Lord Grey and his colleagues to the King for my removal, in consequence of my vote the other night, has been the cause of my being no longer in her Majesty's household. I feel that it is but common justice to my own character to make this statement, and to give you full authority to make whatever use of it you like, except the insertion of it in the public papers.

"I have the honour to be your faithful and obedient servant,

"HOWE"

The Hon. A. Trevor, in the light of this letter, felt it necessary to put a question to his Majesty's Government. He did so as an act of justice to the noble Lord who had been removed from his appointment. The question which he wished to put was whether Earl Howe had not been dismissed from his situation of Chamberlain to her Majesty in consequence of the vote that he had given on the Reform Bill, notwithstanding the assurance that had been made to him by his Majesty that he might vote on that question as he pleased?

In reply Lord Althorp said the Hon. Member and the House must be aware that the removal from any appointment in the household of their Majesties was made in the undisputed exercise of the royal prerogative to remove or retain any individual at pleasure. It would not become him, therefore, standing there as a Minister of the Crown, to enter into any statement or to give any opinion as to the grounds of such removal.

Feeling against King William, and particularly Adelaide, was marked as it was believed that she was resistant to all reform. The Whigs not only distrusted Adelaide but also her Chamberlain, Earl Howe. In October of the previous year (1831) Grey had pressed the King to dismiss Howe, which he had done.

The Queen was insulted and furious. Her deeply ingrained hatred of reform was equalled only by that of the Duke of Wellington, who she felt was the only person who could save the country from revolution. Though she possessed no formal power, Adelaide was no help (or hinderance) to her husband during these struggles. She missed the counsel of Earl Howe greatly.

With the loss of her friend and faithful servant, his mistress would never accept the nomination of any other person to the same post. Earl Howe remained in attendance upon his mistress unofficially.

1833, and the Queen was still without a Chamberlain. Earl Grey had offered to recommend Howe's re-instatement on condition that he should not oppose his Government. This he positively refused, regarding it as an insult replying:

"that he had been wantonly dismissed by him and would receive no favour at his hands."

Although the Queen had refused to have anyone but Howe as her Chamberlain, she eventually relented due to the harassment being received by the King. She therefore agreed to appoint Lord Denbigh, although only allowing him to officiate on the most formal occasions. Earl Howe remained, unofficially, in her company, and was later reinstated in the autumn of 1834, but on his own terms.

Earl Howe and the Dowager Queen

With the death of King William IV on the morning of Tuesday 20th June, 1837, Adelaide became the Dowager Queen as the Victorian Era began. Adelaide wrote to Victoria that same day saying as she ended the letter:

"Excuse my writing more at present. My heart is overwhelmed and my head aches very much. Accept the assurance of my most affectionate devotion and allow me to consider myself as your Majesty's most affectionate Friend, Aunt and Subject."

The funeral of William was held on July 8th at Windsor (see fig. 3.12). Adelaide attended the funeral ceremony, remaining present throughout the whole ceremony. She is, therefore, the only Queen of England who saw a King, her Consort, deposited in his tomb.

After this Adelaide largely retired from public life but her friendship with Earl Howe continued until the day she died. Her latter years were plagued by ill health, but never did it cause her to be selfish or inconsiderate to others.

Neither did it prevent her from travelling to seek recuperation. In October 1838, an attack of bronchitis caused her to seek refuge and remedy in Malta. Sailing from Portsmouth on HMS Hastings, Earl Howe, and others, accompanied her. While in Malta, Adelaide found yet another outlet for her unbounded generosity. She paid for the building of St. Paul's Cathedral, Valetta, at a cost of £10,000 (£1,324,028). She laid the foundation stone on March 20th 1839, Earl Howe being on hand to offer his assistance.



Fig, 3.12 Windsor Castle

On her return in May 1839, she became the guest of various noble hosts in England. Indeed she visited Gopsall Hall, (see fig. 3.13) Earl Howe's Leicestershire home, each autumn between 1839-1844.

In September 1842, Earl Howe travelled with the Dowager Queen by train down to Southampton and thence by carriage to her home at Canford in Dorset. Large crowds cheered her all the way and, although exhausted, managed to show none of the pain she felt after a long and arduous journey. At the end of her stay, the Cavalry of the Dorset yeomanry offered to escort her back to Southampton, but she wished to leave with as little ceremony as possible. Earl Howe wrote on her behalf:

"Her Majesty begs to thank Col. Frampton very much for all his kindness on this and on a former occasion, but she wishes her departure to be quite private."

In October 1847, Adelaide and her retinue, including Earl Howe, set sail for Madeira on board HMS Howe. Named after Earl Howe's maternal grandfather Admiral Howe, she was launched on 28th March, 1815 at Chatham and broken up in 1854. There is a painting of the ship entering Malta Harbour in 1843 in a port broadside view. She was a 1st rate, 120-gun Royal Navy Warship. She is shown in full sail in a following wind. A fort, lighthouse and various houses can be seen in the distance, as well as small sailing craft and on the right-hand side, a steam paddle ship (see Fig. 3.14). There is also a model of HMS Howe at Glasgow Museums Resource Centre (see Fig.3.15).

Friday 22nd October HMS Howe reaches Portugal and is towed into the port of Tagus. The King Consort of Portugal came down to receive the Dowager Queen. She then moved on to Madeira, but even the pleasant climate of this most lovely place could not help ease the suffering of Adelaide and so she returned to England where she occupied herself in making preparations for the inevitable end.

Fig. 3.13 Gopsall Hall, Leicestershire



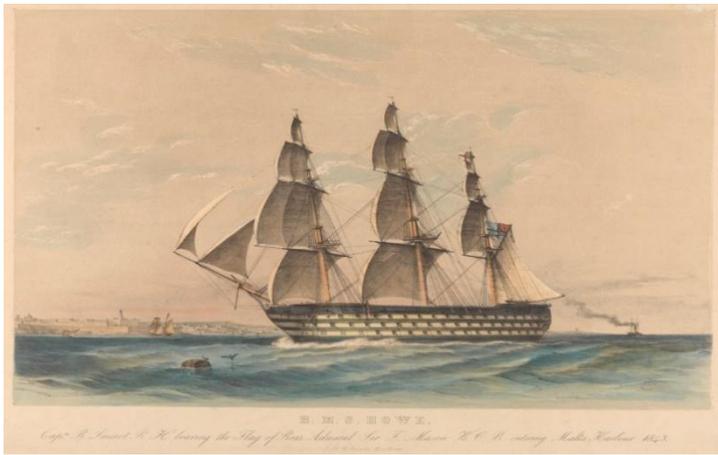


Fig. 3.14 HMS Howe entering Malta Harbour, 1843

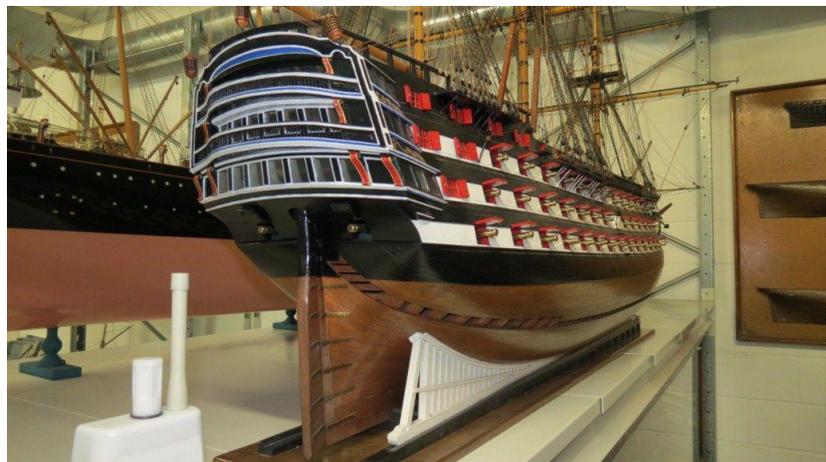


Fig. 3.15 Model of HMS Howe – Glasgow Museums Resource Centre

On the 8th May she inscribed on the back of her old and duly attested will of the 14th August 1837, this remarkable endorsement: "This will is cancelled, 8th May, 1849. My heirs are my brother and sister. And their heirs after them. My executors, Lord Howe and the Hon. W.A. Cooper, are requested to pay off all what I directed in my codicil, and then to divide my property equally between my brother and sister. This is my last will and request."

It was the will of a Queen, but it stood for nothing in the eye of the law.

Her requested arrangements for her funeral included the following lines: "I die in all humility...All those of my friends and relations, to a limited number, who wish to attend may do so". There was a particular request that Lord Howe attend.

The end soon came and was met with dignity. On 30th November, 1849, she calmly passed away.

The funeral took place on a fine December morning, and with all due respect and reverence her body was laid next to her husband in the Chapel at Windsor (see fig. 3.16). Earl Howe was in attendance, as were many of her loyal friends. To Earl Howe, Adelaide had left a Bible and her writing things, but this bequest was considered injudicious and indelicate and was ignored by the executors.

Thus ended the great friendship, one might even say partnership, between Earl Howe and his Queen. The Earl lived on for another twenty years and always remembered Adelaide with respect and affection.



Fig. 3.16 Chapel at Windsor Castle

CHAPTER FOUR – EARL HOWE AND HIS FREEMASONRY

“After the decease of Sir F. G. Fowke, Bart., Lord Howe, on the 18th June 1856, was appointed Provincial Grand Master (PGM) of this, his native county, to which in September last year was annexed the county of Rutland, but after a most prosperous and beneficent rule, on the 18th December last failing health and advanced years induced him to resign office, to the universal regret of the brethren.

“The Howe Lodge of Mark Master Masons adopted his name as a mark of fraternal respect and esteem for a noble brother, who through a long career of usefulness, has been alike distinguished for his zeal for masonry, and by the practice in his daily life of the virtues which it inculcates. And now that he has been taken from our midst, his virtues will, we feel sure, be commemorated by the Howe Lodge of Mark Masters through many generations.”

(Leicester Journal, 1870)

His Masonic Career in Brief

As a Freemason, he was Initiated in the Tyrian Lodge No. 468, now 253, Derby, on 25th September 1815. He was Passed and Raised in St, John’s Lodge No. 25, now 279, Leicester, in September and October 1821, of which lodge until the day of his death, he was the oldest member.

He was WM in 1822-3 and, as such, laid with Masonic honours the foundation stone of St. George’s Church, Leicester, on 23rd August 1823 (see fig, 4.1).

He was Exalted in the Chapter of Fortitude No. 525, now 279 attached to that lodge on 22nd October 1822, and was Second Principal 1823-6, and succeeded Sir Fredrick Gustavus Fowke (see fig.4.2) as First Principal 1831-33.

He was one of the Founders of the John of Gaunt Lodge No. 766, now 523 in 1846. He was also a petitioner of the Lodge, and countersigned the Warrant as Deputy Grand Master, a two-fold capacity probably unique in the annals of English Freemasonry.

He was also a founder member of the St. Augustine’s Chapter No. 631, now 779 which is now attached to the Ferrers and Ivanhoe Lodge at Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

He was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire in 1844 and retired from that post on account of ill health in 1852. He was appointed Deputy Grand Master of England in 1844, which high office he also resigned from the same cause, two years later (1846). He was appointed PGM of Leicestershire, his native county, on 18th June 1856, to which in September 1869 was annexed the county of Rutland. Unfortunately, his failing health and advancing years caused him to resign this office on 8th December 1869.

Lord Howe was advanced as a Mark Master in the Howe Lodge of Mark Masters No. 21 on 15th February 1859 and accepted the post of Senior Grand Warden in Provincial Grand Lodge, under his Deputy in the Craft, Brother William Kelly (see fig.4.3). On this same day, he had laid the foundation stone of the Freemasons’ Hall in Halford Street, Leicester, towards which he made liberal financial contributions (see fig. 4.4 & 4.5).

Such is the outline of Earl Howe as a Freemason but, as you may expect, there is much more to the story than this.



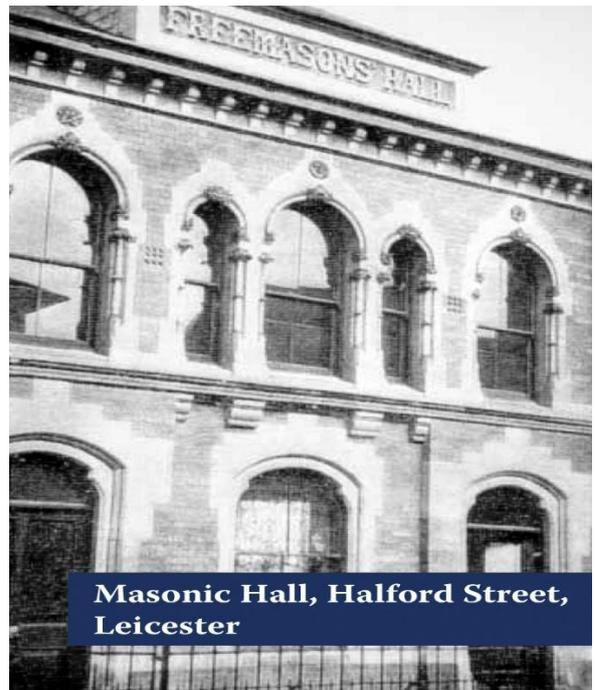
Fig.4.1 St. George's Church, Leicester



Fig.4.2 Sir Frederick Gustavus Fowke

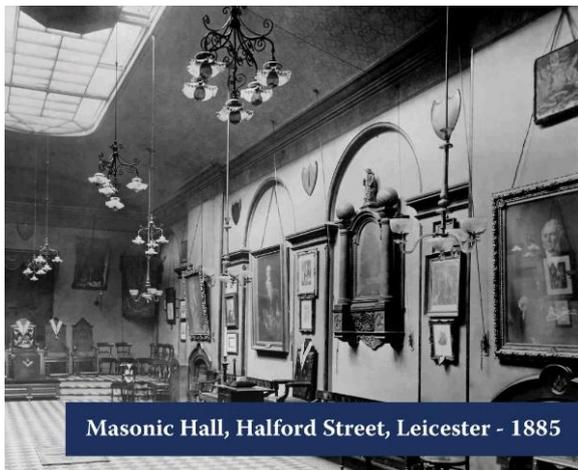


Fig. 4.3 W. Bro. William Kelly



Masonic Hall, Halford Street, Leicester

Fig.4.4 Freemasons' Hall, Halford Street (exterior)



Masonic Hall, Halford Street, Leicester - 1885

Fig. 4.5 Freemasons' Hall, Halford Street (interior)

EARL HOWE AND FREEMASONRY IN WARWICKSHIRE

Earl Howe's connections with the Province of Warwickshire predate his becoming their PGM in 1844. Living for much of his time at Gopsall Hall, just over the border in the neighbouring county of Leicestershire, he would have visited the Province of Warwickshire on numerous occasions, especially at the invitation of his neighbour and friend Earl Ferrers of Ashby-de-la-Zouch (the then PGM of the Province).

On 18th June, 1840, the Foundation Stone of the Queen's Hospital in Bath Row, Birmingham, was laid by Earl Howe. The building was completed the following year at a cost of £8,746 (£875,230) (see fig.4.6). Earl Howe presided at the public breakfast held in the Town Hall, Birmingham, at 1pm followed by a procession in Grand Masonic order, the whole of the streets being lined with spectators. The Rev. Vaughn Thomas delivered an address after which the procession was returned to the Town Hall.

Earl Ferrers (see fig. 4.7), Earl Howe's predecessor as PGM of Warwickshire died on the 2nd May, 1842, but Earl Howe did not take the office of PGM until 1844. The situation for this was that due to ill health, Earl Ferrers had been prevented from taking an active part in the administration of his Province. His last attendance at Provincial Grand Lodge (PGL) was in 1832 (ten years before his death) and there is no record of another PGL until 1837. From 1837-1842 the Province seems to have been under the direction of the Deputy PGM Nicholas Lee Torre. In 1842 no PGL meeting took place and it would seem that as the Provincial Grand Officers lapsed by death or resignation of the holders, no new appointments were made.



Fig. 4.6 The Queen's Hospital, Birmingham 1840



Fig. 4.7 8th Earl Ferrers

The 'Freemasons' Quarterly' magazine of January 1843 reflects this unsatisfactory situation:

"The Brethren of the Province [of Warwickshire] are anxiously awaiting the appointment of a successor to the late venerable and much respected Earl Ferrers who so long enjoyed the honour of presiding over them.

"Several noblemen and gentlemen were named likely to assume the duties of Provincial Chief at the Command of the Grand Master. In different parts of the Province, however, the claims of each of these distinguished Brethren were differently estimated. None of these individuals have as yet been appointed, but an official communication has been received, announcing that the Grand Registrar, W. Bro. C.H. Hall, has been requested to take charge of the Province pro tem."

Three months later the same periodical reported the arrival of the Grand Registrar:

"A large muster has been convened on April 17th to meet the Grand Registrar from London specially sent by the illustrious Duke [of Sussex] as Grand Master of the Craft, in order to hold a Provincial Grand Lodge, and renew the several appointments which had recently lapsed through the death of Earl Ferrers the late PGM."

The letter of Authority, from Grand Lodge, made it clear that W. Bro. Hall's appointment was a temporary one.

Earl Howe and his Installation as Provincial Grand Master

The temporary leadership of the Province by the Grand Registrar ended with the announcement of the appointment of Earl Howe as PGM. He was duly installed at the Provincial Grand Lodge meeting on 25th November 1844. The Installation was conducted by W. Bro. Hall, the Grand Registrar. The Lodge was held at 12 high noon and Grand Lodge was represented by W. Bro. White, the Grand Secretary. At the meeting the new PGM appointed Bro. N.L. Torre as Deputy PGM and the other Provincial Officers.

A new Lodge in Rugby

A brief announcement in 'The Freemasons' Magazine in September 1844 indicated the formation of the first lodge to be consecrated in the Province for several years:

"Rugby. We are contemplating the establishment of a Lodge in this Town. Several gentlemen have been Initiated at the 'Shakespeare' Lodge, Warwick, preparatory to this occasion."

The Warrant for the new Lodge is dated 16th October 1844 and signed by Earl Howe, the Deputy Grand Master – this was a few weeks before his Installation as PGM. In the event the lodge met on a number of occasions and Initiated some sixteen candidates before its Consecration in October 1846 as the 'Lodge of Rectitude' No.759, now 502.

One point of interest is the rapid progress in the Craft of Mr. J.W. Boughton Leigh, initiated into this new lodge on 29th April, 1845. He was made Junior Warden of the Lodge in 1847 and in the following year he was Installed as Worshipful Master. Only nine days later he was appointed Deputy PGM of Warwickshire. Just three years and five months from Initiation to Deputy PGM may not be a record, but without doubt W. Bro. Boughton Leigh seemed to make a remarkable "daily advancement in Masonic Knowledge".

Howe Lodge & Lodge of MMM, TI

In 1850 there were four Lodges in Birmingham, namely 'St. Paul's' No. 51, now 43, 'Athol' No. 88, now 74, 'Lodge of Light' No. 689, now 468 and renamed 'First Lodge of Light', and 'Faithful' No. 696, now 473 (erased 2007). All held their meetings at the same hotel or tavern. This was a very general custom at that time as in many towns there were no other places which were so convenient or afforded the same accommodation. There was a view, however, that the custom was a bad one, inasmuch as it tended to place the Lodge under the control of the Publican – to whom the Lodge was often in debt.

Several members of the Birmingham Lodges resolved to take steps to form a new Lodge which would reflect the joint view. With this object in mind, they applied in August 1850 to the Right Hon. Earl Howe, Provincial Grand Master for Warwickshire, to sanction their petition to Grand Lodge for a Warrant for this new Lodge, to be called the 'Robert Burns' Lodge.

Earl Howe replied that: "...I regret very much that I must decline increasing the number of existing Lodges in Birmingham, as I cannot help thinking that the four Lodges now in operation are amply sufficient, and that to increase them would not tend to the advantage or respectability of the Order of Freemasonry."

The petitioners, undeterred by this want of success, presented another petition in November of the same year, accompanied by a memorandum setting forth fully the principles on which they intended to work the proposed new Lodge, and were fortunate in securing the active encouragement and support of W. Bro. the Honourable J.W. Boughton Leigh, Deputy PGM (he of rapid progress), who himself undertook to submit the documents to the Provincial Grand Master and to draw His Lordship's attention: "...to the number, the zeal, the intelligence and high estimation of the Brethren who had attached their signatures and also the meritorious objects it was their wish and intention to establish in their new Lodge."

This second application proved successful, and on the 25th December 1850 the Brethren had the great satisfaction of hearing from the Deputy PGM: "...that Earl Howe had graciously acceded to the prayer of the petition and was pleased to sanction that the Lodge should be designated by his name."

Owing to the loss of the petition and other documents, some delay was caused while duplicates were furnished, but at length all difficulties were surmounted and on the 27th January 1851 the warrant for the 'Howe' Lodge was issued by the Grand Lodge.

The first meeting of the Lodge was held on the 10th March 1851, in rooms over the Old Coal Wharf in Newhall Street (see fig. 4.8), at which certain Brethren who had rendered much assistance in the establishment of the Lodge but had not been named in the Warrant, were received as members, and Mr. Samuel Jabez Goode (brother of B.W. Goode, Junior Warden), had the honour of being the first candidate for Initiation.

At the same meeting, the Right Hon. Earl Howe, PGM, was elected as an Honorary Member.

The year 1850 was also of special significance for the Mark Degree as the first Mark Lodge in Warwickshire was established on 15th October. A deputation from Newstead Lodge of Mark Master Masons in Nottingham journeyed to Birmingham at the request of the members of 'St. Paul's' Lodge and the 'Howe' Lodge. The purpose was to found the 'Howe' Lodge of Mark Master Masons T.I. The meeting was held in the Town Hall Tavern, Ann Street, Birmingham, when fifteen members of the two Craft Lodges were advanced into the Mark Degree.

Earl Howe's resignation as PGM

On 20th October 1852 a very important meeting of PGL was held at the Court House, Warwick (see fig. 4.9), when R.W. Bro. Earl Howe, PGM, presided and announced that because his continued ill-health prevented his regular attendance, he felt it his duty to resign the high position. His regret, however, was greatly reduced because he was pleased to announce that his successor was to be William Henry Leigh of Stoneleigh Abbey (see fig. 4.10) and that Lord Leigh had accepted the appointment and therefore would at once be Installed. Lord Leigh was to hold the office of PGM of Warwickshire for 53 years – a record for the Province.

Here we have another remarkable rise to high office – Initiated in the 'Lodge of Light' No. 468, Birmingham, on 30th December, 1851 and installed as PGM for Warwickshire on 20th October 1852 – less than ten months in all.

EARL HOWE AND FREEMASONRY IN LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND

Freemasonry in Leicestershire has been in existence since the eighteenth century. It must, however, be remembered that at that time there was no unified governing body for what we call 'the Craft'. When two rival Grand Lodges (the 'Moderns' and the 'Antients') merged in 1813, both traditions were represented in our Province. The practice of appointing a Provincial Grand Master (PGM) for the Province was, however, very much a feature of the work of the 'Moderns'.

Col. Sir Thomas Fowke was the first PGM of Leicestershire, succeeded in 1789 by Thomas Boothby Parkyns (see fig. 4.11) (1st Lord Rancliffe). Following his death, on 17th November 1800 the Province of Leicestershire was without a PGM until in 1812 when his son, George, the 2nd Lord Rancliffe, took the appointment. In 1850 Sir Frederick Gustavus Fowke was appointed the fourth PGM and he was succeeded in 1856 by Richard William Penn, 1st Earl Howe, until in 1869 the Craft Provinces of Leicestershire and Rutland combined. Earl Howe thus became the first PGM of this newly created Province, even though he was never Installed as such because of his untimely death in May 1870.

So how did the manner of appointing a PGM lead to the knitting together of the two counties of Leicestershire and its neighbour Rutland and what role did Earl Howe play in it?

It is not widely known that Earl Howe could have become PGM of the Province of Leicestershire much earlier than he did.

In a petition to the Duke of Sussex (see fig. 4.12) (the Grand Master of England) on 23rd May 1822, there was a report of an audience that Sir Frederick Fowke and others had with the Grand Master at which the appointment of Earl Howe as Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire in place of Lord Rancliffe was suggested. The Duke's response to the Lodge was: "Gentlemen, I approve highly of the suggestion of my good friend Sir Fredrick. I think the individual (Earl Howe) most proper to fill that office and desire you to communicate to the brethren of St. John's Lodge that I will do everything in my power to further the object in view. I have now a good pretence if even I had not before to make the appointment as Lord Rancliffe is residing abroad and therefore cannot attend to his duties."

Despite this apparent support there is no evidence that the Grand Master took any action.

Lord Rancliffe's absence created problems within the Province of Leicestershire that eventually forced the Duke of Sussex to take action in order to ensure officers of Provincial Grand Lodge were appointed. In 1833 he paid an official visit as Grand Master to Nottingham. While there he expressed a desire to meet the Provincial Officers of the Province of Leicestershire. There were of course none to be presented.

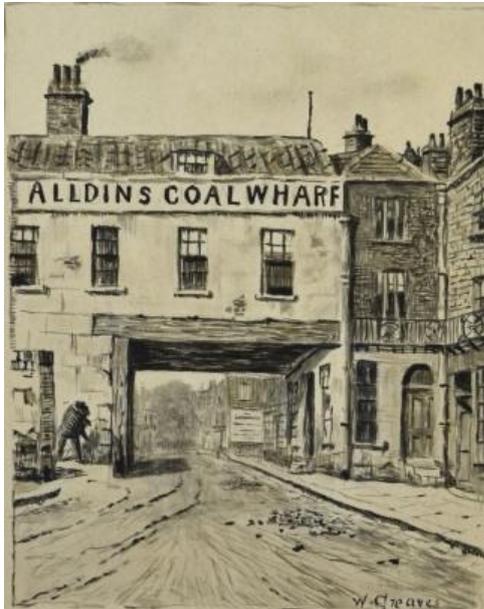


Fig.4.8 Old Coal Wharf, Newhall Street, Birmingham



Fig. 4.9 Court House, Warwick



Fig. 4.10 Stoneleigh Abbey

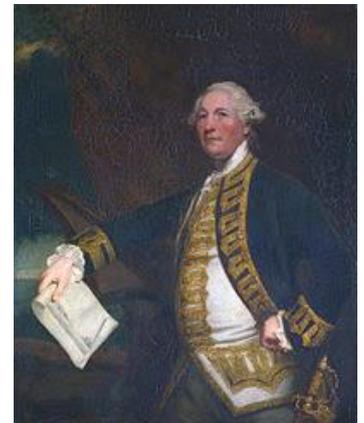


Fig. 4.12 The Duke of Sussex



Fig.4.11 Thomas Boothby Parkyns

Lord Rancliffe hurriedly assembled those Leicester brethren who could be found, hastily appointed them on the spot to various Provincial Grand Offices, and then presented them as such to the Duke. These appointments were confirmed at a subsequent meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge on 29th October.

In 1835 Lord Rancliffe attended a meeting to consecrate 'Rancliffe' Lodge in Loughborough.

Rancliffe died in 1850 and in 1851 his Deputy Sir Gustavus Fredrick Fowke was installed as his successor. He died in 1856. His successor as Provincial Grand Master was Earl Howe. He had a long association with the Province. Becoming Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire in 1856, he was closely associated with William Kelly, whose office as Deputy Provincial Grand Master he renewed and on whom he relied strongly during his period of office as Provincial Grand Master due to illness in his latter years. He played a full part as Provincial Grand Master, not only in Provincial Grand Lodge but in a number of private lodges in the Province as well.

For example, when the 'Knights of Malta' Lodge (Hinckley), having fallen on hard times, needed to be re-invigorated, he agreed to become its Master (see below). Similarly, he gave his name and service to 'Howe and Charnwood' Lodge (Loughborough) on its dedication in 1864.

It was in 1859, during his tenure of office as Provincial Grand Master, that the Halford Street Masonic Hall was built and dedicated, and he made a point of always, through William Kelly, being *au fait* with the affairs of the Province.

His health was not always strong, however, and when he reached his 70th birthday he intimated his desire and intention to retire from office. Kelly persuaded him to stay on, and their correspondence as preserved in the library in Freemasons' Hall, Leicester, illustrates how close the bond was. However in 1869 Howe's health again led him to contemplate retirement and he was anxious to see Kelly succeed him.

It is at this point that the annexation of Rutland to the Province of Leicestershire occurred. The announcement of this union appears to stem from a letter from William Kelly to Earl Howe dated 1st October 1869 which reads: "My Lord, I have now to make my usual report to your Lordship of the proceedings at our Annual meeting yesterday [this is presumably the annual meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge which Kelly chaired due to the absence of Earl Howe due to ill health], when the union of the two Provinces of Leicestershire and Rutland became an accomplished fact by the Consecration of the new Lodge (Vale of Catmos) at Oakham and the Installation of its Worshipful Master."

On 1st December 1869, the Grand Secretary wrote to William Kelly confirming that the Grand Master had nominated him as the PGM of Leicestershire. Earl Howe had resigned from that office due to ill health and died a few months later on 12th May 1870.

William Kelly in his acknowledgment on 2nd January 1870 wrote: "Please note on preparing the patent that the County of Rutland has been added to the Province, as you only mention Leicestershire."

His Patent of Appointment as PGM for the Province of Leicestershire and Rutland is dated 3rd January 1870 and really this was the birth of the combined Province of Leicestershire and Rutland that has continued from that day to this.

When Earl Howe became PGM of Leicestershire in 1856, he inherited a Province which had lodges which enjoyed mixed fortunes. Although two of these were in a healthy state one, in Hinckley, was not.

Freemasonry in Hinckley - The Knights of Malta Lodge No. 58, now 50

Our story starts early in 1846 when, with the support and encouragement of Earl Howe, two fellow members of St. John's Lodge – W. Bros. Kelly and Williamson - came to visit the Knights of Malta Lodge. In trying to establish a second Lodge in Leicester (eventually to be the John of Gaunt Lodge), they came having heard that the Hinckley lodge was almost defunct, to enquire if the members would be willing that the Warrant should be transferred to Leicester. The Lodge minutes of January 28th, 1846 contains their response: "It being in anticipation of establishing another Lodge in the town of Leicester, ours was visited by two Brothers from St. John's for the purpose in soliciting the favour in having our Warrant transferred over to them...The proposition being put to the vote was carried unanimously in the negative., not one voice being in favour of the application."

Such a refusal can scarcely be surprising.

The lodge then entered on the most serious crisis in its history, continuing until 1858, a period of twelve years, to meet infrequently. At a meeting of the PGL held at Leicester on February 20th, 1852: "the attention of the PGM was called to the irregular proceedings said to have taken place at the Hinckley Lodge, when he was pleased to issue an authority to Bros. Wheeler and Kelly, together with the Grand Secretary to proceed to Hinckley for the purpose of investigating the correctness thereof, and to report thereon to the PGM."

The Brethren forming the Commission accordingly visited Hinckley on 14th October, 1852. The minutes of the meeting contain the following detail: "the Provincial Grand Secretary presented a Summons from the PGM of Leicestershire, authorising a deputation to visit and examine the Lodge and to notice the proceedings, and also to investigate the whole of the books and Warrant thereto belonging, and demanding a copy of the Bye-Laws ... and wishing all books belonging to the Lodge to be sent to the Provincial Grand Secretary on order to be laid before the PGM for his inspection."

The Lodge met irregularly during 1852 and 1853, but new Bye-Laws were adopted containing many of the suggestions made by the Commission. However attendance was small, and no new candidates were Initiated. As a result, meetings were temporarily suspended at the end of 1853.

In November 1854, no fees having been paid to PGL by the Hinckley Lodge for a period of seven years, the Prov. Grand Sec. received directions to write to the Worshipful Master, Thomas Samuel Cotterell (a surgeon by trade), on the subject. There were, however, no funds available to meet this liability, and at the meeting of PGL held the following September, the PGM granted the Lodge another year for the payment of the arrears.

During 1855 and 1856 meetings of the lodge were entirely suspended and in November 1856, Brother Cotterell reported to Earl Howe (the newly Installed PGM) at the annual meeting of PGL: "that the number of members was so reduced that unless an improvement soon took place the Lodge must cease ... and requested him to be pleased to afford such assistance as might seem meet."

Earl Howe was determined to resolve the difficulties the Lodge at Hinckley faced.

1857 passed without a single meeting of the lodge being held. In October of that year, a report was presented to PGL by W. Bro. Cotterell: "Masonry is a nonentity in Hinckley, and that in consequence of the non-existence of a Lodge I must surrender the Warrant to your Lordship (Earl Howe), and it is with the greatest regret I make this avowal, but such is the fact."

The reason for this decline in fortune for the Lodge reflects the social and economic circumstances of the time.

When the Lodge was Consecrated in 1803, Hinckley was a town with a strong agricultural base as well as being a centre for the manufacturing of stockings. All the founding members were either small manufacturers or traders in these goods. The dramatic drop in demand for stockings after the Napoleonic War and the growth of industrialisation caused severe problems for the local economy and for a while in the 1850's it appeared that the Lodge might flounder.

Despite this report, it was decided by the PGM to allow the Warrant to remain for another year, a hope having been expressed by Bro. William May, a Past Master of the Lodge (Initiated 24th September 1827) that the lodge might revive. William May was a tailor by trade, was Senior Warden in 1837 and Secretary from 1850-59.

This hope was soon realised, for on 20th July 1858, after a break of over three years, a meeting of the Lodge was held in the Corn Exchange, Hinckley. This meeting was attended, at the behest of Earl Howe, by W. Bro. William Kelly, the Deputy PGM and several Leicester Brethren. Kelly was to become PGM in 1869 and was made an Honorary Member of the lodge on 23rd May 1870.

At this meeting in 1858, two Hinckley gentlemen were Initiated, and several Candidates and two joining members were proposed. The PGM, the Right Hon. Earl Howe, who had signified his willingness to accept the Mastership of the Lodge was unanimously elected to that office.

The Installation of Earl Howe as WM of the Lodge took place on 29th July, 1858 at a special meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge, the first held outside of Leicester for fourteen years. The lodge was held in the Town Hall, Hinckley, and was very well attended. Earl Howe was to hold this office for two years (1858-9) and started the recovery of the lodge which allowed it to prosper and continue to this day. Eighteen members were Initiated during these two years.

To commemorate this important event, Earl Howe subsequently presented to the Lodge a large and handsome antique 'Loving Cup' of Silver (see next page), making it a condition, however, that: "if hereafter the Lodge at Hinckley should unfortunately cease to exist, the cup was to become the property of the Provincial Grand Lodge in perpetuity."



**Loving Cup
Presented by Earl Howe**

In the minutes of 1858, the following letter (dated 25th September) to W. Bro. Cotterell is entered, which accompanied the presentation to the lodge of the cup:

"Dear Sir and Brother,

"The serious illness of my little boy has prevented my personally presenting this little cup I venture to offer the Malta Lodge, on the members electing me their W.M. for twelve months, but I cannot resist now requesting your acceptance of it. Age and infirmity will prevent me attending to my duties as I ought, but I trust, both now and hereafter, I may be remembered as a cordial well-wisher to the Hinckley community in general, and to its Masonic Lodge in particular, when this Loving Cup is drained in moments of Festivity to the happiness of the Masonic Body, and to all mankind, without distinction of Rank and Sect.

"Believe me, very faithfully and fraternally,

"Howe

"P.G.M. of Leicestershire"

This cup currently resides under the care of the Museum at Freemasons' Hall, Leicester. However, at each Installation meeting of the 'Knights of Malta' Lodge the cup is still used for its original purpose by the Brethren.

To sum up, the 'Knights of Malta' Lodge was in some difficulty in 1857 when, through lack of funds and members, the surrender of the Warrant was contemplated. With the Installation of the Right Hon. Richard William Penn, First Earl Howe as Worshipful Master on 29th July 1858, the fortunes of the Lodge greatly improved.

Its character changed, however, the artisan element having disappeared almost entirely, while the manufacturing and professional element became predominant. With the single exception of the year 1869, the prosperity of the lodge has been continuous down to the present day.

The portrait of Earl Howe which hangs in the Hinckley Masonic Hall has recently been restored.

It came into the care of the Freemasons of Hinckley in 1985, but dates back to around 1845. Through the course of time, it suffered severe degradation and physical damage. When the Hinckley Masonic Hall underwent major reconstruction during the summer of 2011, the painting was removed for safe storage and the opportunity was taken to restore it to the condition in which we now find it.

Freemasonry in Leicester – The John of Gaunt Lodge No. 766, now 523

The original number of the Lodge, 766, was altered in 1863 to 523 by the deletion from the register of the Grand Lodge of England of all Lodges which had become extinct and the consequent closing up of the remainder under new numbers.

So when and how was this Leicester lodge established?

From 1790 and onwards for over fifty years, there existed in Leicester only one Masonic Lodge, St. John's, under the Grand Lodge of England. In 1845, there were grounds for belief that the formation of a second lodge was desirable in that it would be to the advantage of the Craft by succeeding in healing some of the divisions that were present.

Early in 1846, William Kelly and Bro. Williamson petitioned Grand Lodge to grant them a Warrant to set up this second Lodge. William Kelly writes of himself and the Senior Warden, Bro. Williamson, (both members of St. John's Lodge), "that we should not be charged with causing a split in St. John's Lodge we decided not to invite any of its members to join us as founders of the new Lodge, except Earl Howe and Sir Fredrick Fowke, both of whom heartily supported us."

Despite their best efforts, there had been difficulties, owing to some jealousy in St. John's Lodge, in obtaining a recommendation for this Warrant and also of getting it signed by the PGM, Lord Rancliffe.

This difficulty elicited a series of correspondence between those wishing to ease the situation. The DPGM (W. Bro. Sir Fredrick Fowke) wrote to Bro. Kelly on 1st February 1846: "I have no objection to writing to Lord Rancliffe and also to Earl Howe as a member, on the subject, and I feel confident from my letter they would agree to join in the recommendation [the application for a new warrant] which appears to be necessary."

On 10th February 1846, he wrote: "I received the enclosed letter this morning from Earl Howe. I think it better to send it to you that you may see the kind manner in which he meets out wishes ... I will write to the Worshipful Master of St. John's Lodge and request their recommendation at the next meeting of their Lodge."

On 17th February, he wrote: "I now send the petition with all the signature which are required to obtain a new Warrant for a new Lodge, but I think it is desirable that it should be signed by the Master and Wardens of St. John's Lodge. I enclose a note for you to deliver to the Worshipful Master."

All difficulties were eventually overcome, the petition was granted, and the Warrant, under the hands of "Zetland, G.M." and "Earl Howe, Deputy G.M." was received. The date of the Warrant was March 6th, 1846.

Rt. Hon. The Earl Howe became a joining member of the Lodge on 26th March, 1846 at the first meeting of the Founders at The Exchange, Leicester (see fig. 4.13). On 16th October, 1856 Earl Howe was installed as PGM. On January 20th 1859, the Lodge signed the petition for the founding of 'Ferrers & Ivanhoe' Lodge No.1081, now 779 (Ashby).

On Tuesday 15th February, 1859, Earl Howe, as Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire, laid the foundation stone for the new Freemasons' Hall in Halford Street and addressed the assembly in the words of an Ancient Charge.

The PGM deposited a glass vessel containing national and local newspapers, Masonic documents relating to the building and coins of the realm, into the cavity of the lower stone and then placed over it a suitably inscribed plate. He spread cement upon it and the upper stone was lowered to its place. The working tools were applied to the stone, the PGM took the mallet, gave the stone three knocks and said: "May this undertaking be conducted and completed by the Craftsmen, according to the good plan in peace, harmony and brotherly love."

This cornerstone is now to be seen on the first landing of the staircase leading to the Oliver Temple of the present Masonic Hall at Leicester (see fig. 4.14).

The Hall was solemnly consecrated and dedicated to Masonry by Earl Howe, the PGM, and the officers of Provincial Grand Lodge on 15th September, 1859.

On 26th February, 1864, the lodge signed the petition for the founding of 'Howe & Charnwood' Lodge No. 1007 (Loughborough).

On 14th November 1872, the foundation stone for the 'Howe Memorial Church' of St. Peter's, Highfields, was laid with Masonic ceremonial (see fig. 4.15).



Fig. 4.13 The Exchange
Leicester



Fig.4. 14 The Corner Stone of Freemasons' Hall, Halford Street, Leicester



Fig.4.15 St. Peter's Church, Highfields, Leicester

Freemasonry in Ashby – The Ferrers and Ivanhoe Lodge No.1081, now 779

After the untimely end of the “Ivanhoe” Lodge in 1841, eighteen years passed before another Lodge was warranted in Ashby.

The first attempt to revive Freemasonry in Ashby was made in 1856 by W. Bro. William Kelly, who had just been appointed to the office of Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire (19th February 1856). In April of that year Bro. Kelly wrote to Bro. Edward Mammatt an eminent and long serving Mason of Ashby in the following terms: “... I am induced to trouble you with this communication for the purpose of enquiring whether, in your opinion, there is any hope of the revival of the Ivanhoe Lodge? ... From the attachment which I know you have to the Order, and also for the good of Ashby, I feel assured that if any hope exist, the revival of the Lodge could not be in better hands than your own.”

Two more years passed, during which time Earl Howe was appointed Provincial Grand Master (Installed 18th November 1856) with Bro. Kelly retaining the office of Deputy.

Earl Howe was a most enthusiastic as well as distinguished Mason, and in conjunction with his Deputy, worked energetically to revive local Masonic Interest in Hinckley, Loughborough and Ashby.

Hinckley, as we have recorded, was the first to benefit. The ‘Knights of Malta’ Lodge, which had been in abeyance for some time, was re-started, Earl Howe undertaking the Mastership of the Lodge for the first two years of its new life (see above).

A similar story unfolded in Loughborough with the establishment of ‘Howe & Charnwood’ Lodge in 1864. Earl Howe again undertook the Mastership of the Lodge for its initial year (see below).

Between the two, in Ashby, sits the setting up of ‘Ferrers & Ivanhoe’ Lodge in 1859. Kelly wrote to Earl Howe in March 1858 in which he writes: “It is very desirable, if possible, to resuscitate the once flourishing Lodge at Ashby, and I believe it may readily and successfully done, if Sir George Beaumont really has Masonry at heart. Several Masons are resident, ... and it is reasonable to suppose that they would rather have a Lodge in their own town. Your Lordship may possibly think is desirable to write to, or see, Sir George Beaumont, and suggest to him the expediency of communicating with Lord Ferrers and others, and to attempt what is feasible, instead of the impracticable scheme proposed by him.”

The latter part of this letter refers to an attempt made by Sir George Beaumont of Coleorton Hall (see fig. 4.16) to obtain a Warrant for a Lodge to meet at his own residence just outside Ashby. His request was refused which gave great offence to the baronet, who persistently refused to assist in reviving Freemasonry in Ashby, or to interest himself therein in any way whatsoever.



Fig.4.16 Sir George Beaumont by Sir Thomas Lawrence

All invitations to Sir George being thus declined, Earl Howe then endeavoured to obtain the assistance and co-operation of Earl Ferrers, who was also a member of the Craft, and whose ancestral seat of Staunton Harrold was in the immediate neighbourhood of Ashby. His Lordship threw himself heartily and energetically into the scheme.

He joined the 'John of Gaunt' Lodge, Leicester, in September 1858, having previously only been a member of an Irish Lodge (No, 728 Dublin). Earl Howe, being a founder member of the Lodge, was instrumental in this. He met with Earl Howe, William Kelly, Edward Mammatt, and others, undertook the duty of obtaining signatures to the petition, and discussed with the Brethren of Ashby the important question of 'ways and means'. It was decided that Earl Ferrers was to be the First Master and that the Lodge be named the 'Ferrers' Lodge in his honour.

For a variety of reasons, the petition was not completed and forwarded to London until 11th January 1859. There were also differences of opinion on what the Lodge should be called. As a compromise it was decided on the name 'Ferrers & Ivanhoe', thus combining the name of the Ferrers family with the old Masonic name and the interesting associations of Ivanhoe.

A Warrant was duly granted, dated 4th February, 1859 and Earl Ferrers was designated its First Worshipful Master.

By the final week in March the room at Ashby Town Hall had been prepared, the furniture procured, and several Candidates were awaiting their Initiation in this new lodge.

Pending the arrival of the Warrant, it had been arranged to open and work the lodge under a Dispensation signed by Earl Howe, and to postpone the Consecration until later in the year.

These plans, however, were suspended in response to the sad news of the sudden death of Earl Ferrers, the W.M. designate. Having joined 'John of Gaunt' Lodge in September 1858, he was appointed Provincial Junior Grand Warden of Leicestershire in January 1859, in which capacity he assisted Earl Howe in the laying of the Foundation Stone of Freemasons' Hall in Halford Street, Leicester the following month.

His death on March 13th was due to a sudden epileptic seizure. He was only 38.

Bro. Edward Mammatt was appointed W.M. elect, and the first meeting of the 'Ferrers & Ivanhoe' Lodge was held, under the Dispensation signed by Earl Howe, on Friday 15th April, 1859.

The lodge continued to meet during the summer while arrangements were completed for its consecration. This took place on 6th October, 1859 at an especial meeting of the Provincial Grand Lodge, presided over by Earl Howe. The lodge was originally numbered No.1081 but was renumbered 779 in 1863. A banquet was subsequently held at the 'King's Head' Inn (now Hotel) under the presidency of Earl Howe.

On 16th May, 1870 – the lodge was put into mourning by the death of Earl Howe. The death had taken place at his London home on 12th May.

On 7th April, 1874 – the sum of £20 was subscribed by the lodge and individual brethren to the fund for placing a stained-glass window in St. Peter's Church, Leicester, in memory of the late P.G.M., Earl Howe (see Chapter 5).

Freemasonry in Loughborough – The Howe and Charnwood Lodge No. 1007

William Kelly in his 'History of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Leicestershire and Rutland' states: "The year 1864 was marked by the revival of Masonry at Loughborough, chiefly through the exertions of Bro. Harry J. Davis, Worshipful Master of the 'John of Gaunt' Lodge and Provincial Junior Grand Warden. A Warrant for a new Lodge, to be called the "Howe & Charnwood" Lodge No. 1007, was granted."

The 'Howe' part of the title reflects the support given to the establishing of the new lodge by Earl Howe as Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire.

A number of preliminary meetings took place regarding the setting up of this new lodge, and from the few details we have of these meetings it seems evident that the main topic of discussion was to consider the several suggestions as to the name by which the new Lodge was to be known. On Wednesday 24th February 1864, the first meeting of the Founders was held at the Bull's Head Hotel, Loughborough (see fig. 4.17).

John Buckley (Royal Sussex Lodge No. 402) was elected Chairman of the meeting and Bro. John Wilson (John of Gaunt Lodge) was elected the first Secretary of the Lodge.

The following letter was read out to the meeting received from Bro. William Kelly, Deputy Provincial Grand Master:

"Dear Sir and Brother,

I enclose for perusal Lady Howe's reply which please return when done with. You will see that Lord Howe agrees to give his name to the Lodge and to become its first Worshipful Master. You must therefore name the Lodge either simply as "The Howe", or if you prefer it you can combine the two names which were proposed and call it "The Howe and Charnwood" Lodge, the latter would of course completely distinguish it from the Howe Lodge of Mark Masters in this Town... If you will get your petition drawn out and signed leaving space for Lord Howe's name at the top of the Signatures, I will sign his name to it and get the Lodge recommendation affixed and after signing the approval if it as DPGM for Lord Howe, send it to the Grand Secretary with a request he will send down the Charter of Constitution as soon as possible. Lord Howe being an installed Master you will be able to hold a few preliminary meetings for initiation, etc., before having the formal inauguration of the Lodge should it be thought desirable. There will be a special meeting of the John of Gaunt Lodge on Friday next when if you petition can be sent to me or Bro. Davis [the WM of the Lodge] in time the formal recommendation might be given."

It was resolved that: "Bro. the Right Hon. Earl Howe, PGM, be thanked for accepting the post of WM of the Lodge; the name of the Lodge be the "Howe and Charnwood" Lodge; Bro. William Lowe (John of Gaunt Lodge) be the first Senior Warden; Bro. William Tomlinson be the first Junior Warden; the Lodge meet at the Bull's Head Hotel, Loughborough, on the first Tuesday of the month."

The only other meeting of the Founders for which we have a record was on 24th March 1864. With certain alterations to Law 3 (day and time of meetings) and Law 21 (regarding the Tyler), the Bye-Laws of the 'John of Gaunt' Lodge were adopted.

The Warrant which bears the date of 1st March, 1864 names Earl Howe at the top of the list of Petitioners.

The petition for the 'Howe and Charnwood' Lodge was officially signed and supported by the officers and members of the 'John of Gaunt' Lodge No. 523. They also lent the necessary furniture and jewels for the inauguration ceremony.

Earl Howe gave his consent for the use of his family coat of arms as the crest of the Lodge, and the motto "Let Curzon Hold What Curzon Held" is that of his house.

Only two changes were made to the family crest – the two crows were replaced by two griffins and an oak tree was placed at its centre to represent Charnwood Forest.



Fig. 4.17 Bull's Head Hotel, Loughborough

The first preliminary meeting of the Lodge

The first preliminary meeting of the Lodge was held at the Bull's Head Hotel (fig.4.17), Loughborough, on 5th April, 1864. Seven of the Founders were present, W. Bro. William Kelly taking the Chair in the absence of Earl Howe who was ill.

Three candidates were Initiated, and two others were balloted for and elected as Joining Members.

A letter was received from R.W. Bro. Earl Howe, which was read as follows:

"Gopsall

"April 1st 1864

"To John Wilson Esq.

"Secretary to the "Howe and Charnwood" Lodge

"Sir,

It is with great mortification that I have to confess myself unable to be present at the first meeting of the "Howe and Charnwood" Masonic Lodge. I feel deeply the kind compliment paid to me as PGM of Leicestershire and the interest I take in the welfare of the Craft and Brotherhood makes me regret extremely that I cannot avail myself of your kind invitation.

"I have been an invalid for many months and am still almost confined to my sofa, but even if I were well enough I have been for weeks bidden to wait on the Bishop of Peterborough on the 5th inst. I fear I shall do neither.

"Very faithfully yours,

"HOWE"

The Brethren resolved to convey their regrets at his Lordship's indisposition in the following terms: "The Brethren assembled desire to express their unfeigned regret that in consequence of ill health their esteemed W.M. is unable to be present among them, and while they offer the prayer that he may speedily be restored to health, they anticipate with great pleasure the time when he shall be enabled to inaugurate the Lodge which has this day been opened under his Mastership."

Other preliminary meetings were held prior to the Consecration, the Chair being taken either by W. Bro, Kelly or W. Bro. H.J. Davis. During these meetings the final arrangements were considered and concluded for the holding of Provincial Grand Lodge at Loughborough on the occasion of the Inauguration of "Howe and Charnwood" Lodge.

This ceremony took place on 2nd August, 1864, when Provincial Grand Lodge was opened and the Dedication of the "Howe and Charnwood" Lodge proceeded. On this occasion, Earl Howe was present and presided over the proceedings.

The minutes record that:

"The Right Hon. The R.W. Provincial Grand Master, having called upon his Deputy, the R.W. Bro. Kelly to proceed with the Ceremony of the Consecration of the Lodge, it was done according to Ancient Custom."

Earl Howe being already an Installed Master was invested by the Deputy PGM as the Worshipful Master of the 'Howe and Charnwood' Lodge. Other appointments and investments followed. How many attended this meeting is unknown as the attendance register has been lost.

Meetings were subsequently regularly held and candidates were freely forthcoming, but the lodge never again (due to ill health) had the honour of being presided over by its noble W.M. That his Lordship continued to take an active interest in its affairs is, however, evidenced by the fact that, two years later, he gave a donation of £10 (£1,194) for the purchase of jewels.

Howe Lodge of MMM No. 21

The Lodge was founded on Leicester and received its Warrant dated 27th April 1858 but was not consecrated until 9th September of the same year at the Bell Hotel, Leicester (fig. 4.18). The consecration was carried out by R.W. Bro. William Kelly PGM.



Fig. 4.18 The Bell Hotel, Leicester

The next Lodge was held on 9th February 1859 at which Bro. the Rt. Hon. Richard William the Earl Howe, G.C.H., PGM in the Craft for Leicestershire, was elected, and it was in his honour that the Lodge had taken its name.

At the next meeting on the 15th February, six days later, Earl Howe was advanced as a Mark Master Mason.

Many years later at the meeting on 30th June 1870, a letter was received from the Provincial Grand Secretary, ordering mourning for six months on account of the death of Bro. Rt. Hon., the Earl Howe, PPGSW. Although Advanced into the Lodge back in 1859, he never attended again due to his commitments in the Craft and continued ill health.

CHAPTER FIVE – EARL HOWE AND HIS BENEVOLENCE

“Amongst the population of South Leicestershire, he was held in the highest consideration by all classes and enjoyed a social influence little inferior in its indirect effects to the sway which his feudal ancestors enjoyed. Not only was he esteemed as a landlord, not only as a man distinguished for his high honour, for his hearty English hospitality, for the graceful courtesy of his bearing, but also for his genial and generous sympathy with the pleasures, occupations, and feelings of his neighbours. In fine, in all the relations of life, he was distinguished by a scrupulously considerate attention to the feelings of others – a quality equally exhibited in matters of the gravest consequence and of the most trivial import.

“He was charitable in the highest degree; he supported all useful institutions in a munificent manner and was ever ready to assist the needy to an extent which never, perhaps, can be fully known. He was a sincere friend to the Church of England, and his purse was continually open to all objects which had for their aim the relieving of distress and the promotion of religion. He was by no means intolerant towards dissenters and manifested an active interest in everything which tended to the welfare of his native county.” What a lovely man.

(Leicester Journal, 1870)

This part of his obituary tells much of the character and generosity of Earl Howe. This is evidenced especially by the close links he had with the people of Hinckley through the relationship he developed with The Lodge of the Knights of Malta and the responsibilities he felt as the owner of Gopsall Hall and his benevolence to the local inhabitants and especially to the churches of Twycross and Congerstone.

Religious and Social Benevolence

Earl Howe was a much loved and distinguished Brother who practised the meaning and teaching of Freemasonry outside the lodge as well as in it. He was a great benefactor to the town of Hinckley (and elsewhere) and started many initiatives to help the residents when the “hungry 40’s” hit the town. This was the great depression of the 1840’s when the framework knitters were short of work and many families were destitute. He also donated a great deal of money to repair, renovate and construct churches throughout the county.

His devotion to the Church of England occupied a great place in his life. He made good use of those means with which providence had endowed him. He was patron of thirteen livings, among which featured the significant local Parishes in the neighbourhood of Gopsall Hall:

- the Rectory of Congerstone
- the Vicarage of Shackerstone
- the Incumbency of Twycross

His purse was employed freely in the relieving of distress and the promotion of the Christian Faith.

His interest and support of local activities was unbounded. Hinckley in particular benefitted from his generous giving, including a £50 (£5,000) annual subscription to the Scripture Reader’s Fund, £10 (£1,000) to the Allotment Tenants Association for over twenty years, and a payment of £200 (£20,000) for alleviating the distress occasioned by the cotton famine. He also aided in the building of local schools.

In spite of all this, his popularity was undermined in 1832 by his opposition to the Reform Bill in Parliament, and it was some years before the former cordial relationship was re-established between Earl Howe and the townspeople of Hinckley. There true and profound respect was revealed when in August 1869 a portrait of his Lordship was placed in the Town Hall by the people of Hinckley in recognition of his Lordship's great and numerous acts of kindness to the town. Subscriptions towards this portrait were restricted to the inhabitants of Hinckley. It was originally hung in the Old Town Hall and was transferred to the Library when the former building was sold in 1890. It is now displayed, cleaned and reframed, in the dining room of the Hinckley Masonic Hall (see fig. 5.1).

St. James Church, Twycross

St. James (see fig. 5.2) is built on the site of a Norman Parish Church, the current building dating from the early fourteenth century. It consists of a five-bay nave and chancel all in one. It was extended in the fifteenth century adding a tower in the Perpendicular style, and a timber gallery carried by Tuscan columns.

In 1840, extensive restoration with repairs and enlargement took place at the expense of Earl Howe. The singing gallery was repaired (which still survives today) at the west end with a delightful small organ set below with the royal coat of arms fixed to the front.

At the same time the north aisle was extended eastwards to house the box pews for Earl Howe of Gopsall Hall, his family and staff. The family pew had its own fireplace and is still there today.

Close by are the architectural memorials to Earl Howe. In addition, we find Queen Adelaide's window (see fig. 5.3). The window contains the royal coat of arms of William IV and twenty-one quarterings showing the then twenty-one German States (Adelaide being of German origin). It commemorates the visits she made to Gopsall Hall as Dowager Queen. This early armorial stained glass is by Thomas Willement. On the south side is a large window with the arms of the Curzon family as a centre piece (see fig. 5.4).

The east window is remarkable in that it contains glass from medieval France as well as fourteenth century stained glass from England. Following the French Revolution, many French churches lost a lot of their original stained glass. Much of it was smashed and destroyed while other bits were sold off. This French glass was originally presented to King William IV, who gave it to Earl Howe so that in 1840 it could be presented to the Church at which he regularly worshiped when in residence at nearby Gopsall Hall.

In the centre of the east window, the panel showing "The Presentation in the Temple" (see fig. 5.5) was originally in the Lady Chapel of St. Denis, near Paris (c.1145). Below it is "Christ taken down from the Cross" (see fig. 5.6) and "The Spies carrying the grapes on their return from the Promised Land" (see fig. 5.7). Both consist of medieval French glass (1243-8) from Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. Above, and from the same source, are windows depicting "The people before Moses", "St. John" and "Moses and the Ten Commandments". Glass from the window depicting "A Kneeling Woman" (see fig. 5.8) comes from Le Mans Cathedral, while other glass is from Saint-Julien-du-Sault in Burgundy.

Earl Howe's mortal remains can be found in the Churchyard near to the north-east part of the Church.



Fig. 5.1 Portrait of Earl Howe being hung
In the Masonic Hall, Hinckley, Leicestershire



Fig.5.2 St. James' Church, Twycross, Leicestershire

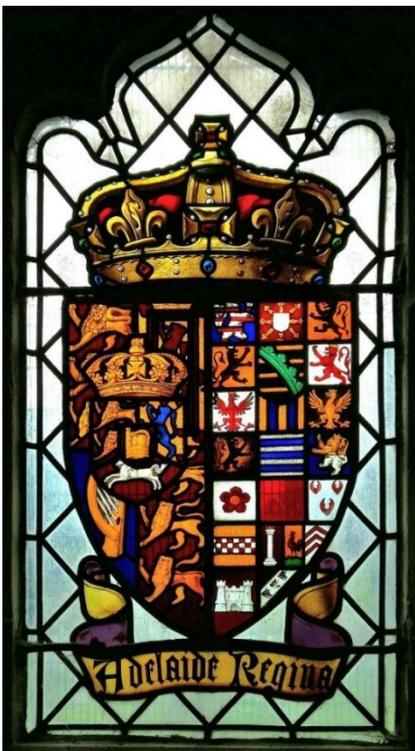


Fig.5.3 Queen Adelaide's Window

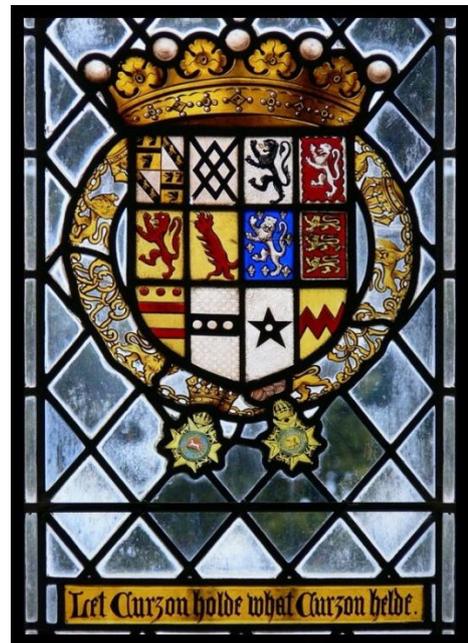


Fig. 5.4 Curzon Family Window



Fig. 5.5 The presentation in the Temple
Cross



Fig. 5.6 Christ being taken down from the
Cross



Fig. 5.7 Spies carrying the Grapes on their return
from the promised land



Fig. 5.8 A Kneeling Woman

The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Congerstone

The church of St. Mary (see fig. 5.9) is listed Grade II. It is believed that a church has been on the site since 1179; the first mention recorded by Nichols is in the 1220 'Matriculas' from which it notes the instigation was by Hugh as Bishop of Lincoln.

Plans exist for the rebuilding of the Chancel and South Porch dated 1830-4. As this is the time the First Earl Howe was in residence at Gopsall Hall and given the latter history of the Church in relation to the Fourth Earl, it is likely that the First Earl supported the development of this local church as well as his patronage of St. James in Twycross.

The organ within the tower arch is a significant internal feature; it was installed in 1914 by the Fourth Earl Howe in memory of his sister. There is also a monument to Georgiana, Countess Howe, on the north wall of the Chancel dated 1816.

The Howe family box pew is in the north-east corner of the large chancel area and is served by its own fireplace like in St. James, Twycross.

A new stained-glass window was installed into the main north window of the chancel in 2014 (see fig. 5.10). It commemorates the work of G.F. Handel and his links with nearby Gopsall Hall. The window was commissioned by members of the parish, Geoff and Fiona Frisby, to commemorate lost loved ones. Sarah Bristow was the artist commissioned to design the new window.

So far in this chapter, the benevolence and generosity of spirit Earl Howe showed throughout his life is reflected by the words and actions described therein. I close this chapter with a reflection of how all these kindnesses were, and still are, memorialised in a church just round the corner from Freemasons' Hall in Leicester – St, Peter's Church, Highfields.

St. Peter's Church, Highfields, Leicester

The church of St. Peter's, Highfields, Leicester (see fig. 5.11), was built as a memorial to the late Earl Howe, Provincial Grand Master for Leicestershire and, latterly, Rutland from 1856-1869, and who for many years was foremost in advancing the Church within Leicestershire and "beloved nobleman and worthy Mason".

Several of the streets in the area also bear testament to him: Earl Howe Street, Twycross Street and Gopsall Street.

In 1869, the Church Extension Association (CEA) launched an Appeal to raise £25,000 (£2,923,157) to meet the demand for new churches in Leicester. The CEA relied heavily on wealthy individuals to fund this expansion. Among the county landowners, two men took the lead. One was William Perry Herrick of Beaumanor Hall near Quorn and the other Earl Howe of Gopsall Hall near Twycross. Both had inherited great wealth, and both contributed generously to church extension work over many years.

Howe and Herrick had been among the first subscribers to what in 1851 was called the Church Extension Fund (CEF), which in 1865 was replaced by the CEA. In 1869, both made immediate donations of £1,000 (£116,926) to the CEA's appeal, at a time when £6,000 (£701,557) could provide a simple urban church to seat 800 people. Both men also made additional donations to individual churches as well as being active in other ways. Earl Howe, for example, who laid the foundation stone for Holy Trinity Church as early as 1838, was a member of the CEF's management committee in the 1850's and chaired its first meeting of subscribers in 1851.



Fig. 5.9 St. Mary's Church, Congerstone, Leicestershire



Fig. 5.10 The Handel Window

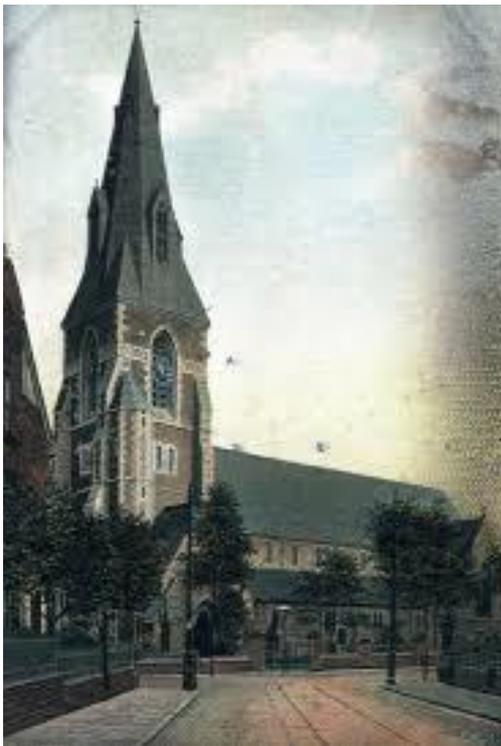


Fig. 5.11 St. Peter's Church, Highfields, Leicester



Fig. 5.12 Limited Edition Stamps to celebrate 300 Years of Freemasonry in England

In May 1870, Earl Howe died. Within two months, at a meeting chaired by Herrick, it was decided to set up a fund to build a memorial church to him in Leicester. The initial subscription list was headed by Herrick with his sister, Mary Ann, who made a combined donation of £600 (£70,155). Substantial donations from other county dignitaries were supplemented by fundraising events such as tea-party's and concerts.

A month later, with donations to the Earl Howe Memorial Fund exceeding £2,000 (£233,852), the CEA offered a grant of £1,500 (£175,390). Emboldened by this, the Memorial Committee resolved to start building as soon as possible. Acting in haste rather than with prudence, they instructed the builder (Mr. E. Roberts of Weedon) to proceed only as far as funds would permit.

The foundation stone of the Earl Howe Memorial Church was laid on 14th November 1872 by W. Bro. H.L. Powys Keck. A resolution was passed later the same day at the meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge that a subscription be raised for placing in the new church a stained-glass window as a Masonic Memorial to the late lamented and esteemed Lord Howe. Letters were sent out to all the lodges of the Province to this effect.

Eighteen months later, on 16th April 1874, St. Peter's (as the church had now been dedicated) was consecrated by Bishop Magee of Peterborough. Subscriptions for the memorial window by now amounted to £140 (£16,370). The window was duly installed by Clayton and Bell at the east end of the church and was unveiled on Easter Sunday 1875 (see next page).

The window contains the emblems of the four evangelists – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The subjects treated are: the agony, the delivery of the keys to St. Peter, the denial of Christ and the martyrdom of St. Peter. There are also several masonic emblems denoting the various offices held by the late Earl Howe. These Masonic emblems featured in the limited-edition stamps produced in 2017 to celebrate 300 years of English Freemasonry (see fig. 5.12).

An inscription also reads:

"To the glory of God, and in the affectionate memory of the Right Hon. Richard William, Earl Howe, Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire 1856-1869, who entered into rest May 12th, 1870 Aged 74 Years. The Freemasons of the Province dedicate this window."

In 1875 the church still had no tower or spire due to a fundraising shortage of some £2,000 (£233,852). However, a 'gentleman of the county' (widely believed to be Perry Herrick) came forward with £1,000 (£116,926) and this triggered additional subscriptions. It is not clear how all the extra money was raised although it is known that Earl Howe's family contributed £1,066 (£124,643) so that Earl Howe's Memorial Church could be completed with its tower and spire.

EARL HOWE – THE FINAL CHAPTER



Earl Howe’s obituary was published in the “Freemasons” magazine on May 28th, 1870, having first been printed in the “Leicester Journal” earlier the same month a few days after his death. The full obituary of this great man read as follows:

“The town and county of Leicester have sustained a poignant and irreparable loss. A nobleman who, for more than half a century, attracted to himself an amount of respect and veneration which it falls to the lot of but few among us to attain, has been removed from our midst.

“We allude to the removal by death of Earl Howe. The sad event, although long anticipated and for some time seen to be inevitable, has nevertheless fallen upon the population of our borough and county with all the force of a sudden and unexpected calamity. On the evening of Thursday, the 12th inst., William Richard Penn Curzon Howe, G.C.H., P.C., first Earl, expired at his lordship’s town residence, 8, South Audley Street, full of years and honours, esteemed by all classes, lamented by all parties, and leaving behind him a memory which will continue to be respected, as long as any merit is attached by men to a faithful discharge of the duties of the public, or of the kindly amenities of private, life. The immediate cause of death was, we believe, his old enemy, the gout, but for several years his

lordship's health has been seriously deranged, and thus, coupled with his advancing years, had prepared the public mind and that of his friends and relatives for his decease. His lordship was son of the Hon. Penn Asheton Curzon (eldest son of the first Viscount Curzon) and the Baroness Howe.

"He was born at Gopsall, December 11th, 1796, and succeeded his grandfather as Viscount Curzon in 1820, and his mother as Baron Howe in 1835. In 1825 he married Lady Harriet Georgina Brudenell, second daughter of the Sixth Earl of Cardigan (who dies in 1836), by whom he had seven sons and three daughters. His lordship married secondly (in 1845) Anne Gore, second daughter of the late Vice-Admiral Sir George Gore, K.C.B., Maid of Honour to Queen Adelaide (the late Queen Dowager), by whom he had two sons and one daughter.

"His lordship was Lord Chamberlain in the household of her Majesty Queen Adelaide, from her accession to the throne in 1830 till her death and was one of her Majesty's most faithful and confidential servants. At the memorable commemoration at Oxford in 1835, when William IV, and his illustrious consort attended, Lord Howe was honoured with the degree of D.C.I. In his capacity of Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide, he accompanied her Majesty to Malta, and subsequently to Madeira and Germany. Having filled for some years a prominent position in the court of the Queen Dowager, he took little part in the political matters of the day. He was a Trustee of Rugby School, a Governor of the Charterhouse (we believe the oldest governor of that institution), and since 1860 had been Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant of prince Albert's own Leicestershire Yeomanry Cavalry.

"... In his political sentiments he was Conservative, and though not an active politician, his support and interest were always given to that party. He never aimed at playing a conspicuous part in politics; he was through a long life a remarkable feature in our social existence as a nation. His position, indeed, constitutes a more curious illustration of English society, and of the combination of circumstances that tend to give a man influence under it, from the fact that he was not a man of leading intellect and oratorical acquirements.

"Amongst the population of South Leicestershire, he was held in the highest consideration by all classes and enjoyed a social influence little inferior in its indirect effects to the sway which his feudal ancestors enjoyed. Not only was he esteemed as a landlord, not only as a man distinguished for his high honour, for his hearty English hospitality, for the graceful courtesy of his bearing, but also for his genial and generous sympathy with the pleasures, occupations, and feelings of his neighbours. In fine, in all the relations of life, he was distinguished by a scrupulously considerate attention to the feelings of others – a quality equally exhibited in matters of the gravest consequence and of the most trivial import.

"He was charitable in the highest degree; he supported all useful institutions in a munificent manner and was ever ready to assist the needy to an extent which never, perhaps, can be fully known. He was a sincere friend to the Church of England, and his purse was continually open to all objects which had for their aim the relieving of distress and the promotion of religion. He was by no means intolerant towards dissenters and manifested an active interest in everything which tended to the welfare of his native county. In the demise of this deservedly respected nobleman – one whose example all, rich or poor, will do well to imitate – Leicestershire will miss a much-valued friend. He had a kind word for everyone, alike for the artisan as for the peer, and he has gone to his grave having earned the laurels, with which a good and holy life is always accompanied, namely the respect and esteem of all who knew him. His memory will long be cherished in this district.

"Among Freemasons his lordship's decease has caused a gap which will not be easily filled. As the Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire, he fulfilled all of the duties of his office with a kindness and

courtesy which made him beloved by the "Craft". They ever welcomed his genial presence amongst them, and the fact that he was to preside at any of their meetings was participated in by all the brethren with the greatest satisfaction.

"... He was initiated in the Tyrian Lodge, Derby, September 25th, 1815, passed and raised in St. John's Lodge, Leicester, in September and October 1821, of which Lodge until the day of his death he was the oldest member. He was WM in 1822-3, and as such laid with Masonic Honours the foundation stone of St. George's Church, Leicester, on the 23rd August 1823. He was exalted in the Chapter of Fortitude attached to that Lodge, October 22nd, 1822; was Second Principal 1823-26, and succeeded Sir F.G. Fowke, Bart., as M.E.Z., 1831-33. He was one of the founders of the John of Gaunt Lodge in 1846, and the Chapter of St. Augustine, at first attached thereto, but since to the Ferrers and Ivanhoe Lodge, at Ashby-de-la-Zouch. He was appointed P.G.M. of Warwickshire in 1844 and retired on account of ill-health in 1852. He was appointed Deputy Grand master of England in 1844, which high office he also resigned from the same cause two years later.

"After the decease of Sir F. G. Fowke, Bart., Lord Howe, on the 18th June 1856, was appointed P.G.M. of this, his native county, to which in September last year was annexed the county of Rutland, but after a most prosperous and beneficent rule, on the 18th December last failing health and advanced years induced him to resign office, to the universal regret of the brethren.

"On the 15th February 1859 (on which day he laid the foundation stone of the Freemasons' Hall, in the metropolis of the county, and towards which he was a liberal contributor), Lord Howe was advanced as a Mark Master in the Howe Lodge of Mark Masters and accepted the post of Senior Grand Warden in the Provincial Grand lodge, under his Deputy in the Craft, Bro. William Kelly. The name of the Howe Lodge was adopted as a mark of fraternal respect and esteem for a noble brother, who through a long career of usefulness, has been alike distinguished for his zeal for masonry, and by the practice in his daily life of the virtues which it inculcates. And now that he has been taken from our midst, his virtues will, we feel sure, be commemorated by the Howe Lodge of Mark Masters through many generations.

"His mortal remains were consigned to their last resting place on Thursday the 19th inst., at Twycross, near Gopsall, with that strict abhorrence of everything like ostentation which ever distinguished this much -beloved nobleman throughout his days. His life had been one of peace, and like a peaceful but dearly beloved neighbour has gone to his rest. The bells of the various churches in Leicester were tolled from two to three o'clock, during the funeral, and subsequently mourning peals were rang."

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His Lordship died about midnight on Thursday 12th May 1870 at his London residence, 8, South Audley Street, after being unconscious for two or three days. He died from his old malady, the gout, from which he had suffered terribly for many years.

His mortal remains were consigned to their last resting place on Thursday 19th May 1870 at St. James Church, Twycross, very near to his beloved Gopsall Hall.

In true Masonic manner Richard William Penn Curzon, 1st Earl Howe, lived respected and died regretted.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – THE LIFE OF EARL HOWE IN BRIEF

APPENDIX B – EARL HOWE ANCESTRY TREE

APPENDIX C – EARL HOWE LINE OF SUCCESSION

APPENDIX D – EARL HOWE'S FAMILY

APPENDIX E – EARL HOWE'S MASONIC CAREER IN BRIEF

APPENDIX F – ORATION AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE

HINCKLEY LODGE OF INSTALLED MASTERS NO. 9972 – 23RD MAY 2019

Earl Howe – His Life in Brief

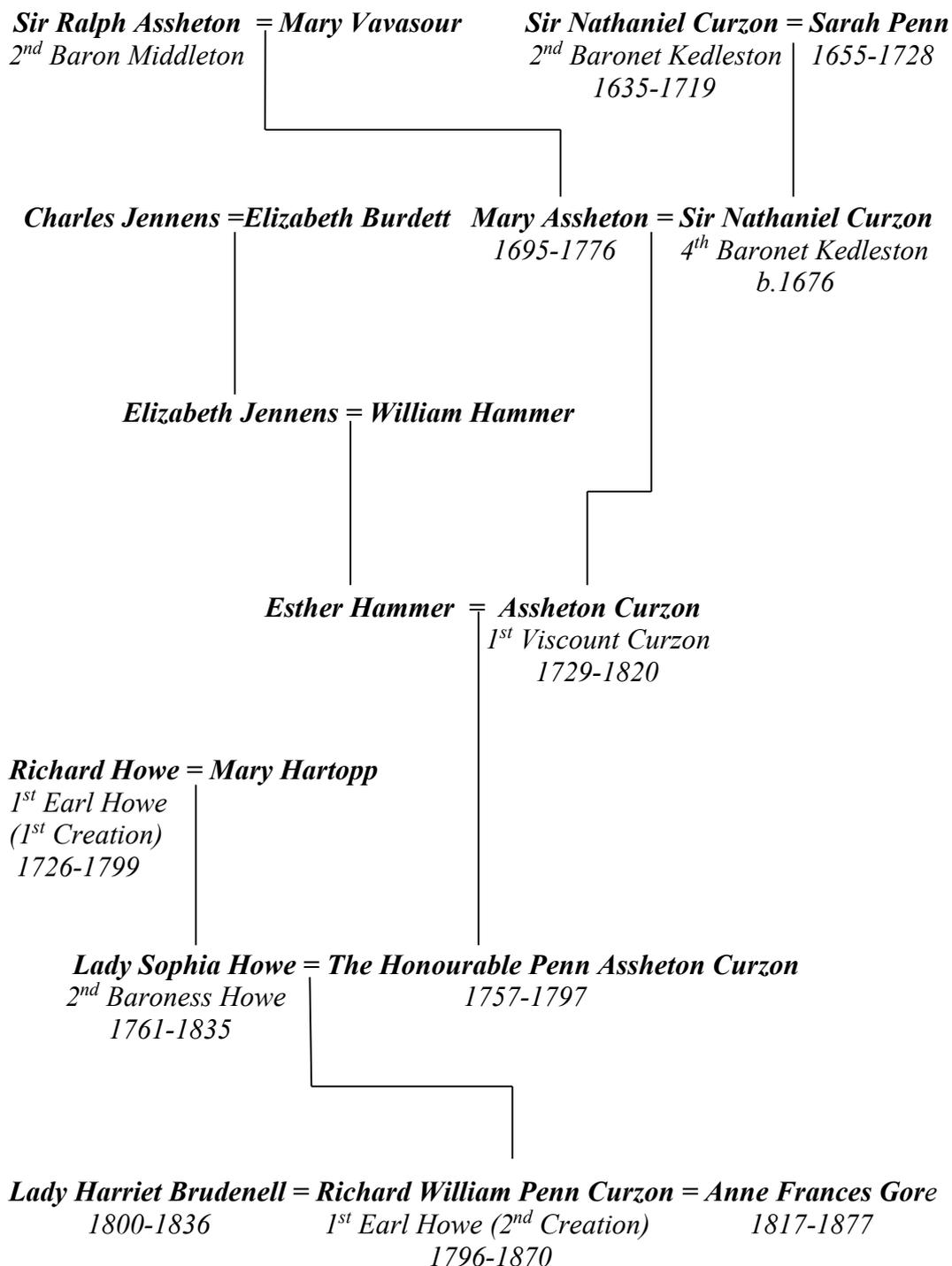
YEAR	MONTH	DATE	EVENTS IN HIS LIFE
1796	Dec	11	Richard William Penn-Curzon born at Gopsall Hall
1797	Jan	7	Richard is baptised in Gopsall Chapel
1809-13			Richard attends Eton College
1813			Establishment of U.G.L.E.
1814	April	23	Richard matriculates at Christ Church College, Oxford
1815	Sept	25	Initiated into Tyrian Lodge No. 253, Derby
1820	March	19	Richard marries Harriett Curzon-Howe (Brudenell)
1820	March	21	Richard succeeds as 3rd Viscount Curzon of Penn
1821	Jan	16	Birth of George Augustus Frederick Louis Curzon-Howe (2 nd Earl)
1821	July	7	Richard takes by Royal Licence the name of Howe
1821	July	9	Joined St. John's Lodge No. 279, Leicester
1821	July	15	Becomes Earl Howe (second creation)
1821	Sept	20	Passed in St. John's Lodge No. 279, Leicester
1821	Oct	2	Raised in St. John's Lodge No. 279, Leicester
1821	Oct	16	Baptism of George Augustus Frederick Louis Curzon-Howe
1822	Feb	14	Birth of General Richard William Penn Curzon-Howe (3 rd Earl)
1822-3			Worshipful Master of St. John's Lodge No. 279, Leicester
1822	Oct	16	Baptism of Richard William Penn Curzon-Howe
1822	Oct	22	Exalted in to the Chapter of Fortitude No. 279, Leicester
1823-26			2 nd Principal of Chapter of Fortitude No. 279, Leicester
1823	July	16	Birth of Capt. Hon. Frederick Curzon-Howe (RN)
1823	Aug	23	Laid the foundation stone of St. George's Church, Leicester
1824	Sept	21	Birth of Hon. Henry Dugdale Curzon-Howe (afterwards Curzon)
1824	Dec	18	Baptism of Henry Dugdale Curzon-Howe
1825	Sept	29	Birth of Georgiana Charlotte Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort
1826	Jan	13	Baptism of Georgiana Charlotte
1827	June	1	Birth of William Henry Curzon

1828	August	12	Birth of Colonel Hon. Ernest George Curzon
1828	Dec	3	Baptism of Ernest George Curzon
1829			Appointed Tory Lord of the Bedchamber to George IV
1829			Becomes Senior Grand Warden of U.G.L.E.
1829	Oct	25	Birth of Leicester Smythe
1829	Dec	27	Baptism of Leicester Smythe
1830			Appointed Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Guelphic Order – G.C.H. (Grand Cross of Hanover)
1830	June	26	George IV dies and Duke of Clarence becomes William IV
1830			Appointed Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide
1831			Appointed Privy Councillor
1831-33			First Principal of Chapter of Fortitude No. 279, Leicester
1831	March	23	1 st Reform Bill passed by the Commons by 1 vote
1831			1 st Reform Bill rejected by the Lords
1831	July	7	2 nd Reform Bill passed by the Commons with a majority of 136 votes
1831	Oct	7	2 nd Reform Bill rejected by the Lords by 199 votes to 158 – a majority of 41
1831	Oct	14	Removed as Lord Chamberlain
1831	Dec	12	3 rd Reform Bill passed by the Commons with a majority of 162 votes
1832	May	7	3 rd Reform Bill rejected by the Lords by 43 votes
1832	June	4	3 rd Reform Bill passed by the Lords by a majority of 9 votes
1834	Oct.		Reappointed Lord Chamberlain to Queen Adelaide
1835			Appointed D.C.L. (Doctor of Civil Law)
1835			Mother dies and inherits her barony – becomes Baron Howe of Langar
1835	July	12	Birth of Adelaide Ida Fane (Curzon) Countess of Westmorland
1836	Sept	14	Birth of Emily Mary Kingscote (Gopsall)
1836	Oct	25	Death of 1 st wife Harriett
1838	Aug	25	Lays foundation stone of Holy Trinity Church, Ashby-de-le-Zouch
1839-44			Visits in the autumn of these years to Gopsall Hall by the Dowager Queen Adelaide

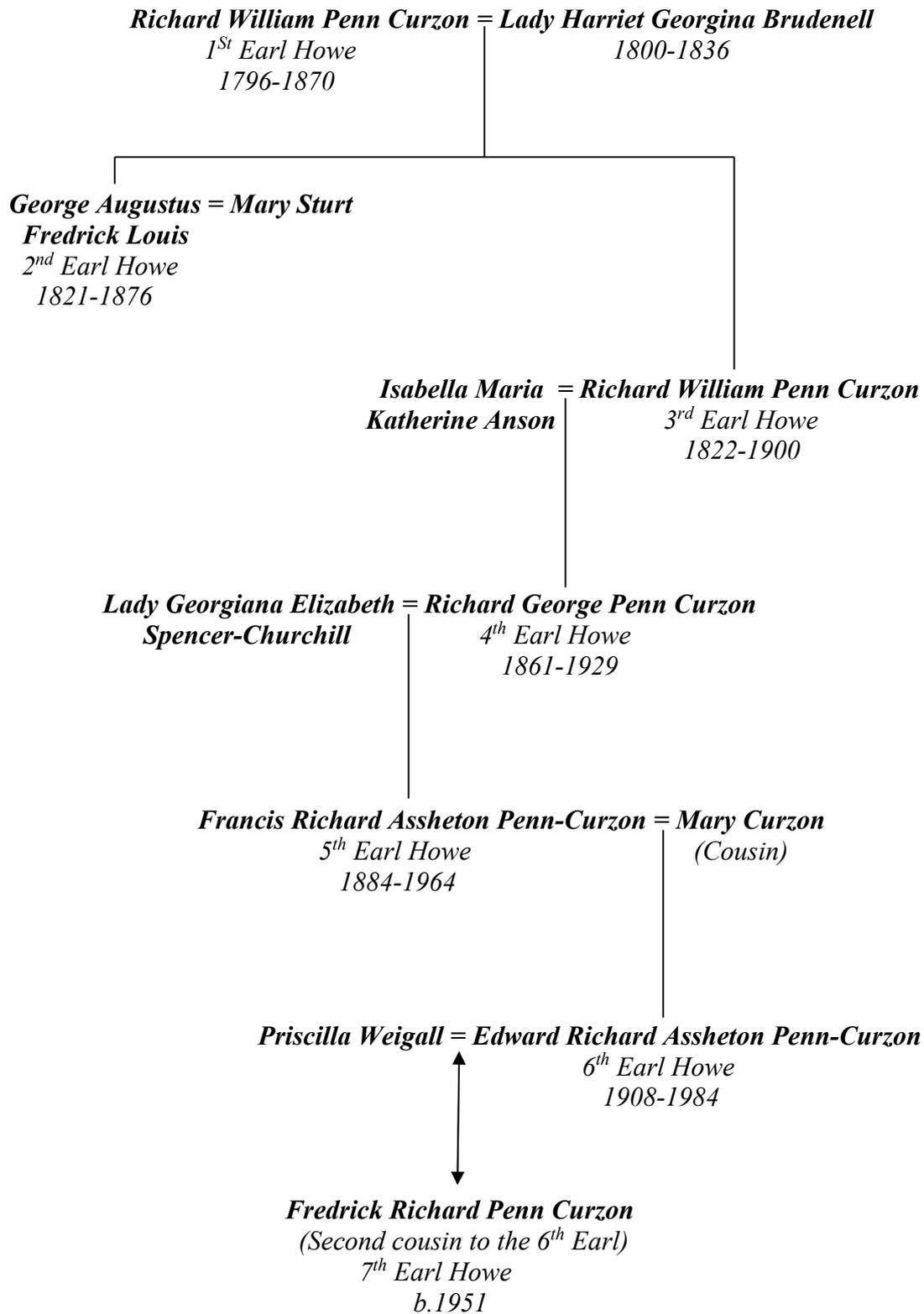
1839			Travels to Malta with Dowager Queen Adelaide
1842			Becomes Deputy Grand Master of U.G.L.E.
1840	June	18	Lays foundation stone of Queen's Hospital in Bath Row, Birmingham
1844	June	26	Joined Lodge of Antiquity No.2, London
1844	Nov	20	Joined St. Paul's Lodge No 43, Birmingham
1844	Nov	25	Appointed Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire
1845	Oct	9	Marries Anne Curzon-Howe (Gore)
1846	March		Founder of the John of Gaunt Lodge No. 523, Leicester
1846	Sept	21	Birth of Colonel Hon. Montagu Curzon
1847	Feb		Founder of Chapter of Augustine No 523, Leicester
1848	July	23	Birth of Maria (Mary) Ann(a) Hamilton (Curzon-Howe)
1849	Nov	30	Dowager Queen Adelaide dies
1849	Dec		Funeral of Queen Adelaide attended by Earl Howe
1852	Oct	20	Earl Howe resigns as Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire
1856	June	18	Appointed Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire
1858	July	20	Elected Worshipful Master of the Knights of Malta Lodge NO. 50
1858	July	29	Installed as Worshipful Master of the Knights of Malta Lodge
1858	Sept	25	Presentation of a Loving Cup to the Knights of Malta Lodge by Earl Howe
1859	Feb	15	Advanced as a Mark Master in the Howe Lodge of Mark Master Masons
1859	Feb		Accepts post of Provincial Senior Grand Warden for Leicestershire
1859	Feb	15	Laid the foundation stone of Freemasons' Hall in Halford Street, Leicester
1859	July	15	Re-elected and Installed as Worshipful Master of the Knights of Malta Lodge
1859	Oct	6	Consecration of the Ferrers & Ivanhoe Lodge
1860			Appointed Lieutenant-Colonel Commandant of Prince Albert's Own Leicestershire Yeomanry Cavalry
1864	Feb	24	First meeting of the founders of Howe & Charnwood Lodge held
1864	March	1	Warrant issued for Howe & Charnwood Lodge
1864	March	24	Second meeting of the founders of Howe & Charnwood Lodge held

1864	April	5	Preliminary meeting of Howe & Charnwood Lodge held
1864	Aug	2	Consecration of Howe & Charnwood Lodge and the Installation of Earl Howe as its first Worshipful Master
1869	Aug		Portrait of Earl Howe placed in Hinckley Town Hall
1869	Sept		Rutland annexed to Leicestershire – Earl Howe becomes first PGM of the combined Province of Leicestershire & Rutland
1869	Dec	8	Earl Howe resigns as the 1st Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire & Rutland
1870	May	12	Death of Earl Howe
1870	May	19	Earl Howe buried at St. James' Church, Twycross

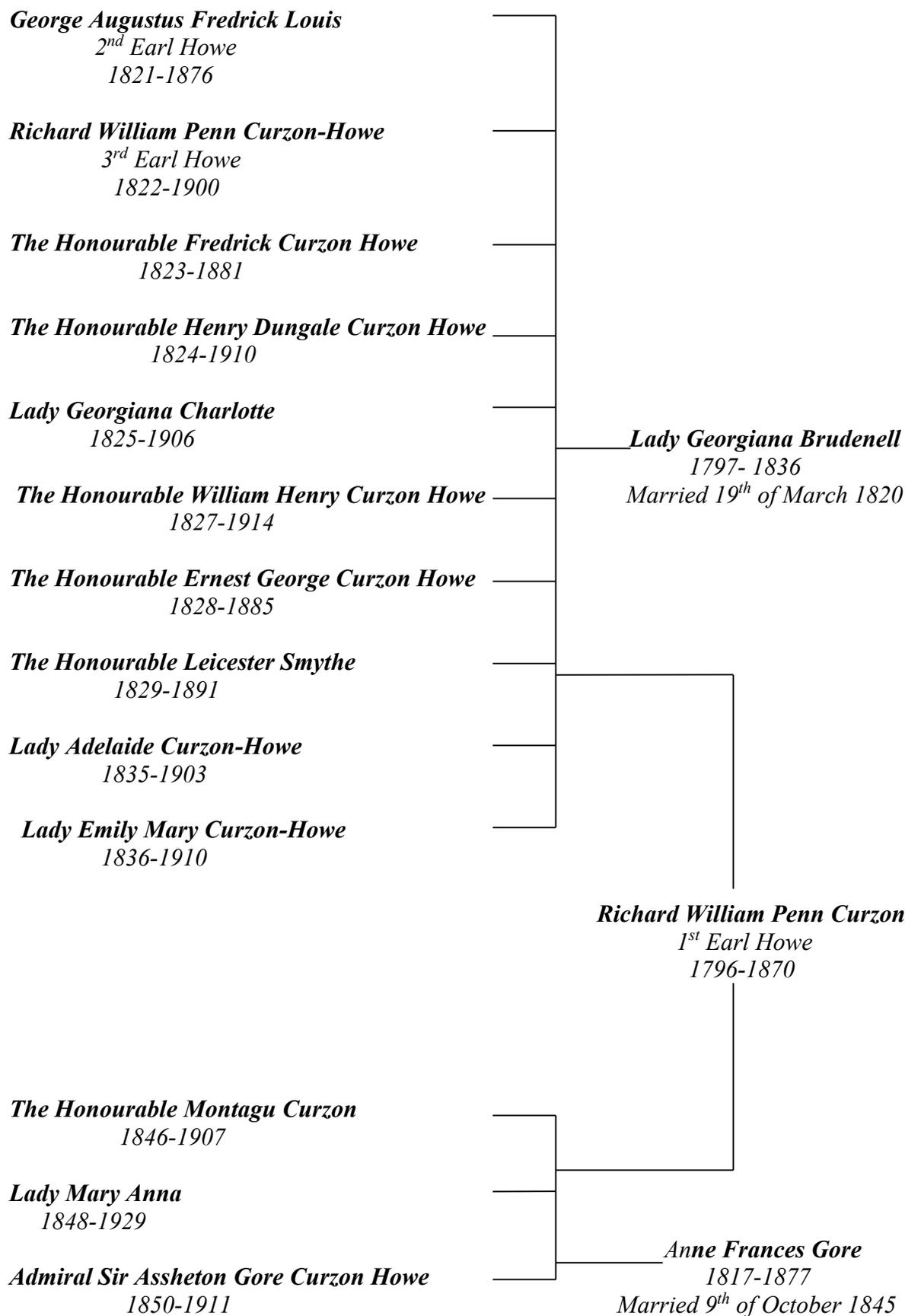
***The Ancestral Tree of
Richard William Penn Curzon
1st Earl Howe (2nd Creation)***



Earl Howe Line of Succession



Earl Howe's Family



EARL HOWE'S MASONIC CAREER IN BRIEF

CAREER IN THE CRAFT

DATE	EVENT
25.09.1815	Initiated into Tyrian Lodge No. 45 (now 253) Derby
09.07.1821	Joined St. John's Lodge No. 525 (now 279) Leicester
20.09.1821	Passed in St. John's Lodge No.525
02.10.1821	Raised in St. John's Lodge No. 525
1822/1823	Worshipful Master of St. John's Lodge No. 525
26.06.1844	Joined Lodge of Antiquity No. 2 London
20.11.1844	Joined St. Paul's Lodge No. 51 (now 43) Birmingham
26.03.1846	Founder of John of Gaunt Lodge No. 766 (now 523) Leicester
20.07.1858	Elected WM of Knights of Malta Lodge No.58 (now 50) Hinckley
29.07.1858	Installed as WM of Knights of Malta Lodge No. 58
???.07.1859	Re-elected and Installed as WM of Knights of Malta Lodge No. 58
02.08.1864	Founder and installed as First Worshipful Master of Howe and Charnwood Lodge No.1007 Loughborough

CAREER IN THE ROYAL ARCH

22.10.1822	Exalted into Chapter of Fortitude No. 525 (now 279) Leicester
1823-26	Second Principal of Chapter of Fortitude No. 525
1831-33	First Principal of the Chapter of Fortitude No. 525
03.02.1847	Founder of Chapter of Augustine No. 766 (now 779) Leicester

CAREER IN THE MARK

15.02.1859	Advanced as a MMM in the Howe Lodge of MMM No.21 Loughborough
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PROVINCIAL RANKS IN THE CRAFT AND ROYAL ACH

1843	Installed as Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire (Craft)
1843	Installed as Grand Superintendent of Warwickshire (Royal Arch)
1856	Installed as Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire (Craft)

1856	Installed as Grand Superintendent of Leicestershire (Royal Arch)
1869	Elected (but not installed) PGM of Leicestershire & Rutland (Craft)

GRAND RANKS IN THE CRAFT AND ROYAL ARCH

1829	Appointed Senior Grand Warden (Craft)
1829	Appointed Assistant Grand Sojourner (Royal Arch)
1844	Appointed Deputy Grand Master (Craft)
1844	Appointed Second Grand Principal (Royal Arch)

**ORATION AT THE CONSECRATION OF THE HINCKLEY LODGE OF INSTALLED MASTERS, No. 9972,
23rd May, 2019.**

R. W. Bro. Michael Wilson, P. J. G. W., Prov. G. Chap.

R.W. Provincial Grand Master, Bro Wardens, Petitioners and Brethren:

Hinckley is unofficially seen in our Province of Leicestershire and Rutland as a special entity. Hinckley has its strong community character as a place to be reckoned with. Maybe this derives from the name of the town itself: “Hun-ca” meaning “bear cub” and “leah” meaning a forest clearing. Recently the *Leicester Mercury* was deliberating whether the Earl Shilton by-pass a decade on was a good thing or not – a rumination that should be diplomatically left to the individual conscience. *TripAdvisor* lists among the top ten attractions at Hinckley: Burbage Common and Woods, the Haunted Antiques Paranormal Research Centre (Brethren, certainly not to be mistaken for the Masonic Hall), also the Concordia Theatre, St. Mary’s Church, Hinckley and District Museum, the Triumph Factory Visitor Experience and the “Elbow Room Ale and Cider House” . Such is Hinckley’s magnetism.

Foremost as Hinckley’s real hidden gem, however, is its noble and historic attention to English Freemasonry. In this respect I am grateful to W. Bro. David Fell, Master Elect of the Hinckley Lodge of Installed Masters, No. 9972, for providing me with evidence of this in relation to Richard William Penn Curzon-Howe, 1st Earl Howe, born at Gopsall Hall near Market Bosworth on 11th December, 1796, to his parents, the Hon. Penn Assheton Curzon and Sophia Charlotte Howe, Baroness Howe of Langar. Gazetted Earl Howe by Royal License on 15th July, 1851, after the death of his grandfather, he was prolific in family life, public service and good works. After the death of his first wife, Lady Harriet Georgina Brudenell, by whom he had seven sons and three daughters, he married Anne Gore – a Vice-Admiral’s daughter - by whom he had two sons and one daughter.

Earl Howe was well connected. He was Tory Lord of the Bedchamber to King William IV and Lord Chamberlain to his Queen Adelaide. The King and Queen both liked and admired him, which, due to institutional jealousy that is absent from Freemasonry, gave him a bumpy ride at times in the Royal Court. He supported education and was awarded at the King’s recommendation an honorary Doctorate of Civil Law at Oxford University. Locally, he was a Trustee of Rugby School, a Governor of Charterhouse and Lieutenant-Colonel of Prince Albert’s Own Leicestershire Yeomanry Cavalry. He valued Freemasonry as a spur to his philanthropy and public service and also its support of his beloved Church of England, being a massive contributor to Church extension during the Industrial Revolution and Trade expansion of the nation.

You can read in more detail in the preface to our Order of Ritual this evening that his progress towards Hinckley Freemasonry began in Derby with Initiation in Tyrian Lodge, No. 468 (now 253). Then, a few years later, he was Passed and Raised in St. John’s Lodge, No. 525 (now 279) where he was the oldest member until his death around midnight on 12th May, 1870, at his house in London. When W.M. of St. John’s Lodge in 1822-23 he laid the foundation stone of St. George’s Church in Leicester with Masonic Honours on 23rd August, 1823. He was Exalted in the Chapter of Fortitude, No. 348 (now 279) in Leicester, and succeeded Sir Frederick G Fowke as First Principal for the year 1831-33. He was a Founder of John of Gaunt Lodge in 1846, unique in being a Petitioner as well as Deputy Grand Master in the Realm. He was a Founder of St. Augustine’s Chapter, No. 779, now attached to the Ferrers and Ivanhoe Lodge at Ashby de la Zouch.

Earl Howe was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire and also Deputy Grand Master in 1844. Ill health meant that he resigned those offices in 1852 and 1854 respectively. Nevertheless, he was appointed Provincial Grand Master of Leicestershire in 1856 until age and infirmity caused him to

resign on 8th December, 1869. 1869 is also the year when, masonically speaking, Leicestershire and Rutland came together. Before that, however, in 1859 he was advanced as a Mark Master in the Howe Lodge of Mark Masters, No.21, and accepted the office of Senior Grand Warden in its Provincial Grand Lodge under his deputy in the Craft, William Kelly. The same day he laid the foundation stone of the Freemasons' Hall in Halford Street in Leicester. Such was the amity and affection between the Church of England and the Craft that St. Peter's Parish Church in Highfields was built as a memorial to Earl Howe and was originally known as the Howe Memorial Church, with commemorative windows and the side streets alluding to him being born at Gopsall and buried at Twycross.

Now we can no longer by-pass Hinckley but must enter deep into the town. There his benevolence was generous, wide and detailed, supporting Church, town community and local industry and enterprise, as well as giving generous financial help and influential advocacy in local crises like the cotton famine and the effects of the Napoleonic Wars. Occasionally the townspeople took against him politically, throwing stones at him once when he emerged from Hinckley Parish Church after Divine Worship, but finally the people of Hinckley placed a portrait of him in the Town Hall in recognition of his service and benevolence which is now displayed in Hinckley Masonic Hall. Earl Howe's timely rescue of the Knights of Malta Lodge, No. 58 (now 50), is treasured by Hinckley Freemasons as should be Earl Howe's ability to touch people of all outlooks and stations in life proved by his deep regard and affection for William Kelly, among many. English Freemasonry may acknowledge ranks but only to cement our bond of fraternal union, reverence and regard for one another, and our mutual support and service of others. There was no ego trip in Earl Howe. So may this portrait remind every Hinckley Installed Master – and every other Installed and Worshipful Master in our English Constitution – how focussed and yet how utterly wide-ranging are the happy duties of this high Office required from the men who follow in the steps and example of Earl Howe when they occupy the Chair of Kind Solomon.

Following their Installation, their year of Office and ensuing years, Worshipful and Past Masters are enjoined to be purely radiant in all their undertakings, to communicate light and instruction to the Brethren, and by virtuous, amiable and discreet conduct to practise out of the Lodge for the service and benefit of others the mutual acceptance, tolerance, compassion, generosity of heart and benevolence we experience within it. It is not the task of Worshipful Masters and Past Masters to give others sorry impression of being a tired, weary bunch. Instead we share the high calling of King Solomon's Court and Temple of which buildings we become bright and living ornaments.

For Earl Howe Freemasonry was never a substitute for his Christian religious faith and practice which, founded on the VSL at the centre of our ceremony today, prompted him to gravitate always towards the truth, to direct his steps in the paths of happiness for himself and others to enjoy, and to embrace and develop a measured but expansive world view of his fellow mortals and of the course of the world in his day. As an Installed Master he looked also to the other two great though emblematical lights in Freemasonry, the Square and Compasses. They remind Installed Masters in past, present and future generations to establish and sharpen our loyalties in every respect as mortal men made in the image of our Divine Creator and walking before God in that quietly glorious and joyfully humble identity that King Solomon took to heart and mind in all his undertakings. May you all, Brethren, having attained the Chair of King Solomon, look towards God your Creator with the same spirit of heavenly quest and earthly hope and enjoyment as our first Grand Master, King Solomon – and encourage all who follow in your footsteps, in the manner of Earl Howe, willingly, happily and zealously to do the same.

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Oration at the Consecration of the Hinckley Lodge of Installed Masters No. 9972

(23rd May 2019) – by R. W. Bro. Michael Wilson, P.J.G.W., Prov. G. Chaplain