



# THE ISCA LODGE, No. 683

PROVINCE OF MONMOUTHSHIRE

1856 to 1956

BY

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P.P.G.D.C. (MON.), P.M. 471, P.Z. 471

AND

H. B. NORTON-NASH

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William Williams Morgan, through whom the Isca Lodge came into existence, was Welsh of the Welsh. Born at Merthyr Tydfil on 24th September, 1809 (that wonderful year which was so prolific of great personages—Gladstone, Tennyson, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Edgar Allen Poe, Whittier and Oliver Wendell Holmes among them), from childhood he was educated with a medical career in view (for, though his father was poor, his mother was determined that her son should follow the profession of her brother, William Williams, who was a doctor in India). In 1855 William Williams Morgan took the diplomas of M.R.C.S. and L.S.A. (He became M.D. of St. Andrew's in 1862). He settled in Newport in 1838, and had some share in the most notable event in the modern history of the town—the Chartist Riot of 1839, for at the risk of his life he tended the wounded. He told the story a few days before his ninetieth birthday. Looking back sixty years, he recalled that he had to visit a patient in the country, and was on his way to the stable in High Street where he kept his horse when he heard firing. He made his way towards the Westgate. "The square was empty," he said, "but people were peeping round the corners. I could see the barrels of the soldiers' muskets pointed out of the Westgate windows, and I could see also a poor fellow lying in the road. He tried to raise himself twice, but fell back each time. I called out to some of the men, "He is wounded; help me to carry him to a place where he can be attended to." But not one of them would move, so I went forward myself, signalling with my hand that my intentions were peaceable. I knelt beside the poor fellow, and finding he was badly wounded, asked if there was anything I could do for him. "Water!" he gasped; and with that he died before my eyes. Twelve months afterwards the town constable said to me; "You don't know how near you were to being shot that morning in front of the Westgate. When you came forward, the sergeant said to Lieutenant Gray: "Shall we fire?", but I said: "Don't shoot! That's a young doctor who has not long come to the town!"

Dr. Morgan's first professional post was as house surgeon to the dispensary at Bury, Lancashire, and while he was there he was initiated in the Lodge of Naphthali, still in existence. He joined the Silurian Lodge, Newport, at its first meeting in 1841, but never went to the Master's Chair. However, he must have been considered a person of consequence in Monmouthshire Masonry, for when the first Provincial Grand



Lodge was held on 30th June, 1847, he was appointed Provincial Grand Secretary. On his ninetieth birthday, 24th September, 1899, a representative body of Freemasons, headed by the Provincial Grand Master, R.W.Bro. Colonel Charles Lyne, and the D.P.G.M., W.Bro. Lt.-Col. C. R. Lyne, waited upon him, and on the lawn in front of his house presented an illuminated address (now in the Masonic Hall, Newport), congratulating him upon his long life and his more than sixty years in Masonry. A remarkable fact which came to light was that he and his father between them had over a hundred years of Masonic life, for his father was Tyler of the Loyal Cambrian Lodge, Merthyr, for more than fifty years.

Dr. Morgan was always a man of initiative and independent spirit—indeed, reading between the lines, it appears that he was something of a stormy petrel. In his early years in Newport he started a dispensary for the treatment of the sick poor. It clashed with the Newport Dispensary started in 1839 with the blessing of Sir Charles Morgan, Bart., of Tredegar, and in 1840 there was a coalition. From that grew the Royal Gwent Hospital. For many years Dr. Morgan was surgeon to the 7th Volunteer Rifle Corps at Newport (afterwards the 4th Vol. Batt. South Wales Borderers). He was Mayor of Newport in 1864 and a Justice of the Peace. In the upper corridor of the old Town Hall at Newport there hung for many years a portrait in oils with an inscription in Welsh and English :—

“Presented to W. W. Morgan, M.D., Mayor of Newport, 1864, by a few attached friends, in testimony of their admiration of his public and social character.”

It represents him seated—black-haired, moustached, serious almost to severity, very different from the photograph taken in old age, which shows a handsome, benevolent patriarch with snowy hair and silver beard, much as the writer saw him on his ninetieth birthday at his house at the top of Waterloo Road, Newport.