Graham celebrates 50 years in Liverpool Lodge

– Derek Parkinson’s address

Firstly, WM may I thank you and the brethren of the Liverpool Lodge for inviting me to this special meeting this evening to share with you the jubilee celebration of one of your members. It’s one of the benefits of holding a senior position in the Province, to celebrate with a brother as he reaches a milestone in his Masonic career. One of the definitions of a celebration is an  enjoyable event that has been [special](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/special)ly organised because something [pleasant](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/pleasant) has [happened](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/happen) or because it is someone's [birthday](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/birthday) or [anniversary](https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/anniversary). Tonight, it is to pay tribute to Graham Bullock, Past Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies of the Province of West Lancashire and so to begin tonight’s tribute I would be grateful if our Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies would place our celebrant before me.

Graham, I was looking back in my diary and saw that I’ve taken the chair at over 40 celebrations of a brother’s golden or diamond jubilee and for the majority of them when I’ve been preparing. I’ve usually included information about things that happened in the 1920’s and 1930’s from the time that they were born but in your case you were initiated into the lodge at the young age of 26 years and so I begin your story tonight in 1943, and take it through to the year of your initiation. On looking back it’s sometimes easy to forget how much things have changed in the last 50 or 60 years but also, I’m usually surprised to see how often there is a parallel between those events and the things going on in the world today.

You were born in 1943, at a time when plans were being made for the allied invasion of France which resulted in the D-Day landings of Operation Overlord on 6 June 1944. Although this signalled the start of the end of the war, London suffered its first attacks from V2 rockets in September of the same year and it is estimated that over 3,000 of these rockets were launched against allied targets.

Later that year the largest airborne military operation was carried out in Operation Market Garden when paratroopers were dropped from gliders to take the key bridges on the River Rhine in the hope of speeding the end of the war. Only last month services were held to remember those killed in trying to free the Dutch and there were re-enactments of the operation shown on the news. Unfortunately, the Germans were aware of the arrival of the paratroopers and the operation failed. I’m sure many of you will have heard of the film made about it, A Bridge Too Far, and if you are ever near Arnhem there is a very good museum all about the event at Oosterbeek.

Moving on to other things happening in society in general we’ve heard a lot recently about equality in the workplace for women, particularly that they should be paid the same amount as a man for doing the same job, but there were other differences in terms of employment between men and women. One was that until the Education Act of 1944 women teachers were not allowed to marry and if they did so they had to leave the profession.

I’m sure you’re all familiar with the saying that death and taxes are the only two certainties in this life and in 1944 the Pay-As-You-Earn tax system came into being. Previous to that the government collected the tax that was due from the previous tax year. The new system meant that the government received the tax on money almost as it was earned.

As a doctor I usually try to find some medical development that has happened and made a significant impact on the healthcare, and in 1944 Willem Kolff invented the first dialysis machine for treating patients with kidney failure. It was made from orange juice cans, spare car parts and sausage casings but it worked and since then that treatment has saved the lives of millions of people worldwide.

Moving forward to the 1950’s and 1960’s signalled a big change in various aspects of life in this country and worldwide.

Internationally the ‘cold war’ between the west and Russia was causing unrest and tension throughout the world, probably similar to the concern brought about by the recent events that we’ve seen on the news. In 1959 the microchip was invented, and what a massive difference that has made to technical equipment both in size and what it can do, particularly the ability to store data. In the early 1960’s the Beatles released their first single; Spiderman made his first appearance in the fantasy comics and the BBC broadcast the first episode of Dr Who with William Hartnell in the title role.

Just before the end of the decade, in 1969, there were several historical events that I’m sure will bring back memories for most of you. Buzz Aldrin, Michael Collins, and Neil Armstrong, flew to the moon in Apollo 11 and Neil Armstrong became the first human to set foot on the moon; Dwight D Eisenhower, a former United States General and President, died in the Walter Reed Army Medical Centre after a long illness and Richard Nixon became President No 37 of the United States. The British-built Anglo-French supersonic airliner 'Concorde 002', made her maiden flight, piloted by Captain Brian Trubshaw and the world's largest aeroplane, the Jumbo Jet or more correctly called the Boeing 747, made its first-ever commercial flight. Robin Knox-Johnston became the first person to sail solo around the world without stopping, Prince Charles was invested as Prince of Wales at Caernarfon in a televised ceremony, and for us this evening the most important event was that in October 1969 Graham Eric Bullock was initiated as a Freemason and took his place in Liverpool Lodge No 1547, and tonight we are here with you Graham, to celebrate that anniversary.

Your story begins in the mid 1930’s when a young civil servant, your father, met a lovely young woman, your mother. They started going out together and were married in 1938 and six years later you were born in hospital, and I found out something that links that hospital to Freemasonry. Highfield House, which was the original building on the site, was built about 1850 by a local cotton broker, as a private residence. It went through several different owners until it was bought in 1895 by Samuel Reece, who was a dairyman and milk contractor. He married Jane Youd and they moved to Highfield House. They had eight children who continued the business and added in a business probably more readily known to most of you, Reece’s Cafes, particularly the one on Parker Street in Liverpool city centre. That was a very large building and had function rooms above. They often held Masonic Ladies Evenings there and when I was doing another brother’s 60 years celebration, I came across a ticket for the Ladies Evening held by Sir Walter Raleigh Lodge No 2837 on 31 October 1947 that had been discovered during restoration work. Tickets were £1 2s 6d. and the social secretary organising the event will be a name familiar to many of you, Kenneth Edward Moxley, who went on to become Provincial Grand Master from 1990 to 1997.

After the death of Samuel and his wife, their home, ‘Highfield’ house and the grounds were purchased by the Corporation and after some development work opened in 1921 as a maternity hospital, providing for the many new arrivals in the developing town. The house was damaged beyond repair in air-raids in the 1940’s, and had to be demolished, but the hospital continued as part of Victoria Central Hospital to look after women during their antenatal time and finally closed in 1982 with the service being transferred to Arrowe Park Hospital.

You grew up on the Wirral and after infant and junior school went on to grammar school, where you were Captain of House and captain of the school rugby team. You left school at 18 and went to university taking physics, but you soon found that that subject wasn’t for you and you left. You gained a place at a large electrical company as a trainee programmer but you still continued your studies and passed several maths courses which gave you membership of the Institute for Mathematics and its Applications and you also became a member of the British Computer Society.

On leaving the company you took up working at Liverpool Regional Health Authority working in computer programming in various departments and were there for 22 years. Whilst there you had worked alongside Ann Marr in Finance and discovered she was setting up a new finance system at Fazakerley Hospital and she offered you the position of Finance Systems Manager which took you through to retirement eight years ago. In your younger days you played rugby for the school and Old Boys and only had to retire when you chipped your knee cap and couldn’t take the strain to push in the scrum.

Just turning the clock back a bit, during your time at the Regional Health Authority you had met your future wife and it’s quite an interesting little story. You had been going out with a young woman who worked on the P&O cruise ships but you had split up and so the plan was for you to go away to the South of France with a friend. Unfortunately, due to their illness this had to be cancelled but your cousin, who also worked for P&O, suggested you go way with her and her husband and as this was at ‘staff rates’ it was very appealing. You joined P&O’s Oriana for a Mediterranean cruise and just by chance on the first night you met your ex-girlfriend and her brother who were also working on board. You palled up with her brother and set off to look for some lively music at the disco on the top deck. Outside the lift were two pretty young girls on their own about to go to bed as there was nothing to do. They were sisters and on the holiday of a lifetime. You told them about the disco and you all went together and from that moment onwards you were almost inseparable from one of the girls. I’m sure some of you remember the TV series ‘Love Boat’ but this was a real life love story, but it could easily have ended at that point as at the end of the cruise you both had to return home and you lived in Wallasey but she lived in Canada, over 4,500 miles away. This meant that the usual boyfriend/girlfriend courtship had to be done from a distance and in those days, they didn’t have Facetime, Skype, Whatsapp, and all the other easy communications we take for granted today. It had to be by letter and just one phone call each week, taking it in turns to call. It was very expensive to book a call between the Wirral and Canada and your dad made sure you paid for every second you were on that phone. In 1973 you went to Canada for three weeks and the following year your girlfriend came over to the UK and you toured around England, Scotland and Wales. The following year, in 1975, you married her.

What a lovely moving story of true love overcoming you living so far apart. Does anyone need a tissue brethren? And it just goes to show how strong that love was and still is, as tonight Graham and his wife celebrate 44 years of marriage, and I think that deserves a round of applause, even though he’s here and she’s at home waiting for him. You and your wife have two children, a son and a daughter.

One of the great pastimes you have is board games, not the ones many of us think of such as Scrabble, Monopoly and so on, but games of skill and strategy that are played by many people and can last for six to eight hours. One of them ‘Sales of Glory’ requires the players to manage and sail their ships and fight sea battles recreating the naval combat of the 17th and 18th centuries. They have about 200 of these games but their friends have around 800. There is a huge international fair in Essen in Germany that attracted just under 200,000 people last year.

You also have a 40-foot narrow boat on the canal in which you sail around the Cheshire ring and other local canals. You are members of a local boat club, and you were Commodore a few years ago. It’s a very sociable club and I’m told you often enjoy a drink or two with one of your great boating pals, Paul Finch.

Now turning to your Masonic career, the main reason why we are here this evening.

You were initiated into Liverpool Lodge on 10 October 1969, 50 years and one day ago. You progressed through the regular offices and were installed as WM on Friday 14 January 1983. During your year you had a wonderful Ladies Evening with numbers well over 100 attending. Your wife drew the table plan and layouts for the night and you still have those to this day. You were exalted into Seacombe Chapter No 3468 in 1977. You received appointment in Provincial Grand Lodge in 1993 as Past Provincial Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies.

I would now be grateful if our group vice chairman Dave Johnson would assist me by reading the jubilee certificate.

Graham, you have had a long and interesting life and have contributed to Freemasonry in this lodge and I know you have certainly derived a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment from being a Freemason, and so it is my privilege to say to you, Graham, congratulations on achieving 50 years as a Mason and we all look forward to seeing you enjoy many more years as a member of this great order.