

PROVINCE OF WEST LANCASHIRE



**50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF
JOHN POTTS**

**LANCASTER CASTLE LODGE NO. 5952,
AT THE MASONIC HALL, ROWLEY COURT, LANCASTER
ON 20th DECEMBER 2019**

50th ANNIVERSARY OF JOHN POTTS

Brethren we are here this evening to celebrate 50 years as a Freemason with John Potts, Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon of the Province of West Lancashire and both he and I are very grateful for your attendance and your support this evening. You know, brethren, to be a member of any organisation for 50 years is a remarkable achievement and something that many of us, myself included, are very unlikely to achieve. It is, therefore, very appropriate for John's friends and colleagues to celebrate this special occasion with him and I know he will be delighted that you are all here tonight.

In order to fully appreciate such length of service it might be helpful to remember some of the things that were happening throughout the world in 1969 when John Potts took his first steps in Freemasonry:

- Prince Charles was invested with the title 'Prince of Wales' in a televised ceremony, at Caernarfon.
- The British-built prototype of the Anglo-French supersonic airliner 'Concorde 002', made her maiden flight, the Harrier Jump Jet entered service with the RAF and the world's largest aeroplane, the Boeing 747, made its first-ever commercial flight.
- Buzz Aldrin, Michael Collins, and Neil Armstrong, flew to the moon in Apollo 11 and Neil Armstrong became the first human being to set foot on the moon and uttered the immortal words ***"That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."***
- 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 the 37th president of the United States of America.
- Robin Knox-Johnston became the first person to sail around the world without stopping and entirely on his own.

- Here in the North West of England, the average cost of a new house was £4145, the average cost of a new car £1,060, the average annual salary £962, a litre of fuel was £0.07p, a loaf of bread was £0.08p and a pint of milk £0.18p
- On 26 November 1969 the first nationwide teachers' strike in British history began as thousands of State Education Board schoolteachers walked off the job in protest of low wages. At the time, the gross wage for public education teachers ranged from £16 to £30 pounds per week
- And most importantly, as far as this evening is concerned, on that very same day, at the Masonic Hall, Church Street, Lancaster, Mr. John Potts was initiated as a Freemason and took his first steps in Vale Lodge No. 5256.

Prov Dep Grand DC would you please place our celebrant before me so that I might address him.

John, we have known each other for a considerable time and I am sure you will not mind if we now lower the formalities a little and just use christian names.

You were born in August 1927 in Lancaster. You attended Greaves Primary School and Greaves Secondary School where you became Head Boy and Head Prefect, leaving at the age of 14 as was customary in those times. At the age of five you contracted double pneumonia and double pleurisy, complications resulted in you spending nine months in hospital, where you underwent surgery with chloroform used as the anasthaetic. Nevertheless at the age of 17 you were passed at your Army medical as A1.

You were a member of a large family having four brothers and three sisters and your brother Joe was the founder of the famous Potts Pies. Unfortunately, your mother died when you were only 13 and your father just four years later. After which you lived for a while with your sister Mary.

In September 1945 you were called up to join the Royal Air Force. You were trained in Halton, Buckinghamshire by Reg Mackerel who also became a member of Lancaster Castle Lodge. You became a sergeant in the medical corps and served in Lincolnshire, Italy, Austria and Egypt before being demobbed in 1948.

When you were at school you had an aptitude for woodwork so on leaving you joined Waring & Gillow, who at the time were making gliders. After six months you had done little more than make tea and you decided to leave. Your sister didn't want you to work in a factory like your brothers and eventually saw an advert for an apprenticeship at Montague Burton. This involved signing up to a 10-year contract, using a solicitor, at a starting wage of 12 shillings and tuppence per week with a 2 shillings and sixpence rise each year. This work was interrupted by the war years and after a short period back you moved to Hepworths as manager at the age of 28.

Your next move came about when your brother Rueben, who had followed you into Vale Lodge, offered you the post of advertising representative at the Lancaster Guardian and you remained in that position for about 10 years. Then aged 40 you were head-hunted by another tailor, Alexandre's. After some differences of opinion with management your employment was terminated after less than a year. Through your brother Reuben, Raymond Whittaker, a local tailor asked you to join his business. You became a partner after two years and went on to run the business with the other partner John Brayshaw until you both retired when you were 68. It was during that period that you and I first met when I became one of your many satisfied customers.

You met Barbara, who lived nearby and was a secretary to the accountant at Storeys and your relationship started when you stopped her in the street and invited her to the Lancaster Guardian Christmas dance. She accepted your invitation and the rest, as they say, is history. You were married on the 15th February 1967. Prior to meeting Barbara, you had been a member of the Church of England but afterwards you joined her at the Unitarian Church then in Lower Church Street, Lancaster. When this was demolished for redevelopment a new church was built by Tom Rowley, another church member and future Lancaster Group Chairman. The first minister was Verona Conway and Barbara and yourself were the first couple to be married at the new church. This is, of course the very building we are in tonight.

In your civic life an important event took place in 1986 when the then Mayor, John Ball, appointed you a Freeman of the City of Lancaster

Your Masonic journey began on 26 November 1969 when, poor and penniless, you were initiated into Vale Lodge No 5256, meeting at the Masonic Hall, Church Street, Lancaster, after being five years on a waiting list, how things have

changed brethren. You were proposed by Arthur Wild and seconded by Tommy Dirkin.

I would now like to ask our secretary to read an extract from the minutes of your initiation.

I am sure those names mentioned bring back many happy memories and thus began your long and distinguished journey in Freemasonry.

John, following your initiation, you progressed through the various offices of Vale Lodge and you were installed as the WM in 1982. You served as secretary between 1991 and 1994. In November 2001 you resigned from Vale Lodge and in January 2002 you became a joining member of Lancaster Castle Lodge No. 5952, having been proposed by John Stanley and seconded by Peter Wiltshire. In January 1993 you became a joining member of Plantagenet Lodge of Installed Masters No. 9357 but you found it necessary to resign in January 1996.

In Provincial Grand Lodge, you were appointed, in May 1993, to the rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon.

John you are also a member of other Masonic Orders. You later resigned from these three Orders so that Barbara and yourself could spend more time in your holiday home in Spain, which you owned for 12 years.

John, having served as a Freemason for 50 years our PGM, Tony Harrison, wishes me to convey to you, his heartiest congratulations on this outstanding milestone in your masonic journey.

As the head of this great Province of West Lancashire, he has issued a Certificate to commemorate this very special day, and I would now ask our group vice chairman, Scott Devine to read this Certificate to you and all the Brethren present.

John, it gives me the greatest pleasure to present you with this 50 year Certificate to commemorate this milestone in Freemasonry. Your story is one of considerable commitment to Freemasonry and it has been a great pleasure for me to be able to share it with all the brethren present. On their behalf, I thank you for the last 50 years and wish you good health and continued happiness in all you do in the future.

John I extend to you our heartiest congratulations.