

# A dedicated Mason and educational adviser – Andrew Whittle's presentation

I have had the enjoyment of attending many celebrations over the last 16 years as a member of a Group Executive, but it is certainly one of the special privileges of an Assistant Provincial Grand Master to be invited to take part in the celebration of a brother's special anniversary.

Brethren, it is said that the greatest happiness a man can have is to know that he is loved, and the very fact that there are so many brethren here this evening who have made the journey to take part in this evening's celebration only serves to reinforce that statement and shows the high regard that our celebrant is held in.

In 1943 we were of course well into the Second World War, but some notable things occurred in that year: -

- the Pentagon building used as America's Armed Forces HQ was completed
- US General Dwight D. Eisenhower becomes the supreme Allied Commander
- The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) was created during May by Chicago Cubs owner Philip K. Wrigley. The purpose of the league was to try to fill empty baseball stadiums and provide entertainment during World War II
- Italy surrendered to the Allies
- the Dambuster raids took place on the German Dams

Also, some very famous people were born in the persons of Chevy Chase the actor, Christopher Walken the actor, Ben Kingsley the actor, Eide Sedgwick the model, Arthur Ashe the tennis player, Blythe Danner the actress, Billie Jean King the tennis player, Robert Fischer the Chess Grand Master.

The most famous of them all was David Roger Withy born in May 1943 in West Derby, Liverpool, the eldest child of Roger and Joan Withy. At that time of his birth David's mother lived with her parents whilst his father was serving in the Royal Air Force. In 1946 David's father returned home from military service and in 1948 a sister Susan was born, which completed the Withy family.

It is safe to say that although David and myself were born 20 years apart in 1943 and 1963 we found that there are some very interesting similarities in our schooling and working lives as you will see as we proceed this evening.

David attended West Derby Primary School and then West Derby Secondary Technical School where an interest and ability in engineering, technical drawing and physics meant he anticipated an apprenticeship in engineering. However, an interesting career visit to the English Electric factory in Croxteth, from which David emerged with a blinding headache, which made him reconsider his career options.

David subsequently discussed his future career with his form teacher Stanley Smith, who suggested 'teaching'. This came as a complete surprise to David but the more he considered it the more it appealed. So, after staying at school for 'A' levels, David then attended Shoreditch Teacher Training College from 1961 to 1964. These three years during which David experienced teaching in a variety of London schools, convinced him that, for many pupils, what their school provided determined their life chances and to enhance those life chances schools needed to 'think outside the box' when supporting pupils in accessing their education.

David's first teaching post in 1964 was at Ruffwood School, Kirkby which was a newly built comprehensive school, accommodating 2,200 pupils where he taught engineering, technical drawing, and design studies. Over the next four years David taught these subjects to 'A' level and in 1968, he was appointed the school's Head of Design and Technology. For some time, the departments of Design and Technology and Art and Design had collaborated on developing design studies programmes incorporating textiles, ceramics, jewellery and graphics and the success of these lead the school to eventually merge the two departments in 1970 creating a Faculty of Design and David was appointed its first Head of Design.

At that time major changes were taking place in David's social life. He was proposed into Warbreck Lodge No 6976 by his former teacher, Stanley Smith, and initiated on 26 January 1972. David's career promotion also enabled him to purchase an MGBT sports car, which allowed him to become a regular at the famous night spots of the Northwest, including the Flamingo Club in Chester, Toad Hall in Formby and the Cabin Club in Liverpool.

It was in the Cabin Club in 1972 that David first met Lin and that friendship became a love match when they were married in Childwall Parish Church on 16 June 1976 followed by a party that evening at Reynolds Park.

During the 1970's, creating comprehensive schools using existing buildings and existing teaching staff was proving difficult for many local authorities and in 1973 David was seconded for 12 months to Woolfall School, Huyton as an assistant headteacher to facilitate its progression from secondary modern to comprehensive status. While the year proved extremely challenging, the experience was invaluable in giving him survival skills for his future career in Knowsley.

Local Government reorganisation in 1974 created Knowsley as a Metropolitan Borough with its own education department and David was appointed its Adviser for Design Education. From the outset David found it an exciting and rewarding job, particularly around developing technology as a subject within the new National Curriculum and providing educational support facilities for many under-privileged pupils. These issues had national significance throughout the late 1970's and in 1979 Lancaster University awarded David a Master of Arts Degree in Education in recognition of his research on the impact of compensatory education on pupil's learning.

One ritual that David did maintain after his marriage in 1976, was meeting every Friday evening in the Sefton Arms, West Derby, with Stanley Smith, his former teacher, and four other Masons including the landlord, Charles Potter, for a pub meal and to catch up on the local news. It was Charles Potter who eventually proposed David into City Chapter No 2514 where he was exalted on 23 April 1979.

With the arrival of his son Philip in September 1980, David's life changed dramatically as Lin finished work and he had to start sharing child night duties with her. David remembers that the grandparents called round regularly and a new book on parenting became one of his regular reads.

At work David was appointed Senior Adviser and Director of Knowsley's Technical and Vocational Education Initiative which was part of a national drive to produce a relevant technical and vocational curriculum which appealed to girls as much as boys. Also, 1980 was the year David became master of Warbreck Lodge. The lodge at that time had a membership of over 70 and held regular social events at the Maghull Conservative Club. As David and Lin needed a babysitter, nights out together were rare, and these socials became a much-valued opportunity to regularly meet up with old friends and develop new friendships.

David's Masonic and educational interests came together in 1981 with appointment to the General Committee of the West Lancashire Masonic Educational Trust (WLMET). The charity's investment income per year far exceeded its grants to beneficiaries and, gradually over the years the charity increased its support for registered non-Masonic charities across the Northwest. The charity usually agreed to fund half the cost of a project or piece of equipment - bringing a new meaning to the expression; 'I will half it with you'. By 2001, the WLMET was supporting 19 non-Masonic individuals and groups to a total value of £49,346. For David, this was practical brotherly love and relief in action.

A pleasant surprise arrived for David in May 1984 with appointment to the rank of Provincial Grand Steward in the Craft and the opportunity for team visits around the Province - he made friendships which remain today.

Indeed, the 1980's provided a range of wonderful experiences across four different Masonic orders; in Craft there was promotion to Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works. In the Mark Degree David became WM of St George Mark Lodge No 553 in October 1985 and on 22 September 1986 he was my Elevated into St George Royal Ark Mariner Lodge No 553.

By 1990 David's son Philip had become an accomplished swimmer and a variety of regular swimming competitions, combined with his membership of the Liverpool Schools under 11 cricket team brought new interests and pleasures to Lin and David, which continued as Philip progressed to undertake other sports during his secondary education.

The National Curriculum was introduced in September 1992 and establishing the new subject of technology proved particularly difficult. Consequently, David spent much time supporting schools and teachers in trying to resolve those difficulties. Manchester Metropolitan University became interested in Knowsley Local Education Authorities support for teaching Technology and in 1994 David commenced a six-year research project at the

University, centered on raising girls' attainment in technology for which he received his Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in 2001.

Knowsley Local Authority appointed David its Chief Education Adviser in 1998, with responsibility for all aspects of the curriculum and its quality across its education service. The task became particularly challenging as the authority's rapidly declining school population meant closing schools and reducing its teaching force. It also led to a reorganisation of its central services and, with that, the opportunity for David to take early retirement in 2000.

David's educational journey was not completely finished though, as he spent 10 years working two days a week as a Lecturer in Education at Liverpool John Moore's University.

By contrast, David's Masonic commitments continued to increase throughout the 1990's; he was installed as first principal of City Chapter in September 1990. This was followed by a further promotion in the Craft to Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden in 1993. David was appointed as Honorary General Secretary of the West Lancashire Masonic Educational Trust in 1999, as received his first appointment in Chapter to Past Provincial Principal Grand Sojourner.

Having taken early retirement this provided David with the opportunity for more leisure activities and time with his wife Lin. These included gardening, visiting National Trust properties and rummaging around antique shops and car boot sales; these became regular activities and remain so today. David also became a Trustee of the Royal School for the Blind, Liverpool in 2000 and has remained so for the last 22 years, and for the past five years has been its Chair of Governors.

On 27 April 2005, David was appointed in Craft to Grand Rank as Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies in recognition of all his work for the Province and in particular his work for charity. 2005 was also the year that Warbreck Lodge merged with Walton, Prudence and Allerton Lodges to become the Woolton Lodge of Unity No 1086 that we know today. David was at that time Warbreck Lodge's treasurer and a member of the new lodge's planning committee.

The early 2000s was a time of considerable debate regarding whether the seven West Lancashire Masonic Charities should be replaced by one new West Lancashire Freemasons' Charity. Eventually the change took place and David was appointed a Trustee in 2008, serving until 2016.

Since 2016, David's Masonic commitments have only involved activities within his Craft lodge Woolton Lodge of Unity where he is currently a member, Royal Arch where he is currently treasurer of City Chapter, the Mark Degree where he is secretary of St George Mark Lodge and Royal Ark Mariner where he is also scribe of St George RAM Lodge.

Today, alongside Masonic interests, David's priorities are spending time with his family, particularly his six-year-old grand-daughter Elena and of course his increased involvement as Chair of Governors at the Royal School for the Blind in Liverpool.

Let us fully recap David's impressive career in Freemasonry:

#### Craft

26 January 1971	Initiated into Warbreck Lodge No 6976.
28 October 1980	WM.
8 May 1984	Provincial Grand Steward.
23 May 1988	Past Provincial Grand Superintendent Works.
14 October 1993	Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden.
27 April 2005	Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies.

#### Holy Royal Arch

23 April 1979	Exalted in City Chapter No 2514.
20 September 1990	First Principal.
11 May 1995	Provincial Grand Steward.
12 May 1999	Past Provincial Principal Grand Sojourner.

1993 - to date            Treasurer.

Mark

14 February 1977        Advanced in St George Mark Lodge No. 553.  
10 October 1985        WM.  
6 May 1992              Provincial Grand Registrar.  
13 May 1997             Past Provincial Grand Junior Warden.  
11 June 2002            Assistant Grand Sword Bearer.  
1991 - to date          Secretary.

Royal Ark Mariner

22 September 1986     Elevated in St George R.A.M. Lodge No 553.  
21 May 1996             Worshipful Commander.  
16 September 2003    Provincial R.A.M. Grand Rank.  
2001 - to date          Scribe.

West Lancashire Masonic Educational Trust

6 February 1981        Appointed to General Committee.  
7 November 1986       Appointed Joint Honorary Secretary  
2000 - 2008             Honorary General Secretary.

West Lancashire Freemasons' Charity

2008 - 2016    Trustee

And I'm sure I speak on behalf of everybody present that we are absolutely delighted to see you here this evening to celebrate your 50 year anniversary and even more so that you have allowed us to celebrate your special evening with you.

David such is the importance of your own golden jubilee that our Provincial Grand Master Tony Harrison has caused a certificate to be struck to mark this wonderful achievement which I shall now ask our group chairman John Murphy to read it to you.