

Good evening, brethren

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 you 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.

But to do that I must first tell you (as if you did not already know!) who that person is.....

**Brother Assistant to the Provincial Grand Director of Ceremonies can you please place WBro William Arthur Cregeen, PJGD on the floor of the lodge before me and ensure that he is comfortable.**

In 1939, the most important event would be the start of World War II and other major events and news stories included:

Nazi Germany attacks Poland on 1 September and France, Australia and the United Kingdom declare war on Germany. Russian troops invade Finland. "Gone with the Wind" premieres in Atlanta. Hewlett-Packard Company created. The Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) is created in the United Kingdom. The Irish Republican Army bombs two London Underground stations, Tottenham Court Road, and Leicester Square, injuring seven, two seriously. The first Anderson shelter is built in London. Russian troops invade Finland. Dictator Francisco Franco conquers Madrid ending the Spanish Civil War. The Wizard of Oz starring Judy Garland premieres. The submarine HMS Thetis sinks during trials in Liverpool Bay, 99 men are lost.

Some very famous people were born in the persons of Tina Turner the singer, Marvin Gaye the singer, Ian McKellan the actor, Paul Hogan the actor, Margaret Atwood the novelist, John Cleese the comedian, Ralph Lauren the fashion designer, Lee Majors the actor best known for the character six million dollar man, Neil Sedaka the singer songwriter, Lee Harvey Oswald the American marine veteran who assassinated President John F Kennedy, and of course maybe the most famous of them all William Arthur Cregeen in October 1939.

Arthur was the second born child of Thomas Henry Cregeen and May Cregeen (nee Wheeler), they already had a daughter and older sister to Arthur, Mona who had been born in 1935 and they would subsequently have another daughter and younger sister to Arthur called Ruth born in 1949. Sadly, Mona passed away in 2001, however Ruth your younger sister is now 73 years of age and living on the Wirral.

Arthur's mother May worked at Ogden's Tobacco factory on West Derby Road, Liverpool as well as being a busy housewife and mother, but had to give up work when Ruth was born due to ill health. His father Thomas was a Marine Engineer with the Pacific Steam Navigation Company and was away from home a lot in Arthur's early years due serving on the merchant ships during World War II. He regularly faced the danger of the German U Boat submarines as part of the Battle for the Atlantic and in fact, at one point the ship that Arthur's father was sailing on was sunk and Thomas was taken to the Harland and Wolff Shipyard in Belfast. Arthur vaguely remembers being taken with his sister Mona by his mother to Belfast to join his father and that they lived in Belfast for a few years.

The Pacific Steam Navigation Company would later be sold to Harland and Wolff Shipbuilders, who at their peak employed more than 35,000 people with a shipyard in Bootle which is where Arthur's father Thomas would work once the war was over and the family had returned to Liverpool. They are perhaps best known for building the RMS Titanic which sank during its maiden voyage in 1912 from Southampton to New York with the death of over 1500 passengers.

The biggest legacy of the company is the Titanic Quarter in Belfast, Northern Ireland, it is a large-scale waterfront regeneration, comprising historic maritime landmarks, film studios, education facilities, apartments, a riverside entertainment district, and the world's largest Titanic-themed attraction centered on land in Belfast Harbour, known until 1995 as Queen's Island.

The 185-acre site, previously occupied by part of the Harland and Wolff shipyard, is named after the company's, and the city's, most famous product, RMS Titanic. The most visible and well know structures at the Titanic

Quarter are Samson and Goliath the twin shipbuilding gantry cranes. The cranes, which were named after the Biblical figures Samson and Goliath, dominate the Belfast skyline, and have become landmark structures of the city. The cranes rapidly came to symbolise Belfast in a way that no building or monument had hitherto done.

Arthur's early life was spent at the family home in 29 Tilston Road, Fazakerley, his first introduction to education in Liverpool was attending Ranworth Square Infants and Junior School in Norris Green between the ages of five and 11.

At the age of 11, Arthur went on to attend Florence Melly Senior School for Boys. The school had been named after Florence Melly and opened in Walton during 1927. The award-winning design based the school around a courtyard, with glass walls and a veranda all around. It was described as an 'open air school'.

The Florence E Melly after whom the school is named was born in Liverpool in 1856, the daughter of George and Sarah. George was a merchant shipowner. For most of her life (certainly from 1861 - 1901), Florence lived with her family at 90 Chatham Street, at its corner with Oxford Street. Florence is always described as 'living on her own means' in the census; she gave her life to education in the city and is listed in the 1903 census as a member of the Technical Instruction Committee.

Arthur was a keen sportsman during his formative and early teenage years with particular interest in baseball, athletics, and football. Arthur is proud to have played football in the same school team as Brian Labone who subsequently went on to play for Everton Football Club and represent his country England. It was in athletics that Arthur had most success with his favourite events being the 440 yards (now the 400 metres) on the track and on the field the discus in which Arthur was able to rank number three in Liverpool for his age. Arthur started his working life once he left the Florence Melly Senior School for Boys at Reads Tin Works in 1954, at the age of 15 years and he remained here for one year.

In 1955 Arthur commenced a five-year engineering apprenticeship at Grayson, Roll and Clover Dock in Sandhills Lane, his apprenticeship covered specifically the areas of engineering in relation to ship building and repairs.

At the end of his apprenticeship Arthur took a job as a Junior Engineer at Athel Line Tankers, which saw him start a short life at sea and travel abroad mainly on the east coast of America, but he did visit the Panama Canal and South Africa. After two years Arthur would go to work for a variety of ship repair companies

Turning to Arthur's family life he was 25 years old when he first met a young lady named Ann in 1964 on a blind date, his best mate was at that point stepping out with a young lady who was Ann's best friend, so they set them both up. Ann turned out to be the love of Arthur's life and after a two-year courtship they were married on 26 March 1966.

Arthur and Ann had two children David a son in October 1969 and Andrea a daughter in November 1973. Both of their children having grown up and completed their education went on to train as schoolteachers.

In 1971 Arthur took a job as a Chargehand with the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company for two weeks, and as nobody asked him to leave, he stayed for 34 years.

The Mersey Docks and Harbour Company has an interesting history; Liverpool Common Council's Dock Committee was the original port authority. In 1709, it had been authorised to construct Liverpool's first enclosed ship basin, the Old Dock, which was the world's first commercial wet dock. By 1750, the old Dock Committee was replaced by the Liverpool Dock Trustees. To provide stone for the construction of the expanded dock system, from 1830 the trustees (and later the MDHB) operated large quarries at Creetown, Scotland.

The MDHB took over running of Liverpool's docks from the trustees in 1858. The need for Liverpool Corporation to divest its dock interests to a new public body was because of pressure from Parliament, dock merchants and some rival port operators. At one point the MDHB railway totalled 104 miles (166 km) of line, with connections to many other railways. A section of the line ran, unsegregated from other road traffic, along the dock road. Today only the Canada Dock Branch is used.

In 1972, the MDHB was reconstituted as a company to allow it to raise money for new building initiatives and projects, including the new container dock at Seaforth. Four light vessels in the approaches to the River Mersey

were maintained by the MDHB until 1973. The company also used to operate a private lifeboat station that was involved in several incidents over the years.

Sadly, during his time at the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company Arthur's wife Ann passed away in 1994 from cancer, leaving a huge hole in his life.

Arthur was eventually promoted to Foreman of the Inspection Department and remained at the company for 34 years in total before he retired in 2005 at the age of 65 years.

Arthur and Ann's two children have done very well for themselves; David married Cheryl and taught locally for the first 20 years of his teaching life, he moved to the Isle of Man some six months ago to take a teaching post on the island. David and Cheryl have twin 21-year-old boys Jonathon who is a serving Police Officer with Merseyside Police and Thomas who works at the Passport Office at the old AC Delco plant at Kirkby.

Andrea married Robert and spent her working life since qualifying teaching locally, but has now been forced to retire due to ill health following a brave fight with cancer. Andrea and Robert live in Merseyside and have two children, Joshua aged 19 who is studying for his degree at university and a daughter Olivia who is aged 14 and attends Birkdale School.

Andrea's husband Robert is the son of Roy Brewis, who was a member of the Lodge of Tranquillity No 3877 until recently and is present here this evening to help Arthur celebrate his golden anniversary as a Freemason. Arthur and Roy are known to each other and their friends as the 'Outlaws', the reasons for which I will leave to your own discretion brethren. Arthur thoroughly enjoys his four grandchildren and is very proud of them but is saddened that his wife Ann never met any of her grandchildren.

Outside of his working and family life Arthur maintained his interest in football and was the club's reserve secretary and vice-chairman, which is where he first met Doug Lace who at that time was the Chairman of the Supporters Association. Arthur did not propose Doug as a Freemason in Mariners Lodge No.249 but did form part of the home visit team that interviewed him.

Arthur also joined the Army Reserve or TA as it was known in those days with the Royal Signals Regiment based in Score Lane, Liverpool as a radio operator, but this foray into Her Majesties armed forces only lasted four years. Arthur remembers that the mobile camps night stays were always spent on pub car parks, I do not think that complied with army regulations and maybe you would like to expand on why a little later in the evening.

Arthur is very proud of his Isle of Man family routes on the male side of his family going back to his grandfather and beyond and is very happy that his son is continuing those links with the island by taking his current teaching post, but he does not know if at this stage his son will move permanently to the island as he still has his house in Fazakerley.

Let us now turn to your connections with and career in Freemasonry; your grandfather William Arthur Cregeen was a member of Stanley Lodge No 1325 and your father Arthur Henry Cregeen was a member of Kirkdale Lodge No.1756.

However, it was on 5 April 1973 that you were initiated into Mariners Lodge No 249. You were passed to the degree of a fellow craft on 7 June 1973, and raised to the sublime degree of a master Mason on 2 August 1973.

Having moved through the various progressive offices of the lodge, Arthur became the WM of Mariners Lodge on 3 October 1985. Arthur then went on to serve the lodge as assistant director of ceremonies, director of ceremonies and the Festival Representative for the 1997 Boys and Girls Festival Appeal in the years that followed, until you resigned from the lodge on 10 December 2009.

Arthur, you became a joining member of Lathom Lodge No 2229 on 26 April 1993 and remained a member until 12 February 2011.

Arthur, you then became a joining member of Lodge of Tranquillity No 3877 on 10 November 2009 and are still a subscribing member. You have held office as junior warden from 10 October 2011 until 7 October 2013, Assistant director of ceremonies from 13 October 2015 until 10 October 2016, director of ceremonies from 11

October 2016 until 9 October 2017 and junior warden for a second time from 8 October 2019 until 10 October 2022 and assistant director of ceremonies for a second time since 10 October 2022.

Arthur, you finally became a joining member of Thomas Harper Lodge No 9612 on 25 June 2011 meeting at Solihull in the West Midlands. You served, as its assistant director of ceremonies from 28 June 2014 until 26 June 2015 and then its director of ceremonies from 27 June 2015 until 24 June 2016. You resigned from the Lodge on 1 August 2021.

You were recognised by the Province of West Lancashire with your first appointment to Provincial rank with the rank of Past Provincial Grand Junior Deacon on 8 May 1992. This was followed a year later with your promotion to the very sought after rank of acting Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies on 28 May 1993.

For the benefit of those younger brethren present this evening, this role lasts for three consecutive years and the duties involve attending upon the senior Craft chain bearing officers of the Province at special events such as individual brethren's milestones celebrations, lodge centenaries, banner dedications etc. The rank also allows you to be a member of the West Lancashire Director of Ceremonies Mess. Arthur told me that he was ranked by appointment as number 17 on the day he joined the Mess and has still not yet arrived at number 1 or as it is known the 'Father of the Mess'. Arthur you will have noticed that many of your colleagues from the Director of Ceremonies Mess, who are not on official duties have attended this evening to show to you the respect you deserve and share in your special celebration.

The Province of West Lancashire recognised your hard work as a Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies for three years in the Craft and promoted you on 21 May 1996 to the high rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden.

Arthur the United Grand Lodge of England recognised all the work you had been doing for the Province of West Lancashire in the Craft and on 30 April 1997, they appointed you to your first grand rank as a Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies.

The Province of West Lancashire then appointed Arthur to be the Vice Chairman of the Woolton Group of Lodges and Chapters on 1 June 1999, an office you served with distinction until 20 May 2002, when the Province had another job for you to undertake in the Royal Arch, which we will return to shortly.

Arthur, the United Grand Lodge of England again recognised all the work you had been doing for the Province of West Lancashire in the Craft and on 25 April 2018, they promoted you to the high rank of Past Grand Junior Deacon.

Arthur you were exalted into the Royal Arch in Red Triangle Chapter No 3874 on 18 April 1986 and having moved through the progressive offices of the chapter became its first principal on 18 October 1992.

You then went on to serve the chapter as charity steward from 20 October 2006 until 3 September 2012, assistant director of ceremonies from 2 September 2014 until 31 August 2015 and as steward from 3 September 2019 until 31 August 2020.

Arthur you also became a joining member of St John's Chapter No.673 in the Province of North Wales on 10 February 2006 and resigned a year later 22 June 2007.

Arthur you were recognised by the Province of West Lancashire with your first appointment to Royal Arch Provincial rank with the acting rank of Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies on 15 May 1996.

For the benefit of those younger brethren this role immediately follows on from its sister role in the Craft and again lasts for three consecutive years in the Royal Arch, with the duties being very similar but now they attend upon the senior Royal Arch chain bearing officers of the Province.

As you can see brethren, the acceptance of the role of a Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies, is to take on a six-year acting role across the two Orders, which in Arthur's day involved more than 60 official visits each Masonic season. Brethren this demonstrates first-hand the indissoluble link between the Craft and the Royal Arch which of course are one organisation headed by the same Grand Master / Grand Superintendent

and in this the largest and greatest Province under the banner of the United Grand Lodge of England / Supreme Grand Chapter headed by the same Provincial Grand Master / Provincial Grand Superintendent.

As part of the Pro Grand Master / Pro Grand Superintendent new seven-year strategy announce in December 2022, our own Provincial Grand Master / Provincial Grand Superintendent upon his appointment last year merged the previously separate Craft and Royal Arch cabinets into one strategic Provincial Cabinet to confirm his commitment to the indissoluble link between the two Orders.

Arthur the Province of West Lancashire recognised all your hard work as a Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies for three years in the Royal Arch and promoted you on 12 May 1999 to the high rank of Past Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah.

Arthur the Supreme Grand Chapter of England recognised all the work you had been doing for the Province of West Lancashire in the Royal Arch and on 27 April 2000, they appointed you to your first grand rank as a Past Assistant Grand Standard Bearer.

Let us return to your sudden retirement as the Woolton Group Vice Chairman in May 2002, brethren this was at the request of the then Provincial Grand Master / Grand Superintendent Colin Penty Wright, who had asked Arthur to take on the role of Director of Ceremonies for the Royal Arch in the Province of West Lancashire but told him that he could not do both roles. Arthur gladly accepted the new offer and was appointed as the Provincial Director of Ceremonies for the Royal Arch on 8 May 2002 serving in that office until 8 May 2006.

Arthur the Supreme Grand Chapter of England again recognised all the work you had been doing for the Province of West Lancashire in the Royal Arch and on 25 April 2013, they promoted you to the high rank of Past Assistant Grand Sojourner.

Arthur, you did join several other Masonic Orders after the Craft and Royal Arch, such as the Rose Croix, Red Cross of Constantine, and the Knights Templar, but your membership never really lasted due to your commitments to the Craft and the Royal Arch.

Arthur is currently the senior non chain bearing member of the Director of Ceremonies Mess which affords him the honour of placing the Provincial Grand Master / Provincial Grand Superintendent into the retiring procession at the Provincial meetings of the Province of West Lancashire. This is an honour that means a lot to Arthur and is a reward from the Director of Ceremonies Mess for the 10 years of full-time active work that you carried out as an active Deputy / Director of Ceremonies.

Brethren, remember that once a Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies always a Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies, and Arthur can still be seen turning out as Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies attending upon the senior chain bearing officers of the Province both in the Craft and the Royal Arch.

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

Arthur, I know that you told me that you had some trepidation about this evening as you had always been the brother behind the celebrant, rather than the celebrant itself and the main man of the hour. Well, I hope that you have not only relaxed but have enjoyed this evening's celebration.

Arthur such is the importance of your own golden jubilee that our Provincial Grand Master Brother Mark Francis Matthews has caused a certificate to be struck to mark this wonderful achievement which I shall now ask our Group Chairman John Patrick Murphy to read.....