

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 didn't already know!) who that person is..... Brother Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies would you please place W Bro Peter Connolly PJGD, on the floor of the lodge before me and ensure that he is comfortable.

So let us think back to 1941 and what was happening in the world, well the third year of World War II has started, and the year would see some momentous events:

US President Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated for his 3rd term. It was the first time any US president had been elected for more than two terms.

The US War Dept. formed an all-black flying unit that achieved fame as the Tuskegee Airmen. On June 20 the Tuskegee program officially began with the formation of the 99th Fighter Squadron at the Tuskegee Institute. Their 1st mission was in June 1943. African Americans were barred from the Air Corps until this year, and then were shunted to all-black squadrons.

The SS Politician wrecked off the coast of the Isle of Eriskay in the Hebrides. It carried some 20,000 cases of whisky, which the natives hid from customs agents. The story was told in the 1947 book "Whisky Galore" by Compton Mackenzie. The book was made into a film in 1949.

The SS Gairsoppa was torpedoed by a German U-boat. The British ship was carrying some 219 tons of silver when it sank in the North Atlantic some 300 miles (490 km) off the Irish coast. Of the 85 people on board, only one survived. In 2011 Florida-based Odyssey Marine Exploration confirmed the identity and location of the ship. In 2012 Odyssey Marine Exploration said it had succeeded in removing about 43% of the insured silver.

The Italian fleet was routed by the British at the Battle of Mattapan off the coast of Greece. More than 2,000 Italian sailors died, and five Italian ships were destroyed. Mavis Batey (1921-2013) of British intelligence had decoded a message that signalled the attack three days earlier.

Glenn Miller and His Orchestra recorded "Chattanooga Choo Choo" for RCA Victor. It became the first gold record in history.

The German submarine U-110 was captured at sea by the Royal Navy, revealing considerable Enigma material. Enigma was the German machine used to encrypt messages during World War II.

Rudolf Hess, a deputy of Adolf Hitler, parachuted into Scotland to see the Duke of Hamilton on what he claimed was a peace mission. Hess ended up serving a life sentence at Spandau prison until 1987, when he apparently committed suicide.

Joe DiMaggio started his 56-game hitting streak.

The German battleship Bismarck sank the British dreadnought HMS Hood in the North Atlantic. 1416 died with only three survivors.

The German battleship Bismarck was sunk off France by British naval and air forces with a loss of more than 2,100 lives. British ships rescued 4 officers and 106 of the crew.

German troops invaded Russia and thereby violated the 1939 Russo-German non-aggression pact. Under the codename Barbarossa, Germany invaded the Soviet Union, the largest invasion of another country in history.

The 900-day Siege of Leningrad by German forces began during World War II. The Siege of Leningrad, 400 miles northwest of Moscow, took place with Germany spread along a 2,000-mile front. It led to the death of at least one million Russians from starvation and disease. Leningrad has since been renamed to St. Petersburg.

In Ukraine some 33,711 Jews of Kiev were killed over 2 days before Yom Kippur in the ravine at Babi Yar by the Nazis. Henrich Himmler had sent four strike squads to exterminate Soviet Jewish civilians and other "undesirables." Over the next 2 years some 100-200,000 more people, mostly Jews, were killed at the site.

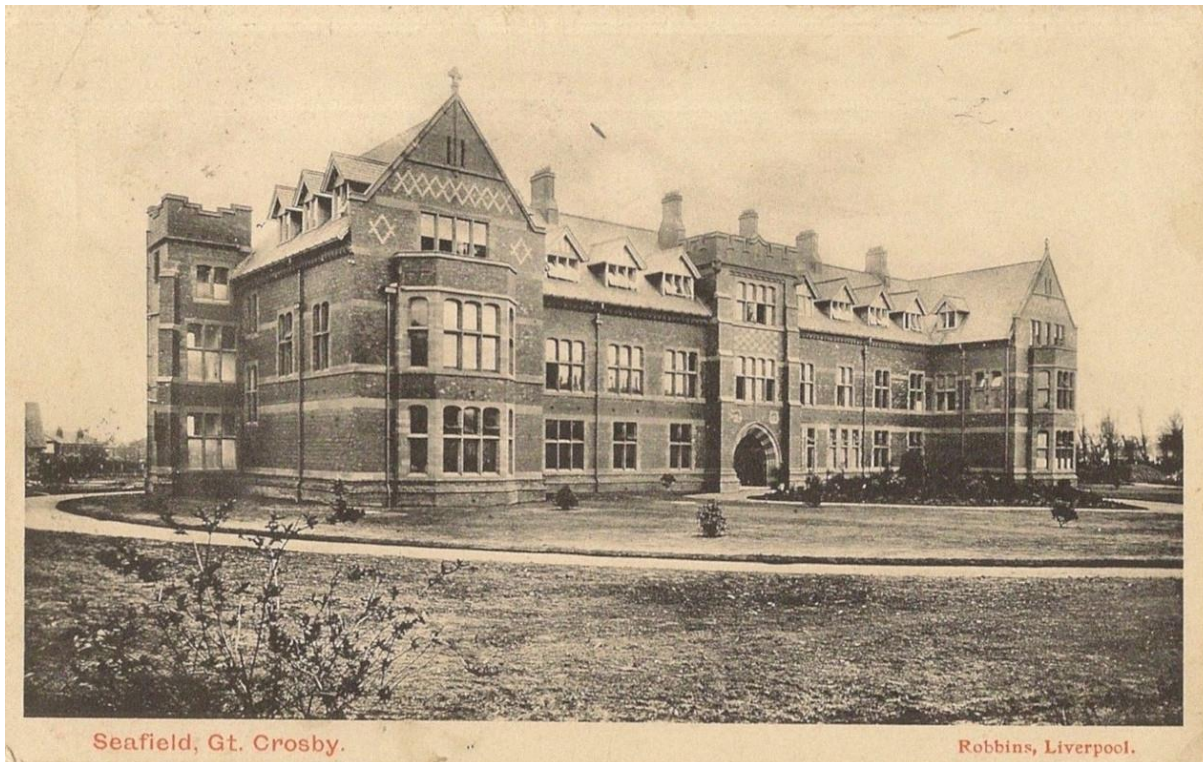
The first British SAS operation, planned to see troops parachute deep behind enemy lines and destroy German and Italian aircraft at two airfields in Libya, took place. Strong winds and driving rain caused chaotic conditions, with several soldiers becoming injured as they attempted to parachute and one plane shot down, killing 15 troops and the crew.

US Vice Admiral Bellinger warned of an assault on Pearl Harbour.

Japan launched an aerial attack on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbour, the home base of the U.S. Pacific fleet, and forced US entry into the war. Long aware that a Japanese surprise attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbour could precede war, U.S. authorities were still woefully unprepared when 363 Japanese fighters, dive-bombers and torpedo planes sunk or damaged eight battleships and three light cruisers, destroyed 188 planes and killed 2,400 men in just over two hours. The Battleship Arizona lost 1,177 men. An estimated 900 were entombed in the sunken ship. 429 people aboard the battleship Oklahoma were killed as the ship capsized. The US lost 19 ships, 140 aircraft and 2,300 lives. In all 2,403 people were killed and 1,178 were wounded; 187 planes were destroyed and 159 damaged. The Japanese lost 29 planes and 5 midget submarines. The next day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt denounced December 7, 1941, as a "date which will live in infamy" as he asked Congress to declare war on Japan.

Some very famous people were born in 1941 including, Bob Dylan the musician, Richie Valens the singer, Bobby Moore the England World Cup winning squad of 1966, Ann Margaret the actress, Alex Ferguson the football manager, Neil Diamond the singer, Otis Redding the singer / songwriter, Linda McCartney the author / photographer, Faye Dunaway the actress Jesse Jackson the American activist / politician, Dame Vivienne Westwood the fashion designer, Placido Domingo the opera singer and probably the most famous of them all Peter Connolly born on 4 August 1941 in Waterloo Liverpool.

Peter, was born to mother Gladys a housewife and father William Joseph, known as Bill, who was the Works Director of Leyland Motors. He was brought up at Seafield, Abbotsford Road, Blundell sands in a large, detached house. The house had originally been built for a sea captain. It has now been converted into a 16-bed home for the elderly mentally and infirmed.



Seafield, Gt. Crosby.

Robbins, Liverpool.

Photograph 1912



Photograph 2023

Peter, I know your memories of this early part of your life are looked back upon with great fondness. Your close family bond, especially with your father who introduced you to your lifelong love of trains and transport vehicles. You recall trips on the Liverpool Overhead Railway with your father on the occasional Saturdays when he was not working. As you pointed out, your father could identify every vessel by its funnel - and knew its cargo as well. The docks were then six miles long. Due to his employment Peter's father could also identify every bus by the grill, nose, or front panel!

The Liverpool Overhead Railway (known locally as the Dockers' Umbrella or Ovee) was an overhead in Liverpool which operated along the Liverpool Docks and opened in 1893 with lightweight electric multiple units. The railway had many world firsts: it was the first electric elevated railway, the first to use automatic signalling, electric colour light signals and electric multiple units and was home to one of the first passenger escalators at a railway station.

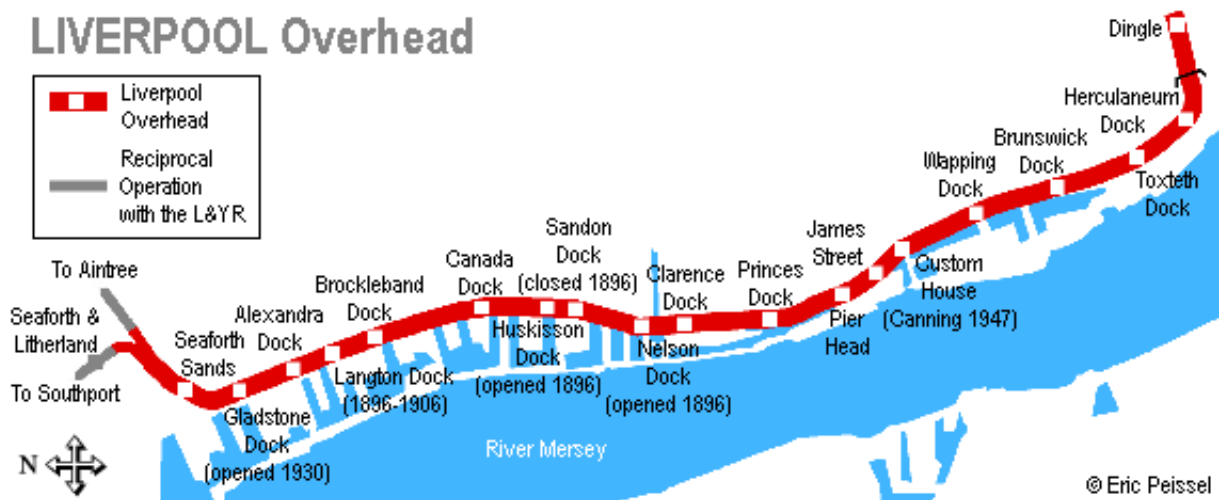
It was the second oldest electric metro in the world, being preceded by the 1890 City and South London Railway. Originally spanning five miles (8 km) from Alexandra Dock to Herculaneum Dock, the railway was extended at both ends over the years of operation, as far south as Dingle and north to Seaforth and Litherland. Located at Seaforth the railway works would build its own rolling stock, they had a foundry works where it cast the wheels.

Several stations opened and closed during the railway's operation owing to relative popularity and damage, including air bombing during World War II. At its peak almost 20 million people used the railway every year. Being a local railway, it was not nationalised in 1948.

In 1955, a report into the structure of the many bridges and viaducts showed that major repairs were needed, which the company could not afford. The railway closed at the end of 1956, and despite public protests, the structures were dismantled in the following year so no former infrastructure of the Liverpool Overhead Railway.



## LIVERPOOL Overhead



After Ursuline Convent and Miss Milton's Prep School, you went to Merchant Taylor's School, Crosby for three years. In November 1952, your father died suddenly, aged 46 years, a devastating loss to your family. He had just joined Fairfield Lodge No 2290 in 1949 and only just - in October 1952 - reached the stewards' list.

Dr Fred Wilson, who was then a medical officer for one of the shipping lines out of Liverpool, proposed you for the RMBI School at Bushey, which you attended for two-and-a-half years. The closure of the school was proposed, but anyone about to start their GCE course was moved to another school, so that their studies would not be interrupted. You were moved to Liverpool College as a boarding scholar. You left in 1959 having GCE O and A level certificates and equally important your athletics colours.

Although Peter recalls his boarding school was somewhat Victorian, he nevertheless enjoyed his schooling, and it certainly set you up for life. Perhaps, your many friends at school helped your upbringing. These included: Nigel McCulloch (subsequently Bishop of Manchester) Malcolm Thornton (Minister for Wales under Mrs Thatcher) and a touch of Richard Stilgoe. That mixture of religion, politics and humour has served you well. At school you were also in the Combined Cadet Force for five years.







After studying at the College of Commerce, you joined Norwest Construction as a management trainee. You did two years as an internal auditor and then joined Southern, a national firm of timber merchants. You started up their joinery department and eventually became a manager of the substantial 'Door and Joinery Division', with responsibility for a turnover of £2,000,000. Following a merger with Magnet, you were appointed to the Board of Magnet Joinery Sales.

In 1985, you resigned from the board, started your own business, and quickly became the second largest supplier of spiral stairs (should I say, winding stairs) in the UK. I realise that your stair chasing activities with Fluff had obviously given you the necessary experience in this field. But there is more: you designed, marketed, and sold extruded plastic products for the newly introduced roof ventilation regulations for 22 years, retiring in 2008.

Peter joined the Territorial Army in 1959, being commissioned in 1960, he completed his career as a substantive Captain and Acting Major. He commanded 309 Signals at Prescot but left the Territorial Army shortly after it became the Territorial Army Volunteer Reserve. Peter, the mess dress still fitted you when you wore it for the Mark Festival on the 23rd February 2017 at Hope Street.





You married in 1964, and have three children: Andrea, Stephen, and Paul, and four grandchildren. You re-married in 1999 to Lynne, as a result you have acquired a further three grandchildren. Your great joy is not playing hide and seek with your family, but going with them on trips to Llangollen, and many other heritage and narrow-gauge railways.

The excitement of the railways extends to trams, and with your OAP travel card you have been seen travelling on the Blackpool Tramway, indeed you tell people that you can go from Stargate to Fleetwood and back, six times in one day, and free of charge! Who needs the Pleasure Beach? Peter's other interests include caravanning and fell-walking.

He is also an honorary Girl Guide, supporting Lynne in her many years as commissioner. Peter recalls taking 140 Brownies to London on a two-day trip and being ceremonially presented with the badge of 'Wise Owl'. However, Peter later found out later that the Wise Owl badge was given to him because the powers that be, could not find a 'Know-it-All' Owl badge.

Peter has another love in his life, which is to listen to and play the great Willis organs made in Liverpool. This includes the Willis organ in our Craft headquarters at Great Queen Street, London and Peter can often be heard regaling to his compatriots on the Joys of the Willis Organ in the Grand Temple.

Following years of Lynne looking after you both domestically and Masonically, it was to be her turn to shine, and she undertook a course of study to qualify her as a vicar; this would involve years of educational study and practical experience within several Churches.

Lynne was made a Deacon of the Church of England at a Michaelmas Ordination ceremony on the 26th September 2020, by the Bishop of Warrington at a service in the Anglican Cathedral, Liverpool, but unfortunately as it was during the Covid Pandemic, social distancing was in force as was the need for fewer people than normal to attend.





After another year of study and plenty of further practical experience too, Lynn was ordained as a priest at a Petertide Ordination service on the 12th June 2021, in the by the Bishop of Liverpool, at a service at the Anglican Cathedral, Liverpool.



Lynne is currently part of the ministry team at St Gabriel's Church, Huyton, where she is the curate, she coordinates the pastoral care ministry and is chaplain to the women's group. Lynn also assists in the taking of services and leadership of the church.

Peter let us now turn to your Masonic journey and what a journey it has been. You were initiated into Fairfield Lodge No. 2229, your father's Lodge on the 15th November 1963, passed to the degree of a fellow craft on the 21st January 1964 and raised to the sublime degree of a master Mason on the 21st April 1964. Peter rose through the progressive offices of the lodge and was installed as WM on the 11th October 1977 serving in that office for two years. Peter then worked hard for his Lodge by taking various of the non-progressive offices and started working for his Masonic group. Unfortunately, the Lodge fell on hard times with regards to finding new members like a lot of Lodges over the last fifteen years and had to surrender its warrant on the 11th March 2009.

Peter became a joining member of Lathom Lodge No 2229 on the 29th April 1985 and remained a member until the 22nd March 2011.

He was also a founding member of Old Lerpoolian Lodge No 9270 on the 15th March 1988, a busy night for Peter as he was the first lodge director of ceremonies. He would also go on to be installed as WM of the lodge on the 16th March 2010. The Lodge was formed to allow the old boys of Liverpool College who were Freemasons to meet and chat over their time spent at the school. The Lodge is a member of the Federation of School Lodges and I understand that there is a letter from the Federation tonight and I would call upon the Lodge secretary to read the letter please .....

Peter became a joining member of Lancastrian Lodge No.7811 on the 14th December 1988, but unfortunately the same fate as occurred at Peter's mother Lodge was to fall on this one and it surrendered its warrant on the 13th December 1995.

He was also a member of Baron Egerton Lodge No.3513 in the Province of Cheshire being Installed as its WM on the 22nd September 1999. Whilst searching google I noticed that the Past Masters Jewel presented to Peter was sold last month on eBay for £50.00, but it is okay the seller was from Hatfield.



Peter's talents were recognised by the Province of West Lancashire when he was appointed to his first and only Provincial rank, the very high acting rank of Provincial Senior Grand Warden on the 8th May 1984. Following his year as acting Senior Warden it was not long before Peter was invited by the Provincial Grand Master to serve as the Vice Chairman of the Eighth Liverpool Group, before going on to serve with much distinction as its chairman. It does seem such a long time ago that we had eight groups in Liverpool.

It was not long before Peter's service to Freemasonry in general, was recognised by United Grand Lodge of England with a first appointment to Grand Rank as Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies on the 27th April 1984. He was further rewarded with a promotion to the high rank of Past Junior Grand Deacon on the 30th April 2008.

Peter completed his fourth step in pure and ancient Freemasonry when he was exalted into Royal Arch on 13th May 1965, as a companion of the Liverpool Chapter No 292. Peter again progressed through the progressive offices becoming its First Principal on the 11th March 1982 and serving again as First Principal for a second time on the 11th March 2015.

Peter's talents were recognised again by the Province of West Lancashire when he was appointed to his first and only provincial royal arch rank, the very high acting rank of Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah on the 8th May 1984.

It was not long before Peter's service to Royal Arch Freemasonry in general, was recognised by Supreme Grand Chapter of England with a first appointment to Grand Rank as Past Grand Standard Bearer on the 27th April 1989. He was further rewarded with a promotion to the high rank of Past Assistant Grand Sojourner on the 29th April 2010.

Peter celebrated his golden jubilee as a Freemason in Old Liverpoolian Lodge No.9270 on the 19<sup>th</sup> November 2013, the ceremony being officiated over by the Provincial Grand Master Right Worshipful Brother Peter Hosker and the celebratory certificate was read by a new Woolton Group Chairman by the name of W Bro Andrew Whittle.



Peter celebrated his golden jubilee as a Royal Arch Freemason in Chapter of Liverpool No 292 on the 14th May 2015, the ceremony being officiated over by the Grand Superintendent Excellent Companion Peter Hosker.

Peter has also been a senior member of numerous other Companion orders in Freemasonry, and I will now take a whirlwind tour of those orders.

Peter was advanced into the Mark Degree in Clarence Mark Lodge No.447 on the 4th December 1967 at the Adelphi Hotel in Liverpool and having worked his way through the progressive offices became its Worshipful Master in 1974.

You have been over the years a subscribing member of seven other Mark Lodges including the Provincial officers Lodge Adoniram 552, Lebanon TI, Arnold Moreton No.1649 and the Grand Master's Mark Lodge at St James in London.

Your talents in this degree were noticed by the West Lancashire Mark Province when you were appointed Provincial Overseer in 1982 and your colleague overseers were none other than W Bro Terry Hudson and W Bro Peter Walker both of whom went on to be Assistant Provincial Grand Masters in the Craft.

In 1987 you were rewarded for all your efforts in the Mark Degree with a first appointment in Grand Mark rank to Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons.

In 1993 the then West Lancashire Mark Provincial Grand Master Right Worshipful Brother Tony Walton appointed you as one of his Assistant Provincial Grand Masters. Promotions in Grand mark rank followed in 1993 to Past Grand senior Deacon and in 1994 to Past Grand Overseer.

In 2005 you were appointed as the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and another promotion in Grand mark rank to Grand Master Overseer of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons.

It was in 2006 that the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons, invited you to take office as the Provincial Grand Master of the Mark Province of West Lancashire, following the retirement of Right Worshipful Brother Tony Walton. Peter you were installed on the 17th January 2007 in Blackpool and as I remember it was the day that the worst storm in a hundred years hit the North of England causing destruction and rail line closures. This forced the Pro Grand Master and his party to spend an extra night in Blackpool enjoying the delights of the seaside town.

Peter you clearly knew what you were doing as you appointed an up-and-coming young Brother by the name of Tony Harrison as your Deputy Provincial Grand Master, who would go on to be the Provincial Grand Master of the Craft Province of West Lancashire. Peter as you know Tony could not be here this evening, but he has asked me to convey his personal apologies as he is engaged on Craft business elsewhere in the province and to pass on his many congratulations on achieving your diamond jubilee in the Craft.

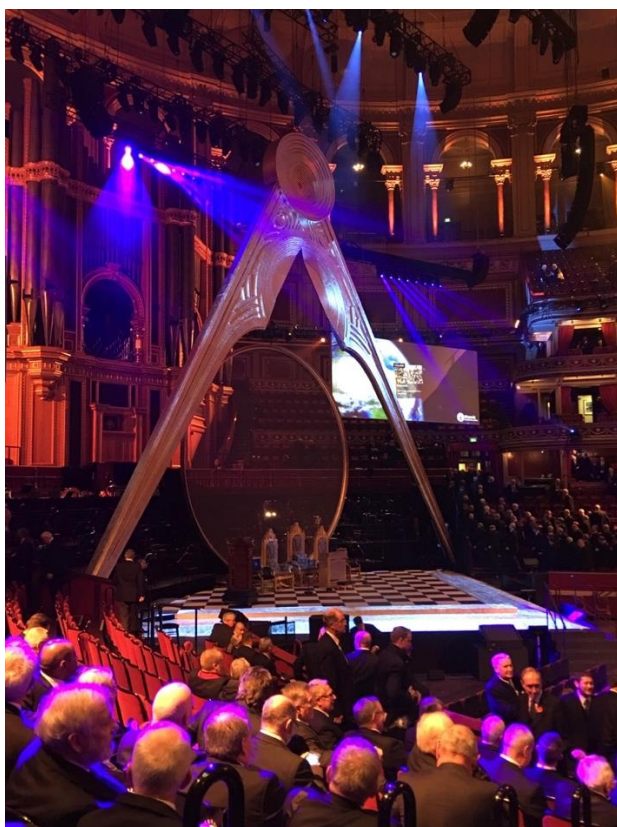
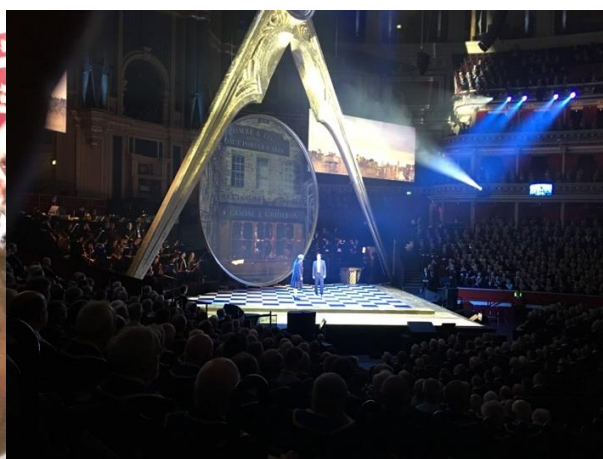
You celebrated your 50 years in the Mark Degree in 2017 and the occasion was officiated over by the Provincial Grand Master Right Worshipful Brother Keith Alan Beardmore who is present this evening.



Peter you were elevated into the Ancient and Honourable Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners in Adoniram Lodge No.552 on the 31st October 1986, working your way through the progressive offices to become its Worshipful Commander on the 31st March 1993. As the Royal Ark Mariner Degree is the sister degree of the mark, high

office is linked to both orders so your appointment as Assistant Provincial Grand Master, Deputy Provincial Grand Master and Provincial Grand Master occurred on the same dates as your mark preferments. Peter you are also a member of the following orders:

The Ancient and Accepted Right for England and Wales (Rose Croix of Heredom) and you were appointed to the high rank of Sublime Prince of the Royal Select 32nd Degree on the 1st November 2017, at Supreme Council in London the day after the Craft Tercentenary Meeting at the Royal Albert Hall. I was lucky enough to also receive my 32nd Degree the same day as yourself Peter. However, I am sure you remember that it was the King of the Asantehene, who is the monarch and ceremonial ruler of the people of the ancient historical Ashanti Empire - Asantehene Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu II, born Nana Kwaku Dua, who ascended as the 16th Asante king in April 1999, who stole the show with his massive entourage and expensive fleet of Rolls Royce vehicles. I have an apology from Illustrious Brother Ian Clarke 33rd Degree Inspector General for the District of Southwest Lancashire that he has asked me to read to you.





The Great Priory of the United Religious, Military and Masonic Orders of the Temple and of St John of Jerusalem, Palestine, Rhodes, and Malta (Knights Templar / Knights Malta) in Jacques de Molay Preceptory No.36 and currently hold the Grand Rank of Past Great Aide de Comp in the Knights Templar and in the Knights Malta you hold the Grand Rank of Past Grand Bailie.

The Order of the Secret Monitor or Brotherhood of David and Jonathon in John Walter Chitty Conclave and hold the Grand Rank of Past Grand Standard Bearer.

The Royal and Select Masters or Cryptic Degrees in Royal Solomon Council No.24 and hold the Grand Rank of Past Grand Conductor of the Council and you're a past acting Principal Conductor of the Works in the District of West Lancashire.

The Allied Masonic Degrees and have just finished your year as Worshipful Master of the Grand Masters Centennial Council.

The Royal Order of Scotland and hold the rank of Past Substitute Grand Master and are also the Provincial Chaplain of the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Counties Palatine of Lancaster and Chester.

I'm sure I speak on behalf of everybody present that we are absolutely delighted to see you here this evening to celebrate your 60th anniversary as a freemason and even more so that you have allowed us to celebrate your special evening with you.

Peter such is the importance of your own Diamond Jubilee that our Provincial Grand Master Right Worshipful Brother Mark Francis Matthews has caused a certificate to be struck to mark this wonderful achievement which I shall now ask the Group Chairman Worshipful Brother David Atkinson to read....