

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 can you please place WBro David Alexander Prince PPrJGW, 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:

- The Andrews Sisters recorded what became a big hit for them, the Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy.
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to support the lend-lease plan to help supply the Allies. In an address to Congress President Franklin Roosevelt expressed the general world aims of the United States as these "Four Freedoms": of speech and expression; of worship; from want; and from fear.
- Adolf Hitler ordered forces to be prepared to enter North Africa to assist the Italian effort, marking the establishment of the Afrika Korps.
- US vice admiral Bellinger warned of an assault on Pearl Harbour.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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 thousand 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.
- 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, 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 David Alexander prince.

David was born in October 1941 to his father Albert an accountant at Pilkington Glass manufacturers in St Helens at their Cowley Hill plant, and his mother Catherine who was a local nursery schoolteacher. David was the first born but over the next few years the family unit would be completed with the arrival of a younger sister Katherine now aged eighty and a younger brother Geoffrey who has now sadly passed away. David remembers a happy family life living at Alexandra Drive, West Park, St Helens.

Once he was five years old David attended Knowsley Road Primary School, St Helens where he fully enjoyed his time and then at the age of eleven years having passed his eleven plus examination, he progressed to the prestigious local Cowley Grammar School. He left school with a collection of 'O' Levels and 'A' levels. David was also found as a regular at the Tolver Street Presbyterian Church in St Helens during his formative years.

David then attended Chester College to follow his desire to become a teacher, following in his mother's footsteps. He started training as a secondary education teacher, but the course was overprescribed so when the college offered students that chance to change to primary education he jumped at the opportunity. David tells me it was the best decision he has ever made, and after the usual hard period of hard study and some good social times David graduated with his Teacher's Certificate in 1960.

Whilst at studying at Chester College which at that time was an all-male college, David met the love of his life a young lady by the name of Pat who was studying primary education at the all-female Wrexham College. Following a happy and suitable courtship they would marry at Tolver Street Presbyterian Church in St Helens on 2 April 1966.

David and Pat would have two children Hazel born in 1967 and Sarah born in 1969. Unfortunately, Hazel contracted Leukaemia aged 11 years of age and although she struggled for seven years, she was able to attend David and Pat's Red Triangle Lodge No.3874 Ladies evening in 1983, when he was WM of the lodge, before sadly passing away in December 1984.

Sarah who is now semi-retired worked as a personal trainer and now works with her partner Jason in the wind farm business, undertaking his administrative work. Jason was a qualified engineer in the Parachute Regiment of the British Army, who on retirement moved into the green energy sector. He currently works in North Arizona, USA undertaking all the Health and Safety requirements, plus associated work on offshore wind farms. This requires them to spend six weeks in the USA and six weeks at home in the UK on a rotational basis. Sarah and Jason have two children Jessica who is 27 years of age and single working in administration for Stobart's the haulage company, and Christopher who is 30 years of age and married to Alexandra. They have two children Rex and Orla who are the apples of David and Pat's world as well as being lovely grandchildren who bring great joy to David and Pat.

During most of their 57 years of marriage, Pat has as well as being a mum, maintaining the home, bringing up her two daughters and caring for Hazel when she became sick, also managed to have a successful career as a primary teacher.

Turning back to David's teaching career it started with his first teaching post in September 1963 at Park Brow Primary School located in Kirkby. Although he told me that he actually had to start in July that year, as there was a teacher shortage caused by the time to gain the teachers certificate being increased from two to three years, there had been no new teachers available in 1962. Pat also gained her first teaching post in Millbrook Primary School in Kirkby at the same time. David explained how lucky they had been as being classed as key workers the local authority provided them with a council house near to the railway Station in Kirkby.

After five years of teaching in Kirkby David moved on promotion to Linslade County Primary School in Linslade, a small and beautiful town in the civil parish of Leighton-Linslade, in Central Bedfordshire. This of course required him and Pat to up sticks and move to Linslade.

However, the area is best known as the location of the Great Train Robbery which for the benefit of the younger brethren was the robbery of £2,610,000, (calculated to present-day value of about £58,000,000), from a Royal Mail train heading from Glasgow to London on the West Coast Main Line in the early hours of 8 August 1963 at Bridego Railway Bridge, Ledburn, near Mentmore in Buckinghamshire, England.

After tampering with the lineside signals to bring the train to a halt, a gang of fifteen led by Bruce Reynolds, attacked the train. Other gang members included Gordon Goody, Buster Edwards, Charlie Wilson, Roy James, John Daly, Jimmy White, Ronnie Biggs, Tommy Wisbey, Jim Hussey, Bob Welch, and Roger Cordrey, as well as three men known only as numbers "1", "2" and "3"; two were later identified as Harry Smith and Danny Pembroke. A 16th man, an unnamed retired train driver, was also present.

With careful planning based on inside information from an individual known as "The Ulsterman", whose real identity has never been established, the robbers escaped with over £2,610,000. The bulk of the stolen money has never been recovered.

The gang did not use any firearms, though Jack Mills, the train driver, was beaten over the head with a metal bar and suffered serious head injuries. After his partial recovery, Mills returned to work doing light duties. He retired in 1967 and died in 1970 due to an unrelated illness. Mills never overcame the trauma of the robbery. After the robbery, the gang hid at Leatherslade Farm. The police found this hideout, and incriminating evidence, a monopoly board with fingerprints, led to the eventual arrest and conviction of most of the gang. The ringleaders were sentenced to 30 years in prison. David assures me that he never found any of the missing haul of cash that has never been found.

After two years David was again promoted to the position of Head Teacher at Keysoe County Primary School in Keysoe, a village and former civil parish, now in the parish of Bolnhurst and Keysoe, in the ceremonial county of Bedfordshire, England.

Whilst in Bedford David who had always enjoyed swimming and played water polo for St Helens as a youngster in his formative years was able to bring these skills to the fore with his pupils. He was a swimming teacher, trained in life saving up to diploma level, qualified as a table tennis teacher, which was a very popular sport in Bedfordshire. David also played table tennis in a local league and even found time to play football for a team called Little Storton in a local league.

In 1976 David had a yearning to return north and took up the position of Head Teacher at Beamont County Primary School in Warrington, which was just for pupils aged eight to 11 years of age, as there was a separate infants only school for the younger pupils aged five to seven. The school was situated over two floors and allowed David to keep his steps count high as it did not have a lift.

David had started to study for the new Bachelors of Education Honours Degree at Wall Hall in Hertford and had completed the first year of study before he left Bedfordshire to take up the job in Warrington. As this was important to David, he decided to continue with his studies and signed up at Chester College to complete the degree he had started. At that time Chester College had not yet become a university, so the degree was awarded by Liverpool University and in 1979 David graduated with his Bachelors of Education Honours Degree.

David eventually retired from teaching in 1995, as you remember the Beamont School had no lift and was spread over two floors. His retirement was enforced as he needed a new hip, fortunately the local authority allowed David to take an enhanced early retirement which he told me meant that he was just one year's contributions short of a full pension, so he was quite happy with the situation.

Following his retirement from full-time and the fitting of the new hip, it was not long before David found himself in need of something to do, so he eventually took two part-time jobs.

The first was with Warrington Rugby League Club in 1996 as an ambassador in a voluntary role responsible for liaising with local schools and arranging stadium tours, which allowed him to keep a connection with his lifelong passion for education. David was responsible for starting the club's community development scheme, and as the role developed it became a paid position as the club's development officer. David who was already a rugby coach from his early 20s found that his involvement with Warrington Rugby League Club also allowed him to obtain several qualifications as a referee in the junior leagues, and then as a referee assessor for all the top referees in the top divisions of the adult professional and semi-professional game. Of course, this was in the days before the current Super League had been created. David retired from this part-time role at Warrington Rugby League Club in 2004.

The second part-time job was with Manchester Metropolitan University as a school experience supervisor in 1997, his role involved visiting students in the classroom and assessing their performance whilst undertaking the teaching elements of their teacher training at the university. David again took retirement from this position in 2009 when he started to have problems with his hip again.

In 2010 David had a second hip replacement some 15 years after his first replacement. Unfortunately for David, his hip required a third replacement in 2016 only six years later and this replacement did not go well and following some medical complications it left David unable to drive and without a driving licence. This has had a huge impact on David's life as he is solely reliant on his good wife Pat to drive him anywhere not accessible on local transport.

Obviously working either full-time as a Head Teacher or in retirement when he needed two part-time jobs to satisfy him, during his time in Warrington David also served as a magistrate for over 30 years, becoming Youth Panel Chair for six years and then Bench Chair from 2008 to 2010.

David was also an appraiser and mentor to new magistrates. Allowing him to continue using his teaching skills. Unfortunately, the law dictates that magistrates must retire at 70 years of age and so it was that in 2011 that David had to retire.

However, do not worry brethren David has kept himself busy since with his other hobbies that include reading, gardening, and travel. David swims three times a week and he is also a keen stamp collector, his main collection of stamps being French in origin, he is also currently vice chairman of the Trafford Philatelic Society.

David let us know turn to your Masonic journey starting with your family connections. James Smallwood your grandfather was a member and past master of Red Triangle Lodge No.3874, as was your father, T Albert Prince PPrJGD, who was also a founding member of Hardshaw Lodge No.8722 meeting at St Helens Masonic Hall, St Helens, being consecrated on 13 January 1977.

Your uncle Ben Davies was also a member and past master of the lodge as well as serving as its treasurer for several years. Your brother Geoffrey who unfortunately has passed away was also a member of the lodge. There was also another of your uncles Alec who was a member of University Lodge of Liverpool No 4274 having studied there for his medical degree and qualified as paediatric doctor. He moved to live in Bristol and worked there as a doctor and eventually becoming the school medical officer for the city.

David you were initiated into Red Triangle Lodge No.3874 on 17 December 1963 at the Carlton Restaurant, Eberle Street, Liverpool. Unfortunately, as the Lodge is no longer in existence the records were returned to the United Grand Lodge of England and are kept in deep storage, so it has not been possible to get a copy of the minutes from the meeting at which you were initiated. However, David informs me that his father Albert Prince and his Uncle Ben Davies were his proposer and seconder. David was passed to the degree of a fellow craft on 21 January 1964 and raised to the sublime degree of a master Mason on 21 April 1964.

David started to progress through the offices of Red Triangle Lodge No.3874, but as we heard earlier you had to move away to work and live in the Bedford area in 1970. However, David still managed to attend the annual installation meeting of the lodge as it always fell in the school half-term. The meeting place was also convenient for David to get the train into Lime Street Railway Station and walk to Eberle Street, even though it would mean returning on the Fish Train to Northampton late in the evening after the meeting.

Over the years Red Triangle Lodge No.3874 had several meeting places: 1918 – 1952 Young Men's Christian Association Rooms, Mount Pleasant, Liverpool, Lancashire, England; 1952 – 1967 Carlton Restaurant, Eberle Street, Liverpool, Lancashire, England; 1967 – 1977 Carlton Masonic Hall, Eberle Street, Liverpool, Lancashire, England; 1977 – 1987 Masonic Hall, High Street, Prescot, Lancashire, England; 1987 – 2006 Woolton Hall, Speke Road, Woolton, Liverpool, Lancashire, England.

David having returned to live up north, he was installed as WM on in October 1983. He tells me that his year in office was very memorable as he met many Masonic colleagues also in office, with whom he become lifelong friends. In fact, for the best part of 30 years, they would meet with their wives once a year outside of Freemasonry for a meal and a catch up, as well as seeing each other at Masonic meetings.

Unfortunately, all have passed to the Grand Lodge above except for Dave Critchley from Prescot Lodge No 5470 whom David did invite to this evening's celebration meeting, but unfortunately is suffering from poor health.

For those younger brethren present the masters circuits as they were known in the day, were a great way to meet new Freemasons who would become lifelong friends, if only we could start these up again.

David would after his year as immediate past master serve the lodge as its assistant director of ceremonies and director of ceremonies both at Prescot Masonic Hall and at its final meeting place at Woolton Hall. David recalls that the lodge moved to Woolton hall in 1987 as Rev Harry E Ross at the time was the group chairman of the Liverpool 6th Group and requested that the lodge move to Woolton Hall so that they would become a member of his Masonic group.

David's services to his lodge were recognised by the Province of West Lancashire when he received his first appointment to Provincial rank as a Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon on 25 May 1993. David was subsequently recognised again by the province when he received a promotion to the very high rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden on 4 October 2001, the rank he still holds today.

Red Triangle Lodge No.3874 would eventually suffer from falling member numbers, so after careful thought and in-depth discussions the decision was taken to amalgamate the lodge. Therefore, on 15 June 2006 they amalgamated with, Antient Manor Lodge No.4511 and Saint Michael's Temperance Lodge No. 3401 to form the Prescot Trinity Lodge No.3401. The ceremony took place under the supervision of the Provincial Grand Master Colin Penty Wright, at Widnes Masonic Hall due to the number of brethren attending the meeting. The newly amalgamated Lodge would thereafter use Prescot Masonic Hall as its permanent home and meeting place.

David was exalted into the Royal Arch in Liverpool Dramatic Chapter No 1609 on 11 October 1979, but due to work commitments as a Head Teacher and fixed school holiday periods, he would regularly miss two of the four chapter meetings. Therefore, due to not being able to attend regularly he sadly took the decision to resign from the chapter. David was also a member of another Masonic Order.

As we heard earlier David's inability to drive has also severely impacted on his Freemasonry and curtailed his involvement with Prescot Trinity Lodge No.3401. If his wife Pat drives him to lodge in Prescot, she must hang around in the local area otherwise by the time she drove home it would almost be time to drive back to collect him. David of course as a good husband is not prepared to make Pat do this so if he cannot get a lift of some else, he cannot attend, unfortunately no other members of the lodge live in Warrington.

Thankfully tonight David's next-door neighbour James (Jim) Burrows Stubbings PPrGSuptWks from Newton Lodge No.6288 meeting at Warrington Masonic Hall is David's personal guest and has been good enough to drive to Prescot Masonic Hall so that David can attend his special celebration. Brethren as much as charity is a large part of Freemasonry, we must remember that Service is just as important, this is why the Pro Grand Master includes Service as one of the four core values of Freemasonry along with Integrity, Friendship and Respect. Service brethren can for me start at home and include assistance to a brother in need.

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.

David such is the importance of your own diamond jubilee that our Provincial Grand Master Mark Matthews has caused a certificate to be struck to mark this wonderful achievement which I shall now ask the group chairman David Atkinson to read.