

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. Provincial Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies can you please place Barrie Norman Collinson PPrJGW, on the floor of the lodge before me and ensure that he is comfortable.

The year 1940 was a most significant one in the history of the United Kingdom and for that matter the world, as World War II was in its second year and rationing of food began in the January of that year with bacon, butter and sugar being the first foods to be rationed. The Nazis pass a law that forbids Polish Jews to travel on trains and establish the first Jewish Ghetto in Lodz, Poland. Walt Disney released its second feature film called Pinocchio, and the first transmission on FM radio is heard with a clear, static free signal.

The Germans bomb the British Fleet at Scapa Flow and Benito Mussolini, the Italian dictator joins the war on the side of Germany. In May of that year Winston Churchill becomes the British Prime Minister and in his first speech says: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat" and so begins the British fight back against Germany. Later that month sees the evacuation of 10's of 1,000s of British soldiers from Dunkirk, despite heavy German bombing of the beach and the flotilla of small boats and larger Navy ships in sea just off the coast.

The year also witnesses one of the most if not the most intensive air campaign in any war the Battle of Britain which the famous Spitfire and its cousin the Hurricane played such a vital role along with the brave men and women of the Royal Air Force. The Germans also started a day and night bombing campaign known as the Blitz, which saw the Germans bomb London for a period of 57 consecutive nights, along with several other strategic cities which included most notably Coventry and Liverpool. During the war more than 40,000 civilians were killed by the Luftwaffe bombs, and almost half of these casualties were in London, where more than 1,000,000 homes were destroyed or damaged.

Winston Churchill instructed the Royal Air Force to bomb Berlin, which they did on 25 August 1940, now brethren remember that date as we will return to it shortly. At the end of the Battle of Britain, Winston Churchill was to famously say: "Never in the field of human conflict is so much owed by so many to so few."

Some very famous people were born in 1940 in the persons of Al Pacino the actor, Patrick Stewart the actor, Katherine Ross the actress, Raquel Welch the actress, Peter Fonda the actor, John Hurt the actor, Julie Christie the actress, Chuck Norris the actor, Frankie Avalon the musician, Ringo Star the musician, Nancy Sinatra the musician and daughter of Frank Sinatra, Tom Jones the singer and of course maybe the most famous of them all Barrie Norman Collinson in February that year.

Barrie was brought up by his grandparents Vincent, who was a blacksmith and Florence. His early education was attending Fairfield Infants School on Peel House Lane, Widnes, before moving to Farnworth Church of England Primary School, Pit Lane, Widnes.

At the age of 11 years, Barrie would continue his education at Wade Deacon Grammar School, Widnes. During his time at senior school, Barrie studied hard and obtained five 'O' Levels.

In Barrie's own words he played in all the rugby union teams at school from years one to five, and upon leaving school he followed in the tradition of all the old Wade Deacon boys when at the age of 19 years in 1959 Barrie became a member and player for the Old Widnesians Rugby Club. This of course is now known as the Widnes Rugby Union Club or 'The Wids' for short. The club was founded in 1924 before moving to its present site in Heath Road, Widnes, in 1959. Barrie retired from playing at the age of 32 years of age.

Outside of school in his own time he joined the Farnworth Scouts and eventually became a senior scout, with the 12th Widnes (St Lukes Church) meeting in Farnworth Street, Widnes.

His first job was as an apprentice at Fisons Ltd, in Widnes a pharmaceutical and chemical company as an apprentice draughtsman. Barrie started at Widnes College and obtained an Ordinary National Certificate in Engineering. Fisons sent Barrie to Liverpool College of Technology and gained a Degree as a Mechanical Engineer.

Barrie later progressed to work at Dunlop Ltd, as the Assistant Works Engineer in the Belting Division and then moved him to the Tyers as an Area Engineer. Eventually Barrie moved to Pilkington Ltd as the Plant Engineer reporting to the Chief Engineer and remembers the strike 60's

Barrie finally moved to Greenall Whitley's Brewery (later Greenall's) Ltd in Warrington as an Area Engineer and then worked his way up the ladder to Chief Engineer and then finally promotion to a Director of the Brewery. Barrie eventually retired from the Brewery after 23 years' service.

Whilst working at Greenall's Brewery, Barrie had all his engineering students at Warrington Collegiate and he was asked one day to become a governor of the college which he accepted. Some years later, Barrie was asked to become a director of the college and again he accepted the opportunity. After some 20 years working for the college, Barry retired and was presented with a Fellowship of the College for all his loyal service. Barrie was telling me his name is on a board somewhere in the college marking this achievement.

Barrie was appointed as a Justice of the Peace or Magistrate in 1995 and retired when he was 70 in 2010. During his service as a Magistrate, he was Chairman of the Licensing Committee for eight years and served as a member of the Magistrates Court Committee for Cheshire.

Turning to your family life Barry, you married the love of your life Wendy in 1962 at St Luke's Church, Farnworth. Sadly, after 52 years of married life, Wendy passed away some 12 months ago, on 5 January 2024.

Barrie and Wendy had two lovely children, a son Mark aged 60 years, and married to Rayna and they have two children Chloe and Sam, and a daughter Sarah aged 56 years, married to Kirk and they have two children. Making a grand total of four beautiful grandchildren named Emma aged 31 years, Chloe aged 31 years, Matthew aged 27 years and Samuel aged 27 years. Barrie is in his own words lucky as both of his children and their families live close to him in Widnes.

Turning to Barrie's Masonic history, he was initiated into St Wilfrid's Lodge No7836 (consecrated on 18 May 1962) on 12 December 1964 at Widnes, having been proposed by his father-in-law Critchley (Critch) Garner. He was passed to the degree of a fellow craft on 26 April 1965 and raised to the sublime degree of a master Mason on 18 October 1965. Barrie was to undertake all the progressive offices before becoming the lodge's master for the first time in January 1974. Following his year as WM, Barrie would hold the offices of treasurer and group representative. He became the lodge's WM for the second time on 18 January 1999.

Barrie's services to his lodge were recognised by the Province of West Lancashire when he received his first appointment to Provincial rank as a Provincial Grand Steward on 11 May 1984. As a result of his first Provincial appointment Barrie, was able to join Quingenti Lodge No 8516, the lodge for all Provincial Grand Stewards of the Province, on 26 November 1984 and remained a member until 1 November 1999.

Barrie was subsequently recognised by the Province with a promotion in Provincial rank to the rank of Past Provincial Grand Superintendent of Works on 22 May 1988. Barrie also joined the Mersey Valley Lodge of Installed Masters No 9057 on 8 January 1988 and remained a member until 4 March 1999

He became Chairman of the Widnes Hall Appeal for Halton Haven Hospice in 2001, which raised the magnificent sum of £21,000.

St Wilfrid's Lodge, due to falling numbers, surrendered its warrant on 17 November 2004, being erased by United Grand Lodge of England on 10 March 2004. Barrie joined St Paul's Lodge No 5459 on 28 October 2003 and is still a member today, having served as both its senior warden for a period of six years and its chaplain.

Barrie was again recognised by the Province of West Lancashire on 17 October 2022, when he was promoted to the very high rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden, the rank he still holds today.

Barrie was exalted into the Royal Arch completing his journey in pure and ancient freemasonry on 16 November 1966, in Bold Chapter No 7583. Barrie undertook all the progressive offices becoming the chapters first principal on 21 November 1979. Following his year as first principal, Barrie took on the role of chapter almoner and charity steward, roles he undertook for 30 years until the chapter amalgamated.

Barrie became a member of Bold and St Paul's Chapter No.5459 on 10 November 2010, with the amalgamation of Bold Chapter No 7583 and St Paul's Chapter No 5459. Barrie resigned from the newly amalgamated chapter and the Royal Arch on 7 October 2015.

Barrie's services to his chapter were recognised by the Province of West Lancashire when he received his first appointment to Provincial Rank as Past Provincial Grand Sojourner on 25 May 1987. Barrie was subsequently recognised by the Province with a promotion to the rank of Past Provincial Grand Scribe Nehemiah on 12 May 1994.

Barrie became a member of a number of other Masonic Orders in which he has held many positions and attained high rank.

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 60th anniversary and even more so that you have allowed us to celebrate your special evening with you.

Barrie 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 our Group Chairman David Atkinson to read.