A remarkable milestone for Alan Phythian celebrates 60 years in Freemasonry

Victoria Lodge No 2360 recently celebrated six decades of commitment to Freemasonry, family, friendship and service to the community. Brethren and distinguished guests gathered to celebrate a truly remarkable milestone: for Alan Phythian's 60 years in Freemasonry.

Assistant Provincial Grand Master David Thomas led the celebration, paying tribute to a man whose life has been characterised by hard work, dedication, adventure, service and an enduring commitment to those around him. 60 years in Freemasonry is a very significant achievement. Yet Alan's story extends far beyond the lodge room. It is a story of a Liverpool upbringing, a successful career, a loving family, worldwide travels, community involvement and, above all, lasting friendships.

Alan was born in May 1937, in Norris Green, Liverpool, to Ernest and Cassandra Phythian. His early years were shaped by a strong work ethic and an enthusiasm for sport and physical activity. He attended Stonebridge Lane Secondary Modern School, where he captained the Gym Club and developed a lifelong interest in gymnastics.

He was also a talented swimmer, earning both the Bronze Medallion and the Advanced Life-Saving Award from the Liverpool Shipwreck and Humane Society, an impressive achievement requiring considerable ability and dedication.

In 1937, the year of Alan's birth, King George VI was crowned at Westminster Abbey. Frank Whittle was testing the first aircraft jet engine, the Hawker Hurricane entered RAF service, and the 999 emergency telephone number was introduced. It was also the year that The Dandy comic first appeared, bringing the legendary Desperate Dan to generations of readers.

Alan was born into a world that was changing rapidly, and he would go on to embrace many of those changes throughout his own life.

Alan's career was built on skill and determination Leaving school at the age of 15, Alan initially worked as an office boy before following his father's advice and beginning an electrical apprenticeship with Campbell and Isherwood in Liverpool.

The company supported shipping at the Port of Liverpool, maintaining dynamos, motors, ship-lighting systems and other electrical equipment. Alan combined his practical training with four years of day-release study at Old Swan Technical College.

Having qualified in 1958, he secured a position with the prestigious Cunard shipping company. This was the beginning of an exciting chapter. Alan sailed the North Atlantic routes, progressing from Sixth Electrical Officer to Third Electrical Officer on senior watch, with responsibility for the electrical equipment in the engine room.

One of the vessels on which he served was the Royal Mail Ship Carinthia, which crossed the Atlantic and travelled along the St Lawrence River to Montreal. The ship carried hundreds of passengers, including families making the journey to begin new lives in Canada.

After nearly four years at sea, Alan decided it was time for a change. In 1963, he joined Ford's Halewood Transmission Plant, where he would spend the next 29 years building an impressive career. Progressing from Maintenance Foreman to General Foreman and subsequently into management, he eventually took responsibility for the night shift and all production maintenance.

Halewood had both Transmission and Assembly Plants, although Alan would undoubtedly have maintained that the real brains of the operation were to be found in Transmission! At just 55, after 29 years' service, Alan accepted an offer too good to refuse and retired with full benefits. There was, however, one new challenge waiting at home. With Ann still working, Alan had to learn to cook!

Perhaps the most important chapter in Alan's life began in 1957, when he met Ann during a church youth holiday. Ann lived in Fazakerley, and maintaining a courtship was not always easy when Alan was regularly sailing across the Atlantic with Cunard. Happily, the romance flourished, and they were married at Emmanuel

Church in August 1962. Ann trained and worked as a junior and infant schoolteacher, and together they built a happy family life.

By November 2026, they had celebrated 64 years of marriage – a wonderful achievement in itself. They have three children, all of whom have established successful careers. And, of course, there are the grandchildren, a wonderful source of pride and happiness, and, as every grandparent knows, a gift that just keeps on giving!

Retirement allowed Alan to indulge another of his great passions: travel. Together with his enthusiasm for discovering new places and experiences, he visited more than 60 countries and regions, including the Arctic Circle, Antarctica, Hong Kong and India. From the extremes of the polar regions to the cultures and cuisines of Asia, Alan embraced the opportunity to explore the world. His adventures provided a lifetime of memories and, no doubt, plenty of stories to share around the festive board!

Alan's commitment to others was evident from an early age. At 12, he joined the Boys' Brigade, becoming a solo bugler with the rank of Sergeant. At 15, he achieved the organisation's highest honour, the Queen's Badge, and eventually rose to the rank of Staff Sergeant. His musical ability became an important part of his community service. For an impressive 25 years, Alan played the Last Post at the Cenotaph in Aughton, Ormskirk, and at Christ Church, Aughton. It was a contribution that demonstrated his respect, dedication and willingness to give his time to others. He also took great pride in coaching the 31st Childwall Boys' Brigade Company, helping them reach the standard required to win the Liverpool competition in 2010. His interests extended to football, motorcycling and rock climbing in the Lake District. In his thirties, he also gained a teaching diploma in physical education and gymnastics. These varied interests reflect a man who has always been prepared to learn, participate and take on new challenges.

Alan's Masonic journey began on 8 September 1966, when he was initiated into Adeste Fideles Lodge No 7425 at Carlton Masonic Hall, Earle Street, Liverpool. He remained an active member as the lodge later moved to Woolton Hall. His Masonic involvement also extended to other lodges and organisations. He joined Silver Jubilee Lodge No 8818 in 2009. For many years, he also served as a coordinator for MAGIC. Southport’s Masonic Action Group in the Community.

Alan's contribution to Freemasonry was never simply about attending meetings. He was always willing to help, support others and encourage new members. His work as a lodge mentor, long before it became a formal lodge office, demonstrated his commitment to helping brethren develop and enjoy their Masonic journey.

Through his close friendship with Malcolm Townley, Alan visited Victoria Lodge as a guest. He quickly decided that this was the right place for him and became a member in 2002. He continued to play an active role, sharing his experience and supporting the lodge. One of his later recruits was his longstanding friend John Taylor, who also enjoyed his time at Victoria Lodge. Sadly, John recently passed away following a heart attack and was remembered by the brethren at the previous month's meeting. Friendship has always been an important part of Alan's Masonic life and the bonds created through Freemasonry have clearly meant a great deal to him.

In October 2016, Alan took on the responsibility of becoming WM of Victoria Lodge, following the unexpected departure of the then master, H Anderson. His year in the chair of King Solomon included the initiation of new candidates and the working of first and second degree ceremonies. He also had the pleasure of declaring Leslie Gilston as master for the ensuing year and subsequently installing him into the chair of King Solomon according to ancient custom.

Alan's support for Victoria Lodge continued beyond his year as master. He was also involved for a number of years with the lodge Christmas fayre committee, contributing to the wider social and charitable life of the lodge. His commitment to the Craft was recognised by the Province. He received the rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Deacon in October 1984 and was further promoted in 1990 to the distinguished rank of Past Provincial Junior Grand Warden, which he holds today. These honours reflect the respect in which he has been held throughout his Masonic career.

In his address, David Thomas summed up Alan's life as one characterised by hard work, service to the community, commitment to family, professional success and dedication to Freemasonry. Those words capture the qualities that have been evident throughout Alan's journey.

In recent years, Alan and Ann have faced some health and mobility challenges, which have inevitably affected their lifestyle and curtailed their extensive travels. They have recently moved from their family home into a

more convenient studio apartment in Southport, better suited to their present needs. Nevertheless, the affection and respect in which Alan is held by his fellow brethren remain undiminished.

The presentation of Alan's 60 year certificate was the centrepiece of the evening.

On behalf of all the brethren present, David Thomas congratulated Alan on reaching this exceptional milestone and presented him with a certificate commemorating six decades of service to Freemasonry. The brethren were invited to join in offering their warmest congratulations and best wishes for his continued health and happiness.

60 years in Freemasonry represents much more than the passage of time. It represents friendships formed, knowledge shared, ceremonies performed, brethren supported and countless memories created. Alan's story is one of a life lived to the full – from the ships crossing the Atlantic to the factory floor at Halewood, from the mountains of the Lake District to the far corners of the world, and from his family home to the Lodge room.

On behalf of Victoria Lodge No 2360 and all who have had the pleasure of knowing him, we offer Alan Phythian our heartfelt congratulations on 60 years in Freemasonry.

Thank you, Alan, for your friendship, your service and your contribution to the Craft. May you and Ann enjoy good health, happiness and many more treasured moments together. And, as was suggested during the evening, perhaps the lodge secretary should keep November 2036 free in the diary for the 70th anniversary!

Article by Robert Thornton-Davidson