

The life and times of Gordon Hunter

So, what can I tell you about Worshipful Bro Gordon Hunter. He was born on the 25th February 1929 at 7 Grimshaw St Preston. There were no houses on Grimshaw Street. It was just a small gap in a row of terraced houses that led to a field. Nr. 7 was in fact nr. 7 caravan. This field was later to become the site of the Preston Greyhound Track. (he tells me that Wall Street collapsed at about that time and the 1930s depression followed, but I am sure that none of this can be attributed to him). About 12 months later he moved to 15 Fleetwood Street, Preston. This was quite appropriate as his parents met in Fleetwood. His Dad was working there and his Mum on holiday. His early schooling was at St. Mark's Infants when he was between 4 and 7 years old. Then St. Mark's Elementary until the outbreak of war when he was compelled to leave to attend a makeshift school under a church to be nearer home. He was allowed to go to St. Mark's school on Sundays for Sunday School. The new school, with no books or desks, started with taking the 14 year olds first, then weeks later the 13 year olds. It was some 3 months and nearly Christmas before Gordon, who was then ten, started at the school. Early in February the following year, Gordon sat the Eleven Plus exam and failed. Who could be surprised after so much upheaval due to the Second World War. What a start he was having to his life. In Feb 1942 he sat the entrance exam for the Junior Technical School of the Harris Institute, Preston's large Technical College. He won a Harris scholarship. At the age of 15 he left in the summer of 1944.

His working life started at T Fenton & Son, Preston, boilermakers, where he stayed for four years. Then Foster, Yates & Thom, in Blackburn, 6 months in fabrication, 2.5 years in the boiler shop working on Lancashire boilers 8 to 10ft diameter, 30ft long, and pressure vessels of every description. He then spent four years in their drawing office. Gordon then moved to the North Western Gas Board for two years, in their drawing Office. They were installing new equipment in an area from Colne to Darwen to Clitheroe and all gasworks in between. He spent a further two years with the National Coal Board – Altham Coke Works, in charge of small drawing office. doing similar to that he did at the Gas Board.

During his last year at FY&T he started teaching part time, evenings, at Blackburn Technical College. After just two weeks he was asked to take another class – final year National Cert Maths. In five years of part time teaching he invariably finished a year with more classes than he started with.

He successfully applied for a teaching post as Assistant Lecturer Grade B at Blackburn Technical College and two years later was promoted to Lecturer. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer on graduating with first class honours, Bsc(Eng), with the University of London in 1964. Who could have imagined these high qualifications after the hard start he had in life.

On 1st Jan 1981 he was appointed Head of the Engineering Department at the Leyland Motors Technical College. Unfortunately, on the 31st Aug 1985, the college was closed and Gordon was made redundant. After resting for 12 months (another way of saying “on the dole”), a chance

encounter with the manager of Training 2000 resulted in employment in charge of their Drawing Office from late Sept 1986 to late March eight years later, leading up to his retirement age. A gentle way of preparing for retirement working six months a year.

If you think this is a busy life you only have part of the story.

Gordon married Joan on Christmas Eve, 1949 and in over 65 years of happy marriage raised five children, became grandfather to seven and great grandfather to seven. He is very proud of his family and has every right to be.

He has been very heavily involved, throughout his life, with the Scouting movement. At the age of 18, having obtained his Ordinary National Certificate in Mechanical Engineering he enrolled for the HNC course only to find out that it clashed with his Scout troop night. Undeterred he continued with his studies and found another Scout troop meeting on a different night to work with. He has been long associated with Waddecar Scout Camp and often did Wardens duties there at weekends and for a full week at the height of the season.

He has been associated with the Church throughout his life and actually first saw Joan when he was a 15 year old and Joan was Rose Queen, in a procession on her way to be crowned.

How he has found the time to become a Mason and devote so much time and energy to it is quite remarkable. As we have just heard, Gordon was Initiated into St Aidan Lodge on the 15th of January 1968. Ten years later he was made Master of the Lodge. (in those 10 years he was made a steward in the same year he was initiated, after one year was appointed Asst Secretary prior to filling the Lodge offices in rotation and on coming out of the chair was immediately appointed Secretary). In 1986 he was appointed PProvJGD, in 1994 promoted to PProvGSwdB and in 2003 to PProvSGW, the rank he holds today. Gordon has also passed through the chair of Hyndburn Lodge in 1998, and is still a member there as well as being a member Hyndburn Lodge of Installed Masters.

With regard to the Royal Arch, he passed through the First Principles Chair of Leopold Chapter in 1986 and currently holds Grand rank of PGStB. He is also a member of Whalley Arches with Gratitude Chapter. He was a member of DeLacey Mark for a short time but due to it clashing with his teaching duties he had to give that up. In his first 42 years in masonry he amassed 48 cumulative years as Secretary, counting its equivalent in the Royal Arch. Remarkable.

Gordon is currently very active with the Accrington and District Fellowship having been chairman since 2002.

One of the most surprising things about Gordon is that he pops up everywhere. On Easter Sundays I regularly see him standing outside our Church door handing out easter eggs, which he has purchased himself, to the children as they leave.

WM, it has been my pleasure to know Gordon for the 30 plus years that I have been a member of this Lodge.