

WBro George Clark PProvGSwdB

A Personal History

George was born in 1930 at the Lake Hospital in Ashton-u-Lyne. He lived with his mother and father in Canal Street, Stalybridge. George attended the Wesleyan Methodist Primary School until he was 11 years old, and then continued his education at West Hill Boys Secondary School where he was Top Boy, and in view of this was offered a place at Stockport Technical College. His father, however, said he should start work, so George left School at the age of 14, which was quite common in those days.

In September 1944 George started work as an apprentice draughtsman with Thomas Wainwright & Sons, Engineers & Millwrights and conveniently based in Canal Street. At the age of 16 George obtained day release to attend Openshaw Technical College, where he studied for and received his National Certificate. George continued his education at the Manchester College of Science and Technology, where he obtained his Higher National Certificate.

At the same time that he was pursuing his education, from the age of 17, George was travelling all over Lancashire to Cotton Mills, measuring up for the electrification of mill machinery as well as repairs to steam engines. The work was diverse and also included the Rubber and Paper making Industry. One of the Paper Mills he visited was John Hargreaves, who at that time had mills in Stalybridge and Collyhurst which had been closed during the war. George was given the job of rearranging the requisitioned plant and bringing it back into production.

Unfortunately, in the summer of 1964, Wainwright's ceased business as a result of the general decline in the Cotton Industry. John Hargreaves heard of this and offered George the position of Chief Engineer at their two mills. So in September 1964 George started work for Hargreaves, and was responsible for the great expansion in the corrugating side of the business. He occupied this position of Chief Engineer until his retirement in 1995. During this period George continued with his studies, taking A Levels in Pure AND Applied Maths, and not content with this he took a Part Time Teachers course at Ashton College which enabled him to teach Maths and Engineering Drawing for a number of years.

George was a member of the Youth Hostels Association and it was while on a visit to the Lake District that he met Bessie, and in 1956 they married at St Stephens Church, Audenshaw. After their marriage they moved into a new house in Ashton under Lyne. Their love of the outdoors continued and they spent many years cycling and walking. Their son Philip was born in 1962 and their daughter Jillian followed in 1970. They are now proud Grandparents with four grandchildren.

18th May 1968 was the 50th Anniversary of Kershaw Lodge and it was at this meeting that George was proposed for membership by Brian Bancroft and

seconded by Harry Green. George was initiated on the 14th January 1969 by WBro R W Jones, his first step in an impressive career in masonry. He was passed by WBro E Walton and raised by WBro G.W.V. Buckle. In 1973 George was elected to serve on the Ashton Masonic Club Committee. Even while still a Steward, George, in 1976 delivered the 2nd Degree Tracing Board and in 1977, only eight years after being initiated, George commenced his first floor office in the Lodge, Junior Deacon. How things have changed!

George was installed into the Chair of Kershaw Lodge in February 1981 and during his year in office he, initiated and passed WBro F Harries, raised Bro J.H.May, initiated our D.C. WBro E Newby, passed Bro W.D. Mundy, and installed WBro W. Eastwood. In May 1989 George received his first Provincial Appointment PProvJGD.

During the 1980's, after finding some of his ancestors graves in St. Paul's Churchyard Stalybridge, and always having had an interest in genealogy, George decided to copy the inscriptions on all the graves and the Vicar gave him access to the registers and other records. In 1999 he was persuaded to enter a Family History Competition and won the first prize, a cheque from Tameside Council. In total George recorded more than 10,000 Graves, 14 Burial Registers and 4 Baptism Registers. Since then he has transcribed and indexed other churches and is still carrying on his research.

During this period George has always remained committed to his masonry and occupied the chair on a further five occasions to raise, initiate, and install WBro J.H.Critchley, to raise WBro P.S.Brown to Initiate Bro F.W.Savage to name but a few.

In September of 1973 George was exalted into Perseverance Chapter, again giving it total commitment. He has been First Principle on three occasions in 1987, 2009 and 2014. If that was not enough, he served as Secretary for eleven years.

At the meeting in February 1996 George was once again installed into the chair of Kershaw Lodge. His record and his commitment to Kershaw is shown in any examination of the records. He has conducted 5 Installations, 14 Tracing Boards, 7 Initiations, 4 Passings, 4 Raisings and numerous Address's and presentations. George was Secretary of the Lodge for 11 years and Chaplain for another five.

George and Bessie still found time for the outdoors, joining the Ashton Walking Club of which they remain members today. They have also enjoyed holidays and have visited America, Canada, Australia, China, India and South Africa, though these days their holidays tend to be restricted to coach trips.

In the year 2000 George was promoted to PProvDepGSwdB, and then to PProvGSwdB in 2017. He has also been given honours in the Royal Arch where, since 2012, he has been PProvGSN.

In the year 2017 to 2018 George was elected as President of Ashton under Lyne Masonic Hall and Club, serving with great distinction. In Kershaw Lodge's Centenary Year, 2018, a committee was formed to research the Lodge's history and produce a Centenary Booklet. This work involved examining all the records and data collected and stored from the Lodge's inception in 1916. Needless to say, George was a major researcher and contributor towards the production of this Centenary Booklet and without his commitment it would not have been written.

Kershaw is a happy lodge and benefits from the presence of Brothers like WBro George Clark PProvGSwdB.