

## HISTORY OF ASHLAR LODGE A.F.&A.M. 610, GRC - 1973-1983(inc.)

### 50th ANNIVERSARY

The 50th anniversary of Ashlar held in 1972 is well detailed in the historical sketch printed at that time. There are, however, a few things that should be added to the story of that successful and enjoyable event.

During the entire 50th anniversary year a brief summary of events taken from the minutes of Ashlar lodge was included with each monthly summons. These not only helped to create interest in the event but won commendation from the Grand Master of that year - Most Worshipful Bro. Wm. K. Bailey.

Although it was mentioned in our historical sketch it is stated here again that Ashlar was honoured in that Masonic year by the London West District and Grand Lodge in that Rt. Wor. Bro. Richard D. Palser was elected District Deputy Grand Master and Ver. Wor. Bro. Leroy Noble was chosen as district secretary.

New Officer's collars were purchased and were dedicated at the September meeting that year by Rt. Wor. Bro. the Reverend Harold Snell, past Grand Chaplain, and minister of Riverside church. A large and well attended church service was held on October 15th in the Byron United church with the district chaplain, Wor. Bro. the Reverend Geo. Morris in charge.

The 50th anniversary banquet and lodge meeting on October 30th was attended by 250 Masons, including 18 Past Grand Lodge Officers and 7 District Deputy Grand Masters from London and surrounding districts. The Deputy Grand Master, Rt. Wor. Bro. Dr. Geo. E. Turner, of Windsor, was also present.

A fitting ending to the memorable occasion was the closing of the lights by the Deputy Grand Master assisted by Ver. Wor. Bro. Eli Davis with the 7 DDGM's surrounding the altar.

### SECRETARIES

serving

After, faithfully and well for six years Wor. Bro. Harry Unwin decided to step down as secretary at the end of 1974. The Brethren immediately presented him with a life membership as a small token of appreciation for his services.



Ver. Wor. Bro. Leroy Noble was elected secretary beginning in 1975 and continued in that office to the end of 1981. He instituted a very nice gesture by presenting each Master, at the end of his term, with a nicely bound booklet containing the lodge notices of his term of office. Ver. Wor. Bro. Noble was also given a life membership.

Wor. Bro. Wm. Macrow was elected secretary for 1981 and still served in that office at the end of 1983 and beyond that date.

TYLER

Back in 1956 Bro. Norman Dickson was elected Tyler of Ashlar Lodge. He performed this important duty faithfully and well and when Oakridge Lodge no. 708 was instituted in 1962 he was elected Tyler of that lodge.

Bro. Dickson endeared himself to all members of both lodges and in March, 1975, he was given honorary membership in Ashlar. On the 20th day of the same month Ashlar joined with Oakridge to honour Bro. Dickson at a very well attended banquet held at Hyde Park United church. Unfortunately, Bro. Dickson had suffered a severe stroke prior to this time and was confined to a wheel chair.

In November, 1977, he was appointed honorary Tyler of Ashlar to act when he was able and a letter of appreciation was sent to him thanking him for 21 years of faithful service.

For several years after his stroke he was confined to Westminster Hospital. He attended Oakridge lodge several times when his faithful friend, Wor. Bro. Filip Cappa either took him or saw that he was brought to lodge. He was saddened in 1979 by the loss of his wife, Mary, his companion for more than 50 years.

Following the death of his wife Bro. Dickson seemed to lose interest in living and finally passed to the Grand Lodge above in December 1983.

Although the office of Tyler was given to a Past Master each year Bro. Wm. Summers performed this task for some time when his health permitted. In March, 1981, he, too, was honored with a life membership in Ashlar.

PROPOSED SALE OF BUILDING

During the years 1974 to 1978 certain business men showed an interest in developing the property around the lodge premises. The lower part of our building had ceased to be used as a bowling alley in 1974 and was rented by the company (Byron Bowling Lanes Ltd.) to an individual operating a ceramics establishment.

In September, 1974, the company had the value of the building appraised at approximately \$70,000. and the lodge agreed to sell its equity in the building for \$38,000. and move to other premises. This deal was not consummated and the property west of our building was then developed into a small commercial mall containing several stores.

In October, 1975, a motion was made in lodge to cooperate with the company and sell the building to the present tenant. This, also, was not possible and in 1979 a commercial and office complex was built to the east and closely adjoining our lodge building. This had the effect of improving the appearance of our building and also effectively ended, for the time being, any attempt to include our property in a development scheme.

BUILDING IMPROVEMENTS

It was mentioned in the 50th anniversary sketch that the ante room was enlarged and renovated. During the years 1976 to 1979 our building was continually being improved and repaired. Much of the credit for the ideas, supervision, and actual work, goes to Wor. Bro. Stanley Norris who gave unstintingly of his time and experience to make our building and lodge premises one of the nicest in the district. Many volunteers assisted in this work and Wor. Bro.'s Wm. Phillips and Robert Soper deserve honourable mention for their tireless efforts in organizing the work.

Some of the projects are listed below:

1. two flags (Canadian and Provincial) donated by the officers.
2. new fire exit door installed in 1977.
3. Masonic emblem sign on outside of building donated by Wor. Bro. Wm. Phillips.
4. Storm windows installed and cracks sealed (1978) by Wor. Bro. Robert Soper.
5. lodge room painted and insulation put in walls (1977). (Reported savings of 22% in heating costs in winter of '78-79 over '77-78)
6. set of square and compasses put on west wall of lodge room by Bro. Henry Muirhead.



7. set of new working tools donated by the 1978 officers
8. during the summer of 1979 the outside of the building was painted and a light put over the sign.
9. in 1978 and 1979 sidewalk sales of donated items were held to raise money for the building improvement fund.
10. as a 60th anniversary project in 1982 the entrance way to our building and the stairs leading to the ante room were carpeted and the walls painted thus completing the renovations. Wor. Bro. Stan. Norris again gave of his time and experience and Wor. Bro.'s Robt. Soper, Reg. Thody and Rt. Wor. Bro. Ross Fuller helped with the painting.

DEATHS OF OTHER PROMINENT MEMBERS

In 1973, three 50 year membership pins were presented to 3 members who joined in the earliest beginnings of our lodge. They were Wor. Bro. Geo. Wickerson, Wor. Bro. Geo. Harris and Bro. Frank Taylor. Unfortunately, Bro.'s Harris and Wickerson did not live long after this. Wor. Bro. Harris passed to the Grand Lodge above in 1976 and Wor. Bro. Wickerson in 1978. Bro. Frank Taylor died in 1980 after having been a member for some 58 years.

At the Ladies Night in 1977 Wor. Bro. Wickerson was presented with a memorial plaque for being the oldest living Past Master at the time. This gesture was very much appreciated by Bro. Wickerson and his wife, who, in 1979, sent a cheque to Ashlar in memory of her husband.

In 1976 one of the first, and most active, members of Ashlar, Ver. Wor. Bro. Eli Davis, died after being in failing health for some time. Ver. Wor. Bro. Davis was one of the members honored for 50 years service at our 50th anniversary celebration and was a faithful attender at lodge. He could always be counted on for excellent ritual and for the occasional different, and often humorous, explanation of the work.

Ashlar's oldest Mason, Wor. Bro. Percy Simpson, who celebrated his 95th birthday on March 29, 1977, passed to the Grand Lodge above in June of that year. Wor. Bro. Simpson was initiated



in Lebanon Forest lodge no. 133, in Exeter, Ont. in 1905. He then moved to Detroit but later returned to London and joined St. John's no. 209a. In 1929, after having moved to Byron, he affiliated with Ashlar and was Master in 1941. At the time of his death he had been a Mason for 72 years and a Past Master for 36. A special night had previously been held in May, 1975, for Wor. Bro. Simpson when he was presented with his 70 year pin. The District Deputy Grand Masters from London West, London East, and South Huron districts were present for that occasion.

Bro. Bert Foyston was initiated in 1930 and died in 1980. His family donated \$80 to the lodge for Masonic projects in his memory. The money was used for the framing of pictures of Past Masters ~~and~~ hung in the ante room.

In the fall of 1976 a bequest was received from the estate of the late Wor. Bro. Geo. Harris in the amount of \$2,000.

Two other prominent members of Ashlar died very close to the 60th anniversary celebration in October, 1982.

Wor. Bro. Ronald Taylor, our Worshipful Master in 1979, had a coronary artery by-pass during his term as Master. He recovered very well from that operation but, unfortunately, died of a brain tumour in September, 1982.

Bro. Henry Muirhead, a very fine craftsman in wood, presented the lodge with a square and compass that was hung on the wall just behind the Junior Warden. As has been noted, Wor. Bro. Geo. Harris left a sizable sum of money to the lodge. From these funds Bro. Muirhead built a very substantial desk for the Tyler's register and other necessities just outside the lodge room.

Coming up to our 60th anniversary Bro. Muirhead was Senior Deacon in the lodge. He stated he wanted to make something for the celebration so he built a beautiful oak lectern that stands in the south west corner of the lodge room.

Just about the time of our celebration he learned that he must have an operation and, unfortunately, he died on November 23rd, 1982. The lodge was saddened by his passing, but, on April 25, 1983, Rt. Wor. Bro. Reverend Geo. Morris, Past Grand Chaplain, dedicated the square and compass and the lectern to the memory of

departed brethren and the Tyler's desk to the memory of Wor. Bro. Geo. Harris.

The Masonic history of Rt. Wor. Bro. Hector McKillop is noted in both the 50th and 60th booklets. Although Bro. McKillop, due to his vocation, moved several times he always kept his membership in Ashlar and usually attended our meetings at least once per year. He was District Deputy Grand Master of Hamilton District B in 1963-64 and in October, 1981 Ashlar presented him with his 50 year pin. Following this his health failed and he died on October 17, 1983.

#### FEES AND DUES

During these inflationary times fees and dues were increased several times. In early 1976 the dues were raised from \$12 to \$15. In December of the same year they went to \$20 and in 1977 they were raised to \$25. At the end of 1979 dues were boosted to the all time high figure of \$30.

During the same period initiation fees went from \$125 to \$140, then to \$150 and at the end of 1979 they stood at \$200. (This figure included the first year's dues.)

In September, 1983, however, fees and dues were changed once again when the by-laws were re-written. Initiation fees were now \$300 which included the apron and the first year's dues.

Yearly dues were now \$35 for those members living in the London Masonic district-\$30 for those residing outside.

#### LIFE MEMBERSHIPS

Life memberships were only \$50 after 30 years prior to 1972. They were raised slightly in the latter part of the '70's and a Life Membership account was set up. In the revision of the by-laws in 1983, however, an entirely new policy was adopted. This was probably due to the fact that so many of our members had become life members and the interest from the Life Membership account would not likely be able to carry the lodge in a year when there<sup>WERE</sup> no candidates.

The 1983 version of life memberships is as follows:

- a. Life membership is now \$500 if purchased on joining the lodge.



b. any member may purchase life membership after 5 years for the payment of \$400 less \$13 for each year that dues have been paid up to 30 years.

c. All brethren who have been 30 years in good standing may be made a life member for \$100.

HEALTH AND WELFARE

Besides visiting the sick and shut-in's Ashlar brethren were active in helping their fellow citizens in various ways.

Starting in December, 1979, plants were delivered to widows of Ashlar members at Christmas time. This practice was continued the following years.

In 1973 a group of the officers visited Masons at the Dearness Home for Senior Citizens for a fraternal time together. That same year, at Christmas time, one of our officers, Bro. John Austin, put on a puppet show for the children at St. Anne's Anglican church.

In 1974 the lodge won the District Deputy Grand Master's trophy for the largest increase in the number of blood donations given by a lodge and in 1978 it won the trophy named in honour of one of our own Past Masters, - Wor. Bro. Maurice Roberts, for the largest percentage number of donations.

In 1979 Ashlar joined all other Masons in the grand jurisdiction to raise money for the HELP program (hearing for every living person). The purpose of this program was to raise a capital fund from which the interest would be given for research into hearing problems. The fund had a target of \$350,000 and was supposed to be a project for the 125th anniversary of Grand Lodge in July, 1980. So successful was this campaign that Grand Lodge had exceeded its target by \$150,000 by July, 1979. Likewise, Ashlar's committee composed of Wor. Bro. J.T. Macmillan and Br. Mac. Tilden was successful in getting Ashlar Brethren to donate \$672 or 134.4% of our quota.

In 1982 and 1983 Ashlar participated in another Grand Lodge project which was sponsored by Heritage Lodge 730 in Cambridge. The plan was to install a Masonic lodge room in a pre- confederation building in Black Creek Pioneer village near Toronto. The project was entitled HOME. The cost was approximately

\$100,000 and every lodge in Grand Lodge in Ontario was asked to help. Ashlar's representative for this undertaking was Wor. Bro. Mac. Tilden and Ashlar brethren contributed well. The cornerstone was laid on October 1, 1983 by the Grand Master, Most Wor. Bro. Ronald Groshaw in the presence of Mrs. Pauline McGibbon, former Lieutenant Governor acting in the capacity of honorary reeve.

BY-LAWS AND OTHER CHANGES

It had been the custom of Ashlar lodge, for some years, when a brother died, to send a floral tribute to the funeral. In 1977 it was decided to change this policy and send \$10 to the Masonic Benevolent Association rather than a floral tribute. A suitable card is then sent to the family of the member.

Also, the regular meeting in June had usually been a pretty warm night and attendance and interest are at a low ebb. Following the urging of Grand Lodge it was decided to dispense with the June meeting commencing in 1979. Since that time some of the Masters have held a barb-b-que for the members at their home in June.

In January of 1983 an amendment to the by-laws was approved moving the installation date from the third to the first Monday of December.

In September, 1983, the lodge approved a notice of motion made by Wor. Bro. Robert Shaw that our by-laws be re-written and brought up to date including new fees and dues. After the new by-laws were approved by Grand Lodge sufficient copies were printed for each member.

DEGREE TEAMS (see also 1983)

A number of different degree teams have visited Ashlar in the past few years. This, of course, often happens when one of their number is being initiated, passed, or raised, or installed as Master. On other occasions a degree team is called in to assist the officers in a busy schedule or to provide a change in the format of meetings. One such team that has contributed to the work at Ashlar is the degree team of the 1969 Masters. Our Master on that year was Ver. Wor. Bro. Leroy Noble and this team has put on an excellent degree no less than 8 times from



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1974 to the end of 1983. It is made up of active, capable, and well known Masons of the London West district.

MEMBERSHIP

Despite many new candidates and a very high level of interest, membership stayed almost the same. It was 171 at the end of 1972 and 173 at the end of 1979. On December 31, 1983 it was 176.

This can be attributed to the fact that 30 of our members died during the period and there were more than the usual number of suspensions for non payment of dues and members taking their demit.

WALKATHONS

In the late 1970's the Senior Wardens of the two London districts started a 10 km. walk to raise money for worthwhile community projects. Some of the projects were: the Masonic Charitable Foundation, Handicapped Adults, a piece of sophisticated hospital equipment and the Ronald McDonald home for out of town relatives of hospital patients. Considerable sums of money were raised from these annual walkathons which wound up with a very nice dinner at the home of Rt. Wor. Bro. Wm. Pellow, Past District Deputy Grand Master of the London East district and a member of the Board of General Purposes of Grand Lodge. As an example, \$12,000 was raised in 1983.

Ashlar Senior Wardens were always happy to participate in these enjoyable events.

125TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GRAND LODGE 1980

Early in 1980 Ashlar purchased one hundred 125th anniversary coins to be sold and distributed to the members.

On June 21, 1980, many Ashlar members participated in probably the first outdoor Masonic meeting to be held in the London district. It was a 125th anniversary project on Masonic Education and was held on the farm of Rt. Wor. Bro. Wm. Frank near Hyde Park. The setting was ideal in that no outsiders could see into the narrow valley that was guarded by Masonic Tylers.

One of Ashlar's projects for the 125th anniversary of Grand Lodge was the painting of the outside of our building. This was done during the summer of 1979.



PAST MASTERS MEETINGS

Around 1980 it was suggested that the Past Masters of Ashlar have a dinner once a year to talk about the lodge and make suggestions for improvements.

This practice was therefore instituted and has continued since that time with a very good attendance of Past Masters and a worthwhile discussion of lodge affairs.

It is usually held in November and the Immediate Past Master was directed to look after the arrangements.

60TH ANNIVERSARY - 1982

At the end of 1981 Ashlar appointed a committee to plan and execute its Diamond jubilee. The committee consisted of all Past Masters and the 1982 officers. Leading up to the celebration a short paragraph about Ashlar's history was printed in each 1982 summons.

A very complete and informative booklet was prepared which contains a great deal of information about Ashlar's history and other details of the anniversary program. This professional type booklet was provided free of charge by two Ashlar members, Bros. Graham Rendall and Wm. Watters. Many favourable comments on the booklet were heard and received.

The main speaker for the event was Most Wor. Bro. Robt. E. Davies, Past Grand Master and present Grand Secretary.

Over 150 Masons attended the banquet which was held on October 25, 1982 in the Parish Hall of St. Anne's Anglican church.

The main project for the event was the re-painting and provision of carpet for the main entrance to our building and the stairs leading to the ante room. Bro. Henry Muirhead also presented the lodge with a beautifully hand crafted oak lectern.

Correspondence and committee agendas, etc., for the anniversary committee are contained with the history in Ashlar's historical file.

This celebration along with the 50th anniversary contributed greatly to the camaraderie and brotherly love and affection of Ashlar members. The committee's main objective was to involve as many Ashlar members as possible but we were pleased.

to have a goodly number of visitors. These included 2 Past Grand Masters, 6 members of the Board of General Purposes, the Grand Junior and Senior Wardens, 6 1982 District Deputy Grand Masters including the two from the London districts, and a great many Past Grand Lodge Officers.

It was also gratifying to realize that the celebration did not cost the lodge any extra money as a profit of \$518 was realized. The fund raising projects included the sale of 1,000 pens marked with suitable Masonic insignia and advertising the anniversary, a garage sale, and a 10 km. walk by a few Past Masters sponsored by other members and their friends.

The celebration merited complimentary comments in the Grand Lodge Bulletin and the Freemason magazine. Also, the newsletter of the London Valley of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite praised Ashlar's efforts.

All in all it was a very worthwhile experience for Ashlar lodge.

#### GRAND LODGE HONOURS

Over the years Ashlar lodge members have been honoured by Grand Lodge. Those so honoured up to 1972 were detailed in the historical sketch in our 50th anniversary booklet.

In 1976, Wor. Bro. R.J. Sanderson, a member of Ashlar, and a Past Master of Oakridge lodge 708, was given the rank of Grand Steward.

In 1981, Wor. Bro. Filip Cappa, also a member of Ashlar, and a Past Master of Oakridge lodge, was elected District Deputy Grand Master of the London West district representing Oakridge. Ashlar members were pleased that its sister lodge, Oakridge, had received its first Grand Lodge honours since its inception in 1962.

At the Grand Lodge Communication held in July, 1982, Wor. Bro. Harry Unwin, a very faithful member of Ashlar, was honoured with the rank of Grand Steward.

By the end of 1983 Ashlar was looking forward to the election of another District Deputy Grand Master as our last member of that office, Rt. Wor. Bro. Richard Palser, was elected in 1972-73. Since there are only 14 lodges in the London West district it would be Ashlar's turn in the not too distant future.



## HISTORY OF ASHLAR LODGE- 1973-1983

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### 50 YEAR PINS

In addition to those mentioned previously in 1973 50 year pins were presented to the following Brethren:

Bro. Sam Brown	initiated in 1923
Wor. Bro. Roy Weir	" 1927 - W.M. in 1944
Bro. Thomas Higgs	" 1928
Rt. Wor. Bro. Hec. McKillop	1931
Bro. Arthur Gosnell	" 1932
Bro. Walter Grover	" 1932
Bro. Dr. H.H. Gilbert	" 1933

### THE YEAR 1983

The year 1983 was a very busy year for Ashlar. It started in January with the 600th regular meeting and it is interesting to note that the 500th regular meeting took place just prior to the celebration of our 50th anniversary in 1972.

The heightened activity in 1983 could have been partly the impact of the 60th anniversary but more likely the interest and dedication of the members. No less than 9 emergent meetings were held during the year.

Three outside degree teams came to Ashlar to confer degrees. They were, the 1979 Masters, the Alumni Group of the Mocha Temple Shrine, and the Past District Deputy Grand Masters of South Huron Masonic district. Incidentally, the '79 Masters dedicated a Secretary's collar and jewel to the memory of our '79 Master, Wor. Bro. Ron Taylor, who had died in 1982.

In October, a delegation visited us from a sister lodge, Ashlar no. 701 in Tillsonburg.

At the November meeting the organ, which had been purchased from the Officer's fund, was dedicated to the memory of departed Brethren by Rt. Wor. Bro. Geo. Morris, past Grand Chaplain.

### CONCLUSION

Ashlar lodge experienced a very progressive period in the years from the 50th anniversary to the end of 1983. It was blessed with capable, interested, and energetic Masters and officers. If the same enthusiasm and hard work continue, Ashlar's future history should be as outstanding as its past.

This history researched and written by Rt. Wor. Bro.  
Ross C. Fuller