

HISTORY OF ASHLAR LODGE A.F.&A.M. 610, GRC, 1984-1989

In order to really understand and appreciate the history of Ashlar Lodge, the reader is urged to read the following historical documents:

1. The 50th anniversary booklet published in 1972
2. The 60th anniversary booklet and program published in 1982
3. The written history of Ashlar lodge - 1973-1983 inc.

The period 1984-1989 in Ashlar lodge was a continuation of progress and interest by its officers and many of its members. Despite many deaths and other declines in membership, such as demits and suspension for non payment of dues, the general interest level and participation of members remained high.

Some of the activities, projects, and other information are included in the following and these will be dealt with individually in this history:

1. Grand Lodge officers and appointments.
2. Listing of Worshipful Masters for the period and changes in Secretary and Treasurer.
3. Recognition of long service.
4. Constitutional changes.
5. Regular and Special meetings.
6. Donations and Presentations - books, bequests, etc.
7. Lodge projects.
8. Lodge building.
9. Blood Donations.
10. Break-in.
11. Deaths.
12. Conclusion.

1. GRAND LODGE OFFICERS AND APPOINTMENTS

During the early years of Ashlar's history it took a considerable length of time for lodges in the London district to obtain Grand Lodge officers. For instance, the first District Deputy Grand Master for Ashlar was Rt. Worshipful Bro. Fred Fuller who was elected in 1935 and then his nephew, Rt. Wor. Bro. Ross Fuller was elected in 1961, some 26 years later, when the London district had 25 lodges.

Following the division of the district into London East and London West in 1965, Ashlar was honoured in 1972 during its 50th anniversary year when Rt. Wor. Bro. Richard D. Palser was elected DDGM of the London West district and Very Worshipful Bro. Leroy Noble was district secretary.

Over the years, also, other members of Ashlar had been honoured by Grand Lodge. These include, Rt. Wor. Bro. Hector McKillop, DDGM of Hamilton District A in 1963-4 and Rt. Wor. Bro. Filip Cappa, a member of Ashlar and past Master of Oakridge 708, in 1981-82.

In 1962, Ver. Wor. Bro. Rolfe Weekes was appointed to the Grand Lodge office of Grand Sword Bearer.

Grand Stewards to the end of 1986 were, Ver. Wor. Bro. Eli Davis in 1936, Ver. Wor. Bro. Robert Preston in 1967, VW Bro. Leroy Noble in 1973 and VW Bro. Harry Unwin in 1982.

Ver. Wor. Bro. R.J. Sanderson, a member of Ashlar and a past Master of Oakridge lodge 708, was made a Grand Steward in 1976.

At the 132nd Grand Lodge Communication in July, 1987, Rt. Wor. Bro. McKenzie Tilden, of Ashlar, was elected DDGM of the London West district and Ver. Wor. Bro. Fred Cotton was district secretary. At Rt. Wor. Bro. Tilden's official visit to Ashlar in February, 1988, he was accompanied by 6 DDGM's of other districts, 5 present Grand Lodge officers, 5 past DDGMs and 5 past Ver. Wor.'s.

Also, in 1987, both London Masonic districts were honoured when Most Worshipful Bro. William Pellow was elected Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Canada in the Province of Ontario. MW Bro. Pellow wisely chose Ver. Wor. Bro. Phillip Brown of Ashlar, as his Grand Director of Ceremonies. VW Bro. Brown was appointed to the Grand Lodge committee on Grievances and Appeals. He felt singularly honoured in this appointment being the only Very Worshipful on the committee whose membership was made up of 12 past Grand Masters and 5 past DDGM's.

In 1986 Ashlar was fortunate in that Rt. Wor. Bro. Joseph Harding, a past DDGM of Sarnia district, affiliated, after

moving to London. He was initiated in St. Clair Lodge no. 425, Sombra, Ont. Rt. Wor. Bro. Harding has made a significant contribution to Ashlar lodge.

2. WORSHIPFUL MASTERS AND OFFICERS

Although Worshipful Masters are always listed chronologically in all notices, they are also listed here for the period 1984-1989 inclusive. Each one has his own style in being the chief officer in his year as Worshipful Master as can be seen by the diversity of accomplishments.

They are :

- 1984-WB Larry Carter
- 1985-WB Denys Mortimer
- 1986-WB Kenneth Turner
- 1987-WB Patrick Roi
- 1988-WB Victor Speake
- 1989-WB Wm. J.D. Harkness

Wor. Bro. Wm. Macrow, who was elected secretary in 1981, decided, after 7 years and some health problems, that he would like to be relieved of this responsibility. As with all other Ashlar secretaries, WB Macrow was very conscientious and faithful. All Worshipful Masters will attest to the fact that the secretary is his most faithful ally and counselor during his governing year. Ashlar was indeed blessed in having a well qualified, capable, affiliated member in the person of WB Geoffrey Lund agree to assume the office of secretary beginning in 1988. WB Lund is a past Master of Power Lodge no. 8051, Yorkshire, (West Riding), England. He brings to our lodge much experience and an abiding love and interest in Freemasonry. He has been very diligent in researching all aspects of Ashlar's bylaws and the constitution of Grand Lodge. He has been most helpful to the Board of General Purposes.

In July, 1984. WB Robert Soper, treasurer of Ashlar, moved to Bracebridge, Ont. He was a very efficient treasurer and active member of the lodge. We were then fortunate in that VW Bro. Philip Brown agreed to assume the office and was still carrying on very capably in that position at the end of 1989.

3. RECOGNITION OF LONG SERVICE

One of the satisfying things in Masonry is the recognition of long service to the Craft. Since better health care, etc., has become commonplace, men are living longer, and are, in most cases, able to enjoy Masonry in their declining years. Despite many deaths, Ashlar was able to recognize some of its long time

members in this period of history.

Bro. Thomas Sanderson was given a 50 year pin in February, 1983 and WB Bro. Reg. Thody received his in December of the same year. At the installation of the Worshipful Master in December, 1989, WB Thody was congratulated on the 40th anniversary of his installation as Worshipful Master.

In May of 1984 Bro. Leslie Rafuse was given a 60 year pin at his home having been initiated in 1924. Unfortunately, Bro. Rafuse lived only 3 years after this and passed to the Grand Lodge above on July 16, 1987.

In addition to the above, 20, twenty five year pins were presented during this period of history.

Masonic lodges are always interested in the special anniversaries, events, etc., of their members, and, in this connection, in May, 1986, Ashlar congratulated Bro. Don McKenzie and his wife, Margaret, on being married 50 years.

4. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

a. Dues

A notice of motion passed in 1983 raised yearly dues to \$35 for resident members and \$30 for out of town members. Rising costs forced an upward change in 1986 to \$40 and \$35, and, in October, 1988 annual dues were raised to \$50 for resident members and \$45 for members residing outside the combined London districts.

Initiation fees remained at \$300 in 1988 - the same as amended in 1983.

b. Life Memberships

A life membership account was set up in the 1970's and many members took advantage of its liberal terms. Prior to 1972 it was only \$50 after 30 years, but, in 1983, this was changed to \$500 at initiation or \$400 after 5 years less \$13 for each year dues had been paid up to 30 years. All brethren who had 30 years in good standing could be made a life member for \$100 plus Grand Lodge fee for commutation of dues.

The original and 1983 rates for life membership were such that on January 1, 1984, Ashlar lodge had 164 members - 85 life and 79 annual dues paying members. By December 31, 1989, the membership had declined to 147 - 78 life and 69 annual dues paying members.

Because of this membership decline and perhaps because very few new candidates were being initiated the lodge passed a motion in 1988 that life memberships could no longer be purchased but that those members who held life memberships would continue to enjoy that privilege.

Also, in 1988, a finance committee consisting of the Worshipful Master, Senior Warden, Junior Warden, treasurer and secretary was set up to monitor the financial affairs of the lodge and report to the Board of General Purposes.

The Board decided that the life membership fund was greatly underfunded and asked each life member to make a donation to the capital fund to make it more viable. To the end of 1989 approximately 30 life members had contributed the sum of \$3,220.

c. Other changes

The Grand Master, MW Wm. Pellow, made strong statements to all constituent lodges that a lodge building should be called a Masonic lodge rather than a Masonic temple.

Thus, in the bylaw changes of 1988 Ashlar lodge building became known as Byron Masonic lodge and Ashlar took advantage of a Grand Lodge promotion and purchased a new outdoor sign with the new "Masonic Lodge" designation.

A further change in the bylaws was made in October, 1988, to the effect that a brother is considered in arrears of yearly dues if he has not paid them by May 31st.

One change suggested by MW Bro. Pellow was to have installations for Worshipful Masters and the investiture of officers held in June rather than December. At a vote held in October, 1987, this change in installation date was unanimously defeated.

5. REGULAR AND SPECIAL MEETINGS

The Worshipful Masters of this period in history had some innovative ideas and they helped to create interest in the members.

One of the ways used to create interest was to get outside degree teams to help with the conferring of degrees. This was accomplished by a Scottish degree team conferring a first degree in 1984, the Mocha Temple concert band in 1984, and the Alumni unit of Mocha Temple on two occasions in 1985 and 1987. In one of these degrees by the Mocha Alumni 14 lodges were represented by the members of the degree team.

Ashlar Brethren also conferred two degrees on candidates in a sister lodge, Ashlar 701 in Tillsonburg, Ont. On another occasion members of Ashlar 701 paid a fraternal visit to Ashlar 610 and conferred a second degree.

On May 27, 1987, our secretary, WB Geoffrey Lund, conferred a degree according to his native English ritual. The Ashlar brethren were impressed with the minor differences in the two rituals but felt that the English worshipful Master had much more work to do than his Canadian counterpart.

When the number of candidates lessened, other interesting and informative meetings were arranged.

Among the above are the following:

- a. Sept./84 - a talk on Masonic history by Rev. Bro. A.G. Pease, Chaplain of Thistle Lodge, 250, Embro.
- b. Jan/86 - a slide presentation by Bro. James Gladwish on the Middlesex, Elgin Detention Centre.
- c. May/86 - a slide presentation by Bro. Wm. Harkness on his trip to Colombia.
- d. Feb./89 - VW Leroy Noble gave a talk on the symbolism of the Masonic apron.
- e. April/89 - a talk and demonstration on gun making by the WM of Myra lodge 529.
- f. May/89 - Bro. Robert Mortimer spoke on "Meeting the Challenge".
- g. various education teams from other lodges.

One cannot write about special meetings in Ashlar lodge without mentioning the memorable Memorial services that were held practically each year during the period. Ashlar is blessed with the excellent singing voice of WB Bro. Kenneth Turner which added so much to these memorial services.

In his various speeches, the Grand Master, MW Bro. Wm. Pellow, had been urging lodges to become more visual in the community and one of his suggestions was an open house type of meeting. Several lodges in the London districts had held this meeting and Ashlar planned one for May 8, 1988. The lodge was opened at 7.30 p.m. and visitors welcomed at 8 o'clock. A small crowd of visitors attended. Although at least one neighbouring lodge had garnered several new members from this open house, Ashlar was not favoured in this regard.

6. DONATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

In January, 1985 it was announced that cash donations had been given to the lodge from the estate of Bro. Stanley Davies and

the widows of Bro. Bert Foyston and WB Stanley Bryant. Prior to this, the widows of WB Roy Weir, Duncan Colhoun and Philip Scott had made donations. Some amounts of this fund were used to help with new furnace and air conditioner, \$(466.02) and the new outdoor sign.

WB Roman Strell and Bro. Arie DeKwastineet both donated 2 volumes of Masonic encyclopediae to the lodge library and Bro. Bill Summers donated 2 volumes of Masonic history that he reported had come from the late WB George Wickerson.

WB Robert Shaw presented a hooked mat depicting the 60th anniversary of Ashlar.

In this area it should also be mentioned the donations given to the Life Membership fund by approximately 30 life members amounting to \$3,220 at the end of 1989.

Also, many members donated the sum of \$1,277 to help defray the cost of the new furnace and air conditioner that was installed in the summer of 1988. The names of the brethren physically involved in this project are included in the section on the building.

W. LODGE PROJECTS

During this period Ashlar continued to carry out its benevolence by taking a poinsettia to the widows of deceased members at Christmas time. The number taken, of course, varied, but in December, 1988 it was reported that more than 2 dozen were delivered. Cards of thanks and appreciation were always read at the January meeting.

Ashlar supported the Grand Lodge project "Help nip drugs in the bud" in 1988-89 which exceeded its target figure of \$1,000,000 by over \$100,000. Unfortunately, Ashlar's response to this project was not as good as was expected but many members participated. The thrust of this 25th anniversary Masonic Foundation fund raising project was to help organizations struggling with this serious problem such as, the Council on Drug abuse, Parents against drugs and Alcohol and Drug Concerns.

The senior wardens of the London districts and other Masonic helpers have earned a good reputation for themselves by helping with the kick-off luncheons for the United Way fund raising in September.

Also, the walkathon fund raising spring projects have been helped by Ashlar donations. For example, the 1986 walkathon raised over \$24,000 for the Merrymount Children's Centre. Other community projects were also aided by this enjoyable fund raising effort in each of the other years.

In June, 1985, and again in 1986, the Ashlar officers held a garage sale on the St. Anne's church parking lot to raise funds.

Ashlar continued to hold annual ladies nights but in 1989 it united with the brethren of St. Paul's lodge 107 in Lambeth for a very successful evening.

Ashlar continued to hold an annual church service but it was reported in October, 1988, that only 2 lodges in the district still carried out this practice and that the matter would be discussed in the future. Ashlar reported a good attendance of members and visitors, and, on at least one occasion, the brass section of Mocha Temple band accompanied the brethren of Ashlar.

The practice of a dinner for past masters and senior lodge officers was continued during the period with a very good attendance and discussion of lodge affairs.

8. THE LODGE BUILDING

In a discussion of the lodge premises it is necessary here to repeat part of the history of the Byron Masonic lodge building. The reader will remember that, in 1954, certain senior officers of the lodge decided that our old building with its outmoded facilities should be replaced. Unable to raise enough funds from the members, the officers formed a company known as Byron Bowling Lanes, Limited, in which most of the company's shareholders were Masons. The company agreed to build a suitable building for the lodge premises but would enter into a 50 year lease of the downstairs portion of the building. At the end of the 50 year period the whole building would be given back to the lodge at no charge. The company installed bowling alleys in its part of the building and they continued to operate until 1974 when it no longer became economical to carry on the bowling business.

The lower part of the building was then rented by the company to a person who operated a ceramics establishment. After renewing the ceramics lease until April, 1988, the operator decided he would retire.

In December, 1987, Rt. Wor. Bro. Ross Fuller, president of Byron Bowling Lanes, told the lodge that the company would like

to sell the remaining 18 years of the company's lease to the lodge and named a price of \$20,000 which included approximately \$5,000 in cash in the company's accounts. In January, 1988, the board of general purposes reported that two committees had been formed - one to buy the building and one to study re-construction and repair.

The feasibility committee on the purchase of the building made a report favouring the purchase and, at the March 28th meeting, the senior warden gave a notice of motion that Ashlar lodge proceed on a course for the ultimate purchase of the interests of Byron Bowling Lanes Ltd. in the lodge building.

This motion was tabled by the lodge when it learned that a suitable tenant had not been obtained for the lower part of the building

This action left the lease still in the hands of the company and, in 1989, it was able to obtain a tenant who would carry on a shirt laundering business.

At the end of 1989 the lease to Byron Bowling Lanes Ltd., still had 15 years, 9 months to go to the expiry date of October 1, 2005.

As mentioned in the history for the 1970's our June meeting had been discontinued, mostly because the weather and the lodge room were too warm the 4th Monday in June. This was also true sometimes in May, September and October, so there was talk about an air conditioner.

At the December meeting in 1985 Wor. Bro. Rick Roi, then senior warden, reported that he had been able to obtain a used air conditioner for the lodge.

The furnace for the building was now some 25 years old and it was in need of repair so it was decided that a new furnace was needed and could be installed with the air conditioner.

Unfortunately, the donated air conditioner was not the right one for our lodge rooms. At the October, 1987, meeting, a notice of motion was passed to approve an expenditure to install a new furnace and air conditioner from general funds in the near future. It was then decided to start a fund for this project which would cost the lodge approximately \$3,000. At the April, 1988, meeting it was reported that the furnace and air conditioner fund was now just \$350 short of the cost.

In September the lodge was pleased to hear that the furnace and air conditioner had been installed during the summer by the

following members of the lodge: W.Bros Larry Carter, Rick Roi, Denys Mortimer, Ken Turner, Wm. Harkness, (and his son), Ver. Wor. Bro. Harry Unwin.

New furnace and air conditioner in Byron Masonic Lodge Building

a. Funds for upstairs obtained from:

Donations	\$1,277.
Oakridge Lodge	500.
Old Building Fund	566.13
Memorial Fund	466.02
Byron Bowling Co.	86.42
Interest	<u>18.01</u>
	\$2,913.58

b. Byron Bowling Lanes Ltd. paid \$3,000 to install a new furnace and air conditioner in the lower part of the building.

As was stated earlier in this history Ashlar took advantage of a Grand Lodge project and installed a new outside lighted sign. This is a standard sign which has the correct square and compass emblem and also uses the word lodge instead of temple.

9. Blood Donations

One of the Grand Lodge projects that Ashlar has participated in is the donation of blood to the Canadian Red Cross. While Bro. James Gladwish was Ashlar's blood donor chairman he kept urging members to give blood and reported the number of donations in the district periodically. In the minutes of May, 1984, he gave the number of donors for the London West district as 333 for the Masonic year. On February 24, 1986, he reported that there had been 1055 donations for the two districts and by the May 26th meeting this had risen to 1452.

Ashlar's contribution to this very worthwhile project has been very good but mostly because of Bro. James Gladwish. In December of 1984 it was reported that he had made 135 donations, but, at December 31, 1989, he had given blood 188 times, a truly remarkable record.

Since many Ashlar members are beyond the age required for giving blood Bro. Gladwish's efforts on behalf of the lodge are really appreciated.

10. Break-In

In May, 1984, Ashlar suffered a break-in to its premises and the working tools, inner guard's sword, and the two flags and poles were stolen. Wor. Bro. Robert Soper replaced the two flags,

but, luckily, the other items were replaced by insurance funds. Ashlar members had the same feelings about their premises being violated as all home owners have when their homes have been broken into.

11. Deaths

Unfortunately, the Grim Reaper visited Ashlar too many times in the period under review. Many long time, faithful, members passed to the Grand Lodge above.

Below is a listing by date of death and initiation of the twenty three members who died from 1984 to January, 1990.

<u>Date of death</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Date of initiation</u>
Dec. 6, 1983	Norman Dickson	Master Mason	Jan., 1948
Jan. 23, 1984	W.J. Sanderson	"	Dec., 1922
Feb. 5, 1984	W. Roy Weir	Past Master	May, 1926
Mar. 11, 1984	Arthur Gosnell	Master Mason	May, 1932
Mar. 12, 1984	Chester Roulston	"	Feb. 1960
Mar. 16, 1985	John Houghton	"	(aff.)* Mar. 1964
Aug. 1, 1985	Duncan Colhoun	"	" Feb. 1965
Oct. 19, 1985	Thomas Higgs	"	Mar. 1928
Feb. 1, 1986	Kenneth Yates	Past Master	June, 1948
Feb. 24, 1986	Avard Lutes	Master Mason	Mar. 1961
July 13, 1986	Wesley Williamson	"	Jan. 1958
Aug. 8, 1986	Martin Gray	"	Dec. 1949
Jan. 1, 1987	Oscar Blake	Past Master	Mar. 1944
July 10, 1987	Stanley Davies	Master Mason	Feb. 1951
July 16, 1987	Leslie Rafuse	"	Feb. 1924
Sept. 22, 1987	C. Owen Foster	Past Master	Mar. 1947
April 17, 1988	H.H. Gilbert M.D.	Master Mason	June, 1933
Dec. 1, 1988	Walter Grover	"	April, 1932
Dec. 18, 1988	Murray Birce	"	May, 1957
Mar. 10, 1989	Jos. T. MacMillan	Past Master	Mar. 1951
Mar. 27, 1989	J.R. Joiner	Master Mason	Feb. 1940
July 17, 1989	Earl Woodcock	Past Master	Nov. 1943
Jan. 20, 1990	Roman Strell	"	Jan. 1946

*(affiliated)

12. Conclusion

Ashlar lodge concluded 67 years of history at the end of 1989. As with all organizations there were high points and low points.

The period 1984-1989 included many high points as can be seen by the reading of this history.

Perhaps the low points were the death of so many members and the decline in the number of initiations in the latter part of the five years. These conclusions coincide with what has happened in Freemasonry in general, in this writer's opinion, but, it is hoped that the future will bring a revival and create in non members a desire to join our beloved craft with its wholesome and moralistic teachings.

This history researched and written by Rt. Wor. Bro. Ross C. Fuller, Past District Deputy Grand Master.