

Association of Masonic Fellowships 28th Annual Conference.
Hosted by
Farnworth Masonic Fellowship
At Farnworth Masonic Hall, Francis Street, Farnworth.
Wednesday, 31st March 2010

Approximately 50 attended the 28th Annual Conference at Farnworth. A warm welcome was received at the door by Bro. Alan Brindle, who delighted in kissing each lady as she entered! He said he had paid a sizeable fee to ensure he was given that position!

A reception was held, where tea, coffee and sherry was served, to enable visitors to mingle with each other, to catch up on the news of the last year and exchange views with other Fellowships

We sat down for lunch just after 12.30pm, and were welcomed by the Chairman of Farnworth Fellowship, W. Bro Ken Tyler, who apologised for the slight delay, which was due to two Fellowships, Garstang and Lancaster, who were expected but had not arrived. He also gave apologies from Accrington, Burnley, Darwin, Shropshire and the Essex Fellowships.

After Grace, given by Bro Alan Brindle, Secretary of Farnworth Fellowship, we enjoyed an excellent meal prepared and served by the Stewards, John and Mary and their Staff, together with a glass of wine.

After Bro Brindle had returned thanks, The Loyal Toast was proposed by W. Bro Stewart Potter, Chairman of the Hall Management Committee.

The main toast of the afternoon, to the Association of Masonic Fellowships, was ably given by Rt W. Bro Jack Price, Provincial Grand Master for East Lancashire, and President of the Farnworth Masonic Fellowship. He said that it was a joy to see so many members from other Fellowships. Ken {Tyler} kept him up to date with what was going on and he felt that this organisation provided a lifeline, not only to retired Masons and their wives, but especially Masonic widows, by giving them somewhere they can go where they are welcomed, and can feel comfortable. It is an essential part in Freemasonry that those left behind feel they are still welcome in the Masonic Family, and our Fellowships provide that common aim, which we can only applaud. Our Fellowships, up and down the land, provide a need for members and friends, and this can only be a good thing. R. W. Bro Price continued by saying when he attends functions, he listens! Not to other people's conversations, but to the background noise. If it's quiet he gets worried as people are not relaxed, but when it's a lovely background noise of everyone talking, - as it was today, - he knows they are enjoying themselves. He complimented the Steward and his wife, John and Mary, on a lovely lunch, and said that there was no better place than a Masonic Fellowship to enjoy each other's company, and he could offer no better recommendation than the company we had enjoyed today. The Toast is to the Association of Masonic Fellowships.

Much to her surprise, Jean Forrester, Secretary of the Association of Masonic Fellowships, found herself down in the programme to respond to that toast! In answer to her question "Why wasn't I told?", just prior to the meal, Ken had simply said "I don't tell anyone and I know you always have something to say"! There was no answer to that!

Jean began her response by saying:- "Well, here we are back in the place where our Fellowship Association started, and I am sure that Farnworth are very proud to be able to claim that title. Although I do have a couple of things to say, it hadn't included anything regarding a response to the toast! However, I do thank Rt W Bro Price for his kind words about the Fellowships. It was very much appreciated. It's lovely to see so many friends here

again today, and I am equally delighted to be amongst you, - especially as I live almost on the doorstep! 5 minutes and I'm home!

From my point of view, things have been ticking along quite nicely, apart from one incident! Brenda Read from Bury rang me very upset that she was still receiving letters addressed to her late husband. I couldn't understand who was using this out of date information, until we discovered that there was a web site containing the Fellowships' Secretaries names and addresses! Apparently, by keying in 'Masonic Fellowships' you are led to the web page set up in 2003 by the Education and Training Committee from the Province of East Lancashire! I'm sure that they had good intentions at the time, but it was completely out of date, and the man who had created the programme had since died! Well, having circulated the secretaries to confirm they agreed to their details being included, the information had now been updated to the current information I have, - as confirmed by W.Bro Chad Northcott on Monday Evening the 29th March, with the exception of the two secretaries who did not wish their details to be included; Bury and Tendring. Anyone wishing to contact those two Fellowships from that web page had been directed to me. If anyone else has a similar problem, please let me know, and I can investigate. There is no point in contacting Bridge Street, Manchester.

During the year, Leyland Fellowship celebrated their 25th Anniversary, and they kindly invited me along with a friend. They made Norma and I very welcome and we had a lovely lunch followed by some very pleasant musical entertainment. We were most impressed with their Masonic Hall, and their Fellowship appears to be thriving!

The original £185 which was collected late 2006, has done us proud. We still have £45 held in the SMF account, and I have cash in hand of £15.58, a total of about £60. This will certainly last us for the next twelve months, so your original £5 has gone a long way, but we may have to think about replenishing the fund next year. It really does help if I can send information by email, and if you have now gone 'Hi-tech', please pass your details on to me, and don't forget to let me know of any changes to your secretaries or addresses. My information is only as good as that which you give me.

The information I have given out today is for the secretary of your Fellowship. I would be grateful if you will pass this on. It is a statement of the money spent and a couple of address updates. I will post the information onto those Fellowships not represented today. The 2011 Conference will be hosted by Burnley who, unfortunately, were unable to attend today due to other commitments.

Thank you again R W Bro Price for your very kind toast to the Association of Masonic Fellowships, and to you, ladies and brethren, for the gracious way in which you received it".

Ken Tyler then opened the Forum by saying that the Farnworth members preferred Whist and Dominoes to speakers. They had tried speakers, but members did not support them. Whist and dominoes were enjoyed by everyone, and there were prizes available to be won. They held raffles to help keep themselves solvent, went on two holidays a year and allowed anyone to bring a friend and the cost was 50p. Most of their members were also in Bolton Fellowship, and if they wanted a speaker, they would be accommodated there.

Tom Owen, Audenshaw, reminded everyone that he kept a list of speakers, and all Fellowships should have a copy. If they had not received one, would they please see him before leaving. He also asked for any additions to the list.

David Brookes, Warrington, extended thanks to the Farnworth Committee for hosting this years conference, He said they had monthly meetings which were intermingled between speakers, lunches and days out. Unfortunately, they did have difficulty in obtaining numbers for a coach trip. One conference had said it was difficult to get men to attend the Fellowships, and how could we interest them. He felt we had to spread the word around, - a bit like missionary work, tell as many as we could. At the moment, neighbouring town of Widnes didn't have a Fellowship.

Marjorie Bannister, Middleton, said their Fellowship was very small and dwindling in numbers. They only had about 30 members, but they were a great bunch! Although they did have the occasional speakers, more often than not they just had parties! These were to celebrate someone's birthday or whatever excuse they could think of! They had been on a day trip to the "Bourne Poacher" at Thornton/Cleveleys. *{for the uninitiated, like me, they do a three course lunch, bingo, entertainment and tea and a cake before leaving}*

Hilda Ince, Salford, said they have a nice group, but would also like to know how to interest more men! Even though they had retired, men just didn't seem to come along. We did have about 8/9 members from Ecclesholme Masonic Home, who seemed to enjoy their afternoon out, although they did sometimes go to sleep if it was a speaker! Salford met the 1st and 3rd Tuesday in the month and had a variety of speakers, slide/film shows or entertainment.

Mike Lloyd, Leyland, thanked Jean F for saying how much she had enjoyed the 25th birthday celebrations. They had a thriving membership of about 300 members and met twice a month. If they could solve the problem of more men, he reckoned they would have 400 members!

Alex Sharples, Wigan. This lady Chairman said it had been lovely today, and we had received such a warm welcome. Wigan was thriving with a membership of 80/90 members of which 60 attended every meeting. They had a variety of speakers, which she also organised. She had tried to retire from booking speakers 2 years ago, but had been persuaded to continue. Speakers were becoming more expensive, and some charged £50. They also went on days trips, and been to a recording of "Countdown". She felt that we should encourage younger 'retired' members to join, but they were doing quite well at the moment. Her term as Chairperson was coming to an end, but she had enjoyed the conferences and discussing things with other members.. She was also willing to pass on details of speakers if required. Thank you to Farnworth for a most enjoyable day.

Tom Owen, Audenshaw, said they appeared to be the most fortunate Fellowship as they were completely funded by the Lodges. Fellowship members do not have to pay for Speakers or even the Christmas Lunch! Members have just recently started paying for their tea/coffee at meetings, otherwise, no one pays a penny! He invited anyone to come along to their meetings and see for themselves.

Jack Price then spoke again saying that he had been listening to the comments and felt that there was a need to keep in touch with each other and the Lodges. The computer was a good tool, but some were not 'on line', therefore we must interface to exchange ideas, and with the older masons. The Group Chairman and APGM was a good way to get information into Lodges. Keep at it!.Don't give up! Develop an interface! Someone will listen! It has been a joy to be with you and you must continue to enjoy your Fellowships whether it's to play dominoes and whist or listen to speakers. The Fellowships are a valued part of the Masonic world and we should not forget that it is very precious.

Phil Mountford, APGM Bolton, said he could see that there was a need for a web page where Fellowship information could be stored and accessed. He would contact Chad Northcott to see what could be done.

W.Bro Derek Bell, President of Bolton Fellowship extended a sincere thank you to Farnworth Fellowship for hosting the 28th Annual Conference, for the pleasure we'd had in attending, and to John and Mary for the excellent lunch.

The Conference ended at 3.10pm with thanks to those who had attended and a wish that we would have a safe journey home.

Conference 2011; Burnley Fellowship.