

Those of us with a propensity to consider a glass 'half empty' will surely be deeply saddened by the closure of this fine Lodge. Whilst those who are more aligned to considering their glass 'half full', will want to celebrate the long existence and great contribution to Freemasonry made by Manor Lodge, and its members, for the past 110 years, since it was first Consecrated in the Officers' Mess in Canterbury Street Barracks, Blackburn, on the 29th of October 1908.

It is interesting to recall how Manor Lodge took its name. It would appear that during the early meetings arranged to discuss its formation, it was agreed that as its first Worshipful Master was to be WBro H. J. Robinson, who was himself Lord of the Manor of Little Harewood, then the Lodge would be named in respect of his title as 'Manor Lodge'.

From its conception, it was agreed that the Lodge was to focus on exclusivity. It was to be made up of Professional men, effectively forming a Gentlemen's Social Lodge, with only invited guests being permitted to attend. Over many years, Manor Lodge was very successful in attracting a high calibre of members and these have included brethren who had given a great service to freemasonry in general and to society at large in particular. If I may refer to just a few of them to illustrate this point:

Masonically:

- Two of Manor's brethren attained the rank of Deputy Provincial Grand Master; VW Bro William Horrocks and Kenneth H. Marsden
- And also, I should mention, WBro Leslie Hiles who attained the rank of Assistant Provincial Grand Master. Brother Hiles was installed as the Worshipful Master of Manor Lodge in 1978, in the presence of the then Provincial Grand Master, Lord Hewlett and nine Assistant Provincial Grand Masters. What an occasion that must have been.

In **Civil Service** to the Town of Blackburn there was:

- Henry Whittaker, a very dedicated and somewhat Dickensian Solicitor of the Town
- His Honour Judge Alan Walmsley
- Lord Justice Benjamin Omerod
- Sir John Taylor
- The Town Registrar, WBro C.R. Davies, who was also the one time Captain of the East Lancashire cricket team
- AND many, many more that are too numerous to mention this evening.

Unfortunately, it was the Manor lodge's Unique Selling Point, its Exclusivity, plus the changing social climate that almost led to its demise in the early 1980's. The Lodge found that it could no longer attract new members. Consequently, the members decided to close Manor. However, the then Provincial Grand Master, RWBro Frederick William Towns came to Manor's aid. In January 1985 he encouraged a group of brethren, who wanted to

establish a new lodge at Clayton-le-Moors, to become members of Manor Lodge, thus meeting their need and ensuring Manor's continuation. On March 14th. 1985 Bro Towns attended the Re-dedication of Manor Lodge.

Unfortunately, today, Manor Lodge has only 14 members. May I applaud you all for your courage and insight in taking the hard decision to close your Lodge. Despite the regret that a Lodge is closing, I am warmed by the knowledge that the majority of Manor's brethren will continue in the Craft as members of other lodges, particularly those who are remaining in the Northern Area of our Province.