

Bro. Fred Andrews

Bro. Fred was born in 1905. He was 96 years and one month old when he died on 28th December 2001. He was initiated in March, 1938 and appears with his lady wife, Ada, in a photograph of the 1938 Ladies festival, held at the Connaught Rooms. White tie and tails. Dinner was seven courses! The photograph is in the Lodge History and was provided by Bro. Fred himself. It always hung in the hall of his home. Bro. Fred loved the Lodge even though as a Warrant Officer in the RAF, he was abroad most of the time. Having been passed and raised in the same year as his initiation, he was posted away. He returned to attend meetings from November 1944 to October 1945, once in 1948 and then for the meetings from October 1949 to March 1950. He made a couple of meetings in 1955 and 1956 when he was appointed as a Steward but then disappears from the Lodge until March 1977. In all this time, he wrote to the Lodge more or less annually giving his apologies. If his later behaviour is any guide, he would have always enclosed a generous cheque for the Master's List.

Bro. Fred was a mechanical engineer. There was little about motor engines that he did not know and there were precious few engineering tasks he could not tackle. His role in the RAF was primarily servicing ground based vehicles but he took on Air-sea Rescue launches with aplomb during his time in South Africa. He served in Canada and the Middle East as well and told us many wonderful stories of the people and places he met and visited. Once, he and a colleague were given a truck in Israel and told to go to Syria. He spent two weeks on the journey, detouring to see all the sites. He was always an independently minded man, as the various Officers commanding the stations on which he served rapidly found out. He was an expert, highly valued and respected, and he ran things his way. This makes him sound like a martinet but in fact he was a gentle and caring man.

From 1977 onwards, he managed to attend several meetings a year. He became a country member in 1982 at the age of 77. His reason was that he was finding travel from Bushey Heath to Upminster a trial by public transport. In truth, he was by then almost totally deaf and partially blind. I had taken over the the Lodge history from the late W. Bro. Ralph Ball. Bro. Fred. He gave me much information from his peerless memory and we also managed to get him along to a few meetings, by sending a car for him.

Ada, the wife that he loved deeply, died some in the 1980's and Fred refused to leave the home that he had shared with her. He lived alone, supported by excellent neighbours, but always felt that Ada was still with him. W. Bro's John McKerrow, Jack Wilks and I made an annual visit to Fred just before Christmas for the last four or five years. He always welcomed us warmly, fed us well and provided far too much drink. (His own tippie, he said, was Pink Champagne!) He would then embark on a two hour lecture based on his reminiscences, with an accuracy for names and places, which was amazing. We called these occasions, 'An Audience with Fred.' We had planned to visit Bro. Fred just before last Christmas but he telephoned to say he was unwell. In fact, he got through to my automatic answering service and when I retrieved the message, there was Fred explaining to recorded voice, 'You will have to speak up my dear. I am a bit deaf.'

W. Bro. John McKerrow and I were worried by not hearing from Fred. We exchanged letters at least once a month. So we went over to Bushey Heath anyway and found him not so well. Using many sheets of paper and a black felt pen that W. Bro. John and I tried yet again to persuade him to move to a Masonic Home. We tried as hard as decency would allow but Fred was adamant. If he had moved, he might have lived a little longer but would not have been with his wife when he died.

He was a lovely man - an excellent Mason and a loving husband. If they have any mechanical engineering problems in the Grand Lodge above, you can be sure that Warrant Officer Bro. Fred Andrews will be fixing them - in his way.