

## **The Life and Times of Derek Henry Smith**

### ***[The Early days and his Musical interests]***

Derek was born on the 26 August 1941 in Church, a district of Hyndburn, not a religious Church, he wasn't an Immaculate Conception, no, just an ordinary Lad born to loving and hardworking Parents. His formative years were spent at Hyndburn Park School where he mixed well with other children and during his early years joined the Cub Scouts at Ernest Street Baptist, played Badminton in the Church Hall there and football for his school, he also played Cricket at Church Cricket Club. At about the age of 14 he joined the Boys Brigade Band as a drummer, 4 years later he moved up a notch and drummed his way into the Accrington Saint John's Ambulance Pipe Band, (which is one of the oldest English civilian Pipe Bands still in existence). I was told years later by his wife that Derek looked very sexy in his kilt and sporran.

However, not being content with bashing one drum in the Pipe Band he bought a full drum kit, his parents must have loved him, and he joined a skiffle group called "The Rockets", and I understand that he was in competition with another Derek who was on the scene at that time, who has travelled no great distance at minimal expense to be with you tonight, drummer extraordinaire: -- VWBro Derek Thornhill. As time and music moved on, he played with various rock 'n' roll groups before hanging up his drumsticks in 1975.

### ***[Derek's Work career]***

On leaving school at 15 (1956), Derek followed in his father's footsteps starting work at a local engineering company, J&T Engineering. However, after about two years working there, he decided that engineering was not for him, as he had always seen himself as a motor mechanic, he had and still does have a passion for cars. So, off he went to the Job Centre full of excitement and expectation, only to be told that there were no garages taking on apprentices

at that time. But the Job Centre did offer him a job as an apprentice carpet fitter at a local shop, being a little disgruntled he reluctantly accepted the job, a job and career he came to enjoy and remained in until his retirement.

However, after serving his apprenticeship with the Accrington company he moved to a well-established flooring company in Haslingden and after a period he became a Partner / Director of the firm. He remained with them until 1988 when he decided to go it alone and started his own company '**Iceglade Contracts Ltd**', supplying and installing diverse types of floorcoverings to local Breweries, Hotel Groups and Holiday Time Share Companies who had sites in the UK, Europe, and the Canary Islands. (Good for holidays).

But surely the highlight of his working career must have been when he received a Royal summons to attend Buckingham Palace, to install the carpet in the Supper Room, next to the State Ball Room, which I believe is on the same level as the Throne Room. Derek arrived at Buckingham Palace on the appointed day and reported to the door of the Palace Lodge. He tried the EA knocks – no reply, he then tried the FC knocks – still no reply but he was admitted on the knocks of a MM. After much questioning and proving, an experience more stressful than a Candidates interview, Derek eventually was escorted to the Supper Room where he set about the task in hand.

Many days were spent working on the carpet, and before he had finished the mammoth task of laying this enormous carpet, Her Majesty the Queen arrived to view the progress, so struck by the magnificence of the craftsmanship, each seam as straight as a die and the pattern match within a thou, she summoned a Royal Retinue to view the work of this Master Craftsman. One courtier was heard to comment that a KQC may be on the carpet for this fine workmanship –a KQC for those who don't know is a **Knight of the Queens Carpets**.

On completion of the project, Derek packed up his tools and was escorted from the Palace, alas without his KQC, but he did get a KFC on the way home.

***[Derek's family life and how I got to know him]***

Derek like other 16-year-old lads became interested in Girls. He had plucked up courage to ask a girl called Barbara to go with him to the Fireman's Ball, *(there is a joke about that, but I won't mention it at this time)*, however, on the night of their date, Derek waited and waited– but no Barbara - Barbara had broken her leg so couldn't go to the Ball. So as not to waste the ticket, she kindly but unwittingly sent along her twin sister Margaret to keep him company.

Well, as they say, **'that was that'**, Margaret became his wife in 1963 and Barbara - his Sister-in-Law.

The couple set up home in Oswaldtwistle and in 1965 their first daughter, Julie Ann was born. Four years later in 1969 they moved to Stanhill Village where in June the following year their second daughter, Helen Margaret was born.

I became on nodding terms with Derek in 1971 when Sheila and myself moved to Stanhill just round the corner from Derek and Margaret. The following year we got to know the Smith's better when Margaret came round in May with a big bunch of flowers for Sheila on the birth of our first daughter, my wife got flowers - I got nothing!

Our wives got on like a house on fire and we found that we had lots in common, an interest in sports cars – Derek had a Sunbeam Alpine and I had a Triumph Spitfire Mk3, we had an interest in Music – we had both played in various pop groups, and both families loved caravanning. We had some great caravanning holidays together, in this country as well as abroad.

I remember one day when chatting with Derek, he happened to mention that he was going to the Lodge that evening. I said, 'the Lodge, what Lodge', (I thought it was something to do with night fishing). 'My Masonic Lodge' he said. I hadn't a clue that Derek was a Freemason, and I certainly knew nothing about it at that time. Well, it took Derek nearly 9 years to convince me that Masonry

would be right for me, and he finally initiated me into Freemasonry the month after he became Worshipful Master of Rossendale Forest Lodge in 1981.

Derek was a regular attendee and good member of Rossendale Forest Lodge whilst at Haslingden, but after the Millennium Margaret's health began to deteriorate which meant that Derek could not attend the Lodge as regularly as he would have liked.

Sadly, in August 2012 Margaret passed away leaving Derek devastated and in a dark place, they had been married for nearly 50 years. However, he had kept up his Lodge membership and with a little help from his friends, Bro Peter Moore and me, Derek returned to his Masonry later that year and to the now amalgamated Lodge of Amity and Rossendale Forest No.283.

Brethren, I was delighted to be asked to give this 50th celebration tribute to our Birthday Boy and to my absolute best friend WBro Derek Henry Smith. Those of you who know Derek, know what a great character his is, always ready with a joke or a helping hand. A character well suited to his current role as Lodge Almoner.

And on a more personal note, thank you most sincerely Derek for your great friendship, your compassion, help and support through my own darkest days and my families trials and tribulations. Brethren, I couldn't have wished for a better friend and Brother than Derek Henry Smith. A friendship that has endured for half a century and I hope will continue for many more years to come.

**WBro Derek Henry Smith, stay safe, stay well, and look well to the future.**