

HERBERT GEORGE SPENCER **(1917 - 2011)**

Earlier this year one of our longest serving members passed to 'The Grand Lodge Above.'

In 2009 The Research Lodge of Otago was pleased to be the venue where George Spencer received a 60 year bar to his 50 year Long Service Badge.

George was born in Croydon, England, on 20 March 1917. From the time he was aged 12, George wanted to be an architect, which was an unusual ambition for a working class boy. He left school at 16 and got a job with an aeronautical manufacturing firm at Croydon Aerodrome. He then worked as a junior clerk in the coal exchange at Blackman. When he was 19 he got a job with an estate agent Thornton Heath thinking this would help him get into architecture. While he was there he undertook a 2 year building course to help progress his goal.

At 21 he was employed by an architectural firm as a junior assistant. He started an architectural course in evenings, involving about 3 hours per night of lectures and study, 5 nights a week, with projects on top of this. The course was set up as a 3 year intermediate course, and a 2 year advanced course.

He had nearly completed the intermediate part of the course when the war started and he was called up in April 1940; joining the Royal Engineers. He was posted to a number of locations around England. The unit he was with, were responsible for designing and building rail roads for transportation and accommodation of men and equipment throughout England, and munitions transportation in the build up to D Day. This also included developing the subterfuge to make it appear that the invasion of Europe would leave from south of Dover and focus on the Calais pass area rather than the Normandy Beaches.

He told of being based at Shrewsbury near the river, and backing onto this river was the Guinness factory. They took boats out onto the river and George said it was amazing how many bottles of beer were floating in the river.

Georges unit was in the second wave to land on Lion beach and went through to Bayeux, as this was the transportation centre for the region, ensuring the rail links/ railways and bridges etc were intact. He then progressed through Europe and was among the first to cross the Rhine. During this time he was promoted, in the field, to Sergeant. In December 1945 he was repatriated back to England

Checking regarding his architectural course he found that as he could now take a special final exam which would give him his qualifications. He continued with his career in London.

It was at this time that he met his future wife, Vicki, and they married in 1952.

They moved to New Zealand and started a family eventually settling in Macandrew Bay. In 1955 his wife became seriously ill with polio, and spent over two years in hospital with a long convalesce at home. Because of this George had to be very involved with the raising of their family, as well as helping his wife, converting their home and working. During this time he joined the Dunedin City Council, and among the buildings he designed were the Tea House in the Gardens, the Green Island cinema, and a number of the pensioner cottages. It was George who noticed that the Moana Pool plans had the main pool at 50 yards rather than the Olympic 50 metres, and these were hastily redrawn. He retired in 1979.

Family was a great interest for him. He enjoyed sport including cycling and walking, as well as painting, drawing and photography.

Because of Vicki's illness George was a strong and active member of the Otago Post Polio Support Group.

Of course his other great interest was Freemasonry.

George joined Freemasonry in London in 1949 being initiated into the T Square Lodge 3269, London, which is one of those Lodges with members being Architects and Surveyors. This Lodge still meets.

Arriving in Dunedin George joined Lodge Macandrew, 343, NZC.

On 11 July he became a member of Otago RA Chapter 844. and later joined the Hiram Mark Lodge 272 in November 1957.

On 17 September 1968 he joined The Dunedin Lodge 931, EC, and was its Master in 1972. He was later appointed to the District of Otago/Southland as District Grand Warden.

As well he was a member of Celtic Cryptic Council 42. for a period of time.

Finally of course he was also a member of The Research Lodge of Otago 161. Joining in 1974, and being our Master in 1977.

A well liked and respected Freemason who contributed greatly to the fabric of Masonry in Dunedin and Otago.

Thanks to information from; family, Wor Bro E W G Brown, and Wor Bro W D Barkman.