



The Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset

Annual Almoners' Meeting 29th November 2011 Report of the Provincial Grand Almoner

The effect of the recession has taken some while to work through but in the past few months there has been an increase in the number of applications for financial support made to the Masonic Charities on behalf of those Brethren and dependants affected. The applications have been to both the Grand Charity for grants to support day to day living expenses and to The Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys to assist with the maintenance of children. With the continuing recession I would ask all members to be aware of those who may not be regularly attending lodge meetings without good reason. It just may be that their financial situation is precluding them from attending and that they may be in need of financial support and that the Masonic Charities can ease their situation. This support applies to those who whatever reason may have resigned from the Craft so it is important that wherever possible contact with these former members is maintained.

Again I must point out that **on no account** must application forms be completed by the applicant's themselves. The Lodge or case Almoner must see documentary evidence and need copies of the figures being included on the application form and must be satisfied that all information being provided is accurate.

The collocation of the four main Masonic Charities into Freemasons' Hall is already reaping benefits. There is a visible sign of more of a working together environment particularly with regard to application for support. This is relevant where for example the Grand Charity received an application for a Masonic Relief Grant and the information provided shows that there are dependant children. The sharing of this nature of information will almost certainly generate an enquiry for the Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys and will speed up the process of providing needed financial support.

Financial and other support from the Masonic Charities

A summary of grants awarded by the 4 main Masonic Charities in the last 12 months to 30/09/2011 and comparison with the previous year is:

	2010 £	2011 £
Grand Charity (Masonic Relief Grants)	26,035	35,130
Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution	31,785	64,157
Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys	103,760	77,201
Masonic Samaritan Fund	24,767	52,615
Total	186,347	229,103



The Freemasons Grand Charity

There were ten grants made to meet day to day living expenses which is identical to the previous year in number except 34% increase in value. The Freemasons Grand Charity is a grant making charity dedicated to supporting people in need. It provides assistance for Freemasons and their partners or other dependants who are experiencing financial hardship or need. Masonic Relief Grants are intended to enhance the applicants standard of living and every case of genuine need is considered with compassion and in confidentiality.



The Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution

There are seventeen Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution care homes across England and Wales which offer person-centred care and support to those living within. We have a total of twelve residents from Somerset who are receiving this which includes five at our local home at Cadogan Court in Exeter.

With a reducing membership and an age increase and needing more care the importance of this provision is ever evident. A total of one thousand three hundred staff are employed in the homes giving the professional support needed to all. Many of the homes are registered for both residential and nursing care and can offer places to people with dementia following an assessment of their needs through the Care Advise Team.



The Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys

In total there are twenty two young people who are being supported by the Trust at present. I am awaiting a decision on a further two cases. In addition to the statistics there was one recipient of Talent Aid.

The Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys is a poverty charity and its mission is to relieve poverty and advance the education of children of Masonic families. It helps those families who have suffered some distress to their home life which has resulted in financial hardship. This could be following:

- death of a parent or parents
- a parent is unable to work because of illness
- parents have separated or divorced
- a parent has been made redundant or their business has failed.



Masonic Samaritan Fund

In total nine grants were awarded from the fifteen application made. The applications not preceded with were resultant upon the N.H.S. providing the necessary treatment within the protracted waiting time of three months (two months or more for cardiac surgery). The Masonic Samaritan Fund provides financial help in support of medical care and treatment, dental care and treatment, respite care and mobility care which includes stair lifts and home adaptations for same.

Please ensure that potential applicants are reminded that surgery or treatment should not be booked or undertaken before contact and written agreement has been received confirming the Fund will support the application. Early contact with the Fund is therefore essential by telephoning 020 7404 1550.

The extent of the grants approved included five cases of mobility aids and one each of dental, gynaecological, orthopaedic and respite.



Freemasonry Cares

Freemasonry Cares is a joint communications initiative of the Central Masonic Charities (The Freemason's Grand Charity, Royal Masonic Trust for Girls and Boys, Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution and Masonic Samaritan Fund). It has been developed to raise awareness about the financial, healthcare and family assistance available to eligible Masons and their dependents and to make it easier to access the support if they need it. It is an awareness of the help which is available and does not replace or circumnavigate the valuable work of the Lodge Almoner.

Since it's launch in the Province with the issue of the booklets to all along with the Compass Magazine no fewer than five enquiries had been made to the freephone number within the first ten days.

ALMONER'S HANDBOOK



The Lodge Almoner's Handbook

Lodge Almoner Seminars have taken place at which the most informative and instructive Handbook was given to all. This is proving to be the bible and guide to assist the Almoners in their role. At the same seminars parts of the Training presentation were made. The aim is to enhance the Almoners' awareness of their role and develop their understanding of the various aspects of the job which also included interviewing the petitioner on their visit to their home.



Somerset Masonic Widows Association

A number of branches could do with more support although I appreciate that not all widows necessarily want to be involved – however they may well do so in the future. The liaison officers are doing a fantastic job and I would ask every member to support them when they can.

Association of Friends of Cadogan Court

The magnificent effort of the Province to raise over £6394 for the Summer Fair in 2011 enabled the Committee to support the Home Manager with the purchase of equipment not provided by the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution. The fair in 2012 will be on 16th June and the Somerset stall will be masterminded by V.W. Bro. Peter Layzell. Can we better the 2011 contribution?

Finally

A joint application form for support to the Central Masonic Grant making Charities is now being used and will be issued when appropriate to the Lodge Almoner or visiting Brother to complete. A guide to making the application has been prepared and will be issued along with the form.

Peter Hodder
Provincial Grand Almoner