

Provincial Grand Lodge of Somerset  
**Charity Organisation Committee**  
Annual Meeting  
25<sup>th</sup> March 2010

**Report of the Provincial Grand Charity Steward**

**Somerset Masonic Charity - Provincial Benevolent Fund**

The Directors / Trustees of Somerset Masonic Charity Limited have delegated day to day responsibility for the management of the Provincial Benevolent Fund to a Management Committee consisting of the Provincial Grand Charity Steward, Provincial Grand Almoner, the 2 Assistant Provincial Charity Stewards and 4 Lodge Charity Stewards. The Committee met on 4 occasions in 2009 and awarded grants totalling more than £10,000 to over a dozen worthy causes in Somerset.

The Committee is keen to work in partnership with Lodges and welcomes referrals from them. Applications for grants, together with supporting documentation, should be sent to the Provincial Grand Charity Steward. The Committee's next meeting is on 27<sup>th</sup> April.

The extent to which the Management Committee is able to make grants is determined by its income, and Lodges are accordingly encouraged to consider making donations to the Benevolent Fund to enable the Province to increase its support of worthy causes in Somerset. Lodges wishing to donate to the Fund can do so by cheque or by transfer from their own Lodge Relief Chest.

**Management Committee Membership**

Last year I reported that 4 Lodge Charity Stewards had been appointed as members of the Management Committee and that two of them would serve until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010.

W. Bros David Maddern and Alec Weeks will stand down at the end of August and I should like to place on record my sincere thanks for the contribution they have made. Their experience as Lodge Charity Stewards has been invaluable and they have helped the newly-formed Committee establish itself and have been actively involved in the Committee's deliberations. David & Alec have worked hard at establishing and maintaining links with the Lodges in their respective areas and their enthusiasm will be missed.

Vacancies exist in the 'Group A' (Nailsea & Clevedon) and 'Group E' (Taunton, Bridgwater, Minehead, Watchet & Wiveliscombe) Areas, and I would be pleased to hear from any Lodge Charity Steward who would be interested in serving on the Committee. Appointments will be for 3 years (1 September 2010 – 31 August 2013). Written applications, with a brief résumé of the contribution that you could make, should be sent to the Provincial Grand Charity Steward by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010.

**Future Festivals Fund**

As previously reported the Future Festivals Fund was established to enable the Province to collect funds on an on-going basis for any future Festival without having to launch a specific Appeal in the years immediately prior to a Festival. Contributions to the Fund have been received from a number of Lodges, but many have yet to take that first step! Those of you that have been involved in previous Festivals will know just how time demanding Festival Appeals can be and you will appreciate how much Festival Appeals dominate all charitable activities to the detriment of other worthy causes. By contributing to the Future Festivals Fund over a longer timescale the negative aspects of Festival Appeals can be avoided and accordingly I ask all Lodges to give consideration to making donations on a regular basis. Donations can be made at any time, by transfer from a Lodge Relief Chest or by cheque. All donations made will be attributed to individual Lodges, will attract interest and count for Honorific purposes. Funds donated to the Future Festivals Fund will not be used for other purposes.

## **Charitable Fundraising**

The Charity Stewards' Handbook includes sections on fundraising and *Regular Giving by All*, and excellent progress is being made in increasing the number of Brethren who give to Masonic Charities on a regular basis. We still have a long way to go however before we can confidently say that the culture has changed from one where only a minority of Brethren contribute *regularly* to one where the norm is for *all* Brethren to contribute on a regular basis. Whilst we are making progress we need to keep driving home the message that it is the responsibility of all Freemasons to support the charities, and that each and every one of us gave a commitment at our Initiation to *give freely*. The amount that a Brother should give is of course a matter for each individual; all we ask is that Brethren should give *according to their means*, on a regular basis and where appropriate in a *tax-efficient manner*. If any Charity Steward feels that a talk about Masonic Charities at a Lodge meeting would be helpful in encouraging Brethren to give regularly then please let me know, as arrangements can be made for me or a member of the Management Committee to visit on a mutually convenient date.

## **Yellow Booklet**

The aim of the Grand Charity's 'Yellow Booklet', entitled "*The Central Masonic Charities*", is to provide information for all Freemasons and their families about the work of the charities and how to apply for support. The booklet was therefore circulated to all Somerset Masons with the February edition of Compass Magazine. Lodges are asked to ensure that all future Initiates and Joining Members are given a copy of the booklet; I have a small quantity available and further supplies are obtainable, free of charge, from the Grand Charity or Letchworth's Shop at Freemasons' Hall.

## **Gift Aid**

The advantages of contributing under the Gift Aid Scheme cannot be over emphasised and details of the scheme are set out in the Charity Stewards' Handbook. I have a supply of Gift Aid Forms which can be collected at the end of the meeting and you can of course obtain copies direct from the Grand Charity.

## **Non-Masonic Donations**

As the results of the annual questionnaire were not available at the time of writing this report a verbal update will be given on the extent of donations from Lodges to worthy Non-Masonic causes in the wider community.

## **Somerset Community Foundation**

As reported in *Compass* we have entered into a partnership with the Somerset Community Foundation and a new Endowment Fund has been established under the *Grassroots Scheme*. A legacy from a former Somerset Mason of over £32,000 and an anonymous *gift aided* donation of £50,000 have received 'match funding' under the Scheme and created a new fund of just under £200,000. *The Somerset Masonic Grassroots Fund* will be managed by the Somerset Community Foundation and the investment proceeds of the fund will be available to the Benevolent Fund Management Committee, which will receive referrals from the Foundation and Lodges, and award grants for the benefit of local communities.

## **Training Seminar**

Training Seminars for Lodge Charity Stewards have been arranged and will be held on 18<sup>th</sup> October at Taunton and 20<sup>th</sup> October at Nailsea. The seminars will provide an opportunity to review progress on increasing charitable giving, exchange experiences and 'best practice' and receive presentations from the Combined Masonic Charities on Legacies. Lodge Charity Stewards are invited to send details of any matters that they would like to have included in the seminars to the Provincial Grand Charity Steward by the end of April. Further details about the seminars will be circulated in due course.

## **Christmas Cards**

Once again we will be selling Christmas Cards for the benefit of the Provincial Benevolent Fund and thus in aid of local causes. As the 2010 range of cards was not available at the time of preparing this report (last December) I will write to all Lodge Charity Stewards before the end of April with details of the designs and seeking Orders for next Christmas. The printers have assured me that the production difficulties experienced last year will not be repeated, and Cards will be distributed at the Secretaries Meeting in August to enable Lodges to start selling them immediately after the summer break.

## **Conclusion**

The last year has been one of consolidation and we have made progress in raising awareness of the valuable work undertaken by our Masonic Charities. We have continued to remind all brethren that they gave a commitment during their Initiation to *give freely* and the number of brethren contributing on a regular basis has increased. I am often told that the newer members of our fraternity are generally very receptive to calls on their charity and that they readily commit to regular giving by Gift Aid. Lodge Charity Stewards tell me however that the 'problem' they face is older members, many of whom have developed sophisticated strategies to avoid contact with the Charity Steward! Unfortunately I don't have any easy solution to this problem and I can only encourage Lodge Charity Stewards to continue their efforts. Experience suggests that individual approaches to brethren are more effective than round-robin letters, and I think that if Lodge Agendas regularly included a '*Report from the Charity Steward*' this would help to change attitudes towards giving. The Provincial Information Officer routinely circulates information about the grants made by the Grand Charity, and all of the Charities are happy to provide information about their activities.

I should like to place on record my sincere thanks to all Lodge Charity Stewards for their hard work and unfailing enthusiasm. To my Assistants in the North and South, W. Bros. Reg Brown and Terry Leach, and the Members of the Benevolent Fund Management Committee I must say a big thank you for their commitment, on-going support and assistance.

**Roger D Poynton, PAGDC,  
Provincial Grand Charity Steward**