



## Annual Charity Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2011

### Report of the Provincial Grand Charity Steward

As the date of this year's Annual Charity Meeting is later than normal, this report covers the 18-month period since my last Report in April 2010.

#### **Somerset Masonic Charities**

The Management Committee of the Somerset Masonic Charities has met on 5 occasions over the last 18-months and has now established a pattern of meeting once every quarter. The number of applications for grants is steadily increasing and over £23,000 has been awarded since my last Report. Income from the newly established Grassroots Endowment Fund has not yet been allocated for grants, but the first applications will be considered in November. The combined income of the two Somerset Masonic Charities will enable grants of c £20,000 a year to be made in support of projects helping disadvantaged people in Somerset. As always, the Committee is keen to work in partnership with Lodges, and welcomes referrals from them.

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 Somerset Masonic Charity (formerly the Provincial Benevolent Fund) to enable the Province to increase its support of worthy causes in Somerset. Lodges wishing to donate to the Charity can do so by cheque or by transfer from their own Lodge Relief Chest.

#### **SMC Management Committee Membership**

The 'constitution' of the Management Committee provides for there to be four Charity Steward Members of the Committee, who are appointed for terms of 3 years and retire on a rotating basis. At the end of August this year W. Bros. Michael Adams (285) and Mike Waterman (7552) stood down 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 fully participated in the management of the Province's Charities and have proved to be good ambassadors when representing the Province. They have also strived to improve communications and maintain links with the Lodges in their respective areas, and their commitment and hard work will be missed.

Unfortunately no applications to fill the two vacancies were received by the 31<sup>st</sup> August deadline, and this has therefore been extended to 30<sup>th</sup> October. I encourage Charity Stewards to consider putting themselves forward for membership of the Committee, as it provides an opportunity to become involved with the management of our charities and to be of service to the Province. I sincerely hope that we will be able to fill

the vacancies with serving Lodge Charity Stewards, as the constitution was specifically drawn up to involve those who work so hard in their Lodges for the Masonic Charities, and to ensure that we capitalised on their experience in managing our own Provincial Charities. Prior to the establishment of the Committee in 2008 there was no opportunity for Lodge Charity Stewards to participate in the Province's charitable affairs, and it would be a pity if so shortly after the Committee's creation the constitution had to be amended through lack of interest by Lodge Charity Stewards.

## **Future Festivals Fund**

Contributions to the Future Festivals Fund have been slow, and to date only 23 Lodges have made donations, totalling c £85,000. As we now know that the next Somerset Festival is to be in 2020, for the Grand Charity, and as the Provincial Grand Master has set a target of £2.8m it is important that we encourage all Brethren to support the Festival and to commit to doing so sooner rather than later. A programme of visits to all Lodges over the coming 6-months has been arranged, and we hope that all Lodge Charity Stewards will find these presentations supportive and that they will assist them in their fundraising efforts

## **Training Seminars**

The Training Seminars for Lodge Charity Stewards held last October were successful, although attendance figures were disappointing. Training seminars are normally held every other year, and comments about format, content, timing, location etc would be welcomed, and will inform plans for the next Seminars.

## **Fundraising Variety Show**

Last November we held a Variety Show at the Playhouse, Weston-super-Mare, in aid of the Somerset Hospices and our Masonic Charities. The Show was a great success and I wish to record my thanks to W. Bro. David Maddern (4494), for initially suggesting that we should hold such an event, and for overseeing the development and promotion of it. The Show raised £2,700, which was distributed between the four Hospices and the Somerset Masonic Charities, and it not only raised the public profile of Freemasonry in Somerset, but provided an entertaining and most enjoyable evening for the members of public and civic dignitaries who attended.

## **Legacies**

Masonic Charities, like all charities, rely on the generosity of benefactors to enable them to undertake their work, and legacies are of increasing importance to charities. The Somerset Masonic Charities have over the last couple of years received two large legacies and we are extremely grateful to the individuals who made appropriate provision in their Wills, and their bequests are enabling more Grants to be made to deserving causes in Somerset. We are keen to draw Brethren's attention to the fact that legacies can be made to the Somerset Masonic Charities, and a Legacy Leaflet has been prepared and will be distributed with the Spring edition of Compass Magazine. The Provincial Registrar, W. Bro. Justin Martin, who is by profession a Solicitor, will be pleased to prepare, free of charge, a Will, or codicil, for any Brother, and his spouse, making provision for a legacy to the Somerset Masonic Charities.

## Conclusion

The last 18-months have been extremely busy as we continued to encourage Brethren to donate in a tax-efficient manner and sought to increase the number of regular commitments to our charities. The number of grants and range of support given to distressed Brethren and their dependants by the national Masonic Charities has increased, and as that trend is expected to continue it emphasises the need for us to work ever more diligently to ensure that the Charities receive the funds they need for their important work. None of this will happen by magic, and ultimately much depends upon the success of individual Lodge Charity Stewards in awakening the feelings of every Brother, so that they cheerfully embrace the opportunity to support our valued charitable institutions. I must again place on record my sincere thanks to all Lodge Charity Stewards for their on-going hard work and continued enthusiasm.

Whilst it is invidious to pick out individuals I cannot let this opportunity pass by without paying tribute to W. Bro. Reg Brown, who stood down in April as Assistant Provincial Charity Steward (North), after nine years in Office and fourteen years as Charity Steward of Backwell Lodge. Reg gave me unstinting support and has been a great servant of the Province. I wish him well in his retirement.

I am pleased also to formally thank W. Bro. Terry Leach, my Assistant in the South for the last four years, W. Bro David Maddern, who replaces Reg Brown as my Assistant in the North, and the Members of the Management Committee for their commitment and diligence in managing our Provincial Charities, and supporting me in numerous ways throughout the year.

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