



Kent Mark Almoner's Newsletter

The Caring Province



Issue 5 Spring 2021

Welcome to this the Spring edition of the Almoner's Newsletter. Much has happened since the last one. There has been a third lockdown, we are still not able to hold Masonic meetings. As Spring and early Summer approach let us hope we can all start to meet our families again; it has been a challenging year. Your Almoner team have been busy over the Winter, we held the first Almoner seminar in early February which was very well attended. It received very positive feedback, the comments made will be considered when planning the next Seminar.

The Provincial Grand Master ran a social media campaign, 'What has the Provincial Care & Welfare Committee ever done for us?' highlights can be found on the Provincial Website here.

www.kentmarkmastermasons.org.uk/news_0569.html

One of the answers to the question was.

A. Published a Handbook for Lodge Almoners.

The Handbook contains useful information for all Mark and R.A.M. Lodge Almoners in The Province, including duties of a Lodge Almoner; duties of the Provincial Grand Almoner; work of the Provincial Care & Welfare Committee; and support available from the Prov.G.M.'s Discretionary Fund, KMBF and MBF. Available online via our Provincial website.

<http://kentmarkmastermasons.org.uk/lodge-almoners.html>

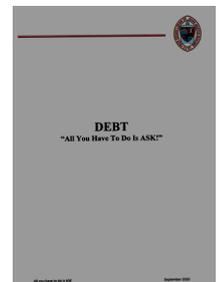
The Almoner's Handbook has been recently updated with some additional information on websites, where you can find information on writing a will, and advice regarding Lasting Powers of Attorney. See page 43.

<http://kentmarkmastermasons.org.uk/.../Almoners-Handbook.pdf>

W.Bro. John Shervington gave a talk on Mental Health to the Provincial Care & Welfare Committee at their last meeting. He also gave a shortened version to the drop-in Session on Saturday 20th March. John will be running a Province wide Seminar on 7th June so that all Almoners has the opportunity to join us and learn more about this very important subject.



Following Bro. Peter Lapage's talk on debt, his booklet has been published on the website, it is worth a read should any of our fellow members find themselves in this position. http://kentmarkmastermasons.org.uk/news_0554.html



Drop-in Sessions.

The Saturday morning Provincial virtual "drop-in sessions" held once a fortnight are always a good source of finding out what is happening in the Province. Should you not be receiving the Zoom link, please contact your Lodge secretary as they all receive the details.



Information.

It has been suggested that not all the information from the Provincial Almoner Team is getting to the members of the Province. The Lodge Secretaries should be included in the distribution; this can easily be done. In order for the Provincial Almoner Team to help you and the members of each Lodge, a monthly report from Lodge Almoners would be most useful should any member be in need of assistance. We can only help if the Lodge Almoner or Secretary keep us informed.

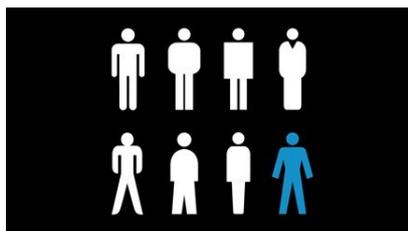
Prostate & Diabetes.

The Provincial Grand Master for the Craft Province of West Kent R.W.Bro. Mark Estaugh mentioned at the drop-in session on Saturday 20th March, that they are trying to arrange a PSA Test (Prostate Cancer) & Diabetes Testing event at Oakley House, Bromley. At the moment this is not possible due to the Covid restrictions, but as the lockdown starts to lift, this will be arranged.

The Almoner Team will keep you posted.

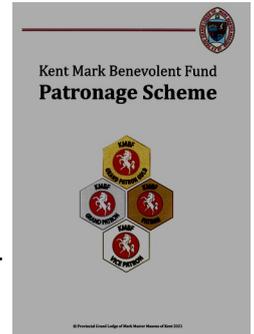
Below the belt.

Something we don't like to talk about is our own health. Prostate Cancer; please Brethren do not treat this lightly. It is said one in eight men are likely to be diagnosed in their lifetime. The two main factors are getting older, it mainly affects men aged 50 and over, and having a family history of prostate cancer. Contact your GP for a PSA test, or alternatively, you can purchase a home testing kit from the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust. At a cost of £25, it could be the best £25 you ever spend.



The Kent Mark Benevolent Fund Patronage Scheme.

This is one avenue of funding that the Provincial Almoner Team can call upon to support members in need. I am sure that you are aware; the only funding the KMBF gets is from members and Lodge-supporting it with donations. Please do support the Patronage Scheme, it is only with your generosity that we can support those less fortunate than ourselves.



“Help us to Help You”

http://kentmarkmastermasons.org.uk/news_0557.html

Here is an update on how your money has already made a difference.



W.Bro. Allan Jones of Gordon Lodge of M.M.M. No. 364 sent some pictures to the MBF of his grandson, Ben Jones, enjoying some time out and about on his new bike which was provided with assistance from a grant, initiated by the Province, of £4,000 channelled

through the Tree of Hope Charity last year. Ben suffers from Mowat-Wilson Syndrome. The new bike allows him to improve his independence.

The bike was delivered a few weeks ago, Allan's son, Kieran, (Ben's father) has also taken delivery of an electric bike and trailer. They are now looking forward to the summer and being able to go out for rides a bit further afield. In an update, Allan sent his thanks to all involved for the help in “making Ben's dream come true”.

Extracts from a letter from W.Bro. Bob King.

Dear Archie / Peter

At the extremely constructive drop in last Saturday I was disappointed to learn of the apathy of some Lodge Almoners, I think many good men will think like I used to that it was not the job for me.

I have changed my mind and have put down a few notes that you may wish to edit and use somewhere down the line.

Every other Saturday the Mark Province of Kent have an open zoom meeting appropriately called the "drop in". Each time a different member of the Executive hosts the meeting.

Last Saturday 58 Mark Masons dropped in and the event was hosted by A.Prov.G.M. David Stiff and the theme was care and welfare.

In these horrid pandemic times our thoughts are drawn to this very important aspect of our Masonic lives.

Naturally the role of the Lodge Almoner featured in the discussions and it made me think of the importance of the office.

I am better known in the West side of the county but for those that don't know me in the East I was initiated in 1978.

I was very keen to learn the ritual, I know many will say "why didn't you then", and progress through the chairs.

In 1981 I was exalted into the Royal Arch.

At this point my main ambition was to become a DC, which I achieved in my RA Chapter, although again some will say they never noticed.

I also served as charity steward in a PZ Chapter. But I found my place when I became secretary of my Craft Lodge an office I held for 10 years,

I was also secretary of my PM Lodge for 5 years. The one Office I always shied away from was Almoner, it seemed a lonely job with little help given and lots of forms to fill in.

I went through my journey in Craft and Chapter and in 2000 I joined Mark, R.A.M. and Rose Croix.

Continued

I was starting to progress in these fantastic orders when duty called and for almost the next 17 years I served on the Executive of either Craft or Chapter and for a couple of years both. This delayed my journey in the other orders but I am now back on track.

Three years ago my R.A.M. Lodge needed an Almoner, no one wanted the job, and sadly as so often happens someone had to reluctantly take on the job and that someone was me. A year later for the same reason I took the office in the Mark Lodge.

But I was determined to make a difference. I didn't realise then that a global pandemic would turn up and direct my efforts.

In these times words that I had never heard of came to the fore, I mean zoom and WhatsApp. Many Lodges created a WhatsApp group and many more held regular zoom meetings.

I noticed that several members of my Mark and R.A.M. were actually the Almoner of their Craft Lodge. I decided to enlist their help and they willingly agreed.

As much as possible I formed groups of members who were in the same Craft Lodge and asked one of the helpers to become my liaison officer for that group.

Every month the 4 of us contact every member in our group, the other 3 report back to me and I send out a monthly report to every member. We have two members not on the internet and 2 other members said that they would contact them by phone each month.

So my Almoners Team consists of 6 very willing members. I also think that Lodge Almoner is right up there as an office that gives the most job satisfaction. What about the paperwork. Not a problem our Provincial Almoner has produced a manual with all the forms explained in detail. I call it my idiots guide and if I can understand it anyone can. Brethren next time the office of Almoner comes available volunteer you will enjoy it or simply volunteer to be an assistant.

Bob King.

As Lodge Almoner how can the Provincial Almoner Team best help you in your role. What are your needs? The Team would like to know.

- It could be training
- One to one Zoom meeting with Almoner Team
- What is required for a successful MBF, KMBF Petition

Vaccinations.

There have been over 27 million Covid-19 vaccinations administered nationally. Two West Kent Masonic Centres became Covid hubs. Welling in the North of the county and Tunbridge Wells more centrally located. Our thanks must go to the Masonic Hall Administrators for the use of their facilities, and an even bigger thank you to the Brethren for volunteering to serve the community at the centres.

The Lodge Almoners WhatsApp Group.

Since the relaunch the Group has steadily grown and there are now 45 members. If you would like to be part of the group, you would be most welcome.

The Aim of the group is:

- To communicate and distribute information quickly and effectively with Lodge Almoners
- To allow Lodge Almoners to communicate easily with each other and to share good practice ideas

For more information contact the Provincial Grand Almoner.

Thank you to W.Bro. Brian Tear for sharing on the Lodge Almoners WhatsApp group a letter where Royal Oak Mark Lodge No. 416 donated £100 to the MS Society in memory of W.Bro. Jack Severs.

Vehicle tax.

Are you aware that a vehicles tax ends on the death of the registered owner. A vehicle with no tax, also invalidates the vehicles insurance.



Scams

There appear to be a lot of internet scams going around. A booklet that may be helpful to combat these is produced by the Metropolitan Police entitled “The little book of big scams”; it is available from the website. <https://www.met.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/central/advice/fraud/met/the-little-book-of-big-scams.pdf>

We are sure you have some fantastic thoughts and ideas; why not share them with us. Let us together truly make the Mark Province of Kent, the “Caring Province”. Should there be a significant event happening in your Lodge, please let us know, it does not matter how big or small, if it is important to you, it will be to us as well.

Congratulations to W.Bro. Steve Rozier on being promoted to Provincial Grand Charity Steward in the Craft Province of West Kent. W.Bro. Steve is still carrying on in his role as Assistant to the Provincial Grand Almoner ,along with W.Bro. John Shervington.



Mark Well.

Yours sincerely & fraternally

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