



MAKING OUR MARK

The Newsletter of Staffordshire & Shropshire Mark Master Masons



Dear Brethren All,

Christmas is traditionally a time of peace and joy when we welcome the birth of Jesus in humble circumstances in Bethlehem. Yet no one could have imagined last year how our lives could be changed so dramatically by the onset of a virus now spread across most of the Earth.

Yet many including Mark Masons have risen to the challenge presented to us with selfless acts of kindness and support, whether it be in the community or to our own brethren. To all of you I say thank you.

Let us hope that the vaccines now being rolled out prove to be effective against this pernicious disease, and it will not be too long before we can resume our activities again.

As we have been unable to hold our Children's Party this year, it has been decided to arrange a Mark Christmas Social on Monday, 21st December at 7.00 p.m. via Zoom. You and your families are welcome to join us and we will be raising a glass to all Mark Masons wherever they may be. Details are enclosed.

Vivien and I wish you and your families a happy and joyful Christmas and let us all hope for better things in the year ahead.

Mark Well Brethren. May you and your families keep safe and well.

Fraternal regards,

Niobe Heenan ✉

Provincial Grand Master





Join Us for the Provincial Christmas Zoom Do



Merry
Christmas

Your Invitation

To join in simply click on the link below:

The link will be available from 6.50pm.

The evenings entertainment will include:

- Christmas Carols with live musical accompaniment by Jeremy Lund. Carols will be sung by the Provincial Choir (that is everybody attending!)
- A Christmas story by Glyn Condliffe
- A Quiz with a star prize of a bottle of Champagne donated by the PGM
- The best Christmas jumper with a prize of a bottle of port donated by the DepPGM
- A short talk by Lynn Stone on the work of the Blood Bikes during the Coronavirus crisis.



[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87939072776?
pwd=RU1rVTJ3WXh5b2dSWWtITHNwVVJBUT09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87939072776?pwd=RU1rVTJ3WXh5b2dSWWtITHNwVVJBUT09)

Meeting ID: 879 3907 2776
Passcode: 446387



Born in Stafford and educated at Walton High before attending Aston Uni and achieving a B.Sc. in Transport Operation and Planning. He left to study in Accountancy qualifying at age 24yrs and moving into the area of Corporate Recovery – or insolvency as it's better known. Accountancy and finance have always been his trade and after a period at a Birmingham foundry and two years with Isuzu Cars (Paris), in 1997 he joined International Motors as the Financial Director. Blimey, Birmingham, Paris, and International Motors --- he should have gone to International Rescue with the Tracey Family and financed Thunderbird 6!

In 2002 David married Carla in Dubai, before returning to their Huntington home. Children Sophie and Reuben soon followed. Reuben may have a career in drama as, when Carla rang David to say that her 'waters had broken' KNOWING there was no rush - there hadn't been with Sophie - David set off for home some time later. Carla was indeed in labour! Setting off for the hospital, they made it as far as Weeping Cross before Nature took a hand and Reuben was delivered by his Dad at the roadside with telephone medical support only!

As a young man David played football for Chesterfield F. C. Reserves but by his mid-thirties his hobby and love was ownership of a horse. He bought Ebony when she was a 4yr old and they're still riding together 22 years later. David tells me she's not as spritely as she was but she can still be a handful to hold onto! Incidentally, David was mucking out Ebony just before Reuben's arrival!

David joined Masonry in 1998 when he joined Carnarvon Lodge, 1572 meeting in Freemasons Hall, London. He was WM in 2003/2004 and received London Grand rank in 2009. As he was resident in Huntington, Staffs whilst WM of Carnarvon he began to visit Craft Lodges and make enquiries re Mark membership. This resulted in him joining Chase Lodge, 6291 in 2003 (WM in 2011) and being Advanced into Robert Mummery, 1304 in 2004.

His first Provincial appointment was as Grand Junior Deacon in 2011, a promotion to Past G Ins. Wks. and now to the rank of Grand Master Overseer.

A member of RAM, Chapter, KT, Rose Croix, OSM, St Thomas of Acon, the Allied Masonic Degrees, Scarlet Cord and KTP it's fair to say that David is known throughout the Province of Staffs and Shrops.

Lockdown has seen David working from home and his mileage is down from 24K per annum to 1200 in the last six months. However he is busier than ever as Nissan, having furloughed 600, have retained only 20 full time employees in essential financial areas. Perhaps that's why he serves as Lodge Treasurer in several orders and can be relied upon in all.

Steve Bird, P PrGSW



MILLENIUM DRAW WINNERS 2020

DRAW DATE	WHERE	WINNING NUMBERS	PRIZE VALUE	WINNER	LODGE NO
SEPTEMBER 2020 LOCKDOWN	IN THE	231	£100	STEWART WARING	1503
	PRESENCE OF	323	£60	PETER CUTHBERT	1150
	W.BRO KEN BELL	240	£40	LLEW EVANS	933
	AT HIS HOME NO	279	£20	TIM ELCOCK	1150
	MEETINGS BEING	92	£20	TONY THOMPSON	1426
	HELD	179	£10	W BROWN	1426

S.S.M.B.A. Presidents Report 2020

Last year I said that I hoped to visit as many Lodges as possible during my year. Many were visited but Covid put an end to more ambitious plans.

I also expressed a hope that the SSMBA would be able to find and assist a few more individual members than in past years. Well that's happened but not quite as I had envisaged.

We have continued to support and provide assistance to many local charities, in particular to the Blood Bikes when they sought some additional funding.

I and others from the committee, especially W.Bro. Steve Bird Senior Vice President, have visited and presented cheques to many local charities – suitably distanced and wearing appropriate protection. It's hoped that this will continue to raise awareness to the good of Mark Masonry in this area.

In the early stages of Covid I was concerned that not all members would be able to keep in touch through the internet. However, it appears that lodges have found ways of keeping in contact with their members.

I get regular phone calls from the Almoners of lodges of which I am a member and I trust that's the same for other members of the province.

Another concern was and still is that with furloughing and in some cases a reduced return on their pension many may find it difficult to pay their Lodge subscriptions. Contributions to charity may prove awkward.

So, if you can please support the SSMBA through your Charity Steward. The monies received will be "faithfully applied".

Brother Almoners we are here to help.

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to the committee for guiding me through the year and in particular to our secretary W.Bro. Alan Colby. This crisis as somewhat increased calls on his time.

Keep safe.

Bryan Hughes



It's been another busy year for the SSMBA. As 2020 draws to a close now is a good time to reflect on the fantastic work of the SSMBA in supporting local charities and worthy causes. Through your generosity, this year the SSMBA have made grants totalling over £12,000.

This is the full list of Grants paid...

Cerebral Palsy (CP) Sport	1,000.00
Covid-19 Fund (Top Up)	579.00
Katharine House Hospice	250.00
Lingen Davies Cancer Fund	1,000.00
Macular Society	1,000.00
Motor Neuron Disease (MND) Association, Shropshire	500.00
Motor Neuron Disease (MND) Association, Sutton Coldfield	500.00
Shrops, Staffs & Cheshire Blood Bikes	5,000.00
Spinal Injuries Association	250.00
St John Ambulance	1,000.00
The Harry Wilson Keys Memorial Fund	360.00
Emergency Grants	750.00
Total Grants	12,189.00



The Provincial Office are aware that, increasingly, mail sent from the Provincial email account (...@mmmstaffsandshrops.co.uk) is being treated as "Junk Mail" by some service providers. We believe this is because these providers have recently installed "junk filters" as a customer service measure and unfortunately, our email address is being incorrectly classified by these filters. We are in the process of correcting the error. However, a solution may take time to implement.

In the meantime, here are some easy to follow instructions on how to make our emails "safe" with some email service providers.

Service Provider	Action to take
Yahoo, Gmail and AOL	follow this link below https://clean.email/how-to-whitelist-an-email
BT	To make sure that emails you receive are never put into your Spam folder, add them as a "Safe Sender". To do this: 1. From the Settings tab, select the "Safe Senders" folder and click on the Add button. 2. Add the email address you want to mark as safe and click Save. Follow this link for more information about stopping unwanted or malicious emails: https://www.bt.com/help/email/using-bt-mail-s-anti-spam-features
Hotmail	Click on "Options" in the upper right corner of your Hotmail screen. Then click the link for "Safe and Blocked Senders" in the body of the page under Junk e-mail. Click the "Safe Senders" link and enter the email address you want to whitelist. Click "Add" to include it on the list.



Born in Sale, Manchester he attended schools in Stockport leaving Peel Moat Secondary aged 16yrs and became an Apprentice Electrician and then an Electrical Engineer. At 23yrs of age he joined BT and spent the next 34yrs as a telephone engineer based in exchanges and offices in Manchester and the Central Midlands.

His boyish good looks hide the fact that he has three step children, nine grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Married to Jill he now lives in Oswestry where he spends his retirement 'mostly gardening' as he has tried skiing but values his health too much!

He joined the Craft in 1982 at the Prince Edward Lodge, 2109 in Stockport, West Lancashire and upon moving residence joined Cae Glas, 8572 at Oswestry. He is a Founder Member of the Shropshire Stewards Lodge, 9971.

In 1993 he joined Mark Masonry at Britannia Lodge, 53 meeting in Sheffield, when a business friend persuaded him to join the Province of West Yorkshire. Their loss was our gain when he joined St. Oswald Mark, 982 in October 2008 becoming WM in 2014 and subsequently The Croft Lodge of Mark Provincial Grand Stewards, 1524.

Provincially he was appointed as Pr G Stwd in 2015 becoming Past Pr GSD in 2017 which led to his current promotion to Pr Grand Senior Overseer – a position that I he know wasn't expecting but is well deserved nonetheless. I have no doubt he will travel the Province once more and – had it not been for Covid – with his family connections he would have arranged a tremendous Childrens Xmas Party!

Indeed Charity is a serious business with Nick. You may have spotted Brethren that he was a winner in the September Millennium Draw. However, he has disposed of the cheque and asked me to put his winnings back into the Charity Pot! Well done Nick!!

Lockdown, he tells me, has had little effect on him and Jill. A little less shopping but a little more time for each other – every cloud has a silver lining!

Steve Bird, P PrGSW





With "Lockdown 2" in place 1150 Mark couldn't even have a meeting within the "rule of 6" so resorted to a Zoom meeting on Nov 11th. Very successful too, as over fifty percent of the members took part and we were joined by the PGM, DPGM and the Provincial DC. Sadly our own WM couldn't participate but the IPM, W.Bro. Richard Jack presided and a good business meeting was held and enjoyed by all who took part. Thanks are due to Lodge Secretary W.Bro. Glyn Condliffe for organising it and W. Bro Dennis Hill for setting up the zoom facilities. Hopefully by the time our next meeting in February, we will be able to hold a proper meeting in our Masonic Hall!!

VW.Bro.Ian CM Smith

MBF Festival 2021



The 153rd MBF Festival will be hosted by East Lancashire Province, and in support of the Festival they have produced a unique Calendar for the year 2021 with copies now available. The 12 original watercolours were painted by Annette Young who is the wife of W.Bro. Gerry Young, P.G.J.D. who is Assistant Provincial Grand Master for the Province of East Lancashire.

Many will also realise that W.Bro. Gerry is also a Staffordshire and Shropshire Mark Master Mason being a member of St. Editha's Lodge of MMM No. 1426. It is therefore hoped that the Brethren of Staffordshire and Shropshire will support East Lancashire Province by purchasing the calendars and in turn assist with the MBF Festival.

These large, wall hanging calendars feature twelve contrasting prints of iconic sights in East Lancashire, commencing with the beauty of Pendle Hill in January and ending with Manchester's colourful Christmas Market in December. Calendars are priced at £10 each and all proceeds will go to the MBF. So, let us brighten your kitchen or office wall and at the same time provide much needed support for our Mark Benevolent Fund. Why not purchase several more copies to send to friends and family at Christmas?

The calendar measures: 318mm x 228mm folded – 318mm x 456mm open



To order:

By email: eastlancscalendars@gmail.com

By telephone: 07766731307

Payment by cheque to East Lancs Mark 2021 Festival – post to: East Lancs Calendars. 47 St Leonards Way, Woore, Crewe. CW3 9SS Or contact them for electronic payment details.

Thank you very much for your support.



Born into a long standing farming family at Tattenhall in Cheshire after leaving school he worked on the family farm and attended Reaseheath Agricultural College where he obtained an N.C.A. qualification.

Following the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 1967 which took the Dairy herd Ray left the family farm and entered the Agricultural Machinery Business, starting in 1968 selling Ford Tractors. Then in 1970 he joined a Farm Machinery Manufacturer selling to the dealers and in 1978 he moved to Mill Loaders in Wolverhampton as Home and Export Sales Manager.

However in 1981 Mill sold the Agricultural Business and Ray then left the Farm Machinery Business achieving the position of NFU Group Secretary for the Eccleshall & Stone Branches. Along with the appointment he held as self-employed Agency for NFU Mutual Insurance - a business that grew beyond his expectations starting with a turnover of £420k which, by the time of retiring in 2011, had grown to £3.6million and a staff of 7.

Married to Anne for 40yrs they have 3children who are all married and have 6 Grandchildren. For all their married life they have lived at Church Aston, Newport.

In addition to Masonry Ray is heavily involved in the running of the Staffordshire County Showground being a senior Chief Steward in the running of the show for 24yrs. He is also a Director and past Chairman of the board. In addition he was the County President in 2019.

He joined Craft Masonry in 1993 with Gordon Lodge, 2149 in Stoke-on-Trent becoming WM in 2001 and was subsequently DC for 8yrs. In 1996 he joined Audley Lodge, 1896 meeting in Newport, Shropshire and was WM in 2007 & 2012.

Due to commercial pressure he delayed his membership of Mark Masonry until retiring in 2011 at which point he joined RT&R Lodge, 1630 meeting at Newport. He was WM in 2016/17.

His first Mark Provincial Appointment was to Grand Junior Deacon in 2017 and he now joins the team as Grand Junior Overseer.

He is a member of RAM, Royal Arch, Red Cross of Constantine, Rose Croix, &KT.

Rays hobby is enjoying breaks in a Touring Caravan which he and Anne have enjoyed for 35yrs. But this year it has never moved not only due to Covid19 (his wife is extremely vulnerable and needs to shield) but also due to him having a hip operation in March with a knee operation at the end of November.

Good luck with your health Ray – Province needs you! And I'm sure that the Brethren echo that wish as we'd all like to see you on the circuit too!!

Steve Bird, Past Pr GSW



Brethren, are you a golfer? If so, you may be interested in joining either the Staffordshire Masonic Golf Society or the Shropshire Masonic Golf Society. Both societies run several internal and inter Provincial matches during the golfing season. Each society already has a list of fixtures outlined for 2021 and whilst held under the auspices of the Craft you are all by virtue of being Mark Masons also Craft members. Either or both societies would more than welcome your interest.

STAFFORDSHIRE MASONIC GOLF SOCIETY

Thur 27 th May	Spring Comp & Provincial Warden's Team Challenge	Aston Wood GC
Date tba	Match v Warwickshire & Worcestershire	Shirley GC
Date tba	Match v Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire	Horsley Lodge GC
Thur 22 nd July	Six Counties Comp—Inter Provincial match between Saffordshire, Derby, Leics & Rutland, Notts, Warks & Yorks-W. Riding	Aston Wood GC
Wed 25 th August	Valon Cup & Denne Shield Comp	The Manor GC
Thur 2 nd September	Provinces in Brotherhood Match v Shropshire	Wrekin GC
Mon 13 th September	PGM's Golf Trophy	Walsall GC

SHROPSHIRE MASONIC GOLF CLUB

Fri 14 th May	Spring Trophies	Lilleshall Hall GC
Sat 26 th June	Weekend Event	Arcscott GC
Thur 12 th August	Match v Worcestershire & Herefordshire	Sapey GC
Thur 2 nd September	Autumn Trophies & Provinces in Brotherhood match v Staffordshire	Wrekin GC



Membership of Staffordshire Masonic Golf Society is £10.00 per annum and for Shropshire Masonic Golf Society £20.00, both very good value.

If you are interested in joining further details can be obtained from:

Staffs Masonic Golf Society – W.Bro. Mark Ashton – email: msg.ashton@gmail.com

Shrops Masonic Golf Society – W.Bro. Mike Higgins - email: salopmasonicgolf@gmail.com

Alternatively, contact W.Bro. Kevin Spencer, Deputy PGM and he will make the appropriate introductions.



Hopefully all our readers will have read the first part of Mark Ashton's "Bone Marrow Transplant" story back in September, well here's Part 2.

In my mind the family would be in contact as soon as the six month embargo was up. They weren't. However, I can still clearly remember how and when they did. What had seemed an eternity, was in fact only 2½ weeks!

It was early on a Sunday evening, and thoughts had turned to the upcoming week's work – as they did. The phone rang and I answered it. The voice said "Is that Mark Ashton?" I answered "Yes." He then said "I'm ringing to say thank you for saving my life."

Those words are etched into my being, and were the start of an hour and a half's magical call with six year old Sam and mainly his parents Bruce and Lee.

Lee explained that she and Bruce had deliberated and fretted over how to initiate the contact, but just didn't know how best to express their heartfelt gratitude. In the end they come up with the wonderful idea of letting Sam be the first to speak.

One of their questions, as we hit it off and briefly caught up with each other's life stories, was "Could you come to Vancouver in September, so that you and Sam can be together for the first anniversary of your transplant – as our guests?"

And so it was that my wife, three year old son and I spent three weeks of September 1990 in British Columbia with the three of them – what memories! If you've not been to Vancouver, Vancouver Island and the BC Rockies, and get the chance, grab it with both hands. They're rated high in the world list of top places to live for good reasons.

Our story, to garner support for Bone Marrow Transplant organisations, which are generally not government funded, had been picked-up by local TV, Radio and national print media before our departure. This continued on our arrival in Canada, both at the airport and for the next few days. During this time we got to meet the extended family, before being given the use of Bruce's boss's huge RV for ten days and heading off to Banff, Jasper, etc. in the Rockies. Incidentally it was that same man who had funded our return airfares – writing this I now wonder if he was a Mason it's the sort of thing we do isn't it, I must ask the question.

And so before we knew it the three weeks of memory-making were up and it was time to say 'Au revoir'.

Up until the day of our return flight, if you'd have asked me about 'out of body experiences' the logical/analytical part of me would have won through, but that changed. On the long flight back to the UK I deliberately hardly slept. This was mainly to deal with the jet-lag, but I know when I nodded off for about 40 minutes. During that fairly short time period, at around 3am Vancouver time, Sam woke up and saw me sat on the end of his bed – he felt safe. Who knows how or why, not me, but neither do I believe in that sort of coincidence!

Life soon got back to normal, with the occasional opportunity to share some of the video we'd taken to publicise and fundraise for Bone Marrow Transplant organisations. The gist of the talk was to ask the stark question, "What would you do if you became life threateningly ill with a blood cancer, and didn't have a sibling to receive a transplant from?" The only answer if you don't have a brother or sister, or one that matches, is turn to unrelated donors through such magnificent, underfunded organisations.

Whilst still a teenager Sam was selected, by Vancouver Children's Hospital, to present a paper at a world medical conference being held in London. Thankfully there was time during the visit for him, accompanied by one of the male nurses, to visit us in Staffordshire & Shropshire. Hailing from the 'New World' he particularly wanted to see our historical canals, so we took him to see them and The Potteries, and to stand on the world's first Iron Bridge, which we duly did.

We are yet to meet again in person, but with the marvellous improvements in technology over the years have kept in contact. And so, when the Chinese Coronavirus is tamed, one of the first places Beverley and I will be heading is Vancouver, to celebrate our 'fluke' of genetics, the amazing people who work in this field of medical science, and Sam's extended life.

As the story of the Round Table Britain and Ireland's Anthony Nolan appeal is an ongoing success story and one of triumph over adversity it is a nice way to round off 2020 and hope for brighter prospects in 2021.



Bro Mark Ashton