



MAKING OUR MARK

The Newsletter of Staffordshire & Shropshire Mark Master Masons

Provincial Grand Lodge 2021



Thursday 14th October 2021 brought a gathering of Mark Master Masons wishing to support the PGM and his Officers of the year. A reduced number of 160 were allowed to meet and though some social distancing was observed in the Temple the afternoon was well attended and the restrictions applied at the Festive Board meant there was more than sufficient elbow room for what turned out to be a surprisingly good meal.

The first incoming processions consisted of **FIVE** Right Worshipful Brethren who currently rule over Provinces from near and far and many Distinguished Guests who had accompanied them.

The second was headed by the PGM himself whose Officers of the Year, the majority appointed last October, were eager to be fully invested and his Sword and Standard Bearers guarded his every step.

The third procession consisted of Royal Ark Mariners from the 19 RAM Lodges of the Province who had returned from sailing their crafts on various waters and moored alongside the Mark PGL to show their support. Indeed W Commander Simon Hewitt, who led the Deputation and addressed the PGM had the look, if not the air, of a Sea Captain and fitted the role perfectly.

An extremely loud report on the door revealed the Deputy Grand Director of Ceremonies who announced that RW Bro Stephen Davison, the Asst Grand Master had arrived and 'demanded' entry. Taking the matter in his stride our PGM informed him that the Asst GM would be most welcome at our meeting whether demanding entry or not. Wry smiles abounded and the DepGDC retreated to collect his charge.

The business of the meeting then took place as per Agenda and we reached the main event of the day – Appointment and Investitures.

RW Bro Heenan was accompanied by his Deputy and Assistant who were re-appointed for the ensuing year. He congratulated them both on their hard work which had carried the Province through the Pandemic.

PGM, Dave Prince PGSW and Tony Marshall PGJW take their seats



The Officers of the Year were then appointed and invested in fine style with the DC Team assisted by Escorts and Marshalls, ensuring that every Brother was in the right place at the right time.

The appointments were completed when RW Bro Heenan confirmed the appointments made at the Annual Assembly of Provincial Royal Ark Mariners held on 30th September at Shrewsbury.

The newly appointed Officers were then saluted under the direction of the PrDepGDC. W Bro Pete Thompson, P Pr GJW who will serve under our newest PrGDC, W Bro Pete Tyson to allow the PrAGDCs to settle into their role.

The outgoing PrGDC, W.Bro Bob Osbourne retired to an ovation from the Brethren after 9 years in his role. It was an emotional moment as the Outgoing and Incoming DCs exchanged Wands and clasped hands as only true friends could. We appear to be in safe hands still.



The meeting was then addressed by the PGM whom encouraged his Brethren to stay firm and committed to the Degree by inviting new members to the Order to experience the 'Magic of the Mark'.

This was followed by an address from the Asst GM RW Bro Stephen Davison who made similar remarks, adding that we should try to increase our Craft Membership too, by inviting friends to join The Craft thereby giving Mark a bigger pool to fish from. He is a frequent visitor to our PGL Meetings and has a good rapport with not only the PGM but the grass roots membership too. He made several humorous remarks about the PGM stealing 'all the good lines' particularly the 'Magic of the Mark' line which he claims to have personally coined. He retired from the meeting to much acclaim.

The Festive Board was a delight. Tables were limited to a maximum of six, as opposed to ten, and the Brethren all enjoyed a good selection of company as well as the nicest meal that I have ever experienced at the venue.

The event concluded at about 8pm with a goodly number of members staying on to enjoy a farewell drink and to seal the friendships they had earlier renewed.



Brethren this is an annual event – pandemics allowing – and I urge you all to book into the next meeting AND to stay to dine.

You know from your Masonic experience that it is at the Festive Board that you find out more about your acquaintances as the Temple is for work and not refreshment. But Brethren, this Happy Degree does call us all from labour to refreshment and there is no finer way to get to know your fellows. Who knows? You may meet a Mark Master who would enjoy the company of a Mariners Lodge but doesn't yet know it.

Mark Well Brethren

Steve Bird

Annual Assembly of Provincial Royal Ark Mariners



On Thursday 30th September the above meeting took place at Shrewsbury led by the Deputy PGM W.Bro Kevin Spencer and held under the banner of Kenneth Shenton Lodge of Installed Masters.

The lodge was opened at 6pm with W.Bro Colin Albrow in the chair and a total of 49 attendees and at 6.30pm the meeting was adjourned allowing the business of the Assembly to be dealt with.

The Deputy was well supported by the Asst PGM and Past Rulers of the Province in the persons of RW Bro David Edwards, W.Bro ICM Smith, W.Bro AD Beckingsale and Ian Dingwall, Past District Grand Master.

There were a total of 10 holders of RAM Grand Rank and 14 holders of Provincial RAM Grand Rank present whose numbers were to be swelled by those recipients of the same Provincial award during the evening.

From the roll of Active Officers in the Mark Degree were another 10 Royal Ark Mariners present and the Pr GSW W.Bro Dave Prince, Pr GJW Tony Marshall and Pr GIG W.Bro Phil Sawyer were invited to occupy the Wardens Pedestals and IG seat for the duration of the Assembly.

The 5 recipients of Pr RAM Grand Rank were duly called before the Deputy PGM who produced and entertaining potted history of the brother before him before investing him with his collarette. As an interested party who considers himself to have lead a full life both masonically and personally, I was put firmly in the shadow of these Brethren who all seemed to be captains of industry, sporting superstar or generally 'all round good egg' and assets to our organisation at every level. I suspect that we all know one of them so congratulations are sent to:

Worshipful Brethren Mike Sharples, Peace RAM 541, Dave Sutton, Kidsgrove RAM 1503, Terry Worrall, Regis RAM 862, Peter Ball, Sir John Jervis RAM 1416 and Andy Delamere, Severn RAM 1617 who were in attendance whilst apologies were received from W.Bro Len Birch, Beaudesart RAM 1127 and W.Bro Brin Bassral, Dartmouth RAM 993 who were unavoidably absent.



Steve Bird, Pr RAMGR.

Staffordshire & Shropshire

Mark Benevolent Fund



The Annual General Meeting of the Mark Order took place on Wednesday 4th August 2021 followed immediately by the AGM of the SSMBA.

The SSMBA is the responsible for receiving and disbursing charitable donations throughout the Province and its 10 Trustee members are drawn from all ranks and areas of Mark Masonry. In 2017 my first connection with the SSMBA Committee began when I was invited onto the committee and began to understand its processes and its value.

At that time funds stood at almost £70,000 and there was a shortage of applicants for assistance it seemed. Indeed it soon became apparent that not many Brethren were aware that they could apply for assistance on a personal level or to aid local charities with their efforts. The Trustees started to advertise their facilities and made a concerted effort to suggest recipient charities – many of which were treating members of the Mark Order and no doubt many other Masons.

It turns out that by completing a simple application form (available from me or W.Bro Alan Colby, Sec) any Brother can apply for 'additional funding' assistance. This means that any funds already raised by a Mark Lodge, can qualify to receive an additional amount from the SSMBA - sometimes greater than the amount already raised.

As a result in April 2017 along with W.Bro Sean Lawlor (Gough 45) I went to The Lou Macari Centre at Hanley, Stoke on Trent, a shelter for homeless persons, to present two cheques - one for £110 from our Charity Collection from Gough 45 and also a supplementary cheque of £250 from the SSMBA. So worthy was the recipient and his work that he was awarded another £500 from the SSMBA in November of the same year.

And so it began! With SSMBA meetings scheduled for March and November each year we canvassed lodges to make their applications and Brother did we do some good!

In March 18 Sussex Mark and Staffordshire Craft received £2K and £5K respectively along with £1K going to House of Bread, which supports the homeless and vulnerable and a further £500 to Stoke Air Training Corps.

In November 18 the Cavalier Centre (Riding for the Disabled) received £5K after an application from 1150 South Shrops Mark.

March 19 saw applications from Wulfruna, Jubilee, St. James, Shropshire and Installed Masters sending £2,750 to St. John Ambulance, Shrewsbury and Whitchurch Hospital, Hope House, Lilleshall School and Black Country Womens Aid.

November 19 saw Ethos Hospital for the physically disabled presented with a cheque for £7k and £1K going to Macular Cancer research. Acorns Childrens Hospice received £1.5K whilst Cancer and Spinal Injuries treatments benefitted from £1,250 and MIND Charity £250.

In March 2020 Wilson Keys Court – our own Masonic Housing Association at Rugeley received £750 while research into Cerebral Palsy, Motor Neuron Disease and Oral Cancers received £1K each.

Brethren, that is a lot of money raised by members of this Province and you should be proud of yourselves as I see a total of just over THIRTY THOUSAND POUNDS – YES £30K raised by you and disbursed by the Trustees of the SSMBA working on your behalf.

In 2017 the Governing Document of the SSMBA was drawn up fulfilling the requirements of the Charity Commission and receiving approval at the AGM. The Rules of the SSMBA were included in the printed Bye Laws of PGL and sets out that Lodge Membership requires an annual subscription. (Currently £3 per member Mark and £2 per member RAM, payable per capita by the Lodge.)

A Charity Stewards Handbook was issued to each Lodge containing advice on the role and including the Grant Application Form to be used when requesting charitable aid and the Annual Return Form required from Lodges as per the membership Rules. Though some lodges have built the SSMBA subscription into their own subs there has not been a great response to the request for an Annual Return.

In March 2019 the question of Lodge Charity Stewards sending in their Annual Returns together with Members Subscriptions to the SSMBA was raised. Sadly this has never been addressed as we have not met as Masons since then.

This brings me right up to date as I have now been afforded the Presidency of the SSMBA and I am visiting lodges speaking to them of their obligation and appealing for charitable donations – which in the main has been well received. Treasurers, with a duty to look after lodge finances, have readily provided cheques from their general funds and voluntary donations and raffles have further increased donations to the SSMBA.

It's clear that even through the pandemic our Masonic organisation has not forgotten the oath made in the NE corner at Initiation: The distinguishing characteristic of a Freemasons heart – I mean Charity! I need not her dilate upon its excellences

To formalise the procedure the SSMBA Treasurer, W. Bro Steve Thompson, Pr G Charity Steward, has been tasked with contacting every lodge, in December (as per the Rules), requesting the Annual Returns. The SSMBA needs your continuing support.

I hope that his appeal will be met by Lodges, who may not have been properly called upon in this respect since 2017, with the appropriate response which will allow the SSMBA to continue in the charitable role it was set up for.

Finally Brethren please consider the SSMBA in your donations to society. The SSMBA may support those people with further assistance, including you, the SSMBA members should the need ever arise!

SW Bird, P Pr GSW, SSMBA President. V.V.I

Gough Mark 45 Double Advancement



It's a relief to know that now we have reached a post-pandemic stage which is free from the restrictions that were legislated for our protection. Masonry – both Craft and Mark – is returning to a little more normality and the Candidates who approached us to join pre-pandemic, have kept the Faith and are as eager to be advanced as we are to advance them.

Tuesday 5th October brought Bros Mark Snape and Avon Allcock, both from The Trent Craft Lodge 4269 to Gough Mark Lodge No 45 to make their next advancement in Masonic knowledge.

The day had been one of great concern as three of the members had been forced to self-isolate following contact with known positive cases involving family members and that left us without a DC or Inner Guard.

Fortunately, our Senior Past Master Ken Bell has a diary full of friends and even though he was asking for assistance in the early afternoon our friends came to the fore and stood in so that we didn't have to cancel.

As the meeting was to be a Proclamation followed by the Advancement – a piece of ritual that the missing DC had made a careful study of - and as the Asst DC I felt I made a poor start and, memory failing me, I was forced to read the Proclamation. The fact that the RW PGM was present made this feel so much worse but the PGM, generous as always, allowed things to proceed without comment.

The Pr ADC, W Bro. Sean Lawlor is a member of Gough and when his salutations were complete he assisted with the investiture of officers and presented two of the Addresses before taking the Master Overseers Gate.

So from a ceremony that had started by 'free falling' began to transform, and the Lodge under the direction of the WM, W Bro. John O'Leary managed to get itself 'free flowing.'

Though obligated together each Candidate perambulated the Overseers alone and both realised that this part of the ceremony was a serious business where they were singled out for criticism and blame; which the Overseers subsequently did their best not to shoulder, leaving the Candidates to take their rightful place as the evenings heroes.

Smiles abounded throughout the ceremony and it was obvious that the assistance of the guiding Deacons had helped lighten the mood – even the threat of a 'double amputation' had been prevented and the skilful craftsmen restored the stone and received their reward.

As the evening was about to conclude the RW PGM revealed that he had a special duty to perform. He announced that the Lodge had earned the Grand Patrons Diamond Award, an award that was the first to be awarded in the Province and the WM will wear it with pride for all to see.

In October 2020 an article in Making Our Mark had highlighted the efforts of the late W.Bro. 'Timmy' Timmis, P Pr GSW, P Asst G STD B who, as a member of Gough Mark 45, had contributed substantial sums to the 2007 Festival which continued after his Passing to the GL Above and had now provided a legacy of £10,000. The same award was also made to Gough 45 RAM following a similar legacy to that Lodge.

The Festive Board was as usual a convivial conclusion to the evenings work and toasts to RW Bro Heenan and Bros Snape and Allcock were received with equal acclaim, showing once more that we are all members of the most Happy Order.

This was an evening which could not have been held without the help of willing friends and the skills which often accompany Provincial Rank. Gough Lodge extends a big thank you to everyone who attended.

Steve Bird, P Pr GSW, M.I.L.



Llandudno At Last !! 2021

It had arrived !! the Event we had all been waiting for since we were denied by the Pandemic



Traditionally, we all made our separate ways on the Friday towards the venue – The Imperial Hotel located on the spectacular and beautiful North Wales Seafront Promenade.

Upon entering the Hotel it became clear that precautions were in place in the form of wall mounted thermometers and hand sanitiser stations pretty much throughout.

Promptly booked in, It was into the bar to swap stories about our various journeys and where we had managed to park

Old friends were reunited , some who had not met since the last time we were at Llandudno, New friends are made and those friendships really are one of the beauties of Mark Masonry and particularly the Mark Weekend.

Friday evening saw an informal meal in the function room, good food and excellent company, and the Mark fellowship was continued by many in the Hotel Lounge afterwards

Saturday was free time to enjoy the sights and attractions around Llandudno, a walk along the pier, a trip up the great Orme on the Historic Victorian Tram, or even Shopping!

Saturday evening saw a more formal Dinner, again with excellent food, the long awaited game of Bingo (unfortunately the professional bingo caller W.Bro Norman Robertson could not be with us , however W. Bro Dave Ward deputised admirably !) in the room the atmosphere was tense with the top prize being £100.00

All the ladies receiving a lovely personal gift, also several ladies were presented with bouquets of flowers .

A short speech followed from the PGM , who thanked everyone for attending, and, whilst thanking and congratulating V.W.Bro Barry Clarke and his wife, he announced that this would be the last time they would be organising the event after 13 years.

The PGM wished them well and also announced that next year we will be back at Llandudno under the stewardship of W.Bro. Mike Towns,

Sunday Morning came along all too soon, so it was a hearty breakfast and farewells until the next time

Congratulations and our thanks must go to V.W.Bro Barry Clark and his wife Ann for another well organised and



highly successful Mark weekend – Hwyl fawr Llandudno - see you next year.



W. Bro David Prince

Pr G S W

Introduction of your New Pr.G. Almoner



Allow me to introduce myself: My name is W. Bro. Richard Webster and I am the new Pr.Grand Almoner {richard@15bgl.co.uk}

Invested at this year's meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge. I suspect many of you will already know me from my previous role as Pr. Grand Secretary. At PrGL, W. Bro. Tony Tomson was also invested as the Pr.Asst.Grand Almoner {a.r.tomson@btinternet.com}.

As a team Tony and I will do our very best to help and support you, but please remember that your Lodge Almoner should, ideally, be your first point of contact for Almoner support.

There are many sources of guidance and information available from Grand Lodge to help with the Almoner role, and as many of you may already know the MCF {Craft} & MBF {Mark/RAM} work closely to cover as many circumstances as possible.

It is the intention of the Pr.Asst.G.Almoner and myself to visit as many Lodges as we can over the next twelve months or so. This will be an opportunity to meet you and to talk to the Lodge Almoners about any situations or concerns they may have about their role. We are also thinking about calling an Almoner's meeting at some point in the spring or early summer of 2022.

On behalf of the Provincial Almoner team we do sincerely wish you all the very best.

Finally Brethren we are here with a sympathetic ear; please do not hesitate to contact your Lodge Almoner in the first instance if you have any questions or require any information and assistance with anything.

Kind regards & good wishes.

Sincerely & fraternally,

Richard.

Pr.G.Almoner.

The New Millennium Arrives



It seems but moments ago that the RW PGM invited me to assist him in his charitable efforts by taking the reins of the Keystone Millennium Fund from W/Bro Howard Jenkins. But the fact is, it was five years last September, that I began to circulate Mark Lodge Festive Boards encouraging members to subscribe to a scheme that not only raised funds for charity but also gave them a chance to win a little cash back.

The premise is simple: you handed me a £5 note - or better still a £10 note - and choose a numbered brass disc (or two) from the 1000 available and I would ensure that the disc went into a wooden Draw Tumbler and that records showed who subscribed to the winning disc.

All you had to do, as a subscriber, was wait and who knows? A cheque for between £10 and £100 may just drop through your door after the March, September and December draws.

Well that was the easy part! As long as I came to your lodge every year and collected your subscription you were in with a chance of winning. And there, Brethren, is the rub! Even with a very understanding wife I found it difficult to get to every lodge, every year to see everyone. But I still risked it and kept on coming!

So I enlisted some help and, at a fair proportion of lodges, I was able to persuade a helpful and charity minded brother to act as 'collector', to become an 'agent' assisting with local collections.

The system worked pretty well and funds kept coming. But not all collectors are 'sellers' and so I still travelled the Province encouraging new subscribers to join and old subscribers to continue their support.

And then along came the Pandemic! Was ALL to be lost? Not on your life Brother. We still needed to give to charity and care for those in need of support. It was time for a change of tactics.

Having been in discussion with active fund raisers from Round Table & Rotary 1630 I implemented an appeal to every Brother to set up a STANDIND ORDER and change his subscription from a yearly 'chance meeting with me' to a care-free donation once a year reducing the travelling aspect of the Fund considerably.

What I didn't realise was that this method also increases a subscribers chance of winning considerably.

Records show that there are 425 subscribing Brethren, 77 of who have standing orders. **That is 18% with S/O.** Whilst I have been at the helm of KMF there have been 90 numbers drawn (15 witnessed draws) 33 of which belong to S/O holders. (33%). The reason is clear - in every draw, numbers have had to be discarded through non-payment of subscription.

And that leads me nicely to the whole point of this article. Having handed cheques for at least £1000 p.a. to the Rt W PGM at PGL for the last FIVE YEARS – all donated by KMF subscribers - it's time for me to move on.

Please welcome W/Bro Mark Ashton of RT&R 1630 who has taken the reins (and the records) and will I'm sure be driving the KMF onwards and upwards. He may wish to keep his mileage DOWN and his and his vehicle value UP so I encourage you to support him in any way you can. He'll do a very good job I'm sure.

Steve Bird, P Pr GSW