

Report Of The Provincial Grand Almoner To Provincial Grand Lodge, 19th April 2010

The trend in increases in personal, financial and health problems being faced by Brethren and their dependants and the resultant workload falling on Lodge Almoners throughout the Province and myself shows no sign of abating. Present indications are that this trend is likely to continue in 2010. This will be seen in more detail from the statistics to which I refer later in this report.

The pastoral work being carried out by the Lodge Almoners is demanding ever more expertise from them. However, it is very heartening that, despite these problems (and they appear to get more and more diverse) indications are that they are responding well to the challenges being placed on them. Brethren are more and more recognising that it is in their interest to help and keep their Lodge Almoner aware of potential and new cases of hardship, as it reflects ultimately on the standards of caring and general happiness of the Lodge.

In my dealings with the staff at all levels in the four main National Charities at Grand Lodge, (now all working in their adjacent offices and successfully interacting with one another), I have found my work made much easier to co-ordinate. This has helped enormously in obtaining and giving advice to Lodge Almoners, particularly where urgent action may be required, possibly involving more than one, and in certain cases, all of the Charities.

In last year's report I referred to the work being carried out by the three Working Groups jointly appointed by the four Charities to draw up models of best practice for Provincial Grand Almoners and Lodge Almoners. This consists of three Initiatives; (i) a model handbook for Almoners, (ii) training of Lodge Almoners and (iii) 'Keeping in Touch', primarily follow-up contacts with Brethren and dependants. As mentioned, I had the privilege of serving on the Working Group dealing with Training. I can now report that the three groups have completed their assignments. A final document has been drawn up and approved by the Rulers Forum. It is hoped that the Handbook, which will be an advisory document, will be printed and

launched at the Provincial Grand Almoners' Conference in York next June. Once this has been approved, it is anticipated that all Lodge Almoners will be invited to seminars throughout the Provinces later in the year to familiarise them with the handbook.

I now present my report on the benefits received from the National Charities by the various petitioners during 2009.

THE GRAND CHARITY

During 2009, 73 applications for grants were made to the Grand Charity of which 52 were successful. Those awarded amounted to £118,220. In addition, 29 Annuities totalling £25,880 were provided under the

Transferred Beneficiaries Fund (formerly the RMBI Annuities Scheme). There were a further 7 Annuities from other Provinces which are administered by this Province amounting to £10,780. In total, therefore, the Province has received almost £155,000, which is a slight increase on last year's totals.

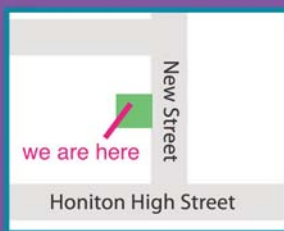
It is worthy of note that, under the new national 'Freemasonry Cares' Initiative introduced by Grand Charity last Autumn, additional cases are now being referred by Grand Charity to the Provinces. As far as this Province is concerned, applications are being received mainly from Devonshire

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