



Warwickshire Mark

February 2021

Obituary

R.W.Bro. Robert Giles Russell P.Prov.G.M

08/08/1927 - 17/01/2021

At the age of 93, we all knew that R.W.Bro. Robert Giles Russell - Bob - could not go on for ever, and had been acutely aware of his recent frail health. However, when the news came of his death, to those of us members of Warwickshire Mark above a 'certain age', it was the passing of a great friend who was our Provincial Grand Master during a golden period of development and growth in Mark Masonry within the Province.



R.W.Bro. Bob was Initiated in 1958 into Fraternity Lodge No 4032. He was Passed and Raised within four months, Exalted into the Chapter of Fortitude No 43 nine months later, and then Advanced into Matthew Clarke Lodge of MMM No 1012 in 1962. During the following decade he enjoyed his family life with his dear wife Catherine and two children, Stephen and Emma, as well as progressing up the career ladder in Education. In later life he often spoke of holidays in Paris with Catherine, pointing out paintings they bought together, as well as the many masonic functions they enjoyed together. As a Freemason, he progressed through the Offices in all three Orders, becoming WM in Craft in 1970, Mark in 1972, and MEZ of his Chapter in 1974.

Continuing his masonic journey, R.W.Bro. Bob was appointed Prov.J.G.W. in Warwickshire Craft in 1979 and Prov.G.S.W. in Mark in 1980, and was appointed to the very unusual first rank of P.Prov.G.S.N. in Royal Arch. Following the tragic death in a car accident of W.Bro. Harry Wilson, R.W.Bro. Bob was appointed and invested as Deputy Provincial Grand Master in 1981 - an amazing three years. During his 9 years in that office, Bob was established as a great supporter of the Province, and often found himself standing in for R.W.Bro. Ronald Gardner whilst he looked after his ailing wife.

On 29th January, 1990, R.W.Bro. Robert Giles Russell was Installed as the 12th Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire Mark. During the following twelve years under his leadership Bob worked hard to grow the province, to improve the reputation of the Mark, and to encourage the inclusion of wives, partners and families in the Mark community:

- the Consecration of 5 Mark lodges and 5 RAM lodges, the dedication of many new lodge banners and the celebration of lodge anniversaries and presentation of long-service certificates
- overseeing the Advancement of some 22 Brethren from Switzerland at Concord and Silhill Lodges so that they could set up the Grand Lodge of MMM of Switzerland
- under the leadership of W.Bro. Ron Albutt, Assistant and later Deputy Provincial Grand Master, the Warwickshire Mark Lodge of Instruction's role became pivotal in promoting good ritual in our Lodges

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- speakers of distinction were invited to give talks and presentations at the Warwickshire Installed Mark Masters Lodge No 1400
- Mark weekends away for Brethren and their wives and partners were initiated
- a committee set up to organise a Warwickshire Mark Summer Ball was enlarged and formalised to become the Warwickshire Mark Social Committee, co-ordinating and introducing many events which are now firm favourites: the annual Mark Carol Service; an Almoners' Sunday Lunch (later becoming the Family Sunday Lunch); a Barn Dance and pig roast (later becoming the summer BBQ); organised groups to attend Grand Lodge communications.

R.W.Bro. Bob encouraged lodges to maintain standards of ritual, and also to celebrate in style. He appreciated well-dressed tables at festive boards - candelabras and table flowers were approved of. Toasts were to be properly prepared, but not to be too long. His delight at being in our company was obvious - he was "tickled pink"; he praised effort; he appreciated the organist's rendition of his favourite tunes (La Vie en Rose); he shared favourite photos of his family and Barclay the dog; his catch-phrase was that we should Accentuate the Positive. Brethren attending the Annual Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge in 2001 were treated to a special, local dessert - rice pudding with Walsall sauce (a tot of local gin, poured over the pudding).

Retiring in 2002, R.W.Bro. Bob continued to take an interest in his Province, and attended lodge meetings as often as he could. In recent years he delighted in entertaining Brethren to afternoon tea at his retirement complex, reminiscing about the old days and the wonderful Brethren he had spent time with.

R.W.Bro. David Hooker, at his Installation as Bob's successor on 18th September 2002 said:

"He served this Province in a Provincial capacity for over 21 years, 9 years as Dep.Prov.G.M. and twelve and a half as Prov.G.M. . During that time we have seen the Province flourish. The standard of ritual has improved out of all recognition, but equally, if not more important, he has developed a spirit of friendship and enjoyment which is unsurpassed anywhere in masonry. He has placed special emphasis on the social side of our activities and has introduced many new functions where the Brethren and their wives and partners have been able to develop genuine and lasting friendships. He has shown an active interest in the running of the Province in every area and especially in administration, communication and charity..."

That seems to sum it up very well...

Notice for Lodge Secretaries:

Following the passing of R.W.Bro Bob Russell to the Grand Lodge above, the Provincial Grand Master has instructed that all Lodges in the Province should include a tribute to R.W.Bro Bob as the first item of business at the next meeting of the Lodge, either physical or virtual, followed by a short period of solemn silence in respect to departed merit.

R.W.Bro Bob Russell was a stalwart of the Province and worked tirelessly for the Mark degree, he was an Honorary member of 26 Mark Lodges and 19 RAM Lodges.

Provincial Virtual Burns Night - Friday January 29th

The Provincial Grand Master, R.W.Bro Philip Wills invites you all to a virtual Burns Night celebration.

We are unable to meet in the normal manner so on-line we go, Robbie Burns would probably have written a poem to help us on our way.

The evening will start at 7.30pm—after the meetings of 1400 RAM and 1400 Mark Lodges

- Welcome from the Prov.G.M
- The Haggis will be piped in with a video of Paul Burgess playing the bagpipes
- Bro Gordon Ferguson will address the Haggis
- Reading "To a Mouse"

Your own supply of Haggis and whisky are optional extras.

This is a Provincial Social event and that Wives, Partners and Family are all invited to join as well. There is no formal dress code, so kilts and tartan if you wish.

The Bagpipes are confirmed, and the Haggis ordered, so come and enjoy a short evening of Mark fun.

If you are still to reserve your place, may I request that you do so by midday on Friday 29th January, otherwise I cannot guarantee to get the Zoom details to you in time. provgsec@warksmarkpgl.co.uk

Installations and on-line Virtual Meetings:

Whilst we are in the midst of the pandemic, when physical lodge meetings are not happening, Grand Lodge is encouraging us to hold virtual meetings in place of each regular meeting, whether they be as a Virtual Business Meetings or informal, social get together. It is recommended that VBMs are held especially in lieu of Installation meetings so essential business can be conducted. However, there are two things that can't happen virtually - the Installation ceremonial and the investiture of Officers. Officers can, however, be appointed. Realistically though, all Officers are generally being reappointed through this period so they get more time in each office. Installation ceremonies should then appear on the agenda for the first physical meeting post covid. As far as the paperwork for an Installation Meeting goes, as a Province all Lodge secretaries are asked to fill in the forms via our website and forward them to the Provincial Grand Registrar, V.W.Bro Gareth Hughes at provgreg@warksmarkpgl.co.uk for inputting into the Grand Lodge database by him.

The Perils of Internet Research!

Many of us forced to stay at home because of the lockdown may be spending more time than usual on the Internet. Researching Mark Masonry can be a fascinating way of spending time, but beware! There are two problems; firstly the Internet is international and secondly anyone can post things on it. So much of what you may read may be inapplicable to Mark Masonry under the auspices of The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and its Districts and Lodges Overseas – and some may be complete rubbish as well. Look at this note on Mark Tokens which certainly contains nothing that is correct for the Mark as we understand it :-

These items are issued by specialized Masonic lodges called "Royal Arch Masons". Royal Arch Masons are also called "York Rite Masons". The abbreviation "RAM" or "R.A.M." is "Royal Arch Masons". The emblem "HTWSSTKS" means "Hiram of Tyre, Widow's Son, Sent To King Solomon". Some have the Biblical Ark of the Covenant on them. Mark Master is the first degree of Royal Arch Masonry and any member who successfully traverses the degree is given a "Mark Penny" by his Chapter. The circle in the centre of the penny is reserved for the mark Master to inscribe his "Mark" which will be recorded in the Chapter's Mark Book, a record of all marks of the members of that chapter. His "Mark" must be registered with the Chapter prior to his final degree of "Royal Arch Mason"
From:- <https://hometowncurrency.org/tokens-masonic/>

Caveat scholasticus – Let the scholar beware!

Zoom Meetings

I think that it was Tuesday 24th March when the word Zoom took on a whole new meaning for me.

Before then Zoom was an ice lolly on a stick, or a word in a line of the song by Fat Larry's Band; 'Zoom just one look and then my heart went boom'. I am sure that some will be singing along.

That first experience of a 'new Zoom' was a morning prayer church service my wife had arranged; since then she has organised 213 services and I have attended the vast majority. Shortly afterwards the charity for which I am Treasurer was organising daily Zoom meetings so that we could deal with the issues raised by the pandemic and soon thereafter we began to hold Mark Executive Meetings, a weekly information meeting was organised by the fledgling Freemasons Without Borders and finally Lodges began to organise social meetings.

There were fears about the security of Zoom's infrastructure and that was borne out when a Freemasons Without Borders was 'raided' and anti-masonic slides appeared on the screen with someone starting to play a guitar and another singing.

Within a few weeks early problems had been overcome, we had worked out how to be more secure, to tidy up the bookshelves behind us or add 'exotic' backgrounds to our screens. The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons allowed us, subject to certain rules, to hold Virtual Business Meetings where we can deal with urgent issues.

This has allowed many, but not all of our Mark Lodges to meet in some way over the past nine months. Most recently W.Bro. Tony Ball has started organising a Zoom Meeting for the Lodge of Instruction. Open to all it holds a presentation to provide information and allows attendees to ask questions of the presenter. My own Lodge, Silhill, has held two social Zoom Meetings on our regular Lodge nights and these have allowed our Swiss members to attend in somewhat greater ease than their usual annual visit. Though the long awaited vaccine gives us hope of an end to our 'lockdown ordeal' it is likely to still be some months before we meet properly. Zoom Meetings therefore remain an important means of just staying in touch. To that end what have I learned from these meetings:-

- It is a great way to stay in touch, but not all are able to access the technology. We are still helping older parishioners to join church services, the same should be the case for our friends in the Mark. Where they simply cannot join then I need to do better in ringing those that cannot so as to check they are well, simply staying in touch is really important;
- Though Virtual Business Meetings have a formal agenda, social get togethers are informal. What I have found is that they still need a modest amount of structure so as to make sure that multiple discussions do not break out; Zoom simply does not work well for that. For me the Meetings work best when the Master takes some control and ensures that everyone is engaged and involved;
- An opportunity is created to invite members we may not have seen for a while. It can be easier to log in than put on your suit and tie. We can also ask prospective members to social Zoom Meetings; again a great way to stay in touch and an early opportunity to meet with members they may not know.

So Zoom Meetings provide a great opportunity to stay in touch. If you have any issues and need help in setting them up then please do approach me or Ian Belsham, Provincial Grand Secretary. We are here to help.

Andrew Armbrister

Lectures, Learning & History

Brethren, there now 21 papers available on the Mark Provincial website www.warksmarkpogl.co.uk. To access them you will need to click the login button on the website, and then go to Secretary downloads. The papers are a mix of lectures that can be given in lodge or can be read to expand your knowledge of the Mark and RAM degrees.

"ONCE in so often," King Solomon said,
Watching his quarrymen drill the stone,
"We will curb our garlic and wine and bread
And banquet together beneath my Throne,
And all Brethren shall come to that mess
As Fellow-Craftsmen-no more and no less."

Above is an extract of one of the papers on Rudyard Kipling.

On request I also have a commentary on the Mark Degree ceremony which can be used to explain the ceremony in more detail to a candidate once they have been advanced.

We are also keen to share best practice so if you do have a paper that you have delivered in Lodge please forward it to me so we can consider including it for other Lodges to use.

We are keen to collate the history of all the Mark Lodges in Warwickshire so if you have Lodge History's in a format that can be emailed can you please send them to me.

W.Bro. James Freakley provdepgsec@warksmarkpogl.co.uk

The Mark Provincial Shop

Please check out the Mark Provincial Shop on the new Warwickshire Mark website. The link is below, however you will need to log in to access the items from the shop. Items available include the ritual books, Warwickshire Mark Provincial Tie and the Warwickshire Mark token. Should you have items of regalia that you no longer need and would like to donate for sale for brethren to purchase with proceeds going to the 2027 festival please post them to James Freakley. Midland Flooring Unit 9 The Cedars Coton Road Coleshill B46 2HH. <https://warksmarkpogl.co.uk/>

If you have any questions about the shop or products please contact James Freakley provdepgsec@warksmarkpogl.co.uk

Lodge of Instruction

The editorial team have asked me to comment on keeping up with ritual during lockdown. I think that as the restrictions have gone on it has become harder to stay motivated. During the first few weeks I set myself a project and achieved it but since then have fallen by the wayside. As the end is in sight I am looking at what I need to brush up on for the future. I would recommend while we have a bit time to read the Mark Lecture which illustrates our ceremony. The L.O.I. team remains focused on the future and we look forward to getting together as soon as we can.

We do have monthly Zoom meetings and we cordially invite Brethren to join us. If you're interested send me an email and I'll forward the link.

Tony Ball 1ballafj1@gmail.com

The next Warwickshire Mark Lodge of Instruction Webinar will be held on Tuesday 2nd February at 7.00 pm. W.Bro Paul Mason P.G.St.B., Prov.G.Almoner will be talking about his work in the Province, with individuals and Lodges. This will be an interesting and informative talk of interest to all Brethren.

Reserve your place to receive Zoom details. provgsec@warksmarkpogl.co.uk

Mark Charity

Brethren, one-year ago on the 20th of January 2020 the Honorary Secretary of The Mark Benevolent Fund R. W. Bro Ryan Williams wrote the Birmingham Women's Hospital to inform them that following a petition from The Mark Province of Warwickshire that they had been granted the sum of £100,000 towards their Woodland House Project.

The Woodland House Project is to provide a specialist centre for dealing with families who have experienced a miscarriage, a still birth or a neo natal death. At present there is no such facility in any hospital in the country and families are dealt with in any available space. This could mean a woman experiencing this tragic event could be on a post-natal ward with nursing mothers and their young baby.

The cost of the project was £3.5 million with the donation from the Mark Benevolent fund they were now at £500,000. This year has seen as with all charities including our own the cancellation of fund-raising events or a concentration on Covid – 19 related support.

I have received an update this week from the fund-raising manager at the Birmingham Women's Hospital as you can see this project is held in high esteem from a vast section of the community and is still being supported.

Please look at the website to see more information on the project—it is well worth it.

[Find Out More | Birmingham Women's Hospital \(bwh.org.uk\)](http://bwh.org.uk)

Let us hope that 2021 is better for all of us, the Women's Hospital seem to be optimistic!

As for ourselves our 2027 Festival is getting closer, we will raise what we can to help future projects like Woodland House. Remember he who gives quickly gives twice. It is worth remembering that at the moment any donation made to a charity be it The Warwickshire Mark Benevolent Fund or The Mark Benevolent Fund if coupled with a Gift Aid declaration gains 25% from the Government. If you need information about how to donate let me know. How much you donate is up to you I do not want to know. Any amount helps.

Brethren but remember to at all time keep safe.

Obituary

Worshipful Brother Edward John Belcher

24/06/1945 to 02/01/2021

W.Bro Ted Belcher was advanced into Concord Lodge of MMM No 735 on 15th April 1994 and in November of that year was elevated into Concord Lodge of RAM. In due course he served as Master and Commander of both of these Lodges. In addition he joined Holte Lodge where he served as Worshipful Master for two years consecutively. He had also been a member of Mancetter Mark Lodge, Ronald Albutt Mark Lodge and both the Warwickshire Installed Masters' and Installed Commanders' Lodges.

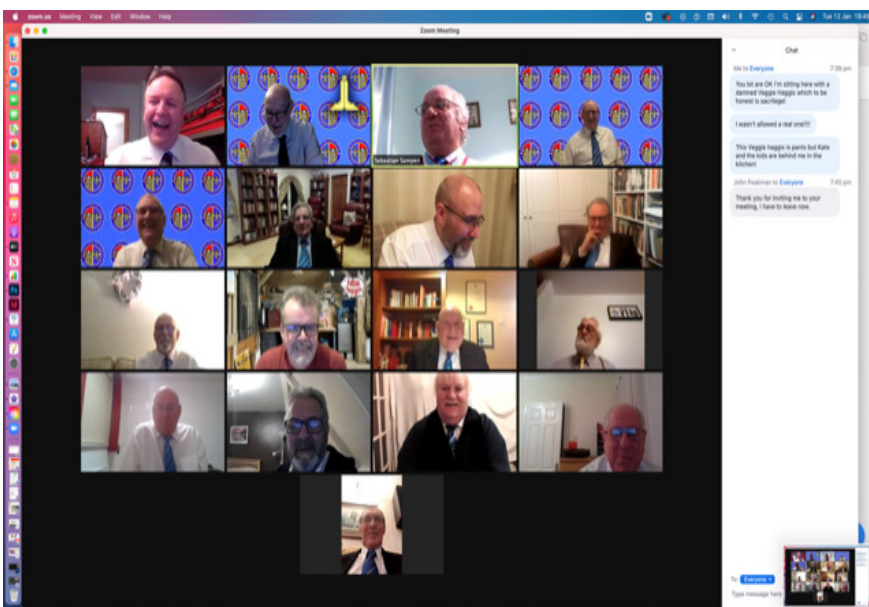
After coming out of the Chair of Concord Mark, Ted held the office of Secretary there for ten years and after leaving the Chair of Holte Mark also took on this role in that Lodge for seven years - both at the same time. He only gave up the latter during his final illness. In Concord Lodge he never really gave up the role entirely, helping his successor and the Lodge Assistant Secretary with administering Festive Boards until they ended with the first Lockdown.

Beyond his Lodges Ted was honoured with a number of Provincial appointments culminating with that of Provincial Junior Grand Warden in 2014. He was also given Provincial RAM Grand Rank in 2007. The final well-deserved honour Ted received was when Grand Lodge of MMM made him Past Assistant Grand Director of Ceremonies in 2018.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his Wife, Dawn, and Daughters at this difficult time.

Shakespeare Lodge of MMM Virtual Business Meeting

At 7pm on Tuesday 12th January the members of the Shakespeare Lodge of Mark Master Masons No.40TI, met for a virtual business meeting on Zoom, in lieu of their scheduled Installation meeting where we would have proclaimed our Provincial Webmaster and Master of the Lodge, W.Bro.Seb Samperi. Coincidentally it was his birthday and maybe we could have been generous and said 'you don't look your age WM!' but then again, we would be lying! We were joined by members of other Lodges and Provincial



Officers led by Exec member and our new Provincial Grand Secretary, W.Bro.Ian Belsham who gave us the latest news on what's going on in Warwickshire. W.Bro.Seb and the Secretary, W.Bro.Dave Handley ran a very tidy and efficient meeting, getting through the business at a smart pace. Once the business was concluded the Master closed the meeting and invited those present to log back in and enjoy a bit of fine harmony led by W.Bro.John Cowan who gave his usual address to the Haggis.

We had a lovely and lively chat while some of us partook of some amber dew and traditional fare although I personally was subjected to the culinary delights of McSweens vegetarian Haggis, which is an oxymoron if I ever heard one! I want to give my personal thanks to all those who revelled in my enforced suffering! Serves me right for being with a culinary terrorist (AKA Vegetarian!)

If your Lodge hasn't held a virtual meeting as yet, please do give it some serious thought. On behalf of our Lodge we have found our frequent virtual gatherings a real boon and morale lifter in these most difficult of times. So until we meet again in peace and harmony....

W.Bro.Martin Grahame-Dunn

Provincial Grand Senior Warden and SPM 40TI

Interesting things to do as part of a zoom meeting.

Have you thought about running an agenda item called "introduce yourself" We have all spent many happy meetings together, sometimes over many years but how much do we actually know about the other members of our lodge? Ask 3 members to present a 5 minute talk on themselves, what did they, or do they do in their working life, what is their home life like, what hobbies do they have outside of masonry, do they have any claims to fame or interesting things they have been involved in during their lifetime, what have they done within masonry and other orders? When and why did they join?

Editor's Final Note

Can I please say a great big thank you to everyone who has contributed to this edition of Warwickshire Mark. The next issue will hopefully be with you in late February, but that does depend upon contributions and every member of Mark and RAM is welcome to contribute.

When the concept of a Provincial Newsletter was first put forward it was never imagined it would be of this size or quality and that is down to you, so please keep the articles, and even better, pictures, coming! As Mark Masonry starts to come to life as soon as it is safe to do so, please let the editor know what you and your Lodges are doing, not just the date and time, but also what is happening—ceremonies, lecture or special events.

Please send your contributions (or any other news) to comms@warksmarkpgl.co.uk