



Warwickshire Mark

December 2020—January 2021

A welcome from the Provincial Grand Master

Brethren...

Welcome to the first edition of Warwickshire Mark - your new monthly Mark newsletter.

Hopefully in the coming months we will be able to share with you all the news from around the Mark Province of Warwickshire. We will keep you informed about developments in and around the Province, with such news as Lodge Celebrations such as Centenary Warrant, 50yrs Certificates, Banner Dedications or even Consecrations. There will be opportunities to join us when we arrange a full Provincial visit to a Lodge, or to the numerous Installation events throughout the year.

We will also be able to keep you up to date with other celebrations and announcements such as appointments to Grand and Provincial Grand Ranks; special events such the Grand Masters Special Award, which you can read about in this publication. There will information about social events for which the Mark Province of Warwickshire is renowned.

But Brethren, we rely upon you all to keep us informed of your special events, news items and items of interest so that we can serve you all best.

I must extend my most grateful thank to the members of the Provincial Secretariat for making the newsletter a reality.

And so Brethren it's over to you.....

R.W.Bro. P.Wills, Provincial Grand Master

WARWICKSHIRE MARK LODGE OF INSTRUCTION

Preceptors W. Bro. Tony Ball and W. Bro. Neil Murray

The Warwickshire Mark Lodge of Instruction exists for the benefit of the Brethren of the Province. There are six meetings a year, four general meetings and two rehearsals for the annual Festival. At the general meetings the Preceptors endeavour to respond to requests from Brethren regarding the Ceremony of Advancement. The conclusion of the season is the Festival held at Alderson House, Warwick, the demonstration being preceded by a full breakfast. The L.O.I. meetings are held at Knowle Masonic Centre.

Due to Covid 19 we have not held actual meetings this year, but have held Zoom meetings which have been well attended.

There will be Festival and it will take place at Alderson House on Saturday 15th May 2021.

Lastly sincere thanks to Knowle Masonic Centre and Alderson House for their support.

Anyone interested in the L.O.I. please contact W. Bro. Tony Ball at 1ballafj1@gmail.com

Bits and Pieces

Due to a paper shortage we have been informed that the Book of Constitutions 2020 will not be published until the New Year. Brethren in need of a copy should refer to the 2019 edition which is available online.

Mark Province of Kent have just announced the total for their Festival—an almost unbelievable figure of £2,050,879. Well done Kent and we now know what we are aiming to beat!

Brethren, as part of sharing best practice we would welcome copies of Lodge histories, historical papers on the development of the Mark / RAM in Warwickshire and Mark and RAM lectures so they can be included on the Mark Provincial Website for Brethren access to read or present as part of a Lodge Meeting

Please send to:
provdepgsec@warksmarkpgl.co.uk

New Year, New Secretarial Team

The start of the new Mark Provincial year brings together a new Secretarial team, and some changes to the way we work.

The use of the internet is becoming more prevalent in an effort to streamline and minimise paperwork, this can be seen in the communications from Mark Masons Hall and the Keystone on Line system. As a Province we are trying to encompass these changes utilising the new website, with the same aim of simplifying administration and paperwork. This has started with email addresses for each Mark and RAM Lodge along with the Provincial Executive, removing the need for the use of personal email accounts. New forms are being added, that can be filled in online and emailed back to the correct person. A Provincial Calendar shows when all meetings and events are being held, as we progress further detail will be added.

The work of the Provincial Secretariat is split between the three Officers. W. Bro Ian Belsham, Prov.G.Sec is the main point of contact with Mark Masons Hall, providing support to the Provincial Grand Master, the Executive, Lodge Secretaries and Scribes. Other activities are undertaken by W.Bro James Freakley Prov.Dep.G.Sec., and W.Bro. Nick Clarke Prov.Asst.G.Sec., support to the Social Committee, Provincial shop, coordinating visits to other Provincial Grand Lodge meetings, whilst all three are involved in the organisation of our own Provincial Grand Lodge meeting.

A new venture is this, the Provincial Newsletter, its success partially depends on you with the provision of newsworthy items to [http://:comms@warksmarkpgl.co.uk](mailto:comms@warksmarkpgl.co.uk).

As part of the new team, the vast experience of V.W.Bro Gareth Hughes Prov.G.Reg, has not been allowed to disappear. His role as Registrar, as the name implies, is to look after the registration of Brethren, Advancees, those passing to the Grand Lodge Above, resignations, and the associated work on the Keystone on Line system.

Overall the Secretarial team mission is to support you and the Province.

W.Bro. Ian Belsham Prov.G.Sec

Mark Benevolent Fund 2027 Festival

I am not sure whether it was being asked to lead our efforts to raise funds for the Mark Benevolent Fund, an 'old' book given to me from a friend 'History of the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons' in which I found a programme from the sixty sixth Festival in 1934 attended and signed by the then Duke and Duchess of York, later King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, or just having some more time to read during this pandemic but I have enjoyed finding out a little more about how our Grand Lodge was formed and with it the Mark Benevolent Fund.

As we find ourselves in 2020 I am tempted to think that Freemasonry has always been well ordered and disciplined in the very structured way we now find ourselves. What I find is that back in the 19th century there were many great differences of opinion on how Freemasonry should be structured. Indeed, consideration was given to add Mark Masonry into craft workings and it looked as though it would be approved in 1856, but in the end the proposition was defeated.

So, Mark Masonry formed its own Grand Lodge and with it decided to create its own charitable fund, the Mark Benevolent Fund. The driving force behind the MBF's creation was a well know Mark Man Rev'd. George Portal, later the Most Worshipful Grand Master, who saw other masonic charities as too bureaucratic and aimed that the MBF should give money quickly. The Fund was given its own motto 'Bis dat qui cito dat' – he gives twice who gives promptly. From personal experience I can attest that that mantra remains the case today with a request to finance a new boiler at the charity for which I am Treasurer, the homeless charity in Rugby, recently approved in less than a week! I am pleased to report though that the Masonic Charitable Foundation turned a different request with equal speed and efficiency.

An ongoing feature of MBF Fund Raising is a Festival, the first Festival Banquet took place in 1869 and raised £80. Though the Festival Dinner remains a Grand Lodge event, it is the responsibility of provinces to organise the Festival and the celebration dinner. The honour of hosting comes around every forty years or so and as you all know, we are responsible for the 2027 Festival. The amount raised by individual provinces has ranged from £500,000 to £1,200,000 though Kent have just had their figure announced; a stupendous £2,050,879. We are making good progress in raising funds, but over the next year you will hear more on individual initiatives to raise more money; but to stress we will not set targets.

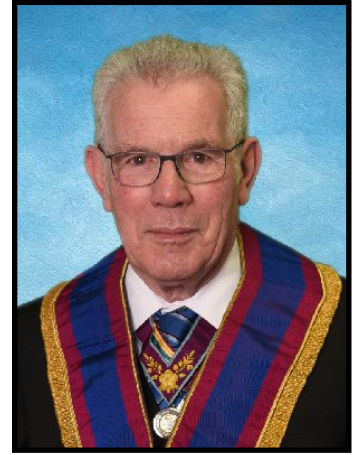
W.Bro. Andrew Armbrister, Festival Director

Grand Master's Special Award

On 15th Dec W.Bro Tony Ball was given a promotion in Grand Lodge for the work he has been doing in the community food bank. He was one of 18 recipients across the whole of Mark Masonry of the Grand Master's Special Award. He was promoted to P.G.S.D. The awards were made at an on line meeting by the Pro Grand Master.

Tony Ball responds on receiving the Grand Masters Special Award:

In April I wondered if there was anything I could do to help out during the pandemic. I was put in touch with New Starts a Bromsgrove Charity who have a food bank and was invited to drive for them delivering food parcels. Shortly after joining the organisation, my wife asked if she could help, working on the assumption that I work better under supervision. We are still working for New Starts and intend to carry on until things are back to normal. I am very humbled to receive this award as I regard myself as a small cog. I thank the Province for nominating me.



The work of the Provincial Grand Charity Steward—by W.Bro R.C. Clemson Prov.G.Ch.Stwd

The Provincial Grand Charity Steward is an Annual appointment by PGM as with all Provincial ranks. He is responsible to the PGM and the Province for all matters relating to charity. Basically, he raises money for the Province and then spends it. In this Province the Provincial Charity Steward is fortunate to have a Social Committee who arrange our large money raising events. Although I do arrange the Christmas Carol service

He is not responsible for the welfare of Brethren or their dependants. That is the preserve of the Provincial G Almoner. Although he does work closely with him and is a point of contact if he is not available.

He is responsible for the charity collection at Provincial meetings and for its counting and deposit at the bank. (Usually he enlists the services of the Stewards for the collection and the Almoner and the Provincial and WMBF treasurers to help)

However, several other jobs come with the role. He is an Ex Officio Trustee of the WMBF and therefore he attends the Twice-yearly meetings of the Trustees and is answerable to the Charity Commissioners for the conduct of the Charity as are all the Trustees. He is the elected secretary of the WMBF and as it is a Registered Charity, he is considered its Chief Operating officer by the Charity Commission. (Annual election at Prov. meeting) he is responsible for the day to day running of the charity. He organises the twice-yearly meetings of the Trustees as well as the annual Almoners meetings he takes the minutes and circulates them and any other correspondence to the trustees. He is responsible for the Annual returns to the Charity Commissioners, updating our legal obligations to them re information (Change of Trustees etc) Some of these are time sensitive. He also arranges updates to our Constitution when approved. He is able with the consent and cooperation of the Chairman to sign a cheque for £500 if there is an urgent need by a brother or charity. (Remember the MBF Motto He who gives quickly gives twice)

He is the Responsible Officer of The WMBF Relief Chest operated by the MCF at Gt Queen Street London. They normally will not talk to anyone else about our Relief Chest except the responsible person.

I circulate all information coming from the MCF as needed and must sign all applications for payments from the chest These have to be countersigned by another trustee and can only go to charities or Festivals with minor exceptions. I am a point of contact for any Lodge with problems re Gift Aid envelopes If anyone has problems obtaining them give me a ring. Remember that as we have a craft Festival running, they have had dedicated envelopes printed for that event we must use the ones with no Relief Chest Number on our number is MMM 2112

He is the Point of Contact with MMH for any Charity Related matter and submits the applications to them for Grants from the MBF. He is the Point of Contact for anyone needing advice of guidance re Honorifics be they Lodge or Personal

I am the back up for the Provincial Almoner re advice and guidance re applications by brethren. Any awards come to me in the first instance I then liaise with the Provincial Grand Almoner for Payment of the award to either the Lodge Almoner or other nominated person. Sometimes this is done by instalments.

Congratulations R.A.M.G.R.

Tuesday 8th December, should have been the Annual Assembly of R.A.M. in London, when three members of the Province would have been invested with R.A.M.G.R. Unfortunately due to Covid the meeting has been abandoned and so the Brethren miss the joy of being invested. They do however assume the Rank from today.

- W. Bro. Nigel J. Bridges, a Past Commander of Bedford Charity Lodge of RAM No115, and long time Treasurer of the Warwickshire Installed Commanders Lodge of RAM No1400.
- W. Bro. Barrie T. Trumper, a Past Commander of Sigma Bene Lodge of RAM No 1501, having been Commander in 1998 and then again in 2017.
- W.Bro. Max C. Pipe, a Past Commander of St Editha's Lodge of RAM No 1426, in the neighbouring Province of Staffs & Shrops., he is also I.P.M. of Mancetter Lodge of MMM No 1883.

Our hearty congratulations go to all three, and we hope that it is not too long before we can enjoy their company again and celebrate their appointment at a meeting.

V.W.Bro Gareth Hughes is thinking about RAM:

The Annual Assembly of the Fraternity of Royal Ark Mariners is usually held on the second Tuesday of December, at Freemasons Hall, Great Queen Street in London. Whilst this did not take place this year due to the Covid-19 safeguarding regulations, it is appropriate to have a brief look at how the Degree came to Warwickshire, almost 130 years ago.

There is much debate about the origins of the Royal Ark Mariner Degree, which is based on the story of Noah and his deliverance from the great flood, together with his family and a large number of other living creatures. Some believe that Noah and his sons were the original central characters of the Craft ceremonies - there are many hints in today's RAM ceremonies that harken back to known former Craft traditions.

Along with the Mark and many other degrees, the RAM Degree was practiced in Craft Lodges until the constitution of UGLE, when the current 3 Degrees of Craft, including the Holy Royal Arch, were agreed as a common curriculum. The other degrees, however, continued to be practiced surreptitiously in Craft lodges for a number of years, and specialist lodges were also set up to keep these degrees going. A Grand Lodge was set up to co-ordinate and regulate Mark Lodges in 1856, and a number of attempts were made to similarly co-ordinate RAM Lodges, none of which were particularly successful. In June 1871, however, the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons paid the sum of £25 to take the Royal Ark Mariner Degree under its protection, set up the machinery for its government in the form of the Grand Masters Royal Ark Council.

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Warwickshire and Staffordshire was constituted in 1876, with Staffordshire being separated 6 years later. It was another 22 years before the first RAM Lodge was consecrated within the province.

In 1891 at an Emergency Meeting of Bedford Mark Lodge No 115, 16 brethren were Advanced in order to form the Charity Lodge of MMMs No. 430, and two years later a combination of those two Mark Lodges, together with members of Athol Mark Lodge No 174 and Staffordshire's St James Mark Lodge No 318 formed the Bedford-Charity Lodge of RAM No 115. This was to be the 35th RAM Lodge in the constitution.

The consecration was conducted by the Pro Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of MMM, Most Worshipful Brother, the 6th Marquess of Hertford CB, TD, who was also the Provincial Grand Master of Warwickshire Mark for 26 years. There were 20 Petitioners for the Lodge, and a further 18 Mark Brethren were Elevated into the RAM Degree at that Consecration meeting. The first Commander was Installed by the Assistant Grand D.C., who also communicated the secrets of the Chair to the Deputy Provincial Grand Master.

It was to be another 26 years before the next R.A.M. Lodge was Consecrated - Hertford Military Lodge No 408.

Obituary W.Bro. Thomas William Gray

07/06/1930 - 02/12/2020

It is with great sadness that we have heard of the death of W.Bro. Tom W. Gray, at the age of 90. Tom was in the back of an ambulance one the way to a routine hospital appointment for an eye condition on Tuesday 2nd December, when he fell suddenly quiet and was discovered to have passed gently to the Grand Lodge Above.

Tom was initiated at the time of his retirement as a Headteacher: less than 3 years later he was Advanced into Central Keystone Lodge of MMM No 744. In another 3 years, he became a Founder of the Progress Lodge of MMM No 1746. Once he had been W.M. of 744, Tom went on to join Warwickshire Installed Mark Masters Lodge No 1400. He also joined Concord Lodge of MMM No 735 and the Ronald Albutt Lodge of MMM No 1822. In Worcestershire, Tom was a Founder of the Millennium Lodge of MMM No 1822, the Quill and Key Lodge of MMM No 1901 and the St. George's Lodge of MMM No 1920, as well as Joining the Worcestershire Installed Mark Masters Lodge No 1409. W.Bro. Tom was appointed to and Promoted in Provincial Grand Ranks in both provinces, until he was appointed to the Grand Rank of P.G.St.B. in 2011.



W.Bro. Tom was also a committed Royal Ark Mariner in Lodges in both provinces, and was appointed to Royal Ark Mariner Grand Rank two years ago.

In both our Orders, as well as in many others, W.Bro. Tom would never be found without a job to do, whether he was a member or a visitor. He wasn't a man to keep his thoughts to himself, and could be outspoken at times. However, he was also incredibly kind, generous and enthusiastic.

Outside of Masonry, Tom was a Parish Councillor; a Member of the Rotary Club; a Teachers Union representative; an advocate for Pensioner organisations and charities, and a valued Cricket Umpire.

Despite increasing ill-health and disability, Tom remained active within his Lodges right up until the suspension of masonry in March. He leaves behind his wife, Doreen and their adult children. We have been asked to hold back from contacting Doreen as she comes to terms with her loss, but W.Bro. Joe McCollum will keep us informed.

There will be a live webcast of the service which is at Redditch on 29th Dec at 11:45

Details Website <https://www.obitus.com/>

Username Dovu1345

Password 605311

You can login to the website at any time to view a test connection (and you are strongly recommended to do this) but you'll only be able to view the Live Webcast approx. 5 mins before the service start time. Please be aware this is a public building and the timing of the live webcast is semi-automated to allow for services running early or late – please use your discretion if you can see activities not applicable to the service you are here to watch.

Editor's Final Note

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

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. To start off; Concord Lodge of MMM is 100 years old next year.

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