



The *Almoners* Almanac

ISSUE 3 - NOVEMBER 2016

A message from John Winter, the new Metropolitan Grand Almoner



The Almoner

Brethren this is my first report after being invested at this year's Met AGM. I would first like to take this opportunity to thank my predecessor Peter Huddleston for the huge amount of work undertaken, his dedication and the many successful initiatives he introduced during his five years in post. Having worked closely with Peter I can say without fear of contradiction London Masons and their dependants are better served thanks to Peter's push for Almoner recognition and improved training to facilitate better access to help for all those in need. My task is to continue Peter's good work and I look forward to serving you as Met.G.Alm.

My report is structured on the core tenets of the craft Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

Brotherly Love

The sale of pre loved regalia continues to be a great success and I thank all those who have donated. Please keep this initiative in-mind when deciding what to do with a Brother's regalia or perhaps collars that have become available due to the closing of a Lodge or Chapter. All the proceeds go to the MMC and we can only continue to support our own charity if we have regalia available to sell. More detail can be obtained from our web site: www.prelovedregalia.com

Florence Nightingale Lodge No. 706 now has a membership of those interested in the role of the Almoner with nearly all being either serving Almoners or members of my team. This has given us a great opportunity to invite along guest speakers to help broaden our knowledge of the many ways in which outside charities and the work they do can assist us in helping and advising our Brethren. It also provides us with a vehicle to temporarily adopt widows who find themselves no

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longer attached to our caring fraternity as a result of a Lodge or chapter unfortunately deciding to hand in their warrant. It gives us time to find a volunteer Lodge happy to permanently adopt a widow. If you know of such a Lodge please inform your Almoner Liaison Office (ALO). For those Brethren interested in finding out more about Lodge No. 706 please contact Garry Gilby email: garry.gilby@ntlworld.com

Relief

The Metropolitan Almoners fund continues to Match-Fund the financial support given by Lodges to their own members and dependants. If you have a case and feel MAF can assist please contact your ALO and bring the matter to his attention. He will guide you through the application process and ensure the matter is swiftly reviewed by the MAF committee. Those lodges that have relief chests and sufficient funds available can of course withdraw up to £500 to give immediate support to those in time of need. I urge all members to remain vigilant and pro-active regarding the identification of their own Brethren in their time of need. The Masonic Charities are now handling around 60 cases a Month from London, but we feel sure some in-need are still going unnoticed, please help us to make sure that those who qualify for help receive it.

Masonic charities made disbursement to 528 London Freemasons and their dependants in the 12 months to 31st December 2015 which totals £2,129,580

Truth

Brethren our Almoner workshops continue to have a good turnout and a good mix of attendees from newly appointed through to those who have a number of years under their belt. The workshops include a group exercise and the opportunity to mix with your peers and learn new ways of working with your brethren and dependants in providing a good quality of service. Feedback continues to be positive with everyone who attends promoting the benefits of attending. Details on up and coming workshop dates can be found on Porchway. Remember you do not need to be an almoner to attend the workshop – so please do book your place, the team and I look forward to meeting you.

John Winter PAGPurs
Metropolitan Grand Almoner

Mum's the Word!



With Mum approaching 97 years of age it was becoming very obvious that she could not continue to live an independent life style. She had been living on her own since Dad had passed away some 22 years ago and even though she had carers provided by the Local Authority she was finding it more and more difficult to do the simple things in life such as climbing the stairs to go to bed, making a cup of tea and preparing a ready made meal and she was fast becoming a prisoner in her own home. Our first thoughts was to get the Adult Social Services involved from the Local Authority to discuss her future Care needs. Unfortunately this proved to be tantamount to dealing with a piece of jelly.

Then it struck me that having been a Mason for some 26 years there may be something that could be gained by talking to the Lodge Almoner. Within 24 hours of doing this the Lodge Almoner, Worshipful Brother Gareth Jones, advised me to get in touch with Masonic Charities on 0800 035 6090. Talking to them I learnt that there was an RMBI Care Home, James Terry Court, some ten minutes drive from my home. I immediately got in touch and received friendly and helpful advice and assistance from Tracey Taylor the Business Manager and Michelle Belch the Manager of the Home plus all the staff that I came in contact with.

From the time of first contact until the date Mum moved into the Home took little more than four weeks. Which is remarkably quick considering in that time the Local Authority has not even bothered responding to their initial visit to discuss Mum's future Care needs. James Terry Court now provides Mum with a more caring, friendly and relaxing lifestyle where she is safe and her immediate family do not have to worry about her. She tells me that the food is excellent and that she has been to the hairdresser twice since taking up residence. All of this was achieved with a few visits to look around the home and a friendly chat about deferring payment to enable mum to sell her home before meeting the full cost of residency.

I think I can sum up how we feel about James Terry Court by quoting my wife after having looked around for the first time, she turned to me and said "this is like a 5 star hotel its a lot better than the hotels we stay in when we go on holiday".

W.Bro Mike Koch, WM Kelvin Lodge 3736



Are you an Almoner or interested in becoming one? Then the Met Almoners team are running Almoner Workshops to help and to guide you. So please register as soon as you can to attend the next Almoner Workshop held at Freemasons Hall.

Why you may ask, it is simple, the workshops are a route to providing you with essential information to do your job well and provide that professional level of service to your members and dependants in a time of need, often out of sight of your meetings and or the members of your lodge or chapter.

So what is covered on an Almoner workshop; you will meet with like-minded brethren and companions and go through a range of material to aid you in your role.

Topics include but not limited to:

- A couple of group exercises where you work through a challenge with your colleagues and a team spokesperson feedbacks the results of the team to the whole group attending.
- The role of 'Freemasonry Cares' and how to go about making an application to the Charities.
- The Metropolitan Almoners Fund.
- Working with Widows and dependants.
- The Welfare Co-ordinator and his team of visiting brothers, the list is endless.
- Pre-loved Regalia.
- Florence Nightingale Lodge for Almoners.

What is sure you will be aware of what constitutes the key elements of the role along with the necessary attributes and skills required to be successful in the office.

You will get the opportunity to learn from the presenters and from your colleagues attending the workshop. The room is full of a wealth of knowledge and experience happy to address any questions or give advice on situations that when new to the role may appear daunting. One of the key benefits of attending is that you will certainly feel refreshed in knowing how important the role is and the support available around you.

We also provide a live demonstration of the tools available to assist you in the role that are available on porchway. Part way through the workshop we have a break that includes a well-stocked buffet, again this is a vital part of the workshop where you have the opportunity to interact with your peers.

The Metropolitan Grand Almoner is usually present and will present you with your Certificate of Achievement and an Almoner lapel pin badge. Post event you will be sent a copy of the material covered on the workshop. Feedback is sought and so far the response from attendees has been extremely positive.

So what are you waiting for; book your place via porchway, the MetGAlm Team look forward to meeting you.

Garry Gilby
*Assistant to Metropolitan Grand Almoner
Communication and Training*

Almoners Trip to get to know the Lodge Widows

At a recent Almoners Workshop W.Bro Keith Rawson gave us all an insight on how he and his wife made a trip to get to know the Lodge Widows and retired members of the Lodge, what follows is how it came about and a copy of the newsletter he produced to report on their welfare. A really excellent idea and one that might be of interest for other Almoners to pursue.

Hello I am Keith Rawson, a Past Master of two London Lodges and 1 Leicestershire and Rutland Lodge. I am Secretary and Almoner of Telephone Lodge No. 3301 and Junior Warden of my L & R Lodge. I am SLGR and a VO in London.

I have been Charity Steward and Almoner of Telephone Lodge and, therefore, responsible for the building up of funds as well as distribution. This follows my fundamental belief that the horse has to go before the cart - you can't spend what you haven't got.

As far as being Almoner is concerned, the decision to make the trip came from writing to and contacting widows and "retired" members but only knowing one or two of them. I felt that reporting on their situation, without really knowing them was not doing the job properly. Although the wide geographical spread did not make it easy, my wife accompanied me and we treated it as a holiday. My first reaction was to think of the visits as rewarding but on reflection, it went beyond that to the extent it was a privilege. In general, I think of the Almoners duties as putting something back and the more I have done it, the more I have enjoyed it.

DAVID & DOREEN BALL

David had already contacted us to advise that he was suspending his Masonic duties for the time being to attend to his wife's needs. I found them both to be as well as could be expected and they have really good local family support. We all had a superb lunch at a local hostelry and talked for a long time about almost everything from family to politics to Masonry and, most interestingly for me, some of David's working life. I hope I left them both in good heart. I had a lovely e-mail from David afterwards.

DAVID & LYNN COLLINS

It is quite some time since David had any direct contact with the Lodge and he and his wife were very warm and welcoming to me and to Hilary. We spent a long time chatting before going to a splendid local pub for lunch. They have two daughters and four grand children who live locally and keeping them both very busy. Lynn had co-authored a book on Bahrain and she was kind enough to give us a copy. It is 47 years since David was Initiated and he will, therefore, come up for his 50 year certificate in approximately 3 years time. I will monitor this and, hopefully, we will be able to arrange for him to attend Lodge for the presentation.

GRETA CONRAD

I spent a very enjoyable few hours talking to Greta who was extremely well and has very good local support. She seemed very pleased to have received direct contact from the Lodge and sends her regards to all.

JOYCE HASTINGS

Joyce has many interests and excellent family support. She was very well and we spoke at length about Pat, the members and wives of members of Telephone Lodge whom she knew.

JACK HEWITT

I spent 3 very enjoyable hours with Jack, who was in fine form. We had a very pleasant lunch at a local pub and he talked about his continued involvement with his local Lodge.

I spoke to Jack about attending our Installation meeting in October and he was very positive after I had explained Ian Stone's kind offer to deal with the travel arrangements.

DEBBIE MATTHIAS

I had not met Debbie previously and this turned out to be a wonderful meeting of minds. She has a deep involvement with Cricket and we both knew many of the same people.

She is also has a very senior role in a London based West Indian charity. It was a really fun get together and one I hope to be able to repeat in the not too distant future. Debbie has since invited me to dinner as soon as we are able to make arrangements. This is something I very much look forward to enjoying.

JOY MAURER

We spent a really nice couple of hours talking, in the main about her husband John and the their life together. She is now 93 and although she has had a recent cancer diagnosis which will soon require an operation, she is still very philosophical and capable. Since seeing her, I visited the Masonic Hall in Exmouth where it seems John had become a member as she was on their list of widows. She has to go for treatment at Exeter hospital on a regular basis and although she has a lady who can mostly take her, her son John sometimes needs to travel down from Surrey to deal with the transport. I was able, through the Exmouth Lodge, to establish details of a volunteer driver group in Exmouth who could help, if transport were not easily available.

YVONNE NORTON

Sadly, Yvonne was in hospital whilst family are in the process of arranging for her to go into a nursing home. I was, however, able to leave flowers for her daughter to take to her with the thoughts and best wishes of the members of Telephone Lodge.

ANITA SHULVER

Anita, unfortunately, had to go out when I called but I was able to leave flowers for her with her neighbour and later, she telephoned to say thank you and to pass on her regards and thanks to the members of the Lodge.

GWEN SMITH

Gwen seemed very well. Recently, she has acquired 2 dogs for company and her cat is still there. She has excellent family support near to home and has managed to get a cleaner and gardener to help her with the house.

She has had a most interesting working life as a senior executive in the Wellcome Pharmaceutical Group. She particularly asked me to send her good wishes to the Brethren of Telephone Lodge.

MARJORIE SMITH

Marjorie telephoned earlier in the day to say that she would, due to her health, be unable to see me.

Gwen, her sister-in-law, explained that she was now 91 and had good and bad days meaning that she sometimes did not have the confidence to go out.

I have contacted Marjorie since and, as a very strong minded person, she gave no inkling of her issues, rather, she thanked me for my contact, wished the Brethren well and I have since arranged for flowers to be sent to her.

VALARIE WOOLLEY

This was a fascinating visit! Valarie is still an actress with a vast array of credits from working with Michael Caine, Roger Moore and John Thaw in the 1960's to, more recently, appearing in Eastenders. She was very well and spoke fondly of John (her husband, not Thaw!). She had suffered a significant number of problems with the executors of John's will (a high street bank!) but it now looks as though she is close to being able to put these behind her. She had prepared a splendid lunch which we enjoyed whilst we talked. She knew many of our members and sends her best wishes.

In conclusion

I was unable to see two other widows as their health was not up to receiving visitors. However, I will keep in touch with them and try and proffer any help they might need in the future. Although it involved a lot of travelling and took quite a long time, the whole was extremely rewarding and I felt very beneficial to all. It is certainly something I will hope to repeat on, at least, an

annual basis. Frankly, it was as enjoyable as any decent holiday and I genuinely feel I have made a number of new friends.

Keith Rawson
Almoner, Telephone Lodge No. 3301

In the Next Issue: **15 years of continued support from the Masons**

Lloyd Morgan has been an Almoner quite a few times in the last 20 years and has an interesting case which exemplifies Freemasonry at its best.

The basic details are as follows:

- Brother is initiated into Freemasonry (He is a self-employed builder by trade – new business).
- On the day he is due to be passed to 2nd degree he falls off a ladder and unfortunately dies as a result.
- The young widow has 2 children of school age and is left in a desperate financial situation.
- The widow went back to work to support the family and keep the family house.
- The lodge rally around and help is obtained from national Masonic charities.

- This help continues at lodge and national masonic level through the years as the boys grow up.
- The boys today have successful careers and their stories are interesting.
- In the present (approx. 15 years later) the widow has remarried and contact has been kept with the lodge.
- She cannot believe the support she received and is "eternally grateful" to Freemasonry.

In her words, we made "a big difference" for the whole family.

Please see the next issue of the Almoners Almanac when the full story will be published by Lloyd Morgan.

A True and Trusted Lodge Almoner

Recently, the Almoner of the Alexander Palace Lodge no. 1541 had reason to contact the MetGAlmoner's team via the porchway link. During the ensuing conversations with him, it transpired that the Lodge cared for seventeen widows. It was pointed out that the burden on the Lodge could be lessened by use of the 'Adopt a Widow' scheme, whereby the Almoner very commendably responded that the Lodge would not like to do that as the widows were of the Lodge and effectively members of the Lodge, they were known and loved by the lodge.

The Almoner had been in the post for over five years and had got to know each of the widows personally, obviously they trusted him and were comfortable in his care.

Brethren this is a commendable example of the true role of the Lodge Almoner, caring, conscientious and dedicated and the Almoner is very worthy of mention and is to be congratulated."

Are you aware of MAF?

MAF is the Metropolitan Almoners Fund. It can be used to support a brother in times of an emergency.

Initially, the member's Lodge or Chapter will be at the forefront of any help provided. MAF will support an application and where appropriate provide supplementary assistance.

Have you joined the Almoners Lodge Florence Nightingale No. 706?

If the answer is no and you are interested interested please contact Don Foster at: donfoster@btinternet.com

If you would like to publish information in The Almoners' Almanac please contact Bob Tuthill at bob@allsortsdesign.co.uk

If any reader has questions they would like answered in a future issue please contact Bob Tuthill at bob@allsortsdesign.co.uk

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