

Presentation of Freemason's Grand Charity cheques to Yorkshire Air Ambulance Service

On what started out as a grey and wet day on Monday 18th July, the Provinces of Yorkshire North & East Ridings and Yorkshire West Riding joined forces to visit the Yorkshire Air Ambulance Service (YAA) to present the annual cheques from Freemason's Grand Charity.

The presentation took place at the YAA Operational base at Leeds/Bradford Airport and we were greeted by Bob Smailes, the Fund Raising Manager for YAA who made us very welcome.

Our Province was represented by David Marsh, Assistant Provincial Grand Master and Stan Thompson, Provincial Grand Charity Steward. West Yorkshire was represented by Stuart Cummins, Assistant Provincial Grand Master and Richard Bolton, Provincial Grand Charity Steward.

By the time we arrived in the afternoon, the rain had stopped although it was still grey and windy. We were treated to a very comprehensive and inspirational guided tour by Darren Axe one of the Aircrew Paramedics who described in great detail how the service operated and showed us around the aircraft and the control room. We also saw the BBC suite where television crews are permanently based, filming and editing for the highly successful television series "Helicopter Heroes".

Two £4000 cheques from Freemasons' Grand Charity were presented, one by each Province. These formed part of this year's national grant of £192,000 donated by Freemason's Grand Charity and distributed through Provinces to every Air Ambulance Service throughout England and Wales. In total, over the last four years, this scheme has provided funding of over half a million pounds to the Air Ambulance Service.

Receiving these cheques on behalf of the Yorkshire Air Ambulance Service, Bob Smailes said that they were extremely grateful for these donations from the Freemasons from whom they have received tremendous support. He explained that they rely almost entirely on donations from Organisations like the Freemasons and the public and the service is an extremely high cost business running into millions of pounds a year. The Yorkshire Air Ambulance Service operates two helicopters and it costs £7200 every day to provide this service.

It was a very informative and enlightening visit and a quite humbling experience to meet such a dedicated and professional group of people who, day in and day out, often in very difficult circumstances provide an essential service which can literally mean the difference between life and death. Freemasons can be justifiably proud to know that they are helping to enable services such as this to continue their essential work.

