

Provincial Grand Charity 2008 Charities Information Day

The 2008 Charities Information Day was held on the 16th October 2008. Almoners & Charity Stewards from across the Province were welcomed by the Vice Chairman of the Provincial Grand Charity, Michael Birch who explained the indisposition of the Chairman, Clive Cooper and he introduced the Provincial Grand Master, Richard John Anderson who also welcomed the delegates and our guests.

The members of the Provincial Charity Committee were also introduced to the meeting with particular mention of the Area Representatives/Co-ordinators and their special role in linking the Lodges and Provincial Grand Charity.

The PGM drew attention to a re-launch of “**Life Membership of the Friends of Connaught Court**” and asked that everyone give consideration to joining this initiative over the coming months to help make a difference in the lives of the residents of Connaught Court.

The first presentation of a busy morning got us off to a very positive start to the day with John Hemy - Provincial Co-ordinator of **Teddies for Loving Care** Scheme, who gave us an update of how the scheme was progressing. He explained the organisation necessary to get the Teddies to the A&E Units across the Province and how over 2000 bears had been given away since the scheme started and he had many heart-warming stories & pictures demonstrating the value of this scheme to children at distressing times.

This was followed by an interesting presentation from Suhail Alam, Finance Manager of Freemasons' Grand Charity on **Masonic Relief Chests - Why & How**. Started in 1986 the Relief Chest Scheme offers individual relief chests to Lodges or Chapters to build up funds for charitable purposes. Today there are almost 4,000 chests holding over £30 million in a safe and tax efficient way. The main benefits are a favourable rate of interest and application of the Gift Aid Scheme allowing for tax refunds on appropriate donations combined with ease of operation. Members of the audience already operating chests readily confirmed all these points.

Another speaker from London was Mike Wheal - Legacy Manager for the Central Masonic Charities.

A **Legacy Appeal** was first announced in December 2006 and is currently being rolled out nationally. Mike stressed the importance of everyone making a will and explained the importance of legacy income to the Central Masonic Charities. He sought assistance from within the Province to get his message across to all members.

We then had ladies from **Prostate Cancer Charity** – Ingrid Spickett - and **Alzheimer's Society** – Karina Stead & Lucy Hudson - speaking about the problems in these areas which many of us are all too well aware of in an aging society. They gave us an oversight of these conditions, diagnosis and the help that their charities can provide to those with the conditions and to others endeavouring to help them.

After an excellent lunch the afternoon started with some good news from the Provincial Charity Steward & Almoner on where the money is going. The Charity Steward dealt **with Non Masonic Donations** from Grand Charity, Provincial Grand Charity & Lodges and the Almoner dealt with the **Masonic Grants** that are coming into the Province for the assistance of brethren and their families who are in need. This was followed by syndicate discussions on how we ensure that assistance is going to where it is needed most. Reporters' notes from the discussion groups were collected for further analysis and discussion.

Overall it was a very busy day with something for everyone and for both new and experienced Almoners and Charity Stewards. Appreciation was expressed to Mike Birch and Keith Ainsworth for the organisation and execution of the day's proceedings.



" Group Discussions was one feature of the Charity Information Day 2008 "