

## ALMONER'S PANEL FOR THE PROVINCE

The role of the Almoner is increasing in importance for a number of reasons including hard economic times through the current recession and early redundancies, but also due to better health provision leading to longevity of life.

It is always the Almoner's remit to be ever mindful of the needs of others, administering welfare and providing assistance and support wherever possible to those who are in need. In our Province it is known that our Masonic family comprises some 26,000 people, these being brethren, their wives and widows and their children and dependants, all with the opportunity to require and receive Almoner support.

As a result, and since the January 2011 launch, of the 'Freemasonry Cares' initiative, the workload of the Provincial Grand Almoner and Provincial Grand Chapter Almoner has seen an increase of 58% in the number of cases actioned. Those figures could be viewed with apprehension when assessing the logistical enormity of personal contact and paperwork processing throughout the Province.

Happily, this situation has not been allowed to blight any help on offer as a new 'Almoner's panel' has been formulated under the aegis of Derek Gaunt, working under the continuing remit of the Provincial Grand Master, to look after the welfare of his Brethren, their dependants and widows. It consists of experienced and approachable Freemasons and Almoners from all areas who have come together to provide and direct their knowledge and assistance to all Almoners and also those who may be needy in future times.

The inaugural meeting, chaired by Derek Gaunt, took place on 9 August at Connaught Court, York, where all those present were treated to an update on the four central Masonic charities by specially invited speakers. Also present were Grahame Gibbon, Provincial Grand Almoner, Durham, and John Hemy, Chairman of Provincial Grand Charity, Yorkshire, North & East Ridings. David Marsh, Assistant Provincial Grand Master also attended, giving his support.

Subjects also discussed included inserting on all Lodge and Chapter summons the details relating to "Freemasonry Cares" and the contact telephone number 0800 0356090, Almoner awareness, problem-solving and charity talks, completion of the new 'Application for Assistance' forms, keeping in touch and an Almoner's page on the Provincial website (watch this space). The meeting was deemed a pleasant and great success with all those present discussing at length their respective roles, bringing many valid points to the fore and it is envisaged that the panel will meet annually.

We are there to help, so please don't hesitate to contact us via Derek Gaunt on 01287 653803 or myself, Martin Eggermont, on 07811463442.



*Front row, L-R, Corrina Fawls, "Freemasonry Cares" Officer, Freemasons' Grand Charity, Derek Gaunt (Provincial Grand Almoner), Elaine Hansen, Care Advice Visitor, RMBI (Liverpool) and John Williams, Development Director, Masonic Samaritan Fund. Middle – Colin Bell (Almoner), Howard Newton (Almoner), Denis Kelly (Almoner), Chris Cooper (Almoner). Back – John Bridges (Almoner), Tony Longstaff (Almoner), Pat Cambage (Almoner), Martin Eggermont (Almoner) and John Hemy (PGC Chairman). Not pictured – Gerald Gelder*