



Mark Provincial Times

December 2020 Edition 7

Welcome from Ian Vincent

Welcome to the seventh edition of the Monthly Newsletter for the Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons for Hampshire and Isle of Wight. I hope you enjoy this edition, and you find it informative and useful. If you have any comments, please contact me at newsletter@hants-iow-mark.org

Don't forget the Provincial Grand Lodge for Mark Master Masons for Hampshire and Isle of Wight has a website containing a lot of information. Please visit the website at this [link](#) Also a reminder that The Province of Hampshire and Isle of Wight for Mark Master Masons has its own [Facebook Group](#).

A Christmas message from R.W.Bro. George J. Deacon, Provincial Grand Master

Brethren, Charles Dickens wrote "It was the best of Times, it was the Worst of Times". How appropriate are those words for this year? This time last year, no one could have predicted the months ahead: this has been a turbulent and surprising Year. There has been tragedy for those who have lost loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have suffered the loss of loved ones and unable to pay their proper respects at the appropriate time. There have also been extraordinary acts of kindness and charity to those in need; as a Nation we have pulled together to help one another come through this awful Pandemic.

I am sure Brethren that you enjoyed the antics of our Deputy Grand Master, Right Worshipful Brother John Prizeman who never failed to make us laugh and smile when needed. Thank you, John, for the tremendous support you give to this Province and to the Order, it has been greatly received by all and you can still see some of his exploits on the Website and no doubt on his Facebook page, if not I shall print them off and blackmail him with them!!! Thanks John.

Christmas is traditionally a time for celebration and as we come to the end of this year with 2 Lockdowns, I sincerely hope we can all enjoy the company of Family & Friends if only for a few short days.

Since February, many of us have embraced the use of social media and what a useful tool this has been enabling us to keep in touch with each other both audibly and visually and this could be one way of holding our Committee meetings in the future. We have been able to present VW Bro David Smith with his 50-year certificate and "Field Promotion", carry out interviews with some of the Members of this Province, enjoyed the entertainment of our Brother Wardens and we look forward to the Wardens "Drag/Panto evening in the New Year!!!

I particularly want to thank the Provincial Wardens, Ian Vincent, Simon Lancaster, and Guy Sudron for all their hard work during the year and in particular the Wardens for their monologues and songs from the Past and raising money for very worthy Charities, so Brethren please continue to support them and our chosen Charities.

As you know, this Province has given £1000 to 10 Hospices, a £1000 to Salvation Army Emergency shelter and shortly we shall be providing equipment for the St John Ambulance support vehicle on the Isle of Wight. This is only through your generosity that we can support these Charities Brethren and I thank you for your continued support. Brethren, we still have a long way to go before we can meet safely, and I look forward to the time when we can attend our Lodges and social functions safely.

I thank my Executive for their support during these difficult times, their advice has been invaluable. The Provincial Wardens and Almoner have been invaluable and very entertaining, and the "Special award" given to Patrick Burrridge supported by Richard Cox; unfortunately, only one award was available to us.

To you all Brethren, may I thank you for your continued support during this very difficult year; yes, it has been the worst of times but also the best of times.

Brethren, may I on behalf of myself and the Executive wish you and your loved ones all the very best for the Festive season and hoping for a brighter and better New Year.

God Bless you All.

George, PGM

153rd Mark Benevolent Fund Annual Festival 2021



The Provincial Grand Master for the Province of East Lancashire has the honour of presiding over the 153rd Mark Benevolent Fund Annual Festival. Festival Badges costing £10 are now available from members of the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Provincial Executive including the Provincial Grand Master, Provincial Wardens, Provincial Grand Charity Steward, and the Provincial Grand Treasurer. If you send them £11, which includes postage, they can post one to you.

Please support the Mark Benevolent Fund and the Province of East Lancashire by purchasing a badge.

Donation to the Salvation Army on the Isle of Wight

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons for Hampshire and Isle of Wight have donated £1,000.00 to the Salvation Army, Isle of Wight Corps. This will help Island people in need; whether they are hungry, cold, lonely or homeless over Christmas and New Year.

Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Assembly

A note for your diary. The Provincial Royal Ark Mariner Assembly for 2021 will be a virtual meeting on Saturday 16 January 2021, similar to the Mark Provincial Meeting. It will be broadcast live on Facebook. More details to follow.

A parallel account of a Mark Mason with Parkinson's Disease

By W.Bro. Patrick Burrige, Prov.G.S.W.

Brethren, I sit here on a glorious December Sunday lunchtime counting my blessings and very thankful to an outstanding group of Healthcare professionals from the NHS. Let me explain:

In 2011 I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which I already knew I had, but I didn't want anyone to know; but by now the signs were obvious to everybody.

At this time, I was the political leader of the medium size rural district council - East Hampshire District. Being very much in the spotlight, the dithering, forgetfulness, balance issues etc had been well and truly noticed and it was frankly, a relief to resign early. I was moved by all the well-wishers at that time, particularly by one of the senior staff members, who told me that he had suffered for years, but whose symptoms had been radically reduced by undergoing some pioneering brain surgery. I resolved to find out about it when I next met my consultant and neurologist.

I guess I was lucky when my lovely old consultant moved to Southampton hospital and was replaced at Basingstoke by a Parkinson's specialist, Dr Claudio Ruffman, who also had links to the University Hospitals at Oxford. Over the next few years, at six monthly meetings I set about persuading Dr Ruffman that I was a good candidate for the operation. In fairness I think I was pushing an open door, and he referred me to the John Radcliffe Hospital at Oxford - where the operation had been pioneered in this country. But they seemed to take an age to get back to me.

In the meantime, quite out of the blue, I was lucky enough to be offered an active rank on the Hampshire Provincial Mark team and I threw myself into the role - loving every second of it. Whilst out and about accompanying the VIP on the various official visits, I noted how the various lodges visited were moved to make extremely generous charitable donations in favour of the Mark Benevolent Fund. I also noted the ease with which the two Wardens "swindled" the visiting team out of every spare penny they could. These lessons would be put to good use in future!

Eventually the letter came. I was summonsed to attend The Neurology Clinic at the John Radcliffe Hospital. They explained to me that I had been recommended by Dr. Ruffman as a potentially suitable candidate for "Deep Brain Stimulation". It seems the process entailed placing two electrodes deep within the brain, approximately directly behind each eyeball; the electrodes were connected by two wires which would run subcutaneously down my neck where they would connect with a "pacemaker" (about the size of a box of Swan Vestas) placed in a pocket of muscle close to my heart. The pacemaker would stimulate the electrodes in the brain with the resultant effect that the symptoms of my Parkinson's disease would reduce drastically, enabling me to cut right back on my medication - and its attendant side effects. In order to be offered the chance of having this potentially life changing operation, I would first have to undergo two days of tests: the first day having taken none of my Parkinson's medication, the second day with my full complement of drugs. My responses to each test would be observed and recorded. I would need to show the 40 per cent improvement on day 2 over day 1.

Meanwhile, at a particularly cordial pre-Christmas luncheon in December 2019, the PGM took me to one side telling me that it was his intention to offer me the Provincial rank of Active Senior Warden the following April. To say I was stunned would be an understatement, in fact during the meal, I began to doubt what I had heard and afterwards had to ask the PGM if I had heard him correctly. He affirmed.

In February I attended Oxford for the crucial tests. I tried to appear "managerial" and wore a sharp suit and dyed my hair a shade darker! The tests ranged from simple to downright difficult, but one of them - a test which measured my ability to memorise things (such as new ritual) was at 38% - I knew it was true! They would let me know the outcome in a few days.

A new Coronavirus was sweeping through Wuhan Province of China which threatened the whole world.

My Brother Warden elect, Richard Cox invited me to his palatial pad for afternoon tea with him and his charming wife. We hit it off instantly, and I knew we would have a fun year.

In early March I heard the news I longed to hear. I was passed suitable; and was thus asked to attend a preoperative assessment with the surgical team prior to a date for surgery of 23rd March 2020, so close to the day of the Mark Provincial Meeting.

On my 61st Birthday, 20th March 2020, with the virus threatening to overwhelm the NHS, the UK went into lockdown, the Mark Provincial AGM was postponed, and my operation was cancelled.

Blast!

A series of statements appeared from UGLE and MGL which were overtaken by events, seemingly within hours and confusion was rife.....then as if by magic Zoom appeared and we filled our life with Zoom meetings and quizzes, I

became quite adept at using it. Eventually, we were even able to hold our Provincial AGM on Zoom, but not before my Bro Warden and I had started to toast Absent Brethren every Monday evening at 9:00 p.m. - using Zoom, we were able to "meet" remotely and broadcast live on The Provincial Facebook page. At first, we embellished the 9 p.m. toast with our own renditions of Stanley Holloway monologues or we would even sing (I use the term very loosely) something from the Flanders and Swann catalogue. Then we branched out into interviewing other Masons, with the emphasis on interesting rather than high ranking. My favourite was eaves-dropping the 50th anniversary in the Mark of David Smith, including his surprise, simultaneous field promotion by the Deputy Grand Master. Richard and I discussed how we might continue the work done by past Wardens raising charitable donations and decided to set up a "100 club". We asked the Brethren to buy a ball or two every month, and the Brethren responded in the way that only Mark Masons do - generously. We held the draw on the first Monday of each month. Eight months in, the Brethren have raised well over £3,500 for charity. Tradition dictates that it is split equally between the MBF and the Warden's chosen charity; I am so grateful to Richard for joining me in patronising Parkinson's UK. Of course, we unashamedly promote the 100 club every Monday evening and when one such Monday we were challenged to dress up in drag for our presentation, we jumped at the chance for what we saw as a further fund-raising opportunity. And so, in a few weeks' time we will do just that, but not before we have been sponsored to the tune of £1,000+. We are nearly there.

Throughout all this time Neurosurgery at Oxford was put on the back burner, but when in November the UK encountered the second wave and the country was re-immersed in lockdown, I had still heard nothing. So, I resolved to find out what was going on.

Telephoning the Hospital involved negotiating a vicious voice mail system which would often lead to a recorded message; nevertheless, I persevered. On Friday, the 13th November I was told that neurosurgery would recommence, I was pencilled in for Wednesday 25th November with a new pre-operative assessment and swab for C-19 on the preceding Monday. Excited and nervous in equal measure I was struck by one thought - how much could I raise for charity if I shaved my head at my village local, the Castle of Comfort. Sadly, they were in lockdown, but the Landlord graciously offered to pass the hat round on their first day open. I spent most of the next week making Christmas puddings to sell at the Christmas produce stall in the village the first Saturday after lockdown ended. My daughter accompanied me to Oxford on the due date, we arrived at 6:50 a.m.! There was a reception committee of nurses and an anaesthetist to welcome me. They worked fast and by 8 a.m. I was in theatre being put under.....
.....6 ½ hours later, back on the ward, I was aware of my daughter looking over me. I burst into tears of joy and relief. The next morning, I felt fantastic, better than I had felt for years. The surgeon came round early and explained that no, they had not turned on the pacemaker by accident, but the trauma undergone by my brain was not unlike the experience of being stimulated by the pacemaker, but that it would wear off in a week or two. I begged him to let me go home - and to my utter amazement, he agreed.

So, to end where I began, it is now Sunday the 6th December, 11 days afterwards. I still feel terrific. The NHS is a wonderful thing. Let us continue to treasure it.

For those of you who have not seen me on Facebook Live here are "before and after" photographs.



W Bro Patrick Burrige, P.G.Std.B., Prov.G.S.W.

Aldershot Military Lodge of Mark Masters No 54 on their November Zoom Meeting



Following Permission and a Dispensation from Province, Aldershot Military Lodge of Mark Masters No 54 held their first Virtual Business Meeting on 24th November. It was certainly a different experience, however we had a good attendance and managed to get some Lodge business transacted. I think all the Brethren enjoyed the opportunity of meeting as a unit once more. Here's hoping that we will be able to hold our next meeting on 23rd February 2021 back at Aldershot Centre, even if it is only under the "Rule of Six"

The Brethren in the screen shot are from the top, left to right: W Bro Brian Lawrence, W Bro Barry Rowlands, W Bro Allan Bazen, Bro Ian Burns, W Bro Bill Southgate, W Bro David Tink (our Almoner somewhat the worst for wear after a gardening accident), Bro Nick George, Bro Chas Hewitt, W Bro Greg Williams, Bro Dave Hill, W Bro Ernest Parsonage, W Bro Guy Sudron, our Worshipful Master.

W.Bro. Brian Lawrence – Secretary

Regular Giving

In these worrying times it is not easy to have charitable giving at the forefront of your minds. Nevertheless, the phenomenal work of the Mark Benevolent Fund goes on regardless. Of course, there is much more focus at present on helping needy Mark and RAM Brethren and their families.

In the absence of Masonic meetings and gatherings the opportunity to make your donations to charity has diminished. In light of this I would ask Brethren to consider becoming Regular Givers to the MBF. We currently have 14% of the Mark Masons in Hampshire and Isle of Wight who are Regular Givers. You can still make your donations by single payments. Both types of giving will, of course, count towards your personal patronage honorifics as well as the 2026 MBF Festival which this Province will host. But most importantly if the Coronavirus is having an adverse effect on your finances please, please, please ignore this request!

Both Regular Giving and Single Donation forms are available at this [link](#). If you're not sure of your MMH number don't hesitate to contact me by 'phone or e-mail and I'll let you know it straight away. My sincere thanks to you all for your continued commitment.

W.Bro. Nigel Wilkinson P.G.S.D., Provincial Grand Charity Steward

Brain Teaser Quiz

Brethren, please look out for V.W.Bro. David Smith's Brain Teaser Quiz which will be coming out to Lodge Secretaries very soon. It is in aid of the 2026 Festival and Mark Benevolent Fund with a suggested entry fee of £5. There are two prizes available and is open to everyone (family, friends, and neighbours). Good luck!

The Old Black Shoes

The old black shoes are looking glum
As I pass the lobby door,
"What's wrong with you?" they seem to say,
"We're going out no more.
We've taken not a single step,
Not third or even first,
And ne'er a sign we've seen you give,
Has Masonry been cursed?"
"It has", I said, "by virus vile,
We have to stay at home
Until such time the plague has passed,
Then once more we can roam.
The Masons' Halls are empty,
Regalia put away,
Gavels now stay silent,
DCs hold no sway.
Volumes of the Sacred Law
On pedestals redundant,
Now Brother Jim contacts his friends
By social posts abundant.
No handshake, word or secret sign,
No friendly Festive Board
No Tyler's song to say Goodnight,
No organ's well-loved chord.
"Black shoes," I said, "do not despair,
Our Chain is firm and strong
Our flag of love remains unfurled
We'll sing again our song.
And though our Brethren may have passed
To Grandeur Lodge Above,
We'll look upon their memories
With everlasting Love;
And in their name, we'll offer help
And soothe the burdened heart;
We'll comfort those who are distressed,
Thus Masons play their part.
And when this crisis is resolved
We'll sing the old refrain,
Happy to Meet, Sorry to Part,
Happy to meet again

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Mark and RAM Masonry following Lockdown

The Provincial Grand Master is keen to hear about meetings which have taken place whether under the "rule of six" or on Zoom. When we get back to some form of normality, this Newsletter is an ideal way to advertise your meetings and afterwards publish what took place (with any pictures you may have). Please forward them to newsletter@hants-iow-mark.org and they will be included in future editions of the Newsletter.