

Masonic Benevolent Institutions

MASONIC GIRLS BENEFIT FUND – MASONIC BOYS BENEFIT FUND – VICTORIA JUBILEE MASONIC BENEVOLENT FUND – MASONIC WELFARE FUND

NEWSLETTER

FOR PATRONS OF THE MASONIC WELFARE FUND

CHAIRMAN – M.W. THE GRAND MASTER

Welcome to our second Newsletter to update and inform you of work and progress in the last year.

You are a Patron of a unique Fund designed to overcome the social conventions and legal restrictions that constrain our existing Masonic Charities in the very complex diversity of modern life. To do so the Fund has a widely written primary objective as follows:

- To relieve cases of poverty, hardship, sickness and distress amongst members of the Fraternity of Freemasons whether situate in Ireland or overseas and the wives, widows, children and other more remote issue and dependants of such members and necessitous persons.**

The Management Board of the Fund is drawn from all over Ireland.

The following Members retired from the Board at the end of 2005:-

**David Benson – Wicklow & Wexford
Robert Gyles – Midland Counties
Tom McBain – South Eastern
Sean Weafer – Grand Master’s Representative
John Wood – Meath**

We wish to acknowledge their work, energy and interest which contributed to the smooth running and progress of the Fund.

Sadly, we have to report that R.W. Brother David Benson, who represented the Province of Wicklow & Wexford passed, away at the end of 2005. He had very wide experience of Masonic Charity having served on the Masonic Girls' Benefit Fund Management Committee and as a Trustee of the Lady Elena Donoughmore Fund. He made many valuable contributions to our deliberations and we salute his memory.

As new Members of the Board we welcome the following:-

E. Brownell – Grand Master's Representative
J. Hobson – Wicklow & Wexford
S. Holt – Midland Counties
I. McCullagh – South Eastern
J. Ramsay – Meath

Continuing for another year on the Board will be the following:-

D. Atkinson - Antrim
D.R. Millen – Antrim
A.R.G.R. Patterson – Antrim
E. Mackarel – Armagh
J.I.A. Davison – Down
B. Eve - Down
C. Ruttle – Down
J. Strong – North Connaught
W. Shortland – South Connaught
W.J. Johnston – Londonderry & Donegal
J. Crowley – Munster
D.C. Webster – North Munster
J.R. Hadden – Tyrone & Fermanagh
B. O'Byrne – Metropolitan Area

Applications being placed before the Board require individual attention and a wide ranging appreciation of needs and how best to provide assistance. Frequently cases are of an urgent and compelling nature requiring speedy and flexible response. Furthermore, the majority of cases fall outside the scope of any assistance or support from Social Services.

Here are a few of the actual cases dealt with in the past year, to preserve anonymity no names or locations are shown:-

- **A Mason died leaving a young daughter and from his wife's first marriage a step daughter. The natural daughter was taken on to the Masonic Girls Benefit Fund but the step daughter did not qualify due to legal constraints in the Rules of the Fund. The flexibility of the Masonic Welfare Fund enabled the stepdaughter to receive exactly the same benefits as the natural daughter.**
- **A member of one of our Irish Lodges in Zimbabwe was dispossessed from that country. Now living in London in poor health and destitute except for Social Welfare Benefits we have been able to provide some relief to assist with his medical problems and comfort.**
- **A Mason deserted his wife and six young children leaving them penniless and in great distress. Within days of being made aware of the situation we were able to give an immediate emergency grant to tide them over until applications could be processed by our other Funds. We were also able to provide another grant at Christmas and so ensure that the children were not deprived of seasonal comforts and gifts.**
- **The son of an unmarried alcoholic mother was brought up by her sister whose husband was a Mason. This was an informal arrangement so no legal adoption or guardianship existed. When the Mason died suddenly the boy did not qualify for assistance from the Masonic Boys Benefit Fund. We could provide benefit and have done so that he now enjoys the same educational security he had when his Masonic "Father Figure" was alive.**
- **A Mason with advanced cancer in need of treatment which is not available in Ireland was given an emergency grant towards getting such treatment in the U.S.A. Sadly he did not survive but the speedy assistance given provided at least some hope, support and relief for him and his family at a very crucial and distressing time.**

You played an important part in bringing assistance to the cases mentioned. You did so by being a Patron of the Fund, by wearing your Jewel and so giving publicity to the Fund.

Apart from dealing with Applications for assistance the Management Board has in the past year continued and extended co-operation with the Victoria Jubilee Masonic Benevolent Fund. In this regard we are aware that we can provide practical help to supplement the Annuities paid by the V.J.M.B.F. This will greatly assist in improving quality of life for those concerned.

We are also proud to be associated with the V.J.M.B.F. in the distribution of the “Care Package” sent to widows of deceased Masons. Last October, for the third year running, over 5,000 widows were sent a greetings card, a letter from Janice Griffin and Rosemary Black together with a booklet about Social Security Benefits. The many letters, cards and telephone calls received by Janice and Rosemary show that this form of “Care Contact” is welcomed and appreciated. As a lady from Antrim said in a note “I truly appreciate all our kind thoughts and the efforts you make to support widows.”

Janice and Rosemary are of course the two ladies who provide all our clerical and administrative support. Their dedication and hard work ensures the efficient running of our Fund together with the V.J.M.B.F. and is to be greatly applauded.

Funding is improving but there is still a long way to go before we are really viable. This need gives you an opportunity to play an important and valuable part in promoting the Fund within your Lodge. Why not try to get at least one other member of your Lodge to become a Patron, better still get two or three.

Our Deputy Chairman R.W. Brother Dennis Millen is also Chairman of the Masonic Benevolent Institutions Liaison Committee. In this forum all our Charities come together in a spirit of co-operation with the intention of maximising assistance that can be given to those in distress and need. The flexibility of your Fund enables us to play an important role in these intentions and the challenges they present.

As a Patron you probably have views and maybe suggestions about how to improve and enhance the workings of your Fund. If so please let your Provincial Grand Lodge Representative be aware of them. You are the eyes and ears of the Fund in your Lodge, with your special knowledge of how the Fund works you are ideally placed to detect distress and need. If you have a potential application in mind discuss the situation with your Lodge Almoner or for guidance call

Janice Griffin on 01 – 679 6799	or	Rosemary Black on 028-90-451 020
at		at
17 Molesworth Street,		115 The Mount,
Dublin, 2.		Belfast,
		BT5 4ND

Thank you for being a Patron.