

MARK PROVINCE OF CHESHIRE

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The Provincial Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of Cheshire consists of 44 Lodges of Mark Master Masons and 21 Lodges of Royal Ark Mariners

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The Fourth Regular Member of the Editorial Team!

The Cheshire Mark Mason is pleased to welcome W.Bro. Jon Clipsham to the editorial team. Jon has just completed a very full year as Master of Eaton Mark Lodge 1607, and ballot permitting, will become WCN of Commemoration Lodge RAM 964 in April 2005. He served the Province of Cheshire as a Provincial Grand Steward from 2003-4.

Professionally, Jon is a Sales and Marketing Manager for a German precious metals company and has worked in this industry for 18 years. He travels internationally, providing technical marketing support to customers in the chemicals and pharmaceuticals industries. He is married with two children, and lives in Macclesfield.

Jon brings to the team his characteristic enthusiasm for freemasonry, as well as several years experience in the production of newsletters and copy writing.

The Cheshire Mark Mason

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THE FRIENDLY DEGREE

You will no doubt have seen the Friendship Meeting Information Pack produced by our Deputy Provincial Grand Master. Copies of which have been sent to Secretaries of every Mark Lodge in the Province. The pack has been produced to help Mark Brethren organise Friendship Meetings in way that will maximise the opportunity to attract new members.



The guidance includes recommended groundwork, both in-lodge and for social boards, an introduction and welcome, a general overview and information regarding the Mark Charities. The first Friendship Meeting in Cheshire was held at Sale last February with the Provincial Grand Master, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and the Assistant Provincial Grand Master present. All five Mark Lodges, which meet in Sale and Altrincham, viz. Stamford 148, Wythenshawe 532, Tuscan 922, Altrincham 1024 and Haven 1543, combined forces at the meeting which was hosted by Tuscan Mark Lodge. Interested non-Mark Masons from every Lodge and Chapter which meet in Sale, Altrincham and Lymm were invited to the meeting, 11 accepted with a few others expressing interest and requesting further information about the degree.

Whilst Tuscan Lodge conducted its business for the evening, visiting brethren were met in the bar and made to feel welcome. After the Lodge had closed, all Mark brethren remained in their places in regalia and the visiting brethren, wearing craft regalia, processed into the Lodge room and were seated amongst the brethren. They were welcomed by the WM who then invited the PGM to occupy the Chair. He gave a short talk on the history and aims of the Mark Degree. The DPGM gave details of the Mark Charities and the APMG outlined the form of the Lodge and described its Officers.

Information packs were handed out giving details of the five participating Lodges and the degree. Then, after a short question and answer session, the WM thanked the Provincial Team and invited all present to the Social Board. The happy atmosphere and buzz of conversation at the Social Board was proof that Friendship had been the keynote of what had been a very successful evening.

So far, of the 11 brethren who attended the meeting, one has been advanced in Tuscan Mark Lodge and one in a Macclesfield Lodge. Also, as a result of this, another brother has been encouraged to become a Mark Mason and Stamford Mark Lodge went on to hold a Friendship Meeting in April. Stamford also had 11 visiting brethren and, to date, have had one application for advancement. More Friendship Meetings are being planned in different areas of the Province. Are you promoting the Friendly Degree in your area?

"That celestial ribbon of watered silk"

It is fanciful to suggest that prior to Noah and the deluge that not a drop of rain had fallen on the Earth and that thick wet mists deposited moisture on the ground to enable vegetational growth. However, one of our early ritual writers was a proponent of such a state of affairs and produced a lecture for the same; hence, no rainbow prior to Noah's covenant with God, and the Antediluvians had never had the opportunity to swim

The legend of an Ark after Noah was expanded into a place of safety or worship. Again in early rituals, there were allusions to Christian parallels, e.g. return of the dove with an olive branch was purported to be Christ; baptism in the waters, etc. The link of the New Testament was stated to be "the new covenant". At the conclusion of the second lecture of the old ritual a Christian allusion is "the good and faithful servants shall find rest and safety in Christ,

the True Ark". Quite clearly this was a case of "making things fit" as occurred several times in studying early ritual. Our non-Christian brethren will understand that these assertions of Christian beliefs in the events surrounding Noah could not be substantiated and had quickly to be esponded around 1845. Further, other degrees controlled by ruling bodies, under whose aegis was the R.A.M. were open to non-Christian brethren and to preclude such brethren from this degree seemed illogical.

Turning now to the history of the degree itself, as is usual the origins are lost in time. Dunckerley was aware of the Degree c.1760 in his travels to the States -alternatively, travelling Irish Constitution Military Lodges made him aware of same. In Ireland (where the degree is no longer practised at all) it existed c.1790 in an Encampment as the Noahchida degree and some 20 years later as part of Ark, Mark and Link series. In Scotland the Royal Ark Mariner Degree was worked in a Craft Lodge *by Charter* from 1840 to 1915 as a side degree. Then when the Cryptic Degree obtained it's Warrant from Illinois in 1915, by a delayed changeover, Cryptic Councils obtained their own Charter.

It is difficult to try and understand the circumstances, which prevailed and influenced ritual writers at the time, but the Jacobite rebellions were still engrained in the psyche and the Act of Sedition was impinging upon other than Craft Degrees. Grand Lodge of Scotland forbade separate working of many side degrees in 1800

Trusty Mark Masons

*Lets get a bit technical about The Cheshire Provincial Grand Lodge Mark Master Masons' Fund of Benevolence
(herein after referred to as the Mark Fund of Benevolence)*

You may have wondered about the technicalities of the Mark Fund of Benevolence. This is a Trust, which was established under Deed of Trust dated 12 March 1982 by Montacgue Albert Gilmore, George Hamson and Denis Macrae Kevan. It is registered as a Charity, numbered 512541, with the Charity Commissioners for England & Wales. The trust was established in 1982 with funds of £469.52 and over the 22 years has grown thanks to the generosity of the brethren of the Mark and RAM lodges to approximately £350,000 where it stands today. We say approximately because parts of the fund are held in quoted investments, the value of which change by the moment.

As a Trust, the Fund needs Trustees, that is where we stand in. Our powers are laid down in the original Trust Deed and our duties are spelt out in law within the Trustee Act 2000. The current Trustees are, Bro Glyn Hewitt, W.Bro John Astbury, W.Bro Paul Bullows, W.Bro Albert Cross, and W.Bro Barry Travers. We have been meeting three times a year to set and review the policies, and review the investment of funds to ensure that our objectives are met. We also advise the Committee of Benevolence of funds available for distribution on an annual basis. It is that committee which is responsible for dealing with the application forms submitted for assistance. We do however have a representation on that committee.

At this point in time, it is one of the objectives of the Fund that we only set aside for distribution to worthy causes the income which has been earned on the underlying investments in any year. The donations received from the various brethren and lodges are retained in order to grow the fund and hopefully generate further income to meet appeals received each year.

As well as ensuring that we comply with the requirements of law laid down in the Trustee Act, we also have to ensure that the Fund acts in accordance with the rules and guidelines laid down by the Charity Commissioners for England and Wales. You may be aware that this body takes a much more active role these days and now has a much more detailed look at charities and their accounts to ensure that the charitable status is not being abused. We are therefore very grateful to our Provincial Grand Treasurer, Provincial Grand Registrar and Provincial Grand Secretary in keeping us on the straight and level.