

The Cheshire Mark Benevolent Fund

The Cheshire Mark Benevolent Fund has been busy over the past few months, allocating funds to needy causes in line with the published criteria for providing assistance.

Those benefiting have included The Countess of Chester Hospital, for whom we have purchased a hand held saturation monitor for use within the Children's unit, The Hospice of the Good Shepherd in Backford, Chester, where P.A. Sound equipment has been purchased to enable staff to provide social and similar events and therefore raise further funds for this excellent cause. Other recipients include Bollington & Macclesfield Sea Cadets, who have been assisted in providing voyages for cadets on offshore vessels and sponsorship for the grandson of a Brother who is walking the Inca Trail to raise money for SCOPE.

The Committee of Benevolence would be pleased to receive further applications for assistance. The forms and criteria can be obtained from your Mark Lodge Secretary. Our grateful thanks go to all who have over many years supported the CMBF, the Lodge Charity Representatives and all brethren who give time and money to boost the fund.

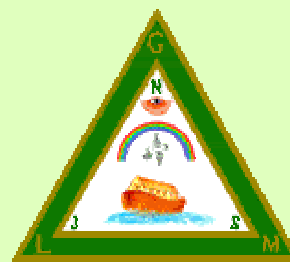
The Beginnings of Speculative Mark Masonry in England and in Cheshire Pt 1

Although the history of Operative Mark Masonry begins much earlier, the speculative story has its outset on 1st September 1769, where we find the first written record of any working of a speculative Mark degree, when at a newly 'Moderns' chartered Royal Arch Chapter, known as the Chapter of Friendship, held at the George Tavern in Portsmouth, the famous Thomas Dunkerley, son of the Prince of Wales, later King George II, Provincial Grand Master;

"bro't the Warrant of the Chapter and having lately rec'd the "Mark", he made the bre'n "Mark Masons" and "Mark Masters" and each chuse their Mark. He also told us of this manner of writing". This is interesting as it confirms the degree was being worked in parts somewhere else earlier than 1769 and makes mention of what we now know as the Mark Cipher.

The state of the Mark Degree down to the middle of the Nineteenth Century was at best, chaotic. Many degrees of varying types had been worked in Craft Lodges prior to the Union of the two rival Grand Lodges in 1813, since when under the Articles of Union, the Mark Degree was not recognised as "Pure Ancient Masonry". The commonly heard part of Article 2 of the Act of Union reads;

It is declared and pronounced that pure Ancient Masonry consists of three degrees, and no more, viz. those of Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason, including the Supreme Order of the Holy Royal Arch.



"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 esponged 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. Dunkerley 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 and country Lodges stopped working them for years. The Knights Templar obtained their Charter from England in 1810, for instance, and Alex Deucher became Grand Master Supreme Grand Chapter for Royal Arch was formed in 1817 and two years later there was a "divvy-up" of the degrees controlled by the Royal Arch. Opening in a Council in the early days, consisted of one knock on the pedestal with the end of the axe that wasn't the sharp bit! Whether the then degree of "Ark Mason" was the same as or similar to our R.A.M. degree history remains silent. (*Cont page 8*)

It's all Potatoes!

True story. Late last year a man in Germany bought a Personal Computer and then took it back complaining that it contained no components, just potatoes. Amazingly, the store gave him a replacement. The same man turned up at the store a little bit later with the replacement (also full of potatoes) wanting a cash refund. At that point someone with brains rather than potatoes called the Police. That story reminded me that the first funding for the Cheshire Mark Provincial Benevolent Fund (CMPBF), after the coffers were completely emptied for the 1989 Festival, was £420 obtained as result of a complaint about potatoes at the Festival Dinner. The fund has grown to its present healthy sum by the untiring enthusiastic efforts of our Charity Representatives and the very generous support of all Cheshire Mark Masons.

But what happens to the money so carefully gathered in? Well, unlike some other Registered Charities, our Chief Executive, his Deputy and his Assistant do not get large interest-free mortgages from the fund to help them obtain their mansions. Neither do the Charity Representatives get paid any commission on their fund-raising, in fact every person I know that is involved in the CMPBF cheerfully gives a tremendous amount of their time and personal resources to the fund.

It was decided at the outset that capital acquired would be used to build the fund and income earned would be distributed in accordance with the objectives of the fund. We are now able to distribute some £13,000 - £14,000 per year both to Masonic and Non-Masonic causes. We like to help with tangible things. These have included a wheelchair, a bed lift, a specialist item for sick children, equipment to help deprived children have a holiday, and other specific items for charity and voluntary organisations and for individuals. What we are unable to help with is filling bottomless pits, things like building maintenance and accumulation of funds.

In order to help those in need there is an Application Form which gives guidance on where, when, and how the fund may be able to help. Charity Reps. and Lodge Secretaries should have copies. Why not get one and see if we may be able to help those people down the road you know are pretty desperate, or that local organisation that does so much good but would dearly like to have a certain piece of equipment that would help them to do even more. It's your money - say how you would like it to be spent and we will see if we can make someone's life a little better.

Those potatoes. One potato, carefully cut, planted and tended, will produce a large crop of other potatoes. Keep the P's coming in and lets see if we can raise the amount we can distribute from £13,000 p.a. to 15, 18, or even £20,000. Thanks for all your help.

N.B. P's means Pounds, not Potatoes - I'm trying to give those up! *Alan Smith*

Know Your Cheshire Mark Festival Jewel

This series continues with the theme of Mark Festivals for the MBF held in Cheshire, following that in 1885 (see first edition) Cheshire held its next Festival in 1898 as follows -

1898

31st Annual Festival

Stewards - 123

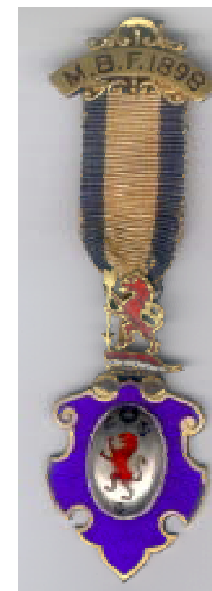
Chairman -

R.W.Bro. The Hon

Alan de Tatton Egerton,

PGM Cheshire

Raised - £1,736



The Cheshire Mark Token

A relatively modern development has been the introduction of Provincial Mark Tokens under the English Constitution. Cheshire has been no exception. The token pictured, which some of you may well have received, was avidly promoted by one of our much respected and loved members in the Mark Degree, W.Bro. Mike Stratton.

The design of the token first issued in 1993 represents the Cheshire window at Mark Masons Hall in London. The Cheshire Arms are superimposed on a keystone. Above the keystone is a ribbon or scroll bearing the legend 'Cheshire', the whole is surrounded by the legend - 'Provincial Grand Lodge of MMM's'.

Ralph Wheeler in his 1996 book on Mark tokens records this version as 'withdrawn'. There is a second version, much sought after by collectors where the wrong reverse was struck, if you have one keep hold of it brethren.



A Profile of Fidelity Lodge of Mark Masters No.31

Fidelity Mark Lodge is allocated the number 31 on the roll of Grand Mark Lodge, although a low number, it belies its real age. It was warranted on 28th July 1858, to meet at the White Hart Inn in Hyde, Cheshire. The Petitioners, led by that renowned Mason, John Yarker, who took the chair as the first Master on 8th September 1858, had begun to build on the foundations of Mark Masonry, so ably laid by Ashton District TI throughout North East Cheshire.



As was common back in those days, the Lodge moved within a short period to another hostelry in Hyde, but for reasons clouded in mystery, the lodge became dormant mid way through 1862. The minutes for the installation in May 1862 make no mention of any problems, however they were not signed until 23rd June 1897, following the efforts of brethren from Joppa Mark Lodge No. 11TI, who had wished to revive it. One of Joppa's brethren, indeed the first master of the revived lodge, was the masonic historian Bro. John Armstrong, so well known for his definitive work, 'The History of Freemasonry in Cheshire'. It was with the revival of the lodge, and with the agreement of John Yarker, who had banded with Joppa's brethren in the venture, that resolution was made to move the lodge to the Masonic Chambers, Hamilton Street, Birkenhead, where the first meeting took place during August 1897.

The Lodge continued to prosper, supported by Joppa Mark Lodge, and although it moved its meeting place regularly during the early years, its membership grew. The minutes of 14th May 1913 record the sad passing of Bro. John Yarker, its first master, aged 80 years. During May 1923, Fidelity Mark finally found a permanent home, when it moved to where it meets today, at Clifton Road, Birkenhead.

The Lodge celebrated its diamond jubilee in 1918, which was attended by the Provincial Grand Master, RW Bro. Lord Egerton of Tatton, and other dignitaries. In 1958, of course the lodge was 100 years old, but as there had been 35 years of dormancy, a centenary warrant could not be granted, the brethren had to wait until 1997, where they celebrated in style in the company of RW Bro. Benjamin Addy, the Provincial Grand Master for the Mark Province of Cheshire at the time, now Assistant Grand Master.

Undoubtedly Fidelity No.31 has 'marked well' in the Province of Cheshire and we wish them well for the future.

Notable Lodge Meetings - for your diary

2004

19th March	Neston Mark	Presentation of Mauls
16th April	Hyde Mark	75th Anniversary
21st April	Cestrian RAM & Earl of Chester Mark	Presentation of Maul
23rd April	Sincerity Mark	Presentation of Maul
26th April	De Tabley Mark	Presentation of Maul

Provincial Grand Mark Meetings

3rd April 2004	Mark AGM	Chester College
19th May 2004	Mark Masters' Dinner	Middlewich
18th June 2004	Mark GLO Dinner	Christleton
17th September 2004	Charity Repts Dinner	Middlewich

Grand Mark Meetings

8th June 2004	Mark Investiture (All ticket meeting)
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A review of 2003

The three leaders have been busy over the past twelve months, not least attending Grand Mark Lodge and neighbouring Provincial Grand Lodges, but also visiting qualifying Mark and Royal Ark Mariner Lodges throughout the Province, to present mauls. Congratulations go to all those Mark and Royal Ark Mariner Lodges who received a Maul. A special mention for Deeside Mark Lodge No.795 and Wallesey Mark Lodge No.600 who both joined the list of lodges who have received three Overseers Mauls.

The Provincial Team made a number of visits; of particular note were two personal Golden Jubilees. The first was that of Bro. Jim Todd of Cornwall Legh Lodge of Royal Ark Mariners, who celebrated 50 years in the RAM and also celebrating, was W.Bro. Thomas Powell of De Tabley Mark Lodge No.396, notching up 50 years a Mark Mason. Congratulations go to both Brethren.

Other notable events include the Elevation into the Royal Ark Mariner of our Deputy Provincial Grand Master in the Craft, V.W.Bro.Cyril Acton and a visit to Hyde Mark Lodge No. 868, who were celebrating their 75th anniversary and where the District Grand Master of Transvaal is a member and was in attendance.

2004 ? Yes that's going to be just as hectic !