

Charities Information Day 2015 Escrick

On 15th October 2015, 102 people descended upon The Parsonage Hotel at Escrick, York for the 17th Annual Charities Information Day. The delegates were mainly Almoners (43) and Charity Stewards (39) together with several Trustees and Standing Committee members from The Provincial Grand Charity. In addition there were members from the Almoners Panel and the Festival 2018 Committee.

The meeting was opened with a short presentation by Nigel Weightman, Chairman of The Provincial Grand Charity. This was followed by some words of welcome from the APMG, Malcolm Dabbs, who was deputising for the RW Provincial Grand Master, Jeffrey Gillyon, who was attending the Annual Meeting of the Province of Cumberland and Westmoreland.

Nigel Weightman introduced the first speaker, Denis Stublely, Chairman of the Festival 2018 Committee who, yet again, was dressed immaculately. Nigel indicated that he had heard that Denis even ironed his socks, to which the response was “no I do not, Mrs Stublely does that” a comment that was followed by raucous laughter.

Festival 2018

Denis Stublely gave an update on the Festival's finances. So far £1,042k had been raised - £850k in the bank and another £192k in pledges. In broad terms, each lodge will need to raise another £5,600 over the next 2 ½ years to achieve our Provincial goal. Already 16 lodges have received a Festival honorific with Mitre lodge recently joining De La Pole as a Grand Patron. The Festival is as important to Almoners as it is to Charity Stewards as Festivals raise the funds that Almoners spend in supporting our brethren and their dependents in time of need. A short video about the Festival has been produced – this will soon be distributed to all lodges for brethren to watch. Over the coming months each lodge will receive information regarding their contributions to date. This will enable brethren see how their lodge compares with the Provincial average. Denis concluded by urging all brethren to continue to support Festival 2018.

Presentations

The delegates were then treated to some excellent presentations.

Claire Beaumont from the Advice & Support Team at the RMTGB gave a presentation on the work that she does in helping Almoners to obtain grants for brethren and their dependents. Her advice extends not just to grants from the Central Masonic Charities but also to advice on State Benefits.

Richard Douglas, Chief Executive of the Masonic Samaritan Fund, gave a talk on the work and scope of MSF. At the end of his presentation, Richard introduced Rita Hudson, the wife of a member of Minster Lodge, who gave a short talk on her experience in securing help from the MSF when she was diagnosed with Macular Degeneration. MSF acted swiftly to provide help for which Rita was very grateful. Finally, Richard advised that to mark the Silver Jubilee of MSF this year, a total of £1M has been awarded to medical charities throughout every Province in England and Wales. The successful charities were selected by ballot of brethren in each Province. The beneficiaries in this Province were Macular Society, British Heart Foundation, Parkinsons UK and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

Mark Guidery, manager of Zoe's Place Baby Hospice in Middlesbrough, gave a presentation on the history of his charity and the work that he and his staff do to help those in the area that need help. Few delegates could not have been moved by the presentation and photographs of the children that had benefitted from the Hospice. Several delegates expressed their pride that both local lodges and The Provincial Grand Charity had been able to provide funds for the charity over the previous years.

David Burnett, a retired solicitor and a member of Old Bridlingtonian Lodge, followed his success last year with a talk on 'Powers of Attorney' with a superb presentation on 'Wills'. Although this is subject many people try to avoid, David presented it in an interesting and enjoyable way and many people were seen to be writing notes, presumably to help in making or updating their own wills.

Bob Smailes and David Hebden, from the Yorkshire Air Ambulance gave an excellent presentation on the YAA and demonstrated how important it was to have such a facility within our Province. They thanked Freemasonry in general and the Province of YNER for past and continued support.

Adrian Allen, Deputy Communications Officer of YNER, gave another excellent presentation on Publicity & Improving Our Image. As a professional in the media, Adrian was able to explain the importance of good publicity and ways that this may be obtained. He indicated the necessity of using social media to communicate with both members and the general public.

Zoe Bray from StepChange, a 'debt charity', gave a most illuminating presentation on personal debt and the help that her charity can bring to help people overcome their financial problems. This talk would assist our Almoners when trying to sort out financial problems of those brethren in need.

Finally, **Nigel Weightman** gave a Powerpoint presentation which has been produced to help Charity Stewards, in particular, to explain to lodge members the background to The Provincial Grand Charity. He also gave information on how to apply for grants and explained the role of Area Representatives.

The closing remarks were made by Nigel Weightman and APGM Malcolm Dabbs. They both hoped that the day had been worthwhile for the delegates and that the presentations were useful and relevant to the very important work that they do as lodge/chapter Almoners and Charity Stewards.

At the end of the meeting, all delegates were asked to complete a questionnaire to provide feedback to the organisers in order to assist in future arrangements for the event. Every one of the 27 delegates who replied, indicated that he would either attend himself next year (if still in office) or recommend his successor to do so. This was very encouraging.

Denis Kelly 23rd October 2015