NOTES FOR THE SPECIFIC USE OF THE LODGE ALMONER

The Office and role of Almoner, which are inextricably linked to the welfare of the Brethren and their families, are of critical importance and are indispensable in dealing with those compassionate issues which arise from time to time.

In recent years, Grand Lodge has emphasised the increasing importance of this demanding role and a Provincial Grand Almoner was first appointed in the Province of Lincolnshire in 1995.

Dealing with compassionate and delicate issues requires the devotion of considerable time together with discretion, patience, tact and perseverance and, consequently, much of the work of the Lodge Almoner is done without the knowledge, and out of the sight, of the Brethren.

The duties of the Lodge Almoner may be summarised as follows:

(i) In the sad event of bereavement, he will make immediate contact with the family of the deceased Brother, or with the Brother himself if his partner dies. Advice will be readily available with regard to administrative matters as well as addressing financial and welfare problems both in the short and long term, including any help required for dependent children so that immediate difficulties and longer term problems can constructively be addressed and resolved for their benefit.

(ii) In addition, the Almoner maintains regular contact with sick Brethren and/or their families and dependants and will help them to address day-to-day problems which may arise and in respect of which help can be offered.

(iii) Regular contact is maintained with widows of former Brethren throughout the year, especially at Christmas time, so that the Almoner can look out for any signs of financial difficulty or any other welfare issues.

(iv) The Lodge Almoner will make discreet enquiries if a Brother is not attending regularly or in the unhappy event of a resignation being tendered so that any problems can be discussed and addressed in a helpful manner.

(v) The Almoner will keep the Lodge updated about any sickness of Brethren and their families, but will not disclose names or details of cases of financial distress. Only the barest outline will be given, for reasons of discretion and confidentiality, where applications are made to Masonic Charities.

The Almoner does rely upon the support of the Brethren in informing him if there are any problems which the Almoner should address and the continued support of the Brethren in this context is strongly encouraged.

From time to time, the Almoner will appreciate help from the Brethren in the carrying out of his important duties and some Lodges have understandably seen fit to appoint one or more Assistant Almoners. It must be stressed that under the Book of Constitutions (Rule 104) this is not an appointment as an Officer of the Lodge but is to be regarded as recognition of the help and assistance given to the Almoner.

The Almoner will make or initiate applications to the Masonic Charities, full details of which are set out in the booklet "Masonic Charities" issued by Grand Lodge and also in the booklet entitled "The Almoner" first published in November 2002 which together identify the various masonic charities, including those which are applicable to the Province of Lincolnshire. Every Mason in Lincolnshire has been given a copy of "Freemasonry Cares" which is a valuable reference.

Where an application to a Masonic Charity results in a grant being made, this should be paid into a Lodge Almoner's Account and then paid out for the benefit of the applicant - ideally in discharging specific liabilities rather than as cash payments to the applicant and certainly not as regular payments. Cash payments to the applicant could jeopardise social security benefits.
While confidentiality must be an essential feature of the Almoner's work, the Almoner's Account must be administered in accordance with the Lodge by-laws -usually requiring cheques to be signed by two Brethren (perhaps the Almoner and the Lodge Treasurer) and the accounts to be audited by the Audit Committee. The accounts can be presented to the Lodge in summary form with no names being disclosed.