

**From: V. W. Bro. Stephen Wright PGJO
Chairman of Trustees, Warwickshire Mark Benevolent Fund**

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Dear Brethren,

IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE WARWICKSHIRE MARK BENEVOLENT FUND

Firstly I would like to wish you all a very happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

I rarely have the opportunity to write to the Brethren regarding Benevolent Fund business however there have been recent very positive and significant financial events which it is only right that I bring to your attention.

Over twelve months ago the trustees were informed by a firm of solicitors that we were to receive a substantial legacy from the estate of the late Mrs Mary Jones who passed away in Little Aston Nursing Home just two years ago. Mary's estate, after specific legacies to family members, was to be divided among six beneficiaries, including her local parish church and the WMBF. The amount payable to each beneficiary organisation would be in the region of £200,000. The solicitors have been working on winding-up the estate for some time, and this has included the sale of Mary's home in Little Aston and the realisation of investments. A preliminary distribution of £195,000 has recently been made. The solicitors are retaining a small balance as there are residual estate costs which are to be settled. We are hopeful that the final amount will be close to the £200,000 figure.

These funds have been placed in a specific '**Permanent Endowment Fund**'. For those of you unfamiliar with this term it means that the full capital sum has been invested (to remain as a capital asset of the fund) and only the income from those investments will be used for the benefit of the general expenditure of the WMBF. I trust that many of you will have studied the WMBF annual financial statements which were distributed at the recent Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting. If you did so carefully you will realise that the total value of the fund has now increased by approximately 83%. This is a very substantial increase.

The stockbrokers to the WMBF have already received the initial £195,000 together with direction from the trustees that we would wish the investments to be hypothecated to a specific Permanent Endowment Fund to achieve an income approaching 5%. We have emphasised that we would hope that their conservative approach will ensure that the capital value will remain reasonably constant, although in line with all stock market related investments values can fall as well as rise. As the policy of the WMBF is to invest for the longer term we would not expect short-term falls in the value of the investments to create difficulties.

As to the income, the trustees are hopeful that this will increase our cash flow by something approaching £10,000 per annum. The trustees with their corporate responsibility will determine how this additional income is utilised. For the time being it will probably be directed towards the 2027 MBF Festival, providing a very useful additional funding line (£100,000 over 10 years?).

Our stockbrokers were appointed over twelve months ago and so far the trustees are pleased with the service provided. The main board of trustees has appointed a small sub-committee consisting of Worshipful Brothers Armbrister, Bridges, Evans and I to monitor the work of the brokers and report back to the main board whenever necessary.

You may be asking how this substantial and generous legacy came about.

Mary Jones was the widow of the late W.Bro. Eirwyn Wyn Jones P.Prov.G.S.W., a highly respected Past Master of St. Christopher's Lodge No. 1128. He was the Almoner/Charity Steward of St. Christopher's for many years. W.Bro. Wyn died some years ago and there may not be many of the current members of the Province who can remember him. He never missed a Lodge meeting or an officers' meeting and was a regular attendee at Warwickshire Installed Mark Masters' Lodge. Back in the early days of R.W.Bro. Bob Russell's time as Provincial Grand Masters the Province held long weekend breaks abroad and Wyn, as a travel agent, was instrumental in organising the travel arrangements.

This legacy was the result of good, straightforward, almoner's work over many years. After his death various Brethren followed in Wyn's footsteps as Almoner. Mary was always invited to the annual Families' Luncheon and was pleased to attend, greatly enjoying her day out. The Lodge also held a special Sunday lunch to celebrate Mary's 100th birthday. After one of these luncheons Mary informed me that she was re-drawing her will and that she would like to leave a legacy to St. Christopher's Lodge owing to the kind way we had looked after her. While thanking her for her generosity I suggested that legacies sometimes created administrative difficulties and even , sometimes, dis-harmony for Lodges and that if she were willing to do so a legacy to the WMBF might be more appropriate. She readily agreed to this and I passed on WMBF details to her solicitor when he contacted me. There is nothing extraordinary about this tale. I feel sure that nearly all of our Almoners are looking after Lodge widows in a very similar manner. My only surprise has been the extreme generosity of her legacy, something I had not imagined at the time.

The legacy itself reminds us all of the value of remembering the WMBF, or any other charity for that matter, when drawing-up our wills. As we get older and retire it is not always easy to keep up the level of the charity contributions we made when we were younger and at work as our incomes are squeezed during retirement. Should any of you decide to follow in Mary Jones's footsteps please be assured that legacy funding received will be added to the Permanent Endowment Fund so that the work of the WMBF can continue into the future.

Yours sincerely and fraternally,

Stephen Wright