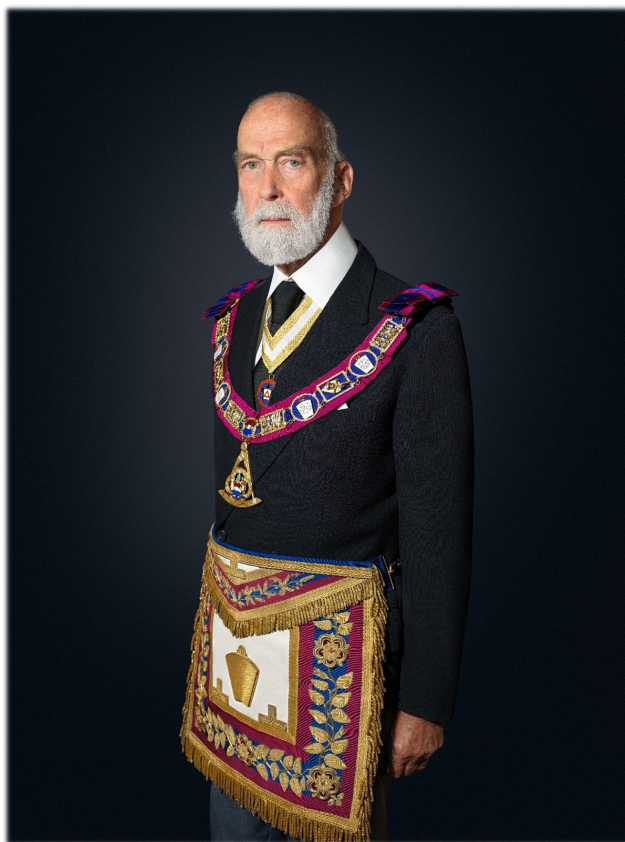




# **Mark Benevolent Fund**

**Annual  
Review  
2023**

# The Grand President



**H.R.H. Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO**

Grand President  
of the  
Mark Benevolent Fund

Photo by Rory Lewis  
Winner of the Portrait of Britain (2017 – 2020)

## The Mark Benevolent Fund

**A BRIEF HISTORY**—It was not long after the official founding of the Mark Degree in June 1856 that the Reverend George Raymond Portal, MA (Canon Portal in 1881), devised the idea of a charity separate from that of the United Grand Lodge of England. Portal wanted a charity where immediate aid could be granted, dispensing with red tape and lengthy delays. Although he faced much opposition to the idea, in June 1868 the Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons Fund of Benevolence was born, now known simply as the Mark Benevolent Fund (MBF). The aim of the charity is to help poor and distressed Mark Master Masons and their dependents. To date over £7.3 million has been disbursed in grants to individual petitioners.

**THE MBF**—The Mark Benevolent Fund is proud to have H.R.H. Prince Michael of Kent, GCVO, as its Grand President. The Fund not only assists distressed Mark Master Masons and their families, but also makes donations to other registered charities and worthy causes. These grants have totaled over £30 million since 1868. Meeting on a regular basis, the Worthy Causes Committee reviews all applications whether large or small.

**RECENT GRANTS: £515,000** to 26 Blood Bike charities for new fully equipped bikes and support cars; a renewed partnership with St John Ambulance with a grant of over **£3.4 million** to help renew their fleet of ambulances, mobile treatment centres and support vehicles; a major capital grant of **£1.3 million** to hospices throughout England, Wales, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man, to mark the significant contribution made to the Crown and the nation by HRH The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; **£100,000** to the Birmingham Women's and Children's Hospital charity for counselling rooms in Woodland House, the new £1.5m neonatal bereavement centre; **£37,000** to the Children with Cancer Fund – Polegate for a utility vehicle; and **£2,900** to The Lovey Foundation for a motorbike to seek out children in need in remote areas of Ghana.

**ANNUAL FESTIVALS**—Traditionally an Annual Festival is held after many years of fundraising by the nominated Province culminating in a Grand Summer Banquet when the results are revealed by the Honorary Secretary. Each year a different Province in England or Wales hosts the Mark Benevolent Fund festival, having begun fundraising up to ten years prior to the event. The festival enables Brethren, their families and friends, as well as supporters from other Provinces, to gather together in celebration of the host Province's success. The first festival at the Mitre Hotel in Twickenham was held in 1879 and raised the sum of £79, equating to approximately £55,000 today.

## Fund Activity Summary 2023



In 2023, the Mark Benevolent Fund made **33** grants to local charities, Provinces, Districts and other worthy organisations and **17** grants to our own members and their families throughout England and Wales.

Humanitarian Aid	£270,000
Disability Support Services	£150,513
Youth Sector	£140,594
Hospice and Cancer Care	£137,035
Local Community Focus	£119,018
Secondary Emergency Services	£65,000
Health Care	£53,579
Our own members and their families	£36,820

**TOTAL**

**£972,559**

## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023

### 1st North Wallington Scout Group—£39,636



This charity, has over 80 members and the group needed to upgrade its ailing 18 year old minibus and trailer. The youngsters will benefit from new modern and reliable transport that complies with the current ULEZ legislation.



### The Arrow Riding Centre—£7,500



The Arrow Riding Centre is for young people and adults with special needs. They are a volunteer-based charity with a team of qualified coaches that work alongside physiotherapists to develop tailor-made programmes for each of the riders, helping them to unlock their potential on and off the horse. Rosa is their newest recruit thanks to the M.B.F.



### The Brainwave Centre—£13,026

The aim of this charity is to aid children with disabilities to achieve greater independence, working towards improving their contact skills and learning potential through a range of specialist therapies. Funds went towards the purchase of a disabled accessible roundabout for the sensory garden based in Huntworth, Bridgwater.

Many children are wheelchair dependent and this roundabout allows them to experience greater involvement with their siblings.

### British Liver Trust—£15,811

The M.B.F. was pleased to fund a new liver disease screener for the charity's mobile screening unit, and new 'easy read' materials for people who are at risk of liver disease, cancer, and lower health literacy.



## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023

### Canterbury Umbrella—£45,582



The charity is an important social support centre for adults with mental health and learning difficulties, and gives help and support to those who feel isolated in the community. Funds have been made available to completely refurbish the kitchen and toilets.



### Chadsgrove Educational Trust—£10,000



Chadsgrove is a college for students aged 19 to 25 with physical disabilities and/or complex medical needs. Funds have gone towards the purchase of a new hybrid wheelchair accessible vehicle.



### Children with Cancer Fund—£36,807



The charity's van is their lifeline and is needed to transport volunteers and equipment to all important fund raising events. Sadly, it was also at the end of its life. The funds have allowed the Children with Cancer Fund to purchase a new reliable all purpose vehicle.



### The Children's Heart Federation—£11,581



The Children's Heart Federation is the leading UK children's heart charity. The funds purchased INR (international normalised ratio) machines so children on blood thinning medication can have the 'clotting levels' of their blood tested safely at home instead of in hospital, which also lessens disruption to their education.



## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023

### Community, Equality, Disability Action (CEDA)—£6,771



CEDA needed a specific piece of equipment called an Acheeva bed system. This bed is designed to help children and adults with special needs learn how to move independently.



### Derbyshire and Leicestershire Scouts—£4,862



The Derbyshire and Leicestershire Scouts Fietskamp takes place in the Netherlands in 2024. It is a cycling trip for Derbyshire and Leicestershire scouts and young explorers. The M.B.F. has helped with sponsorship of equipment for the event.



### District of Romania—£115,000

The Mark Benevolent Fund continues to support Ukrainian refugees setting up home in the District of Romania. It is thanks to the enduring generosity of Mark Master Masons and their families that we are able to continue making these donations.



### Foreland Fields Charity—£5,000

Funding went towards the installation of wheelchair accessible paths to the forest school, horticultural centre and sensory garden.



### Haswell & District MENCAP—£26,215



Funds went to the renovation of their community café and 'patch to plate' project. It is now well established with raised beds and greenhouses full of produce grown by people with learning disabilities, supported by volunteers.





## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023

### The Holistic Cancer Centre—£16,984

This centre offers a wide range of complementary therapies including counselling, nutrition awareness, and relaxation therapies such as mindfulness and meditation, as well as reiki, acupuncture and crafts.



**The Holistic Cancer Centre**  
"a safe place in a difficult time" (Est. 1988)



### The Incredible Design Co—£12,950

The centre supports severely disabled adults. The printing enterprise provides a service to those adults who are unable to access traditional employment,

but who still wish to take part in work. The funds for new printing equipment will allow them to continue their work and give more people the opportunity to use it.



### London Wheelchair Rugby Club—£30,967

Four specialised sports wheelchairs were purchased to support and encourage other new players. Wheelchairs are vital for disabled people to take part in activities and also to progress in this sport and achieve ambitions.



### Lovey Foundation—£2,900

The Lovey Foundation (UK) provides education for children in Bawku in Ghana. Unfortunately, some Ghanaian children from the poorest backgrounds don't have access to education due to parents being unable to afford school uniforms, or the children having to work full time for their families. A new motorbike was purchased enabling the charity to access remote areas to seek out children in need, especially those located in rough terrain.



**District of Ghana**





## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023



the *Meath*  
epilepsy charity

### The Meath Epilepsy Charity—£5,146

Meath provides fully supported residential care, on and off-site day activities, and domiciliary services for people with complex epilepsy usually associated with a learning or physical disability. Funding will help them deliver highly interactive epilepsy awareness training to an estimated 750 people in the Southeast.



**Ménière's Society**  
for dizziness & balance disorders



### The Ménière's Society—£2,387

The Ménière's Society is dedicated solely to supporting people affected by inner ear (vestibular) disorders. They need new office equipment as the vast majority of work is computer based. The office team use their laptops for both administrative purposes and also to answer helpline calls.

### Mid Surrey Community Fridges—£42,702



Mid Surrey Community Fridges are saving 6½ tonnes of food from landfill every week. Roughly around 1,600 people will benefit from the food network every week. The Mark Benevolent Fund stepped in to replace the organisation's out of date van, which was beyond restoration.



**MID SURREY**  
COMMUNITY FRIDGES

### Newcastle Wheelchair Rugby Club £35,799



Funds will be used to start a junior wheelchair team and to buy eight junior specialist rugby wheelchairs to offer the facilities to the under 16's.



## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023

### Sailship Training & Learning—£20,000



Sailship offers work, life skills, and training for people living with learning disabilities, and provides therapeutic pathways for improving mental health and well-being for the wider community, as well as dementia friendly spaces. The charity purchased a 9-seater vehicle with space for a fold-up wheelchair in the rear of the vehicle.



### St John Ambulance—£8,000



The Province of Hertfordshire have been working hard since last November to raise funds to assist St John Ambulance in the purchase of a new 4WD ambulance, to be based in Hertfordshire. The Mark Benevolent Fund has awarded the final £8,000.



### Sebastian's Action Trust—£2,920



The Trust provides emotional and practical support to very sick children and their families as well as free respite breaks at this fully accessible respite home. They were awarded this grant to replace beds and bedding at the centre.



### ShelterBox—£155,000

The Trustees of the Mark Benevolent Fund were quick to react to the humanitarian crises in Türkiye, Syria and Morocco following devastating earthquakes. The figure includes £80,000 from the Mark Emergency Relief Fund allowing us to support relief efforts in partnership with ShelterBox.



## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023



### Southmead Hospital—£18,654

The Mark Benevolent Fund made the final contribution to allow the charity to purchase neurosurgery equipment. The new robot will be housed at the hospital in Bristol.



### Style Acre—£36,000

The charity supports 270 adults with learning disabilities and autism in Oxfordshire. Since 1995, people have accessed person centred support to live safe, happy and fulfilled lives. A new minibus for use by adults with

#### Style Acre

Supporting people with learning disabilities



learning disabilities and autism has been provided by the M.B.F. Their vehicles provide essential transport to and from their community hubs and to a wide range of activities across the county.



### Sweetpea Smallholdings—£1,871

This donation enabled the charity to begin work at the farm site giving more space for producing fruit and vegetables that will be donated to foodbanks across the area. The funds have already enabled them to purchase a polytunnel to help protect vulnerable plants and to construct raised beds to help give disabled volunteers better access.



### Tees River Rescue—£57,000

Tees River Rescue provides routine patrols on the River Tees to ensure water safety and to assist emergency services as requested. A new reliable purpose built boat has been supplied by the M.B.F. to replace the aged models they currently have.



## Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023

### The Therapy Garden—£1,363



This is a horticulture and education charity, working to have a positive and significant impact on the lives of people facing challenges in life.

The charity changes lives for the better by creating a safe place to enjoy the power of gardening and to connect with nature. Funds have been made available for the purchase of new kitchen equipment.



### Tunbridge Wells Sea Cadets—£80,276



This charity offers a range of various activities for young people from windsurfing, rock climbing, camping, and music. Funds will create a new first floor structure and install a new staircase.



### Villa Real School—£57,029

The school is for pupils aged 2–19 years with severe, profound, medical and complex learning difficulties, including pupils in end-of-life plans. The M.B.F. provided a grant for a new minibus to enable greater flexibility in the activities they run.



### Whitehaven Theatre of Youth—£10,000

The Whitehaven Theatre of Youth are a performing arts charity for ages 7 to 18, covering all aspects of drama and musical theatre. Funding was raised for equipment to enhance their productions to give a more professional feel to them.



# Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023 by Provinces

**Bristol** £9,499



**Cumberland & Westmorland** £17,311



**Essex** £3,140



**Buckinghamshire**  
£2,465



**Derbyshire** £5,000



**Gloucestershire & Herefordshire**  
£3,950



**Devonshire** £118,187



**Channel Islands**  
£2,000



**Hertfordshire**  
£49,447



**Cheshire** £2,500



**Dorset** £8,381



**Kent** £6,850



**Dyfed** £4,980



**Cornwall** £7,500



**East Anglia** £27,000



**Leicestershire & Rutland** £19,100





# Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023 by Provinces

**Lincolnshire**

£11,250



**North Wales**

£7,000



**Sussex** £8,055



**London** £63,100



**Nottinghamshire**

£16,250



**West Lancashire**

£7,825



**Northampton,  
Huntingdon &  
Bedford** £10,325



**Oxfordshire** £6,000



**West Yorkshire**

£2,708



**Northumberland**

£2,500



**Staffordshire &  
Shropshire** £4,150



**Wiltshire** £400



**North & East  
Yorkshire** £10,050



**Surrey** £11,070



**Worcestershire**

£9,900





# Grants to Worthy Causes in 2023 by Districts

**Bolivia**  
£4,500



**Cyprus**  
£10,262



**Gibraltar**  
£1,300



**Hong Kong**  
£8,300



**Italy**  
£1,712



**Jamaica &  
Cayman Islands**  
£8,000



**River Plate  
(Argentina)**  
£1,000



**Romania**  
£1,800



**South Africa  
(Eastern Division)**  
£420



**South & East  
Caribbean**  
£1,222



**The Transvaal**  
£9,300



**Total**

**£505,710**

# The Portal Jewel

## Reverend Canon George Raymond Portal, MA

Grand Master 1869–1873

Founder of the Mark Benevolent Fund



Photo courtesy of Winchester  
Cathedral Archives

In the nineteenth century there was a practice of presenting a special jewel to retiring Grand Masters as a mark of appreciation for their services to the Order.

This jewel was presented to Reverend Canon George Raymond Portal in 1875 after his tenure as Grand Master. He, like so many of the great men and women documented throughout history, possessed a desire and a passion to make things better.

The Mark Benevolent Fund stands as testament to him over 150 years later as, undoubtedly, without his untiring endeavours and perseverance in the early years, and the continuing support of the membership, the MBF would not have become what it is today. Indeed, we thank him and the many thousands of Brethren whose involvement and hard work has helped mould the charity and ensured continuous growth and development.



# Mark Benevolent Fund Festival 2024

## **The One Hundred and Fifty-sixth Festival**

will be held on

**Saturday, 6 July 2024**

at the Concorde Conference Centre,  
Wilmslow Old Road, Altrincham, WA15 8XQ



Under the Presidency of  
R.W.Bro. Gary Raymond Horstman  
Provincial Grand Master for Cheshire

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## **FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS**

2025	Oxfordshire	Essex	2030
2026	Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Northumberland	2031
2027	Warwickshire	Wiltshire	2032
2028	Somerset	North and East Yorkshire	2033
2029	Durham	Dorset	2034

Further particulars can be obtained from:

M.B.F. Honorary Secretary, Charities Office,  
Mark Masons' Hall, 86 St James's Street, London, SW1A 1PL