

THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN
Of The
EAST LANCASHIRE MARK PROVINCE

The **East Lancashire Mark Benevolent Fund** is our own Provincial Mark Charity. It is responsible for the administration of two groups of flats & bungalows in tranquil & peaceful surroundings in East Lancashire. One in Bolton which is named Canon's Close the other in Blackburn which is Priors Close.

For many years RWBro. Canon Thomas Whitehead Taylor (Provincial Grand Master 1948 – 1961) had been conscious of the burden of upkeep of large old houses on Elderly Masons, their widows & dependants. He cherished a dream of providing rented accommodation at a reasonable cost.

He discussed it with his Deputy, Thomas Sharples Barlow, who became Provincial Grand Master 1961 & George Farnworth Nuttall (Provincial Grand Master in 1979).

Canon Taylor died in 1961 but the other two nurtured his dream & with the help of many other Brethren & a gift of land from RWBro. Thomas Sharples Barlow eight flats were built at Canon's Close in 1963 – 64 at a cost of £14,464. Work was also started on eight bungalows.

The East Lancashire Mark Benevolent Fund Limited was incorporated by the Execution of a Trust Deed dated 28th January 1966. It is a Company Limited by Guarantee & does not have a Share Capital. It is a Registered Charity with the Charities Commissioners.

The primary objectives are **“To provide Relief to those in need among Mark Masons, their widows & dependants in the Province of East Lancashire”**

Shortly after its incorporation Mrs. Whittaker, widow of the late WBro. Henry Whittaker, who had been a close friend of RWBro. Thomas Sharples Barlow conveyed land & property in Preston New Road, Blackburn to the fund. The property was demolished & sixteen flats were built in the grounds.

In 1984 the property adjoining Canon's Close came on the market & was purchased by the fund. The property was demolished & a block of eight apartments erected. These were opened by His Royal Highness, Prince Michael of Kent in 1987.

East Lancashire is unique in being the only Mark Province to provide this facility.

RWBro. John Prizeman (Deputy Grand Master) visited Canon's Close when he was the President of the Mark Benevolent Fund & commented that he was going back to London to advise them what we were doing in East Lancashire – **The Jewel in the Crown.**

At present the fund has a board of six Trustees / Directors:

WBro. Howard Nuttall (Chairman)

VWBro. Jeffrey Huddart (Treasurer)

WBro. Malcolm McCarthy (Secretary)

WBro. Roger Fielding

WBro. David Rainsbury

WBro. Gerald Young

VWBro. John Tyler & VWBro. Graham Mangham are Ex-Officio Members by reason of their Office as Chairman of Canon's Close & Priors Close House Committees respectively.

Canon's Close now comprises of nine bungalows, eight flats & eight apartments.

Priors Close has six two-bedroom flats, ten single bedroom flats & two cottages.

Changes in recent Legislation have meant that the properties have had to undertake major improvements / alterations.

During the period 2017 – 2020 over £150,000 has been spent on these upgrades at Canon's Close.

Over the same period at Priors Close in excess of £250,000 has been spent.

It is all worthwhile as one resident commented:

“Having had the privilege of living in the Mark Flats for three & a half years, my wife & I would like you & your board to know what a wonderful difference living here has made to us in the eventide of our lives. Not only has it removed the financial worry which oppressed us before we came here, but the serene & peaceful outlook, the lovely trees, birds & flowers have greatly contributed to our contentment. We shall be for ever grateful”.

HOWEVER, THAT IS ONLY PART OF THE STORY. We have an important roll assisting the Provincial Almoner in his Roll.

Assessing & arranging payments for urgent medical consultations from Private Practitioners in the event that the National Health Service cannot provide a timely appointment or if a second opinion is required.

THIS OPTION IS OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS & IS FUNDED BY THE EAST LANCASHIRE MARK BENEVOLANT FUND.

Depending on the need this sum varies each year.

In addition, in liaison with the East Lancashire Mark Fellowship, who cover the cost, send approximately 300 Christmas Cards.

Our **CHARITABLE DONATIONS** over recent years have covered ALL ASPECTS of the Community.

In conjunction with the Graham Fulford Charitable Trust providing PSA Testing in respect of Prostate Cancer at the East Lancashire Provincial meetings.

Donation of £25,000 to East Lancashire Craft Festival.

Donation to the Province holding the Mark Festival each year can be up to £10,000.

£100,000 over the period of the East Lancashire Mark Provincial “2021” Festival.

Donation to Cumberland & Westmorland Flood Appeal.

For the benefit of **YOUNG PEOPLE**, we have made donations to Chethams School of Music, Droylsden Air Cadets, East Lancashire County Scouts & Smithills School Brass Band.

Purchase of a Television for the Child Witness Room at Minshull Street Court.

In liaison with "Happy Days" Charity, introduced by the Mark Benevolent Fund, donation covering the cost of a Theatre Company Production of "Snow White" for Newfield School which specialises in Children & young people aged up to 19 years with learning difficulties.

In addition, 18 Children from Bury who suffer from Autism to visit "Tree Tops Trek".

IN THE COMMUNITY.

Contribution to Bury Cancer Centre, East Manchester Boat Community Project based at Portland Basin, Ashton-u-Lyne.

Five Defibrillators for East Lancashire Light Railway.

Sponsorship of the CD made to celebrate the 170th Anniversary of Boarshurst Band.

Refurbishment of the Medical Room, of Ashton United FC in the Community at Hurst Cross, Ashton-u-Lyne.

These & similar donations could not have been possible if it had not been for the generosity of the Brethren & Lodges in the Mark Province of East Lancashire.

Without the vision & foresight of RWBro. Canon Taylor, The Voluntary Support from the two Committees at Canon's Close & Prior's Close from the Chairmen to the Gardeners but mainly the support of the Brethren of the Mark / Royal Ark Mariner Lodges the East Lancashire Mark Benevolent Fund would not be able to **"MAKE A DIFFERENCE TO SO MANY"**.