

# PROVINCIAL NEWSLETTER

PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF MARK MASTER MASONS AND ROYAL ARK MARINERS OF DURHAM

## DURHAM

PROVINCIAL GRAND MASTER OF DURHAM  
RW Bro. Prof. Denovan Keith Wilson



### A Christmas Message from the Chaplaincy Team.

In these dark days that lead us to the turn of the year our hopes and thoughts turn naturally towards the light. I suppose that this year and the strange times in which we live, the lack of company, the lack of voices, the lack of touch that we all need to feel secure, all of the things which the Corona Virus has denied us, we look even more expectantly towards the end of the tunnel, the pinpoint of light that will grow as we move towards Christmas and the end of the dead days of December.

The early Church knew the same need for light and according to the early Christian writers the evening service on 21<sup>st</sup> December, the winter solstice, the shortest and darkest day of the year, began with the two words “O Oriens”. A literal translation of this short phrase is “O Dayspring” but it is more usually translated as “O Morning Star”. The words invite us to turn our backs on the darkness of winter and turn towards the Light, the Light foreshadowed in the words of Isaiah

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.” [Isaiah 9:2](#)

the great Light whom we will greet again in our Christmas worship with the words of St. John on our lips and in our hearts;-

“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

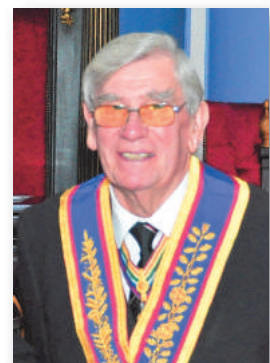
For Christmas is a celebration of the Light, the light made manifest in the Infant Jesus, the light who shines in our world and gives us hope when the darkness threatens to overwhelm us. So in these sombre days of lockdown, in the dying of the year, do not fear the darkness but turn towards the light, “the Light of Christ” foretold in those two short words “O Oriens” and made real again for us each year in the promise and reality of the Nativity of Christ at Christmas.

And may the members the Provincial Grand Lodge Chaplaincy team wish you and all whom you love a blessed Christmas full of light and hope for the future.

*O Morning Star,*

*splendour of light eternal and sun of righteousness:*

*Come and enlighten those who dwell in darkness. Amen*



Grand Chaplain, Keith Dinning



## End of an era for Staindrop Mark Lodge No. 1274

After almost 57 years of distinguished service Staindrop Lodge of Mark Master Masons has finally called time on its proceedings. The Lodge was consecrated on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1963 and its last meeting was held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Despite their best efforts to continue, the Lodge Members had decided to hand back the Lodge Warrant to the Provincial Grand Master, and the final Lodge Meeting was to have been held on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

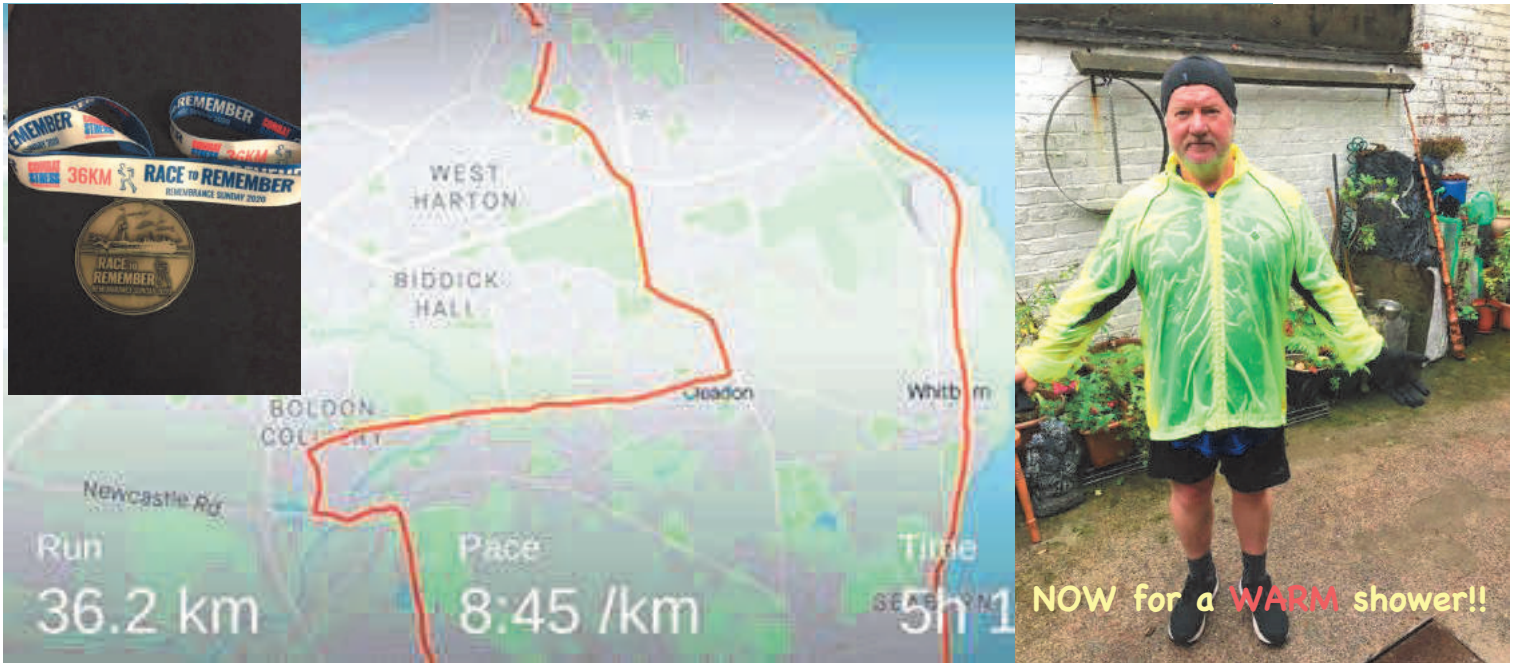
However, the coronavirus restrictions were to deliver the final blow to the Lodge, as it was prevented from holding any Lodge Meetings during 2020. On 6<sup>th</sup> October 2020 the Assistant PGM, W.Bro. Trevor Lynn, on behalf of the PGM, collected the Lodge Warrant from the Lodge Treasurer W.Bro. Sam Savage. All except two of the Lodge Members are to continue their Mark Masonry as members of other Mark Lodges in South West Durham.

Always popular with visitors, especially the August Meeting, Staindrop Mark situated in the picturesque village of Staindrop will be sadly missed by all.



The last Staindrop Mark Festive Board in November 2019

Congratulations to **Robert Summerson** for completing his challenge run and raising so much for charity.



"Last month for remembrance day I did a 36km charity run and raised **£200** for Combat Stress the UK's leading charity for veterans complex mental health. For over a century Combat Stress have been helping former servicemen and women deal with issues like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression. Today we provide specialist treatment and support for veterans from every service and conflict, focusing on those with complex mental health issues. It was wet but I got round, for myself it was a fitness challenge but was on behalf of a good cause."

If you would like to find out more about the charity, please visit the link below.

[https://combatstress.org.uk/?fbclid=IwAR0J6btsF\\_-65XfaCIZBE5Yiuusa-PMsT-v-ERyMQAHr0QkKSFITbnM5V\\_4](https://combatstress.org.uk/?fbclid=IwAR0J6btsF_-65XfaCIZBE5Yiuusa-PMsT-v-ERyMQAHr0QkKSFITbnM5V_4)



## ‘It’s Good to Talk’.

*Remember that you don’t have to suffer alone.*

***Our Provincial Almoner, Keith Liddell, is a registered member of the MBACP, and he invites you to contact him in confidence on his mobile no; 07986 567005 to offer our support.***

*" Pandemic Blues – A word might help to beat it."*

### OBITUARIES



- Bro. Raymond Harrison - DoB: 29/05/1947 - Mark 854 - ( St. Andrews) - Passed away: 12/11/2020
- W. Bro. David Benson, P.P.G.S.O. - DoB: 09/06/1957 - Mark 925 ( Moseley ) - Passed away - 20/11/2020
- W. Bro. John William Scott, P.G.St.B. P.P.G.M.O. - DoB: 24/02/1939 - Mark 981; 1492 - RAM 981- (Spennymoor ) - Passed away: 03/12/2020

## *Christmas Joy of Giving & Receiving...*

Following last month's issue of our Newsletter the latest Provincial initiative the 'Mark Mason's Seasonal Home Visits' was announced. At the time of writing this article numerous home visitations have been made. Those visited received 'Seasonal Greetings' in person with a gift and card conveying a message from all the Mark Master Masons of Durham Province.

The personalised visit to their home touched many of the recipients. There were memorable emotions shared including tears, laughter and reflection.

We have permission to share comments and photographs taken that display 'the joy of giving and receiving' and importantly being remembered by the family of Mark Master Masons. In return we have been requested to send to all the brethren their sincere appreciation.

### Denny & Dorothy Wilson.



2020 has been so challenging for many individuals and relationships. Unfortunately that is true for Denny and his wife Dorothy as she suffered a 'stroke' only a few months ago. It was feared that Dorothy may have lost her natural mobility. However, with the power of positivity and determination, Dorothy showed the progress she had made when she walked with a mobility frame to the door of her home with Denny to receive their Christmas gift and message from his brethren. The steps taken by Dorothy show that not all gifts have to come beautifully wrapped to be magical or amazing.

### Bill Swift and his wife Lynn.

Bill and his wife Lynn are both keeping well and safe. Bill enjoys his daily walks to keep body and soul together and Lynn states that she enjoys the peace when he's out on those walks. Joking apart both are coping well with current restrictions. They are looking forward to the return of some normality and meeting again with missed friends. They wish the very best of seasonal greetings to all readers.



### Larry Tinkler.

When we visited Larry at his home he was celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday. Larry, with great enthusiasm explained the wonders of communicating with, seeing and hearing old friends by using 'Zoom'. He stated that although he was ninety years young he was enjoying all these new learning opportunities. Judging by the delight he displayed it was evident he was enjoying his birthday and fully intended to celebrate Christmas. – 'Happy Christmas and best wishes to my friends'

### Mrs. Marion Scott

This visit was both difficult but necessary for a variety of reasons, since Marion was having the cope with the sudden loss of her husband John. There were tears, smiles and laughter as mixed emotions were being shared. Marion was delighted with the support given by so many but importantly John Nye and wished to thank everyone for their kindness.

### Mrs Eliane Smith (husband Geoff Smith)

Mrs Elaine Smith was delighted by the visit and seasonal gifts. Currently, Geoff is being cared for in hospital and Elaine was preparing to see him that afternoon. She wished to express her appreciation for the kind thoughts, support and seasonal wishes for them both.



**Frank & Margaret Rankin.**

At the time of calling Frank was continuing to support his wife Margaret with the palliative care she now requires. Frank gave enormous praise to the care workers who supported the family in delivering such comforting care to Margaret. He also thanked the brethren for their kindness and seasonal message.

**George Paylor**

Although George suffered the recent loss of his wife Pat he was being very positive about celebrating Christmas with their family at home. Pat would have been celebrating an important birthday in 2021 and celebrations are planned to go ahead. George continues to enjoy the longstanding friendship with Jim and the support of many brethren. He wished everyone a 'Merry Christmas'.



**Derek & Pam Warneford**

Both were delighted and pleasantly surprised to receive a visit and Christmas greetings from the Mark brethren of the Province. Derek is responding well to the treatment for medical issues and is looking forward to a quiet Christmas with close family. They commented how much they valued the kindness of the brethren and wished everyone a safe and happy Christmas.



**Sam Savage**

We found Sam in a relaxed mood at his home. He explained that he was keeping well and plans were in place for Christmas day lunch with his daughter and family. Sam continues to carry out his various masonic undertakings in his relaxed but business-like manner and keeping in touch with dispersed family and friends wishing everyone a happy and safe Christmas.



**Melvin and Pam Swailes**

Melvin and Pam especially have to conform to the requirements of self-isolation since the commencement of Covid-19 restrictions. However, you can see that they are keeping their spirits up and looking forward to a quiet but enjoyable Christmas. For all those who know Melvin well he will not miss the opportunity to enjoy drinking (in moderation) some of that Christmas spirit. Cheers!



**Barry Newton**

Barry Newton was taken by surprise by the visit to his home and appreciated the sentiments and gift from the Mark brethren. He looked well but did not want to tempt fate by saying that he was. He displayed his natural engaging manner and was very optimistic about the future, the availability of a vaccine to combat Covid allowing a safe return to our lodges. He wished to thank everyone concerned and to send seasonal greetings to all.



**Joe Bulmer**

Joe Bulmer greeted us at the door of his home with a beaming smile and welcome. The conversation revolved around coping with life's changes over the past and current year. These included his decision which he has already conveyed to stand down from a number of responsible positions in Freemasonry. However, he was keen to confirm that he was looking forward to the return and attending Lodge meetings in the future. In the



meantime plans were in place for Christmas day with nearby daughter and grandchildren. Joe wished everyone the very best of seasonal greetings.

**Alan & Jacky Stapleton**

Unfortunately, Alan has not enjoyed the best of health over recent years but has supported several lodges in the capacity of Tyler. When we visited his home he was secured by a locked front door which he willingly opened. We were greeted by the smell of the baking of Christmas Cakes from the oven which he proudly took responsibility for. Both he and his wife Jacky are managing their health and mobility issues and from the Christmas preparation and decorations intend to enjoy their Christmas and looking forward to a better year in 2021.



**John Gibson**

John was taken by the surprise visit to his home and delighted to receive the Christmas card and gifts from the members of the Mark Masons of Durham. John appeared spritely and in a positive mood. He wished everyone the best of seasonal greetings and for a better year in 2021.



**Mrs. Lillian Wiegold & Daughter Yvonne**

Currently, Peter Wiegold, who has cancer is being cared for by his wife and family at home. At the time of our visit Mrs Lillian Wiegold was being supported by her daughter Yvonne and were very appreciative of the personal visit and gifts. We have since spoken with both Peter who sounded in good spirits and Yvonne who appreciated all the contact from the brethren. She stated they intended to make the most of Christmas together.

**Les & Dorothy Dunn**

Les & Dorothy are already preparing to shake off 2020 in preparing to have new carpets fitted in their home in readiness for new furniture. They firstly mistook our visit as being the team to measure up for those carpets. Both are keeping well and safe sending their best wishes for an enjoyable Christmas to all.



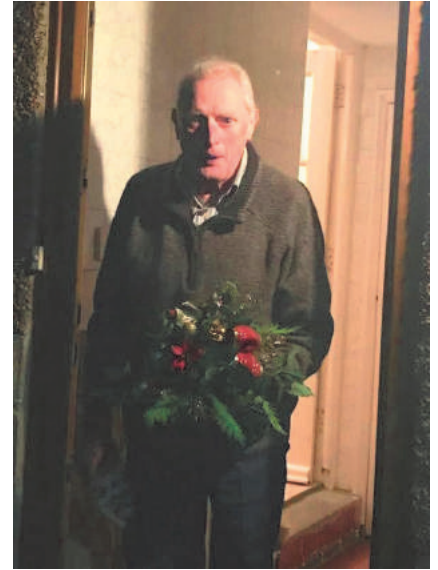


**Alf Morris**

Unfortunately, Alf was not at his home address at the time of our visit. However, enquiries with his neighbours confirmed that Alf is keeping well and quite mobile. Although he resides alone they keep a neighbourly watch out for him and would ensure they gave him the Christmas gift and message from the Mark brethren.

**John Brass**

John has continued his self-isolation since the commencement of the pandemic. He resides alone and confesses the isolation does wear him down at times. Thankfully his son, who lives locally does his weekly shop and freemason friends keep him up to date with lodge matters. John is keeping well and safe, sends his best wishes to all for a happy Christmas and healthy New Year



**Pamela Douglas**



Pamela is currently working long hours with Darlington Health Care & Social Services and has done since the commencement of the pandemic. She stated that although she has been kept busy that it is a blessing having the support of fellow workers rather than being alone at home. Pamela is keeping well and will be celebrating Christmas and four days off work with her daughter Kim and family. Pam also misses being at Shildon Masonic Hall serving brethren at the bar and like us all hopes it's not too long before we can meet once again but in the meantime thanked the brethren for the thoughts and gifts wishing everyone a Merry Christmas.

**Geoff & Sheila Mansfield.**

Although Geoff is not yet a Mark Mason both he and his music give so much meaning and enlightenment to our ceremonies and 'festive board' celebration. In the absence of family, we took the opportunity to extend seasonal greeting to both from the Mark Masons of Durham. Their delight being evident from the photograph taken - they wished everyone *'all very best for Christmas and New Year.'*



***Message from Keith Liddell & Trevor Lynn***



During this time of Covid restrictions we have all learnt how much we miss the physical presence of friends, colleagues and family. The hearing of a friendly voice by phone, or seeing someone on Zoom, a message by text, letter or email, are all important means of communication. All that said, the personal touch is difficult to beat as the images you have viewed demonstrate. So when we make our Christmas list of gifts for 2021 let us include the continuation of Mark Masons Seasonal Home Visits.



Brethren, the Mark Degree has long been considered by many to be *"The Friendly Degree"*. Perhaps a more suitable phrase to describe the Order is *"The Caring Degree"*. Within the Mark Province of Durham that description has never been more apt following the responses of Brethren in addressing trials and tribulations caused by the current pandemic. In particular we thank W.Bro. Michael Wilkinson and his partner Anita for their outstanding work in organising the Festive Visitations following the initiative announced in the last Newsletter.

Brethren, as we embrace the Festive Season and New Year in continued difficult circumstances, let us all continue to be vigilant and be ever mindful of the needs of others.