

The 2024 Annual Review



Celebrating the charities
in receipt of grants from the
Mark Benevolent Fund

Foreword

The Mark Benevolent Fund (M.B.F.) has carved out a reputation for disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Since the charity's sesquicentenary in 2018, grants averaging over £1.3 million a year have been disbursed to our members and their families in need as well as worthy causes benefiting the wider community. It is this outward looking aspect of the work of the M.B.F. that we particularly celebrate today with representatives in attendance from charitable organisations that have benefitted from grants in 2024.

We have been delighted to work closely with all the charities in receipt of grants, by providing funding for transport, medical equipment, buildings, furniture and many other items to complete or progress projects in a wide range of areas. The support provided to these organisations by the Mark Benevolent Fund has enabled each of them to achieve their goals more quickly than might otherwise have been the case.

The partnerships we have forged with over fifty new charitable organisations in 2024 will endure and underline the Mark Benevolent Fund's commitment to practice charity in its broadest sense.

FORTHCOMING FESTIVALS

- 2025 Oxfordshire
- 2026 Hampshire and Isle of Wight
- 2027 Warwickshire
- 2028 Somerset
- 2029 Durham
- 2030 Essex
- 2031 Northumberland
- 2032 Wiltshire
- 2033 North and East Yorkshire
- 2034 Dorset
- 2035 Derbyshire



Further particulars can be obtained from:

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

Fund Activity Summary 2024



In 2024, the Mark Benevolent Fund made **72** grants to local charities, Provinces, Districts and other worthy organisations and **8** grants to our own members and their families throughout England and Wales.

Secondary Emergency Services	£666,244
Disability Support Services	£404,870
Local Community Focus	£282,838
Health Care	£256,707
Youth Sector	£213,894
Humanitarian Aid	£192,230
Hospice and Cancer Care	£111,810
Our Own Members and their families	£26,902

TOTAL

£2,155,495

Blood Bike Groups—£750,000

The President of the Mark Benevolent Fund, R.W.Bro. Archie Torrance, has proudly announced a major donation of £750,000 to support Blood Bike Groups across England and Wales. This significant grant reflects the Fund's continued partnership and ongoing commitment to the Blood Bikes family.

During this **yearlong initiative**, all Blood Bike Groups in England and Wales are invited to submit a one-off application which can be used for capital expenditure such as a bike, car, equipment or facility improvements. **Total grants awarded to date: £377,345**

**Blood Bikes
Cumbria**
£25,000



**Freewheelers
EVBBs**
£25,000



**Midland
Freewheelers**
£19,187



**Derbyshire
Blood Bikes**
£24,945



**Nottinghamshire
Blood Bikes**
£25,000



**North West
Blood Bikes**
£20,314



**Devon
Freewheelers**
£25,000



**Lincolnshire
Emergency Blood
Bikes Service**
£25,000



SERV Kent
£17,564



Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby—£1.7 million



This significant amount, announced in August 2024, reflects the Mark Benevolent Fund’s ongoing commitment to fostering inclusion and providing opportunities for athletes with disabilities, with a particular focus on the next generation of wheelchair rugby players aiming for the 2028 Paralympic Games in Los Angeles. **Grants to be awarded from 2025.**

This **four-year initiative** is inviting all wheelchair rugby clubs, registered with ‘Great Britain Wheelchair Rugby (GBWR)’, to submit applications for grants which can be used for capital expenditure such as wheelchairs, sports kits, vehicles, and facility improvements.

**SERV Oxfordshire,
Bedfordshire and
Northamptonshire**
£16,750



**SERV Suffolk &
Cambridgeshire**
£18,046



SERV Wessex
£25,000



**Severn
Freewheelers**
£ 24,870



**South West
Blood Bikes**
£18,289



**Staffordshire
& Shropshire
Blood Bikes**
£17,380



**Warwickshire
& Solihull
Blood Bikes**
£25,000



**Yeovil
Freewheelers**
£25,000



Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

Ahead Of The Game Foundation—£34,404

This Foundation provides physical, mental and emotional support to those with a confirmed diagnosis of cancer, including their families and loved ones. The charity will benefit from an extensive renovation to the conservatory to create a full cancer nutrition cafe, with space to provide a range of sessions within the hub, addressing various needs such as grief workshops, coffee mornings, wig fitting, nutrition workshops, and face-to-face meetings with councillors and caregiver support groups.



All Saints Church, Hessele—£13,685

A new audio system is essential to the running of All Saints Church in Hessele, both for the many services held there each week, and for all the community events. The M.B.F. stepped in when the old system failed.

Alzheimer Café Isle of Wight—£36,544

The Alzheimer Café Isle of Wight welcome anyone affected by dementia, including individuals pre and post diagnosis, families, carers and healthcare professionals, to join for informal education about dementia. This grant ensured that the condemned lift could be replaced. Visitors now have full access to the whole building.



Aspire Oxford—£38,709

This housing and employment charity supports vulnerable and marginalised people and tackles complex social issues. Funds enabled their three-bedroom property to be repurposed and refurbished to provide accommodation for people experiencing homelessness.

ATC 176 (Hove) Squadron—£5,422

The Air Cadets Squadron can now purchase new laptop computers for exams and training courses which are accessed via the RAFAC website. Some cadets have been waiting to take their initial exams since February 2024.



Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

ATC 1349 (Woking) Squadron —£8,800

This branch of cadets wanted to develop a marching pipe and drum band. The Squadron provides training which will be beneficial to Cadets in civilian life and those who choose to progress through the Armed Services.



Bristol Children's Hospital—£100,805

This grant helped the Appeal reach its goal to fund the purchase of cutting-edge equipment for the Paediatric Neurosurgery department which will revolutionise the care of children with complex brain tumours, allowing surgeons to operate on lesions using a robot guided laser, instead of via open brain surgery.

Children's Heart Unit Fund (CHUF)—£103,035

CHUF supports children and families receiving cardiac treatment at the Children's Heart Unit in the Freeman Hospital, Newcastle, and cardiac patients at other hospitals in the north of England. The grant enabled the purchase of seven state-of-the-art echocardiogram machines providing medical teams with 3D high performance images, to increase diagnostic confidence and improve treatment plans for patients.



Children's Sailing Trust—£12,159



This charity offers accessible, affordable watersports activities and residential opportunities for children. A special hoist will allow a single caregiver to assist individuals with restricted mobility.

Diabetes UK—£5,000

The Trustees of the M.B.F. awarded £5,000 to the charity in memory of the late R.W.Bro.

John Norman George Howitt, P.G.S.W., Grand Treasurer (2013–2023), in recognition of his outstanding service to our Orders.



Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024



Dougie Mac—£7,184

This charity promotes holistic care for those with limited life expectancy, who have entered the palliative care phase. The M.B.F. award purchased ten pressure-relieving mattresses for the Adult Inpatient Unit.

EGO Performance Company Ltd—£63,180

A sound kit and lighting was purchased for their new premises in Coventry. The equipment will help create a professional theatre space for members and audiences to use and enjoy to full effect.

The logo for EGO consists of the letters 'EGO' in a white, bold, sans-serif font, centered on a dark purple square background.



Exmoor Search and Rescue—£16,000

Funds replaced damaged and tired waterproof jackets and trousers. These items will be issued to each fully operational team member.

Farringdon Detached FC—£68,490

This community club in Sunderland helps youngsters focus on improving healthy living, assists with mental health issues and offers a signpost for professional help. Funds went towards a fully accessible 9-seater bus.



Five Acre Wood School—£37,602



This school in Kent has over 850 pupils on their roll aged 2-19 years with profound, severe and complex needs. Funds were used to convert the cargo hold of an Airbus A319 into a 'sensory story sack' area.

Furzedown Project—£35,000

This activity centre and social hub is for people aged 50 and over in the London Borough of Wandsworth. The Project's mission is to increase people's sense of wellbeing and reduce social isolation. Funds were used to replace their minibus.

The logo for The Furze down Project features the text 'The Furze down Project' in a white, serif font, centered on a dark purple square background.

Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

Great North Air Ambulance Service (GNAAS)—£63,326

Funds were provided for the purchase of another vehicle to add to their fleet to help compensate for the loss of a helicopter. The vehicles play a pivotal role when the helicopters are unable to fly due to extreme weather conditions or breakdown.



Green Synergy Charity—£6,124

This small charity uses community gardening and therapeutic horticulture to support people in deprived areas of Lincolnshire. Founded in 2012, their mission is to inspire, enable and empower people to improve their mental and physical wellbeing, aiding them to socialise, learn and thrive, whilst managing the green spaces in environmentally responsible ways.



The charity received a cheque for £6,124

for the repair and replacement of gardening equipment damaged by vandalism. This donation assisted with the cost of repairing the main polytunnel and the children's garden, fence and pergola.



Harriet Davis Trust—£6,659

Harriet Davis suffered from a rare degenerative metabolic disease. The charity's objective is to enable disabled children, their families and carers to enjoy the benefits of seaside holidays in suitably adapted and equipped properties. Funding has enabled the purchase of Flexcare adult seating to support adult wheelchair users when out of their chair.

The Haven at Bridgewater—£49,287

The Haven is a new building providing accommodation for school children with special educational needs and disabilities, a hub for music tuition, staff meeting spaces and room for added wraparound care. Funding will provide a new classroom area including flooring, doors, windows and a boiler.



Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024



The Haven Lincolnshire—£37,552

Funds were given for a 'garden room' at the refuge. The Haven is a survivor-led organisation offering safe shared house accommodation to survivors of domestic abuse. One-to-one counselling and practical support is available to aid recovery and help victims move forward.

Heads Up—£8,463

This mental health and wellbeing charity supports clients with mental health challenges, dementia and learning difficulties. The grant purchased 'The Magic Table 360', an interactive light projector featuring a range of games and sensory experiences.



Helen Bamber Foundation—£45,180

The M.B.F. made a grant towards the first major Trauma Centre specialising in rehabilitation of survivors of trafficking and other severe abuse. The funding was for a kitchenette, accessible reception desk, and special glazing on doors and windows.

Herefordshire RDA—£21,810

The charity needed funding for the building and fitting out of a new equine therapy centre. The centre will offer existing and new service users modern accessible facilities, longer opening times, an expanded programme of activities, and long-term security. The M.B.F. purchased a fully accessible toilet and shower, arena mirrors for training purposes and mirrors in our mechanical horse room.



HospiceCare North Northumberland—£27,300



A grant was given to purchase a vehicle for use in their fundraising efforts across the county, to help move stock from their shops and to make deliveries to clients.

Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

The Incredible Design Company—£15,000

The M.B.F. supplied help with fit-out costs in their new premises after they were unexpectedly evicted at short notice, preserving the equipment purchased with a previous grant.



The Irene Taylor Trust—£500

This charity was established in memory of Irene Taylor, wife of the late Lord Chief Justice, Peter Taylor, and works with some of the most vulnerable and excluded individuals in our society, inspiring them through the creation of new music. Funding will be used for new equipment and musical instruments.

Kidney Cancer UK—£5,000

The M.B.F. Trustees awarded £5,000 to the charity in memory of the late R.W.Bro. John Norman George Howitt, P.G.S.W., Grand Treasurer (2013–2023), in recognition of his outstanding service to our Orders.



Lakelands Day Care Hospice—£44,583

This donation helped to fund the refurbishment of the kitchen at the Butland Complex in Corby, providing enhanced layout and more preparation space. A private room for counselling and meetings, and a bathroom area were remodelled and fitted-out. Lakelands Hospice is not supported by the NHS and does not receive any government funding. This donation has made a huge improvement to the provision for ongoing care and support for those most in need.



Lighthouse Community Hub Blyth—£30,000

The charity was awarded funding for a child poverty prevention program. They will convert a disused bungalow on the site of a local school into a Community Hub providing a wealth of help and support to enhance the lives of some of the most disadvantaged families in the region.



Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

Lincoln MS Centre—£2,770



The Lincoln MS Centre provides hyperbaric treatment for people with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), as well as other conditions and injuries. The M.B.F. replaced the front door system, allowing wheelchair users and those with walking difficulties to access the building.

London Air Ambulance—£100,000

The M.B.F. supported Metropolitan Grand Lodge's fundraising for London's Air Ambulance Charity 'Up Against Time' Appeal to help fund the purchase of two replacement state-of-the-art helicopters.



London Search & Rescue—£57,000



The charity needed funding for a dual-purpose 'Water Support & Team Transportation Vehicle'. This allows them to move various items of kit to searches that take place on many of London's waterways. Their new vehicle will also give the flexibility to transport up to 6 members of the team around to different locations in the search area.

Marion Centre—£31,346

The Mark Benevolent Fund provided physical training and recreational equipment for use by special needs students, who currently do not have access to appliances, assisting them physically and mentally.



Mark District of Romania—£72,050

For ongoing support to Ukrainian refugees.



Mark District of Spain—£25,000

An emergency grant for flood relief in Valencia.



Mayfield School—£4,270

This school cares for students with severe and profound learning needs across West Cumbria. Funding was made available for a large shed to enable the neat and accessible storage of equipment and to provide a small area of indoor workshop space.



Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

Minstead Trust—£17,057

This charity supports people with autism and learning disabilities. £7,057 was provided for the purchase of tools and items to help those with impairments, and a further emergency grant of £10,000 was given following a burglary and damage to their premises.



NICE Centre—£13,198



This charity works with adults and young people with neurological movement disorders and physical disabilities. The grant will be used to fit-out their new HUB Community space to enable further access to activities that meet physical, social and mental health needs for the benefit of many families and children.

North Kelsey Community Shop—£7,594

To provide equipment for a not-for-profit village shop selling convenience products. The shop will also act as a social hub in this remote Lincolnshire village, supporting residents without travel options and helping them to benefit from increased social interaction.



North West Air Ambulance—£52,573



Funds were granted for a replacement 'Critical Care Vehicle', imperative in saving lives throughout the Northwest. The new vehicle will be based at Barton Airbase, near Manchester.

PCrefurb—£15,150

This is an independent not-for-profit community group who needed funding to replace outdated IT equipment which the charity uses to teach clients how to use digital devices.



Princess Alice Hospice—£28,480

A new hybrid car was bought for the team to assist with home visits.

Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

PSDS—£81,000

A grant for fit-out costs was provided for their new Centre of Excellence in Reigate for families and professionals involved in supporting a child or young person with Down syndrome.



Raw Material—£20,078

New computers, software and speakers were bought, supporting young people from disadvantaged inner-city areas. This charity promotes education and training in the creative and expressive arts.



Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity—£24,894

This charity provides support for children with critical and complex health conditions. Twenty-five specialist seating systems (P Pods) were bought. These are essential for offering comfort and postural support.



St David's Hospice Care—£1,493

The charity covers South Wales and Monmouthshire. This grant was awarded for 20 bedside assessment kits.

St Lukes—£7,796

St Lukes, founded in 1945, is located in the Kearsney farming area, to the north of Durban, South Africa. Their mission is the special needs care of mentally and physically disabled children and adults in the community. Funding helped with repairs and modernisation.



SCCCC—£69,962

Sheffield Churches' Council for Community Care are working collectively with St Luke's Hospice on a project that intends to supply reliable transport for palliative patients to access St Luke's Day Centres.

4th Workington Scout Group—£7,660

Doors and windows will be replaced at their headquarters in Horsley. The existing wooden doors and windows were installed in the 1990's using secondhand goods from a former nightclub.



Grants to Worthy Causes in 2024

1st Nanpantan Scout Group—£21,007

Funding was given for a kitchen in their new building, a critical space, used for teaching life skills to members (160 attend each week) including food preparation, cooking, nutrition and food hygiene. It will also support other local community groups and residents who have shown interest in using the facility. This will generate a regular and secure income for the group.



ShelterBox—£50,000



Providing ongoing humanitarian relief for those affected and displaced by conflict.

Side by Side—£4,700

The Cycling Club will allow ten SEN/disabled young people to enjoy the physical wellbeing and social benefits that come from cycling. The grant will support 20 sessions with the project.



Special Olympics West Midlands Ski Group—£14,982



This is the largest Special Olympics Ski Group in the country. Currently 50 skiers (all with an intellectual disability) are training throughout the year. They are now able to buy new ski jackets, ski trousers and personalised helmet covers.

Sense—£6,010

This national charity has hubs throughout the UK. The M.B.F. have awarded the final funding required for a sensory room for children and adults with deafblindness and complex disabilities at the Sense Woodside Centre in Bristol.



Wildgoose Rural Training Centre—£68,285

Training, education and therapeutic opportunities in land-based subjects are offered at this site in Worcester. Activities and courses are designed for adults with disabilities and young people who find the challenges of schooling difficult. The grant will help transform the green polytunnel storage area into a barn with four new teaching spaces, an additional workshop, blacksmithing forge and tractor bay, plus the purchase of the building, a new concrete base, and installation of water and electrics.



Grants by Provinces and Districts to our own members and their families in 2024

Total

£263,046

Grants to Worthy Causes by Provinces in 2024

Berkshire
£13,350



Cornwall £9,500



Durham £16,630



Bristol £7,050



Cumberland & Westmorland
£29,131



Dyfed £4,480



Buckinghamshire
£1,000



East Anglia £18,557



Derbyshire £3,600



East Lancashire
£3,275



Channel Islands
£2,000



Devonshire £2,680



Cheshire £2,500



Dorset £3,750



Gloucestershire & Herefordshire
£19,000



Grants to Worthy Causes by Provinces in 2024

Essex £3,400



London £78,000



Northumberland
£3,968



Hampshire & Isle of Wight £2,000



Middlesex £43,000

*Provincial Grand Lodge
of Mark Master Masons
of Middlesex*



Nottinghamshire
£4,850



Hertfordshire £17,540



Monmouthshire
£5,000



South Wales
£8,000



Kent £7,484



**North & East
Yorkshire** £8,200



**Staffordshire &
Shropshire** £8,800



**Leicestershire &
Rutland** £20,200



North Wales £4,500



Surrey £15,470



Lincolnshire
£59,098



**Northampton,
Huntingdon &
Bedford** £4,390



Sussex £15,975



Grants to Worthy Causes by Provinces in 2024

Warwickshire

£1,993



West Lancashire

£27,693



West Yorkshire

£1,000



Worcestershire

£7,160



Total

£484,224

Grants to Worthy Causes by Districts in 2024

Brazil

£12,000



Germany

£3,530



Hong Kong

£9,000



Romania

£8,500



East Africa

£350



Gibraltar

£850



Jamaica & Cayman Islands

£11,496



Spain

£416



Total

£46,142

Combined grants by Provinces and Districts to Worthy Causes, our Members and their Families in 2024

TOTAL

£793,412

The Portal Jewel

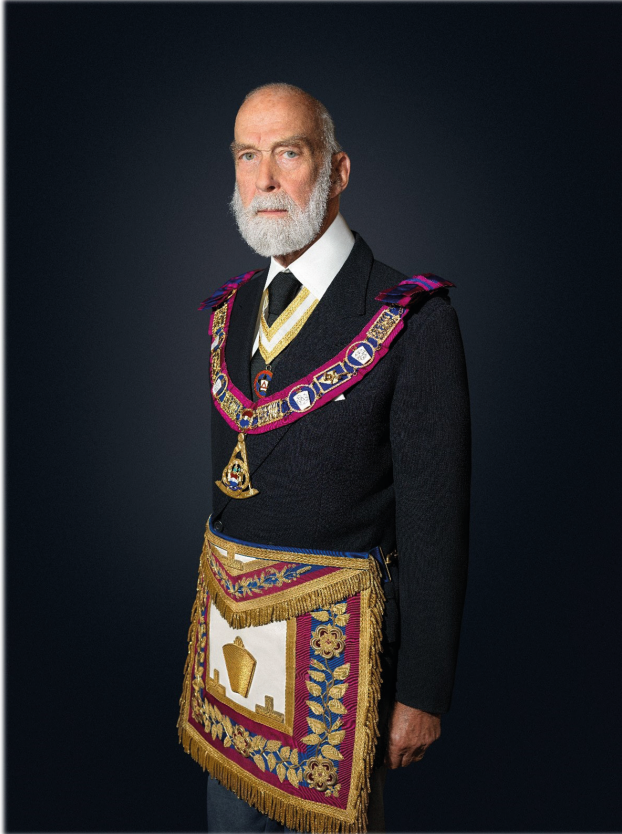
Reverend Canon George Raymond Portal, MA
Grand Master 1869–1873

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 M.B.F. 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.





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

Grand Master of the Grand Lodge
of Mark Master Masons

Grand President of the
Mark Benevolent Fund

FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY PORTRAIT

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

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