

Foundation.

The Down Masonic Widows Fund was founded in 1893 as the idea of a Doctor Thomas Cromie who was so ashamed of the poverty of some of his patients, who were widows of deceased brethren, that he decided to do something about it.

The objective of the fund was to afford assistance to deserving widows and families, including mothers and sisters of freemasons who have been members of a lodge in the Province of Down outside a six mile radius of Belfast. The inclusion of mothers and sisters is interesting and is there to cover the case of a Brother who does not marry but lives with his widowed mother or unmarried sister.

With regard to the education of school age children of deceased brethren, support should be pursued through the Boys' and Girls' Benefit Funds.

The Down Masonic Widows' Fund is a registered charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland and conforms to all the rules and regulations of this independent regulator of charities in the Province.

Applications

The Fund covers the Masonic Charity Districts of Banbridge, Bangor, Downpatrick, Newry and Newtownards. Within these districts there are 84 lodges with a total membership of 4000 brethren. We currently have 160 widows who benefit financially from being on the fund.

Assistance is by a grant to a Widow as the Committee may find best suited to the necessities of the applicant, is means tested and reviewed annually.

Applications should be completed by the Lodge in the first instance and these will then be forwarded to the District Charity Committee where they will be ratified and then sent to the Fund secretary for consideration by the Trustees.

Application forms can be downloaded from our web site or obtained from the secretary of the Fund on request. Please ensure up-to-date forms are used for all applications

*We encourage all Brethren to
make use of the Gift Aid system.*

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Bereavement Grant

When a Lodge member passes away the Almoner together with the Lodge Secretary should make application to the Treasurer of the Down Masonic Widows' Fund for the payment of a bereavement grant for the benefit of the deceased Brothers widow.

Widows do appreciate that the friends of her late husband want to help as much as they can during a difficult time for their family. A letter of request to the Fund Treasurer is all that is required.

The Almoner or visiting Brother should make discreet enquiries from relatives and friends to ascertain that the widow is in financial need, at least on a temporary basis. It may be the case that the widow has a temporary cash flow problem and does not have access to immediate funds to pay for the funeral tea until such times as the estate is settled which can sometimes be a matter of months. He should also confirm that the deceased Brother was the main bread winner of the family.

We would encourage Lodges to act speedily so that the widow receives the grant when perhaps she most needs it.

After a period of perhaps 6 to 8 weeks further contact should be made to see if the widow is coping and that she has cashed the cheque. This is a good opportunity for the Almoner to assess any further needs of the widow.

Officers: -

Patrons: -

M. W. The Grand Master of Ireland
R. W. Provincial Grand Master of Down
M. Ex. District Grand King of Down

President

R. W. Bro. Desmond H. Smyth.

Vice President

R. W. Bro. Ernest Woods.

Chairman

R. W. Bro. W. G. Ian Ritchie.

Vice Chairman

R. W. Bro. J. Alan Hanna.

Treasurer

R. W. Bro. Robert Winters.

Secretary

R. W. Bro. Noel W. Sufferin.

Trustees

R. W. Bro. J. Alan Hanna.
W. Bro. H. Edgar Kelly.
R. W. Bro. Douglas Thompson.
R. W. Bro. Noel W. Sufferin.
R. W. Bro. W. G. Ian Ritchie.
R. W. Bro. Desmond H. Smyth.
W. Bro. Eric J. Williamson.

Contact The Down Masonic Widows' Fund

Email:- admin@downwidows.org
Tel: M:- 07802 699061
Tel: H:- 02892 665306

By Post to: -

Noel W. Sufferin
Beagh Lodge
1 The Grange
Lisburn
BT28 3XX

For further information go to:-
www.downwidows.org

Points for the Almoner.

- Be aware of the aims, activities and Bands of our Fund.
- Have a basic knowledge of benefits available from the Government Agencies.
- Be sensitive and preserve confidentiality at all times.
- Maintain regular face-to-face contact with Lodge widows.
- Make immediate contact with the families of recently deceased brethren.
- Agree a time convenient to all parties and who will attend any meeting and discussion.
- Suggest to the widow that she has a friend or relative present when you visit with her.
- Always identify yourself and leave a contact card with your name and telephone number.
- Keep accurate records of all visits, payments and always keep copies of completed forms.
- Maintain a record of the names and contact details of brethren and widows.
- Ensure the information entered on forms is complete, verified and accurate.
- Ask to see widows proof of benefit entitlement forms which are issued in March each year.
- Ensure forms are fully signed & authorised by the Lodge and the District Charity Committee.
- Report at each Lodge meeting, while always preserving confidentiality.
- **Always act in accordance with the CCNI rules and regulations. Seek advice if unsure!**



The Down Masonic Widows Fund

Founded 1893



**Registered with
The Charity Commission
for Northern Ireland
NIC100079**