



## MIDDLESEX PROVINCE RELIEF FUND

*Helping those in Middlesex in time of need*

The events leading up to the formation of what subsequently became the Middlesex Province Relief Fund.

In the mid 50's the Chairman of the old Rock Building Society thought that his home in Stanmore would make a good retirement home and offered it to the then Mayor of Wembley, W.Bro. Sydney Newlands. The price was £26,500. Sydney did not have the money so in true political fashion he borrowed the money from the ratepayers of Wembley!!

So with the help of Brethren who worked for the Council, many of whom were members of Anselm Lodge, Wembley Eventide Home started. Over the years many other people joined them, not all were masons and indeed many were wives. By various means, fetes, legacies and in one case a large house and grounds just off Hanger Lane the loan was repaid and extensions to the original property were made which increased the size to an 80 bedded unit some of the residents in dormitories.

The trustees realised that they had to modernise the place but did not have the money or the energy to undertake such a large modernisation and so they approached R.W.Bro. Gordon Bourne to see if the Province could help. He together with V.W Bro. Ken Reed thought that the Province could raise the money to carry out the work and bring the Home up to modern standards and within the current legislation.

So in the late 80's the Trustees of the Home changed and planning permission obtained. The funds required came from an appeal and in 18 months £1,250,000 was raised, a further grant from the Grand Charity of £250,000 was given and the Grand Charity lent £500,000 free of interest to the Middlesex Province Retirement Fund as it was then named. The loan was put onto a deposit account and earned a lot more interest than it would have got today.

The Home was registered under the Industrial & Provident Act as a registered Charity and run by the Trustees appointed at an AGM, not all the Trustees are Masons.

I became a Trustee in 1990 as Treasurer just as the work was finishing and in 1995 Chairman. The size was slightly reduced to a 72 bedded unit (40 nursing care & 32 residential) about 90-95% were en-suite.

We had fetes, Christmas Fairs, concerts, bingo and many other events organised by the League of Friends. The 16 acres of grounds were kept immaculately, the cricket pitch was used for inter Provincial games. Monies raised went to the Support Fund which helped Residents whose funds were running out. Lodges sent donations to this Fund or the Entertainment Fund which we also used for gifts to the Residents at Christmas.

We continued to modify the remaining non en-suite bedrooms and when we sold the Home in 2002 I think there were only three more to do.

In 2000/2001 the then Government issued a directive that all new Homes should have bedrooms of 12 sq.meters and all Homes registered under the old regulation should alter their existing rooms within 5 years. It doesn't take long to realise that we would need a block of 8 rooms together to be able to make 6. Elderly people do not like change and to start moving 8 people to other rooms at the same time would not be easy. Our staffing numbers were based on the 72 rooms and if somebody died Matron knew that she had three weeks to clear, repaint and let that room.

The Trustees after various meetings decided it was time to call it a day and sell the Princess Alexandra Home as it was now known. We offered it to the RMBI who prevaricated for three or four months and then said that they would take it and all its assets and if it did not work then they would hand it back to us!

We knew from some of our Trustees that Jewish Care might be interested and they were approached and to cut a long story short the contract was signed on the 29<sup>th</sup> January 2002 and completion took place on the 31<sup>st</sup> January two days later. The total received was £2,250,000 and we gave back £100,000 to be used by Jewish Care to pay any shortfall in fees that might occur in any of our residents.

We interviewed various Bank advisors and settled for Barclays Private Banking. I am afraid they were not very successful in their choice of investment. After two to three years we moved to Coutts and they have been far more successful and our Fund is now in excess of £ 3,900,000.

Since the sale we have up to the 30th September 2011 given over £365,000 with a further £71,000 this year in Grants. They have gone to other charities, hospices, individuals requiring help, organisations such as the Scouts/Girl Guides, Youth clubs, purchased equipment, given bursaries and paid Christmas grants to widows of closed Lodges.

**Mike Foxwell**  
**Chairman of Trustees, MPRF**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2012**