

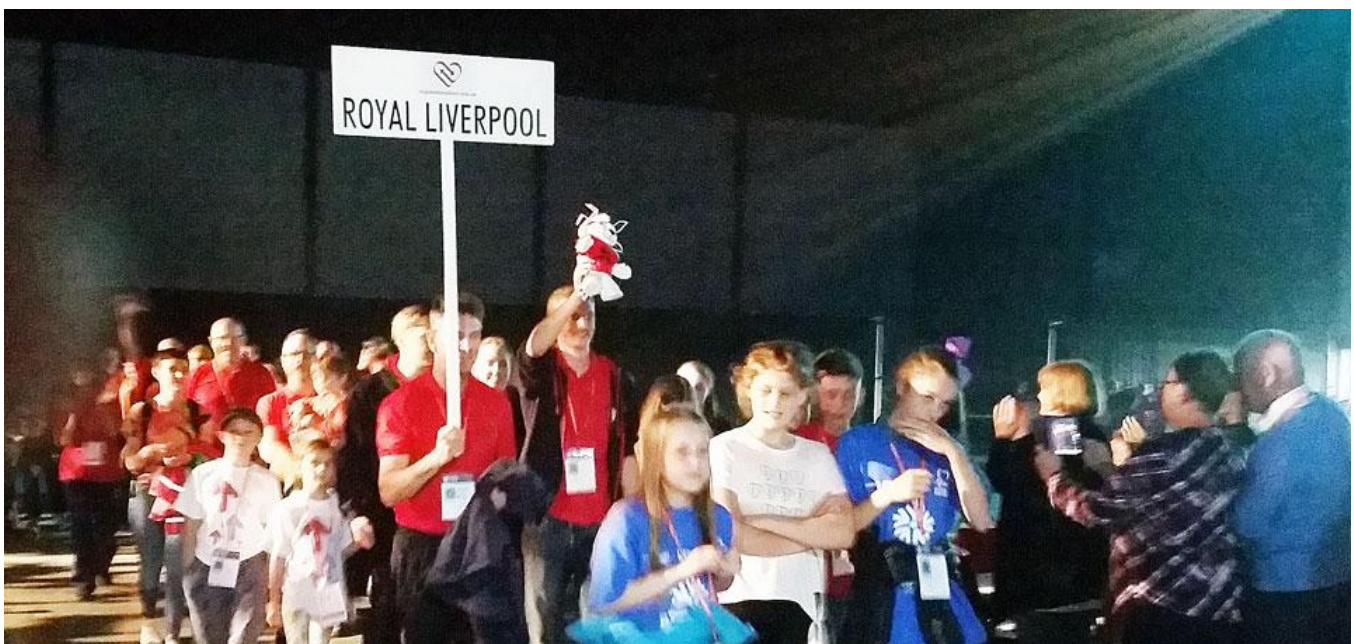
For 300 years Freemasons have been helping their local communities in many ways. The most commonly known has been by making donations to support the charity, organisation or individual. However, one of the most effective over the years has been by giving up their time to support the charity, organisation or individual.



The teams head for the opening ceremony.

The 2016 British Transplant Games which were held in Liverpool at the end of July are an example of Freemasons in West Lancashire continuing to support their community and the people from across the country taking part in the games.

The British Transplant Games are the flagship project of the charity 'Transplant Sport' and have been in existence for over 30 years when the first Transplant Olympics took place in Portsmouth in 1978. At that time, these games were an international event and included teams from France, Greece and the USA.



The opening ceremony.

Since these early beginnings the games have grown and are held every year in different cities throughout the UK, including Portsmouth, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Belfast, Medway, Sheffield, Bolton and Newcastle Gateshead.

The games aim to demonstrate the benefits of transplantation, encouraging transplant patients to regain fitness, whilst increasing public awareness of the need for more people to join the NHS Organ Donation Register and discuss their wishes with their families. They also seek to thank and celebrate donor families and the gift of life.



Competitors from Alder Hey Children's Hospital.

The West Lancashire Freemasons Charity was pleased to coordinate the selection of some 30 Masons from West Lancashire who volunteered to act as games ambassadors.

Jim Fallow, a West and East Lancashire Mason is a member and trustee of the Donor Families Support Group and he writes: "Following the conclusion of the very successful Transplant Games, can I on behalf of the Donor Family Network, thank all the volunteer Freemasons and their partners for the assistance that they gave to the smooth running of the games. At the Gala Dinner it was mentioned on several occasions that, without the volunteers, it would be impossible to run such an event. Favourable comments were also made about the cheerfulness, helpfulness and friendliness of them all.

After the games I spoke to Les Newman (St Helens and Prescott Group Charity Steward) who told me that all of the volunteers enjoyed the games and found them inspiring. I gave Les a number of Donor Family Network pin badges and for them to be distributed amongst the Masonic volunteers. I'm sure that those who assisted now have a better understanding of organ donation.



A proud winner.

As a trustee of the charity, along with my daughter Andrea, if any group or lodge would like a talk about the Network and Transplant Sport at a meeting, please contact me and if I can't do it, somebody will."

A few days after the games the WLFC also received a letter of thanks from the Assistant Mayor of Liverpool Councillor Wendy Simon, she wrote:

"This weekend has seen the City of Liverpool host the largest ever British Transplant Games with over 900 athletes and a further 1,400 accredited family network members participate in 23 different sports.

The event organisers and participants have been full of praise for the event describing it as not only the biggest but also the best they have been involved in.

Liverpool is now fully established physically as an event city, but it fills me with tremendous pride to hear the underlying feedback to the success of this year, it was the friendly nature and welcome from the people of Liverpool.

It has been drawn to my attention that you and your team of volunteers made a massive contribution towards this in not only giving up your time but really fully supporting the athletes, officials and organisers in delivering an outstanding games.

As the chair of the Liverpool Organising Committee please accept my heartfelt thanks.

Kind Regards,

Councillor Wendy Simon,

Assistant Mayor of Liverpool."



Les Newman.

Six day diary of the games, as written by Les Newman in his own words.

Monday 25 July.

1 pm, arrive at Wavertree Sports Ground for registration

Meet up with Barry Jameson (Assistant to the Provincial Grand Principals) and look at the tasks in hand which included 2,500 T-shirts that need sorting into sizes, water bottles to be laid out, 20,000 leaflets, 8,000 bus timetables and 3,600 safety pins for pinning the competitors numbers on T-shirts and an accreditation pass specific to each competitor, supporter and hospital to be put into the day sacks.

We split into two teams of four and started work!

Tuesday 26 July.

9 am continue yesterday's sorting.

The supporting hospitals have cardboard boxes which need completing: Guy's, Barts, Alder Hey, Addenbrooke's, and St Helier all have teams in the games. There is even a team of two from France!

Wednesday 27 July. Competitor team registration day

The volunteers managed the registration process throughout the day

Thursday 28 July.

4 pm, preparing for 6.30pm parade to the opening ceremony at the Arena and Convention Centre in Liverpool.

The volunteers acted as marshals on the parade route, directing competitors and guests to the muster point.

Barry Jameson distributed each hospital's name banner at the parade muster point.

6:30 pm, the parade starts. Transplant patients proudly march from the Maritime Museum, past a Royal Navy Vessel and the Pump House where the Concertina Band was in full swing. The parade travels over a bridge towards the ACC, where there are 2,000 people!

The master of ceremonies does the introductions and brings on the Liverpool Signing Choir, which was followed by a stunning display by a young gymnastic troupe.



Barry Jameson.

Finally, the teams enter the hall to standing ovations from all present. It was a tear-jerking half an hour!

Beth Tweddle, the renowned gymnast, was introduced to the audience and The British Transplant Games was declared officially open after Andrea Fallow lit the flame of the games. Andrea's dad Jim, a member and trustee of the Donor Families Support Group, may have been the proudest man in the room!

As I looked at the flame with a lump in my throat thinking about all the young children who need transplants.

Friday 29 July.

9:30 am. My job for today was to man the information and help desk in the Wavertree Sports Centre with Gemma Nichols from Liverpool City Council.

Gemma listened to the charitable work Freemasons do and is given a copy of Charitable Giving. We were both kept busy with inquiries all day.

My heart goes out to two little girls, one no older than five who is on a tube feed but still a competitor! She stood proudly with mum and her sister as her photograph is taken.

A young girl who has her face painted was so happy she has won a medal. She proudly showed me her medal – it was clear to me that it means a great deal to her.

Saturday 30 July.

9:30 am. At the Indoor Tennis Centre with Barry, where we help set up the table tennis. We were asked to referee some of the matches and thankfully Barry remembers all the rules! The more important games thankfully have a professional referee, so we then supervise supplying new balls and bottles of water!

As the day wears on, the litter and empty water bottles pile up, so we get bin bags and walk around picking up the litter and generally give advice and help.



A proud mum and her daughters.

Sunday 31 July.

9:30 am, Field and Track Events Day, at the scoreboard Barry is on the long jump.

The Liverpool Harriers laser finish line with linked photo-finish camera was very impressive. The scores and pictures were sent to an observation platform above the stand.

We got two copies of the results – one was put on a noticeboard, the second was taken to the official who presented the winners' medals.

Jim Fallow appears and kindly gives me 30 Donor Family Network lapel badges for all the Masonic volunteers.

The day is drawing to a close and I think of the patients and volunteers.

Volunteer Kathy was fighting cancer; another volunteer's son was in remission from cancer having been given a successful bone marrow transplant. The message of the games is clear – donate your organs and let others survive!

All the volunteers agree that they really enjoyed the games and found them inspiring and they plan to meet again soon for a Liverpool reunion.

Les Newman