

Provincial Grand Mentor

Report for Provincial Grand Lodge – November 2025

It gives me great pleasure to present this my final annual report as Provincial Grand Mentor on the activities and progress of the Provincial Mentoring Team across East Lancashire during the past year. It has been a year of renewed energy, improved structure, and closer collaboration as we continue to strengthen the culture of mentoring throughout our Province in both the Craft and the Royal Arch.

One of the most rewarding developments during my final year has been the continued growth of the East Lancashire Level Club (ELLC) and the mentoring team's role in supporting that progress.

Area Mentors have played a vital role in guiding and advising the ELLC area chairmen, offering support when needed and helping to build a firm foundation of cooperation and encouragement. More importantly, they have actively promoted the ELLC at Lodge level, ensuring that newly Initiated Brethren are made aware of the opportunities available to them beyond their mother Lodge.

It has been genuinely fantastic to see a wide range of events being organised by the ELLC—spanning everything from learning and development evenings to purely social gatherings. These events have not only provided light-hearted fun and engagement, but have also allowed Brethren to form strong friendships, which in turn has led to an increase in inter-Lodge visiting and improved retention.

The ELLC is proving to be a vital extension of the mentoring framework, and I am proud of the way the mentoring team and the ELLC have worked together to create a welcoming and vibrant environment for newer Masons across the Province.

A key area of focus this year has been on strengthening the link between Craft and Royal Arch Masonry, particularly in encouraging progression and ensuring that Exaltees receive the same level of support as Initiates.

Throughout the year, the mentoring team has actively promoted the Royal Arch as a natural and rewarding next step for Master Masons. Area Mentors and Lodge Mentors have been instrumental in opening up those conversations at Lodge level, ensuring that newer Brethren are made aware of the purpose and value of becoming a Royal Arch mason.

Behind the scenes, we have also been working hard on the development of a Royal Arch mentoring strategy that will emulate and align with the successful Craft mentoring structure. This includes the clear definition of Chapter Mentor roles and engagement of Royal Arch Area Mentors.

While there is still more to do, the foundations are now in place, and I am confident that this work will continue to flourish in the coming year, ensuring Royal Arch mentoring is consistent, meaningful, and contributes positively to retention and progression.

The Area Mentors have been outstanding this year, showing real dedication and visibility throughout the Province. The entire team has worked incredibly hard, attending a significant number of Initiation ceremonies, Lodge meetings, and area events, where their presence has made a genuine difference to both new and existing Brethren.

They have worked closely with the Area Membership Teams to ensure a seamless handover from Candidate to Initiate, providing continuity of support during the early stages of a Brother's journey. Their role has extended well beyond just attending meetings, they have offered guidance and encouragement to Lodge Mentors, ensuring that no one is left unsure of what mentoring should look like in practice.

Our Area Mentors have also helped circulate and promote valuable resources such as:

- ELLC information for newer Brethren
- Provincial Mentoring Booklets to aid structure
- The continued use and promotion of Solomon as a daily tool for personal Masonic learning

Their work has been central to maintaining mentoring momentum across all Areas, and their efforts have created stronger links between the Province and individual Lodges. I cannot thank them enough for their contribution and commitment.

Mentoring continues to play a crucial role in retaining and progressing our Brethren, and I'm proud to say that the Province of East Lancashire is leading the way in how mentoring is being delivered and embedded at Lodge level.

While retention will always be a challenge in any membership-based organisation, the consistent and structured approach taken by our mentoring team is clearly making a difference. The work being done across the Province is not just encouraging—it's proving that mentoring works, and works well.

We are now seeing tangible results:

- Year-on-year improvements in retention, particularly in the crucial first 12–24 months after Initiation.
- A noticeable increase in newer Brethren stepping into Lodge offices and getting involved earlier in their Masonic journey.
- Greater confidence among newer Masons, not only to stay active, but also to visit other Lodges, engage with the Royal Arch, and participate in social events.

These signs of progress are the direct result of the time, care and guidance provided by our Lodge Mentors, Area Mentors, and those who support the mentoring framework across the Province.

As I come to the end of my time as Provincial Grand Mentor, I want to take this opportunity to express my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has supported, worked alongside, and helped strengthen mentoring across the province.

This role has been a true privilege. It has allowed me to meet and collaborate with some of the most passionate, generous, and dedicated Brethren our Province has to offer. From Lodge Mentors guiding Initiates on their first steps, to Area Mentors going above and beyond to support and connect Lodges across their areas, the success of mentoring in East Lancashire is a direct result of your collective effort and enthusiasm.

I've always believed that "Freemasonry is to be enjoyed and never endured" and that "everyone is a mentor." These principles have guided my approach and will, I hope, continue to underpin the Province's mentoring culture in the years to come.

To my successor who will today take up the mantle next, I offer my full support and very best wishes. You are inheriting a role that is both rewarding and impactful. I have no doubt you will bring your own strengths and energy to it, and I am confident that the mentoring structure will continue to flourish under your guidance.

To the Province. Thank you for the trust, the encouragement, and for allowing me to contribute in this way. Though I may be stepping away from the role, I remain, as always, proud to serve our great Province.

Rob Ashton

Provincial Grand Mentor