Provincial Grand Membership Officer

Annual Report 2025 – 2026

As the end of my term draws near, it would be remiss to fail to recognise the sterling work of the entire Membership Team throughout the last year. Namely, the six respective Area Membership Officers (AMOs) (Chris Thompson – Northern, Richard Sykes – Eastern, Matt Sykes and previously Michael Porter – Southern, John Clayton – Western, Andrew Foster – City West and Sean Cullen – City East), their respective Deputies and Assistants along with Paul Wood who provides technical support and Dave McGurty AProvGM who serves as an escalation point and offers strategic support and advice to the membership function. Last but by no means least, a huge thanks to the many Hall Membership Officers and Lodge Membership Officers who help to convert our numerous prospective Candidates into Entered Apprentices.

Prior to the 2025 – 2026 Masonic year, we had made much use of Hall-level digital marketing campaigns; each of which culminated in a hosted white table event involving multiple Lodges. This programme of Provincial Digital Marketing Campaigns was generously funded via the Province and was mostly successful. However, at the start of the year, all Provinces were asked by UGLE to pause any digital led initiatives so that they wouldn't conflict with a new national programme styled as NDMC3 i.e. National Digital Marketing Campaign 3. Training and support materials for the campaign were made available to the Team by UGLE.

The NDMC3 is split into two parts (Part A and Part B), each of which run for several months. In fact we are still in the middle of Part B. The volumes of referrals fluctuate but generally as is a standard pattern for larger digital campaigns, they tend to tail off the longer it stays open. Part A was viewed by UGLE as something of a trial run and indeed feedback from our AMO Team on Part B thus far has been that the quality of prospective Candidates has increased, suggesting that the algorithms used for digital targeting have been improved upon between the 2 phases. As our Province already has such well-developed processes of its own for managing 'leads' and a well-established and experienced membership team, we were able to process leads very efficiently. This led to us having a truer conversion rate at the midway point for Part A of the campaign than that of many other Provinces. In effect, we were showing as having 'closed' a lead on UGLE's case management system by virtue of being able to quickly assess suitability, whilst other Provinces were still classing many as 'in progress'. This has been rectified for Part B, both with regard to our own approach and the aforementioned better targeting of prospective Candidates.

Our individual six Areas continue to run a series of local initiatives. Two examples being Western Area's ongoing digital targeting of prospective Candidates and City East's regular programme of open days at Manchester Hall. Please continue to support your respective Area teams with any local initiatives, whether through contributing to the funding of them (e.g. Western Area runs a monthly raffle to support their activity) or through giving up your own time to help out at events. More generally, Lodges are increasingly running their own white tables or simply inviting prospective Candidates to festive boards. This latter approach is particularly helpful in terms of keeping Candidates engaged whilst awaiting a slot in the calendar to come free to conduct their Initiation. Whilst on the subject of free slots in Lodges' respective calendars, it is worth reiterating that it is completely acceptable and well-established practice to Initiate more than one Candidate at the same ceremony. This has been reconfirmed by UGLE recently at one of the NDMC3 briefing events.

Whilst numbers nationally remain a challenge, there are hopeful signs that this is beginning to turnaround. Within Province, our reduction in numbers over the last year has been relatively modest. In fact the volumes of initiates is actually quite high, suggesting that retention is an area to particularly focus on. Lodges are advised to think of their respective Lodge Membership Officer, Mentor, Almoner and Royal Arch Officer as a single team, jointly responsible for looking after and focusing Candidates during that important first couple of years of membership.

Finally, I would like to offer best wishes to my successor as ProvGMO, John Clayton. He has been an invaluable source of support to me over the last 3 years, and I am confident that the membership function will thrive under his leadership.

Bill Spiby
Provincial Grand Membership Officer