

*From The Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master*



*Brethren and Companions welcome to our first ever Light Blue Club Special Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge here at Westhoughton Masonic Hall. This is a history making occasion and I'm sure that for many years to come we will all remember being here today.*

*Over the course of the last three seasons, we have held six Light Blue Club Seminars in various geographical locations across the Province. Many of you have attended and contributed to those Seminars. This Special Meeting of Provincial Grand Lodge, is designed to build on the success of those Seminars.*

*I'm most pleased, that so many of you have taken up my invitation to attend our Provincial Grand Lodge Meetings at the Winter Gardens in Blackpool in 2024 and 2025.*

*Both of those Meetings attracted over 1200 masons to attend. Our next Provincial Grand Lodge Meeting is in Blackpool on Friday 8th May 2026. Please put that date in your diary and come and take in the experience, bring your lodge friends, support those brethren who are being awarded Honours and let's see if we can push the attendance levels up even further.*

*The reason why I am focusing so much on newer masons like yourselves, is simple, you are undoubtedly the future of West Lancashire Freemasonry. In 5, 10, 15 and 20 years from now, you newer masons will be Group Secretaries, Group Vice Chairmen and Chairmen, Craft and Royal Arch Assistants, Deputy Provincial Grand Masters, Deputy Grand Superintendents and ultimately future Provincial Grand Masters and Grand Superintendents.*

*The key priority for The Grand Master, HRH the Duke of Kent, is the National Membership Challenge. This is so important as Freemasonry has existed as a force for good for over 300 years. We need to ensure that the organisation is still thriving in another three centuries from now.*

*Let me give you some quite concerning statistics. Our Province in terms of geography and membership is the largest outside of London. As recently as 2008, there were 12,500 West Lancashire masons. Today we are a little over 6,500 subscribing members.*

*You as our newer masons are key to bringing in future Prospects. Please simply tell your family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues about what we do and what we represent. You will know good men who would make good masons, invite them to join us and then support them through the process of their masonic experience.*

*Most of you will know that the Craft and the Royal Arch are One Organisation. We have many other separate Masonic Companion Orders. The Royal Arch or Chapter is not one of those, it is part of the Craft. By joining Royal Arch you will complete the story from where it was left when you took your Third Degree. Please remember you didn't join a lodge you joined freemasonry. Pure and antient freemasonry consists of your First, Second and Third Degrees including membership of the Royal Arch.*

*There will be a presentation later on our Agenda about the Royal Arch, please consider joining a chapter. There is now no fee to Supreme Grand Chapter in London and chapter subscriptions are usually much lower than those in your Craft Lodges.*

*Another key priority for us is community engagement. I know that many of you are involved in helping people within our local communities. Please keep up that excellent work. Your efforts will enhance our reputation and potentially attract new members.*

*I also ask that you engage yourselves with your lodges and chapters in encouraging and arranging social events. Such occasions are important in terms of retaining our current members, whilst also attracting potential new prospects. I often say that the reason I'm a freemason and in this position today, is because as a non-mason I attended a Ladies Evening, liked what I saw and subsequently joined. The rest as they say, is history.*

*I thank you all for your engagement both with freemasonry in West Lancashire and in particular our Light Blue Clubs. To have a Club in each of our 16 groups is an outstanding achievement. I thank all of those more long standing and established masons for their work in managing and supporting our clubs.*

*I have attended several Light Blue Club Social Events. I will certainly make it to more in the future. Please raise any potential dates that you would like me to come along to with your Group Chairmen, so that I can consider them along with other requests when I complete my Diary Planning.*

*Turning now to Ritual. Over the years I've seen masons who are accomplished at ritual and find it easy to learn and deliver. I've seen others who really have to work at it for long periods of time, but eventually get there. Other Brethren no matter how hard they try, are unable to do it. I have seen too many find themselves in a minor Office of a lodge or a chapter, realise what lies ahead and then regularly miss meetings or resign. I don't want any of you or your peers who are not here with us today to find yourself in that situation – ask the senior Brethren in your lodge to help you with your ritual, they will be happy to do that.*

*There are also other non-ceremonial Offices that you can be appointed to and assist your lodges and chapters such as Assistant Secretary, Secretary, Almoner, Charity Steward and Social Events Organiser to name but a few. I also fully accept that modern life is very demanding for many in respect of family and work commitments and responsibilities, both of which are far more important than our masonic careers. From my personal perspective, I am content that you will attend your lodges and chapters when you are able to do so and enjoy yourselves. Enjoyment and fun is key to what we are all about.*

*Brethren and Companions if you want to ask me any questions about the Province or The United Grand Lodge of England today or on any other occasion when you are with me, please come and speak to me. If you have any suggestions to improve the Province please make your Group Chairman aware. He can send any ideas to our Provincial Grand Secretary Peter Taylor, and I can assure you they will be looked at, and you will be given a response.*

*To conclude, thanks again for your attendance today, I trust that you will find it useful. Please keep enjoying your Craft and Royal Arch Freemasonry and may the red rose continue to bloom!*



Mark Francis Matthews,  
Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master