



Installation meeting of The Old Rectory Lodge of Mark Master Masons No 1398

Thursday 5th February 2026, at Caversham Masonic Centre, the Old Rectory Mark Lodge No. 1398 gathered in excellent numbers for one of the most significant evenings in its calendar: the Installation Ceremony of W Bro Matt Coward.

The meeting was honoured by the presence of VW Bro Jim Payen, P.G.J.D., attending as the Visiting Executive.



He was accompanied by a strong delegation of Provincial Acting Officers and guests, more than twenty in total, whose presence added both colour and gravitas to the proceedings. Their arrival created a palpable sense of occasion, and the brethren of Old Rectory Lodge were visibly proud to welcome such distinguished company.



Once the lodge was opened and the formalities began, the atmosphere shifted into one of focused anticipation. The Installation of a new Worshipful Master is always a moment of significance, but this evening carried an extra sense of celebration. W Bro Pat Brown, who had served the lodge with dedication and good humour throughout his year, rose to perform the ceremony. His delivery was nothing short of outstanding. With precision, dignity, and a clear affection for the brother he was installing, he placed W Bro Matt Coward into the Chair of Old Rectory Mark Lodge No. 1398. The Brethren looked on with admiration as the ritual unfolded flawlessly, a testament to Pat's preparation and commitment.



Once installed, the new Worshipful Master took control of the lodge with confidence and composure. He proceeded to appoint and invest his officers for the coming year, each brother stepping forward with pride as their new roles were confirmed. The sense of teamwork and continuity was unmistakable; Old Rectory Lodge has long been known for its strong internal bonds, and this evening reaffirmed that reputation.

During the remaining business of the meeting, the lodge received particularly pleasing news: it would soon have the privilege of receiving the Travelling Keystone from Berks and Oxen Installed Mark Masters Lodge. Even more exciting was the responsibility of passing it onward to Jersey Mark Masters Lodge later in the year. The announcement was met with enthusiasm, and several brethren exchanged delighted glances at the prospect of such a meaningful exchange of fraternal goodwill.

With the business concluded, the lodge was closed in ample form, and the brethren prepared to make their way to the Festive Board. The rain had not relented, but spirits were high as everyone crossed into the refurbished Valley Suite next door. The transformation of the room was immediately noticeable: fresh décor, warm lighting, and a welcoming layout that made the evening meal feel like a true celebration. A beautifully prepared beef carvery awaited, and the brethren wasted no time in enjoying the hearty fare and lively conversation.

As plates were cleared and glasses refilled, a raffle was held, raising over £100 for BEMBA—a generous result that reflected the goodwill of the evening. Laughter and conversation filled the room, the kind of easy camaraderie that defines the best Masonic gatherings.



Toward the end of the Festive Board, the newly appointed Immediate Past Master, W Bro Pat Brown, rose to deliver a heartfelt speech. His words were warm, sincere, and touched with humour, expressing his pride in the lodge and his confidence in the new Worshipful Master. Pat spoke of the journey they had shared, the challenges overcome, and the bright future ahead.

W Bro Matt responded with equal sincerity. He expressed how honoured he felt to sit in the Chair of Old Rectory Lodge, acknowledging the hard work of the team over recent years and his determination to continue that momentum. Matt spoke of his excitement for the year ahead, particularly the opportunity to represent the lodge on

his visits and the special moment he anticipated in December when he would hand the Travelling Keystone to Jersey Mark Lodge. His words resonated with genuine enthusiasm and commitment.

As the evening drew to a close, W Bro Steve Clark rose to give the toast to the visitors, thanking them warmly for their support and their presence on such an important night. The Tyler then delivered his traditional toast, bringing the formalities to a dignified conclusion.

One by one, the brethren gathered their coats, braced themselves for the rain, and stepped out into the night. Despite the weather, there was a shared sense of satisfaction and fellowship. It had been a wonderful evening—one that would be remembered fondly within the history of Old Rectory Mark Lodge No. 1398.

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