

## Mark Masonry in Romania

My story begins in 1995 when I joined a small group of freemasons who were interested in the fledgling Internet and wished to investigate the possibility of forming a Masonic Lodge to develop the use of the Internet in Masonry. By January 1998 we had grown to 52 Founders and Internet Lodge 9659 was consecrated in the Province of East Lancashire on the 29<sup>th</sup> of that month.

Fast forward to May 2012 and the lodge had grown to 299 members worldwide. As a lodge we visited Malta (<http://internet.lodge.org.uk/index.php/visits/91-activities/251-maltavisit2012>) and there met for the first time 11 of our members from Romania who invited us to visit their country the following year.

So May 2013 saw us visit Romania (<http://internet.lodge.org.uk/index.php/visits/91-activities/263-romania-may-2013>) a country emerging from the darkness of an oppressive dictatorship where Freemasonry was similarly emerging from darkness. Here we met many more Romanian Freemasons who later joined our lodge and firm International friendships were established.

Jump again to 2015. Internet Lodge now had 403 members (Currently 481). A group of its members who were Mark Masons harboured the idea of creating a Mark Internet Lodge. They were encouraged by the then Mark Provincial Grand Master of the Province of Monmouthshire and were driven by a small number of very determined Mark Masons from that area. The result was that in June 2016 Mark Internet Lodge 1975 was consecrated at Mark Masons Hall (<http://www.themarkinternetlodge.online/What-is-it.asp>).

In November 2016 5 Romanian Freemasons attended a meeting of Mark Internet Lodge in South Wales and were advanced into Mark Masonry in Mark Internet Lodge. They were the pioneers of Mark Masonry in Romania

In two consecutive days in July 2017 Mark Internet Lodge was opened by dispensation in Bucharest, Romania. On the first day 32 Romanians were advanced into Mark Masonry and on the second day A further 30 (including the Craft Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge of Romania) were also advanced. It had been my intention to attend these meetings but family illness meant a late cancellation. I was however admitted as a joining member at the first meeting.

In November 2017 Mark Internet Lodge again travelled to Romania and another 72 brethren were advanced into the lodge, making 134 in total.

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 2018 I did travel with other members to Bucharest in dreadful weather conditions.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> March there were two ceremonies in Mark Internet Lodge, In the first a total of 42 Romanians were advanced into the lodge. There were 7 Mark Provincial Grand Masters present. This was the first multiple advancement that I had seen and I was very impressed by the way it was carried out will all the candidates formed into a phalanx repeating their obligation. They were all made to feel part of the ceremony and of Mark Masonry. Those below the rank of a Mark Installed Master were then requested to leave the lodge with the exception of the Craft Grand Master of Romania and his Grand Chancellor. Then in a ceremony I have not witnessed before they were entrusted with the secrets of a Mark Master. Lodge was then closed and we retired for the Festive Board.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2018 we were honoured by the presence of RWBro John Herbert Prizeman Deputy Grand Master and a Grand Lodge deputation. A meeting of The Grand Lodge of Mark Master Masons of England and Wales and its Districts and Lodges Overseas was opened by RWBro Prizeman at 11:00 a.m.

This was the consecration of the Alexandru Vaida-Voevod Lodge of Mark Master Masons, the first Mark Masons Lodge in Romania. There were over 200 present. It was a remarkable ceremony with 50+ founders present all from Romania. This was followed by The Installation Meeting of the new Lodge. W.Bro Florin Birlea was the first Master of the Lodge and his Acting IPM was Wbro Radu Balanescu (The Romanian Grand Master)

Before the end of proceedings the Deputy bestowed upon WBro Radu Balanescu the rank of Past Grand Junior warden.

We retired to the Festive Board where the wine flowed freely along with the local fire water.

After a suitable period of rest we were treated in the evening to a Gala dinner with music and entertainment. The first such entertainment was provided by a group of young children who sang and danced for us. We were later informed

that they were from the local orphanage. This obviously touched Mark Masonic feelings and it was soon announced that the MBF would donate £10,000 to the orphanage. A great weekend.

And for the future?

A second Romanian Mark Lodge is to be consecrated in Mark Masons' Hall in London on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2018 and a third in Constanta Romania on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2018. The formation of a District in Romania will then follow.



Websites

Craft <http://www.internet.lodge.org.uk>  
Mark <http://www.themarkinternetlodge.online/>