

## The Founders Toast - May 6th. 1976.

Tonight it is my privilege to maintain one of our traditions by presenting within the framework of this toast to our founders, a short discourse upon some aspect of the history of the Humber Lodge which may be of some interest to our Brethren - it rather like an annual Humber Prestonian Lecture, although I assure you that it's not in my capacity as Lecture Master that I address you, but simply by invitation of the Worshipful Master.

And so tonight we celebrate the 149th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Humber Lodge, and we honour especially as our founders three men who by their zeal and generosity made this event possible: Bro. Wm. Crow, Bro. Thomas Feetam, and Bro. Joseph Eglin. Perhaps the younger members of the Lodge, and any visitors present who may not be familiar with our history, may be a little confused by dates when they learn that our Warrant of Constitution, which is the instrument by which we practice our Freemasonry, although first issued in 1756, was later granted in 1775 to Lodge No. 53, which was of course the first number of the Humber Lodge, and yet we pay special tribute to Bro. Crow, Bro. Feetam and Bro. Eglin as our founders for their work in making possible the erection of our Lodge building in Anne Street some fifty years later.

But we honour these three as our founders for very special reasons. Much has been written and spoken about them, a record of achievements, a history of their membership and eloquent tribute to their work for the Humber Lodge has been voiced at this our May meeting for many years past: I certainly could add little to it, and assuredly could not improve upon what has been said before, and so tonight I'm going to talk about some of the earlier founders of the Lodge - if that isn't a contradiction in terms - so that they may not be forgotten on this our founders night, and perhaps also because a brief word or two about our early history might help to enlighten some of our younger members. How then did the Humber Lodge come into being? Let us go back briefly - very briefly to the beginning.

In 1717 the first Grand Lodge was formed when four London Lodges joined together into an association as a centre of Masonic union and harmony. Other Lodges soon joined, progress was rapid, and in the next 20 to 30 years, a large body of "English Masonry owed allegiance to the new Grand Lodge of England. Almost inevitably, however, in the early days of unsophisticated communications, there was not complete unanimity between Masons, and there were some who were concerned at the weakness of the administration of the new ruling body, and certain fundamental alterations to the ritual which had been made following a recent exposure, and in 1751 these dissidents, as some historians choose to call them, influenced strongly by a young Irishman, Lawrence Dermott, whose signature appears on our Warrant - formed a rival Grand Lodge known as the Ancient Grand Lodge - Ancient because they preferred to adhere to the Ancient Constitutions, and inevitably the original Grand Lodge became known as the Moderns because of their new approach to Masonry. And so from 1751 to 1813 when they were finally re-united, these two Grand Lodges, usually simply known as the Ancients and the Moderns, worked in complete opposition to each other, each with their own Constitutions, each issuing Warrants to new Lodges, refusing to have anything to do with each other, and strictly forbidding fraternal visits to Lodges of the opposite persuasion.

Thus it was in this atmosphere of bitter rivalry, in 1759 the Moderns constituted the first Lodge in Hull, No. 252 on their roll, and in the same year, in less than a month in fact, the Ancients issued their first Warrant to Hull, No. 78 on their roll. I won't go into any detail of the history of these first two Lodges although we do have in our possession some extremely interesting and very valuable records of the Ancients Lodge No. 78: it is sufficient to say that neither of these two lodges lasted very long. The Moderns

granted their second Warrant to Lodge No 267 in 1761 but again it existed for only a few years. In 1781 the Rodney Lodge and in 1783 the Minerva Lodge came into being, again both Moderns Lodges, and both were in existence in 1809 when ten citizens of Hull sent a petition to the Grand Master of the Ancients, His Grace the Duke of Atholl, asking for a Warrant. Thus the scene is set for this important event in 1809. Apart from the Rodney and the Minerva, the only Lodges operating in Hull at that time were two Military Lodges attached to the 2nd Hoyal Lancashire and Cumberland Regiments of Militia, Nos. 120 and 215 on the roll of the Ancients. It is clear from the petition or this new Warrant that the applicants were members of the two Military Lodges then stationed in the town, and as there was no other Ancients Lodge in Hull then certainly the petitioners must have been initiated and raised in those Lodges. Certainly the application was supported in writing by the Masters of those Lodges, and the Commanding Officer of the Garrison.

Would you not think then that these few good men of Hull might have some claim to be considered amongst the founders of the Humber Lodge. Let me tell you who they were.

Thomas Larard, Watchmaker, Market Place.

Denton Northgraves, Watch maker, Silver Street.

Thomas Brown, Publican, Wincolmliee.

Joseph Levy, Watchmaker, Blanket Street.

Thomas Johnson, Stationer. Market Place.

Samuel Abrams, Jeweller, Kingston Court.

Thomas West, Merchant, French's Gardens.

Israel Shacklock, Shoemaker, Dock Bridge.

Andrew MacLaren, Publican, Grimsby Lane.

George Larkin.

Let me quote one paragraph from the petition:-

"As it is uncertain how soon the two Lodges to which we are at present members of may be removed from Hull, and unless we get a Lodge established in the town before the two regiments are called away, we shall be totally deprived of the benefits arising from the Ancient Order of Freemasonry; especially as we denied hitherto the Modern Masons admittance amongst us, and we must naturally expect they in turn will prohibit any of us visiting them. We therefore humbly crave that if it meets your Graces' approbation to grant us a Warrant, and that it may please your Grace to indulge us with one soon as it may be convenient to your Grace to order the same,"

We are in duty bound,

Your Graces' most humble petitioners.

Across the margin of the petition is written "Let the petitioners have the Warrant No .53 lately held at Liverpool, to be transferred to them February 24th 1809.

(signed) Thomas Harper, Deputy Grand Master.

By such a stroke of the pen Brethren, was history made, and the old Liverpool Lodge, The Ancients Knights Templar, No. 53 was legally transferred, by name and by number to continue its existence at the Fleece Inn in the Market Place at Hull. We know nothing of the men to whom our warrant was first issued in 1756, we know little of those to whom it was confirmed in 1775 except that

certainly it prospered, and in fact under date Dec 22 1804, the W.M. of the Lodge in a letter to Grand Lodge applying for two certificates incidentally states:

"I have the honour and pleasure of announcing to you that these two make twenty-seven initiations since I have had the honour of presiding in Lodge No. 53, being only the last six months"

Looks as though they had a steady production line going in 1804, but although we know little about anyone who may be considered as 'founders' prior to 1809, we certainly know something of the 10 good men and true to whom the Warrant was transferred in that year, and thus when we honour as our 'founders' the three distinguished Masons whose names are associated with this celebration, we should also remember with some gratitude, three watchmakers, a jeweller, a shoemaker and a stationer, two publicans and a handful of the Kings' Men who were determined to preserve in this town the Ancient Freemasonry they had learnt to enjoy as members of the two Military Lodges. Their action has resulted directly in our being here tonight 167 years later to honour our Founders, and to celebrate the events which followed.

Having talked a little about the Founders, what of the ceremony of laying of the foundation stone which we also celebrate tonight? We have amongst our records a book, hand written, giving a complete description of the whole procedure, and on the flyleaf there is a note of explanation written by Dr. John Pearson Bell, P.M. of the Humber Lodge, one time Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Yorkshire N. & E., which says;

"This book contains a full and clearly written statement of the ceremony used at the laying of a foundation stone of a Masonic Building, and was evidently written specially for that of the Humber Lodge No. 57. Osborne St, Hull which was laid down on the 7th May 1827 by the late Robert Mackenzie Beverley Esq., Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Yorks. N. & E."

The ceremonial was extremely involved and very elaborate, it was held in public, everyone wore full regalia and it was all carried out with tremendous pomp and ceremony, and colour and enthusiasm, which was so popular in the early part of the nineteenth century. Just to capture the mood of almost 150 years ago, let me read just a little of the instructions for the ceremony for you,

"The procession is formed. The musicians playing a solemn air: no common lively tune is to be heard: but something expressive of solemn jubilation, as in great Anthems, or a chant which might last during the procession. Indeed nothing is so proper as this sort of Music.

Arrived at the place fixed for the building, the whole company stops, and forms itself into a square round the foundation stone. The canopy of the Grand Master is placed east of the stone. The Grand Master says:-

Men, Women and Children, here assembled today to behold this ceremony, know all of you this day that we be lawful Masons true to the laws of our country, and established of old with peace and honour in most countries, to do good to our Brethren, to build great buildings, and to fear God who is the Great Architect of all things. Unless our Craft was good, and our calling honourable we should not have lasted so many centuries, nor should have had so many illustrious Brothers in our Order glad to promote our laws, and further our interests. Today we are here assembled in the face of you all to build a house for Masonry, which we pray God may prosper if it seem good to Him, that it may become a house for good men and good deeds, to promote harmony and brotherly love throughout the world till the world itself shall end"

Upon the foundation stone laid that day, May 7th 1827, the superstructure of the number Lodge was raised, which by the sincerity of its members, has I believe, ever remained honourable to the builders. Bro. Crow, Bro. Feetam and Bro. Eglin who contributed

so much in terms of energy, foresight, service and personal generosity would rest content I think in the knowledge that in 1976 the Old Lodge was celebrating the 149th anniversary of the event, with a fine record behind it, and a future as secure and as assured as at any time in the past.

Times have changed, the ravages of war have deprived us of the building, but the spirit of freemasonry remains constant, and as we look forward in the not too distant future to celebrations of an earlier foundation, it helps to maintain a proper perspective by recalling to mind the early struggles for survival of our founders, whose devotion to the principles of Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth have set the scene for our present enjoyment.

It is not sufficient in a day and age when the moral values of the principles which we hold dear and which motivated our founders, have changed, and are still changing - that we should forget the past and look only to the future. It is on the strength of what has gone before that Freemasonry is built - so it has been since time immortal - and it is right and proper that on this day every year we should take stock of ourselves and our Lodge, and remember with gratitude all of our predecessors who have contributed to the prosperity of the Humber Lodge - determined to maintain our traditions in the highest possible traditions - the only ones acceptable amongst us - and I ask you therefore Brethren to pause for a moment in our celebrations, and to think on these things.

Worshipful Brethren and Brethren be pleased to stand, and in darkness and in silence to honour this most noble toast,

Bro. Lt. Wm. Crow, R.N.

Bro. Thomas Feetam

Bro. Joseph Eglin,

And all our Founders,