

## **The Founders Toast – 1990**

**Presented by W. Bro. W. Downing.**

Tonight we celebrate the 163<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Humber Lodge building in Anne Street, a building which stood for 114 years and in the toast connect with this celebration we honour as our founders three worthy past masters of our Lodge : Lt. Wm. Crowe, Thomas Feetham and Joseph Eglin.

This is our tradition. This is the established practice and custom of the Humber Lodge and tonight I am honoured to have been invited to propose this toast.

It may seem unusual that we celebrate the laying of the foundation stone of a building which has long since disappeared and the fact that Bros Crowe, Feetham and Eglin were not our founders at all may strike you as being something of a contradiction of terms.

The three illustrious brethren whose generosity and enthusiasm reversed the ailing fortunes of the Humber Lodge between 1824 and 1827 and thus made possible the laying of the foundation stone of the lodge building in Anne Street which anniversary we so proudly and sincerely celebrate tonight 163 years on. This celebration at our May meeting provides us with a unique opportunity to look back with pride, to remind ourselves of our heritage, to consider albeit briefly the work and dedication of so many freemasons who preceded us as members of our lodge, all of whom contributed greatly to the establishment we enjoy today. To remind ourselves to maintain and indeed strengthen our resolve to uphold the standards set for us. The proceedings tonight enable the younger members of our lodge to learn something of its history in an atmosphere suitable to the occasion.

Let us go back very briefly to the beginning, to set the scene and recall something of our history which hopefully will remind us of what we owe to our founders the memory of whom has inspired the members of this lodge for so many generations.

The early history of the lodge is fairly well known and documented. Our warrant was first issued to a lodge in Liverpool by the Grand Master of the Ancients on the 19th May 1756, some 234 years ago. After some years the warrant became dormant and in 1775 it was re issued and confirmed bearing the same number 53 to a lodge which became known as the Ancient Knights Templar lodge which held its meeting in Strand St. Liverpool. For many years this lodge was prosperous, so much so that in 1804 the Master in communication to the Grand Master of the Ancients in London stated that he had carried out 27 initiations in the previous 6 months. Sometime later the lodge came under censure for un masonic conduct and the warrant was withdrawn and returned to London.

In 1809 there was a petition from ten citizens of Hull to form a new lodge in the town These applicants had been attending two military lodges No 120 & 215 which were attached to the 2nd Royal Lancs and Cumberland regiments of Militia stationed in the town. These two lodges supported the application. 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 in February 24th 1809". Thus the old Liverpool Lodge warrant no 53 continued its existences as the Ancients Knight Templar lodge in Hull Although the Humber Lodge as we know it really started its existence in Hull in 1809, because of the

circumstances of the transfer of the original warrant it was legally constituted in 1775, some 215 years ago.

That very briefly is what might be described as the early history of the Humber Lodge warrant. But to continue with the story of the lodge and particularly with events leading up to the laying of the foundation stone, I now refer to our earlier days by including events some historical and some amusing.

1809 March 16<sup>th</sup> the lodge met for the first time at the Fleece Inn Market Place.

1810 July 2<sup>nd</sup> It was resolved that the lodge hitherto known by the name of Ancient Knight Templar should in future be called the Humber Lodge.

1810 Feb 6<sup>th</sup> Resolved that any of the brethren whispering during the lodge being in labour be fined 2/6.

1811 Dec 18<sup>th</sup> Every member to pay a shilling a year for coal and 2 shillings be paid by visitors after the first visit.

1817 to 1820 there are no record of minutes and we know that the lodge went into decline. The organ and sundry items were sold to pay debts and by 1821 the lodge had moved to the Black Swann in Dock St. But alas there were only 11 members left on the books. The following year they moved to the Turks Head in Mytongate and I believe that some time held meetings at the Humber Tavern in Humber St.

Now we come to a very important entry. 1824 Oct 6<sup>th</sup> Bro Crowe of the Minerva Lodge accepted as a joining member.

November 3<sup>rd</sup> Bro Feetham of the same lodge accepted as a joining member. From then on the fortunes of the Humber Lodge took a dramatic turn for the better and for the next 3 years there was a tremendous revival of interest and due to the generosity of Bros. Crowe and Feetham there was a much needed improvement in the lodge finances.

1827 March 21<sup>st</sup> A proposal that the members of the Humber and Minerva Lodges should unite for the purpose of erecting a Freemasons Lodge building.

2 days later March 23<sup>rd</sup> at a meeting held at Bro. Harpers in High St. Bro. Crowe in the chair it was resolved that a subscription be entered into for the purpose of erecting a new Masonic Hall that a committee be formed of Humber and Minerva lodges and that ground on the North side of Osborne St. containing 220 Sq. Yard be purchased for the site.

March 28<sup>th</sup>, a building committee had been formed and signed an agreement for the sale of the land in Anne St. To Messrs Crowe and others. At this advanced stage for some unknown reason the Minerva lodge decided to withdraw and not join us in the project,

April 19<sup>th</sup>, three weeks later, the plans had been prepared and the lodge accepted a tender from Bro Kidd for the building for £340.7.2d.

May 7<sup>th</sup>, three weeks later the event we celebrate with such pride and dignity tonight, the laying of the foundation stone by Bro. R.M. Beverley Deputy P.G.M. was officially instigated. The ceremony was carried out with tremendous pomp ceremonial and splendour. A procession was formed in public, everyone wearing full regalia and musicians playing a solemn air. Arriving at the site the whole company stops and forms a square around the foundation stone. The canopy of the Grand Master is placed east of the stone. A lead box was placed in the foundation stone and in

the many items of interest were included in the box a brass plate inscribed with the names of Bros Crowe , Feetham and Eglin. The Grand Master concluded his lengthy lay oration with the following,

'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 7<sup>th</sup> 1827 the superstructure of the Humber Lodge was raised which by the sincerity of its members through the ages has ever remained honourable to the builders and may it continue to do so.

Bros Crowe Feetham & Eglin would rest content I think in the knowledge that in 1990 the old lodge celebrating the 163<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of that even with a fine record behind it and a future as secure and assured as at any time in our history.

The same year Bro Feetham was elected WM and on 3<sup>rd</sup> October the new building was opened. Just think of the time schedule brethren.

March 1827 the first meeting to discuss the project and 149 days later the grand opening ceremony. I very much doubt whether such a project could be completed in the same time today.

Moving onwards Bro. Joseph Eglin was elected WM in 1834. Bro Crowe passed away and records state that on Sept 12<sup>th</sup> of that year a funeral procession to Holy Trinity church, to attend the internment of the remains of the late Bro. Crowe in a tomb within the alter rails. It was a significant honour befitting a worthy man.

At this stage in our history and with your indulgence I would like to introduce a more modern episode which has been recorded and in some small way provides a significant link with the past showing our appreciation of our founders efforts. To celebrate my year as WM of this lodge in 1973 I sponsored a kneeler embroidered with the Humber Lodge banner which was presented to the lodge on this same evening 5<sup>th</sup> May 1977 and it was finally dedicated later that year. I trust it will remain in Holy Trinity church for many years to come and that Bro. Crowe will rest content in the knowledge of our tangible appreciation of his personal efforts.

Times have changed 49 years ago this month on the night 7/8<sup>th</sup> April 1941 the ravages of war deprived us of our building but the spirit of our masonry remains constant and as we look forward to the future it helps to maintain a proper perspective by calling to mind the early struggles for survival of our founders whose devotion - the principles of brotherly love - relief and truth have set the scene for our present enjoyment. It is not sufficient in this day and age when the moral values which we hold dear have changed and are still changing. That we should forget the past and look only to the future. It is right and proper that on this day each year we should take stock of ourselves and our beloved lodge and remember with gratitude all of our forebears who have contributed to the prosperity and perpetuity of this lodge and may this time honoured toast be proposed till time shall be no more. I ask you therefore brethren to pause for a moment in our celebrations and to think deeply on all these things.

Worshipful Brethren and brethren be pleased to stand and in darkness and in silence honour this most noble toast to Bros Lt. Wm. Crowe, Thos. Feetham and Joseph Eglin and all our founders.