

The Founders Toast May 13th 2008

Presented by W. Bro. G. Bates

Tonight we celebrate the 181st anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Humber Lodge premises in Anne Street, a property which stood for 114 years, and we honour our founders Brothers LT. WM. Crow, Thomas Feetham and Joseph Eglin.

We honour these three brethren as our founders not because their names appear on the application for our warrant, but because in 1824 when our fortunes were at a very low point, our furnishings and organ having been sold to cover debts, these three relatively new members re-vitalised the old lodge and by their efforts and generosity succeeded within three years to put the affairs of the lodge on a firm footing and organised the laying of the foundation stone and the building of the Lodge in Anne Street. These three are the brethren whose names we hold in respect and veneration, and who for more than 180 years have been regarded as the founders of our lodge.

But tonight let us go back to the beginning and if it is not a contradiction in terms I am going to talk about some of the earlier founders of the Humber Lodge.

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. Over the next 30 to 40 years a large body of English Masonry owed an allegiance to the Grand Lodge of England but in those days of unsophisticated communications, problems arose which resulted in a breakaway group forming a rival Grand Lodge in 1751 which became known as the Ancient Grand Lodge because they preferred to adhere to the ancient constitutions, thus the original Grand Lodge became known as the Moderns because of their new approach to Masonry and the two Grand Lodges competed against each other until the union in 1813.

So it was in this atmosphere of bitter rivalry that in 1759 the Moderns constituted the first lodge in Hull No. 252 on their roll and a month later the Ancients issued their warrant to Hull, No. 78 on their roll. Neither of these two lodges lasted very long and in 1761 the Moderns granted their second warrant to Hull No. 267. Again this did not last very long but in 1781 the Rodney Lodge, and in 1783 the Minerva Lodges came into being, both Modern, and both were in existence in 1809 when 10 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 the important event of 1809. Apart from the Rodney and Minerva, the only Lodges operating in Hull at that time were two military lodges attached to the 2nd. Royal Lancashire and the Cumberland Regiment of Militia, Nos. 120 and 215 on the roll of the Ancients. It is clear from the petition for the new warrant, that the applicants were members of these two Military Lodges then stationed in the town, and it is clear that the application was supported by the Masters of these Lodges and the commanding Officers of the garrison.

You would think then that these few and good men of Hull should be considered amongst the founders of the Humber Lodge. These men were Thomas Larard, a watchmaker, Demon Northgraves also a watch maker, Thomas Brown, a publican, Joseph Levy another watchmaker, Thomas Johnson, a stationer, Samuel Abrams, a jeweller, Thomas West, a merchant, Israel Shacklock, a shoe maker, Andrew McLaren, a publican and George Larkin.

A quotation from the petition reads as follows, As it is uncertain how soon the two Lodges to which we are at present members of, may be moved 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 as soon as it may be convenient to your Grace to order the same.

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

By the stroke of a pen history was 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 in Hull, and the name was changed to Humber in 1810. WE know nothing of the men to whom our Warrant was issued prior to 1809, we certainly know something of the ten good men and true to whom the Warrant was transferred in that year and thus when we honour as our founders the three distinguished Mason whose names are associated with this celebration, we should also remember with some gratitude, three watchmakers, a jeweller, a shoemaker, 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 two military lodges. Their action have resulted directly in our being here tonight 199 years later to honour our founders and to celebrate the events which followed.

Having talked about the founders, what about the ceremony of the laying of the foundation stone which we also celebrate tonight. We have amongst our records a hand written book giving a complete explanation of the proceedings, and on the flyleaf there is a note of explanation written by Dr. John Pearson Bell, P.M. of the Humber Lodge, and one time Deputy Provincial Grand Master of our Province which says, " This book contains a full and clearly written statement of the ceremony used at the laying of the foundation stone of a Masonic Lodge Building, and was evidently written specially for that of the Humber Lodge, Osborne Street Hull which was laid down on the 7th May 1827".

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.

There was a procession through the streets to the site, and when all were assembled, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master made the following proclamation. ⁴⁴ 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 we 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 Humber Lodge was raised, which by the sincerity of its members, has I believe, ever remained honourable to the builders, Bro. Crow, Bro. Feetham, 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 2008 the old Lodge was celebrating the 181st. anniversary of the event, with fine record behind it, and a great future as secure and as assured as at any time in

the past.

Times have changed, 67 years ago this month the ravages of war deprived us of our building, but the spirit of Freemasonry remains constant, and as we look forward into the future, it helps to maintain a proper perspective by calling to mind the early struggles for the survival of our founders whose devotion to the principals 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 on this day each year we should take stock of ourselves and our Lodge, and remember with gratitude ail of our predecessors who have contributed to the prosperity of the Humber Lodge, Determined to maintain our traditions, and I ask you therefore Brethren to pause for a moment in our celebrations, and to think on these things.

Worshipful Master and brethren please be upstanding, in darkness and in silence. Honour the toast to our founders

Bro. LT. Wm. Crow

Bro. Thomas Feetham'

Bro. Joseph Eglin