

Founders Night Address,
May 13th 2014
W.Bro. David Malcolm Terry.

Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Worshipful Master and Brethren,

I rise to my feet with some feeling of trepidation as to the complexity, solemnity and distinction of having the honour to submit this time honoured toast.

Many worthy Brethren have had this honour before me and so many of you here assembled must have heard the contents of my address before, so I will say at the onset – be patient and think of yester-year and in particular of the events of 1827.

Brethren, I do not take credit for that elegantly composed opening paragraph. There is a Brother here amongst us who must be familiar with those sentences because he typed them some 25 years ago and submitted this toast in May 1989. Hence I thought it fitting to use those well chosen words because they were penned by one W.Bro. Earnest Peter Donnison whose 60 years of Craft Masonry we celebrate this evening.

The particular events of 1827 I will come to shortly, but to understand the significance of that year we must delve back in time.

I make no apology for this brief history of the Humber Lodge No 57 that I am about to embark upon as there may be many of our distinguished visitors here today who are unfamiliar with the vagaries of this ancient Lodge's past.

“ To begin at the beginning “ we travel back in time to 1756 but not to the town of Hull. We start our story in Liverpool where a Warrant of Constitution No 53 was issued by the Duke of Atholl, Grand Master of the Ancients, bearing the date May 19th 1756.

There appears to be a mystery about the original destination and use of this Warrant but it is certain that in 1775 it was reissued, authorising the holding of a Lodge at the Buck and Dog Tavern in Strand Street, Liverpool. The Lodge was titled “ The Ancient Lodge”.

This Lodge was eventually suspended and the Warrant remained dormant until 1809 when several Freemasons in Hull applied to purchase the Warrant from the Brethren of Liverpool who were still in possession of the document.

They were assisted by two Military Lodges, No 120 and No 125 attached to the Cumberland and Lancaster Regiments of Militia who were quartered in our town.

The first meeting of this new Hull Lodge was held on 16th March 1809, Bro William White having the honour of being the first Worshipful Master. Their meeting place was the Fleece Inn situated in Market Place. The title of the Lodge- The Ancient Knight Templars.

By 1810 our forefathers deemed the Lodge's title too unwieldy and so the name was changed on July 2nd 1810. What was more fitting than to name it after the noble river on whose banks stood the town of Hull.

The Warrant of 1756 names founders Bros. Patrick Vaughan, Edward Ledward and Thomas Griffiths. Should we honour them with this toast tonight? Should we honour Bro William White our first Master? Tradition says not.

To unearth more familiar names we must travel on in time. The Humber Lodge moved from the Fleece Inn to the Black Swan in Dock Street. Humber Lodge was at a low ebb, nine members having to loan the treasurer 43 guineas to pay off it's debts.

On 21st June 1819 an emergency meeting was called for the purpose of electing officers for the ensuing year, but as only four members attended business could not be transacted. A further meeting was called on 31st July and again, including the Tyler, there were only four attendees. It was then resolved that the Lodge furniture be sold in order to liquidate the debts .

For the next 15 months it appears Humber Lodge ceased to meet. On November 8th 1820 an unconstitutional meeting was held at The Black Swan. Another was held at the same venue on January 12th 1821. Unconstitutional because our famous Warrant was still in the hands of the Brother who had formerly acted as the Treasurer. The differences between the Treasurer and Members were aired on 22nd November 1822 at The Black Swan, the former Treasurer, not particularly full of brotherly love left the Warrant downstairs with the landlady, instructing her that on no account was she to surrender it to anyone but himself. The meeting was inharmonious to say the least, there being considerable discord and disorder.

The W.M. excused himself from the meeting, went downstairs and persuaded the landlady to part with the parcel entrusted to her care. He did not bear it in triumph to the upper room but hid it in an empty house down a passage leading out of Dock Street. One can only imagine the scene when the former Treasurer realised he had been duped. He appealed to the P.G.M. Lord Dundas who asserted his prerogative and suspended the Warrant.

Not to be deterred the Lodge continued to meet at The Turks Head in Mytongate, the meetings being used for the purpose of conviviality rather than the desire of gaining instruction.

Two dates in 1824 stand out in Humber Lodge's records; October 6th and November 3rd. These dates mark the inauguration of a more prosperous and certainly more Masonic era. This new era is kindled by the arrival of two Brethren, Lieutenant William Crow and Thomas Feetam who were accepted as joining members.

A split had occurred at Minerva Lodge No 467 which resulted in 14 members resigning. It was natural that many of these resigning Brethren should seek out a new channel for their Masonic enthusiasm. For two years they worked under the Warrant of the dormant Rodney Lodge until a dispute with Grand Lodge over payment of dues finally put an end to its existence.

Humber Lodge seemed to offer opportunities to these homeless masons and nearly all of the disbanded Rodney members were elected joining members.

These, mainly young and enthusiastic Brethren "rattled the dry bones" of Humber Lodge, Bro. Crow more than any when he was elected W.M. on 12th June 1825 just eight months after joining. Bro. Feetam became his Junior Warden. The minutes now chronicled Masonic work rather than the amount of liquor consumed.

Membership numbers increased and soon the Turks Head became too small for their meetings. Bro. Crow presided over the meeting when a resolution was submitted, " That a subscription be entered into for the purpose of erecting a new Masonic Hall, that a Committee be formed of members of the Humber and Minerva Lodges and that ground on the north side of Osborne Street, containing 220square yards, the property of Mrs Osborne be purchased for the site."

Minerva rapidly had a change of heart and the scheme was pushed forward solely by Humber. £300 was speedily subscribed, the majority being donated by Bro. Crow, Bro Feetam and a Bro Joseph Eglin, a local merchant. An agreement to purchase the land for £204 16shillings was soon signed and on April 19th a tender for the erection of a single storied building was accepted for the sum of £340 7s 2p.

The landlord of the Turks Head was not exactly thrilled that his steady income was about to diminish and made himself so unpleasant to the Brethren that on the occasion of a Lodge of Emergency for the purpose of initiating a candidate, the W.M. fearful for the safety of the Warrant, wore it around his body in place of the usual apron.

The Lodge was closed and an adjournment made for refreshments, when the landlord introduced two Police Constables and accused the Brethren of being about to remove some of his property from the premises. The law declined to intervene which caused such rage in mine host that he expelled the Brethren, the newly initiated Brother celebrating his introduction to Freemasonry by walking through the dark, stinking, dangerous streets of Hull carrying a Warden's candlestick aloft, the candle still burning brightly.

That night the Lodge effects were deposited at the home of Bro Feetam The next meeting was held at The Humber Tavern in Humber Street when it was decided to hold future meetings at The Neptune Inn in Chapel Lane until the new Masonic Hall in Osborne Street was ready.

On 7th May 1827 the foundation stone was laid by Right Worshipful Bro. Robert MacKenzie Beverley, Deputy Provincial Grand Master of Yorkshire, with great pomp and ceremony. Over a hundred gathered for the ceremony, after which they retired to The Neptune for a banquet, the evening being spent with the greatest harmony and brotherly love.

The foundation stone lay undisturbed for 114 years to the day when on the night of May 7th 1941 the Masonic Hall was destroyed by enemy action.

Some of you may recall that when I last mentioned the Warrant it was numbered 53. When the Ancients and Moderns settled their differences and combined in 1813 the Lodge numbers were reallocated and we became No 73. In 1832 there was a further renumbering and we emerged as No65 which we enjoyed until 1863 when again Lodge numbers were readjusted and-guess what-we emerged as Number 57.

We are proud of that number 57. We are proud of our Humber Lodge, and we must never forget those great men who, through their foresight and generosity brought their dream to a reality.

Lieut. Crow died in 1827, age 63years, only 10 years after becoming a joining member.

Thomas Feetam, Master in 1827 died in 1858 age 65 years and Joseph Eglin, Master 1828 went to Hamburg in 1836 and died some months later age 34.

So, 187 years after the laying of that foundation stone, which may have been destroyed but is remembered in the North East Corner every time we initiate a candidate, we remember the enthusiasm, wisdom and generosity of the men who resurrected our Lodge in May 1827.

Lieut. William Crow age 56years, Thomas Feetam age 34 years and Joseph Eglin age just 25 years.

Before submitting the toast I would ask that the Brethren rise.

In darkness and in silence we honour the toast to Bros Lieut. William Crowe, Thomas Feetam , Joseph Eglin and all our Founders.

Brethren OUR FOUNDERS.