

THE FOUNDERS TOAST May 7th 1981

Tonight we celebrate the 154th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Humber Lodge premises in Anne Street, a building which stood for 114 years, and we honour as our founders Bros. Lt.Wm.Crow, Thomas Feetham and Joseph Eglin.

This is our tradition - this is the tradition of the Humber Lodge, and tonight it is my privilege to have been asked to propose this toast.

For the especial benefit of our younger members and our guests, perhaps I should add that it is also traditional for the proposer of this toast to say something of the history of our Lodge. There may be some amongst us who might say 'The history of the Humber Lodge is a series of events in strict datal order, well researched, often published, so why say it all again. But surely there must always be something new to say about the events we recall tonight and which have so affected our own lives, some 150 - 200 years later.

We honour as our founders Bro. Crow, Bro Feetam & Bro Eglin, not because their names appear on our first application for a warrant, but because in 1824 when the fortunes of our Lodge were at a very low ebb - even our furniture and Lodge organ had been sold to meet debts - these three all comparatively new members re-vitalised the old Lodge and by their efforts and splendid generosity succeeded within three years to put the affairs of the Lodge on a sound footing, and organised the laying of the foundation stone and the building of our old Lodge in Anne St. It was a tremendous effort. These three are the brethren whose names we hold in respect and veneration, and who for more than 150 years have been regarded as the real founders of the Humber Lodge.

But tonight I'm going to talk about some of the earlier founders of the Humber Lodge, if that isn't a contradiction in terms, and if I repeat just some of the things I said when I proposed this toast five years ago, then I crave your indulgence. Let us go back then very briefly to the beginning, to set the scene.

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 allegiance to the Grand Lodge of England but inevitably 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, 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 known simply as the Ancients or the Moderns worked in complete opposition to each other.

Thus it was in this atmosphere of bitter rivalry in 1759 "the Moderns constituted the first Lodge in Hull Ho. 252 on their roll and less than a month later the Ancients issued their warrant to Hull, No. 78 on their roll. Some of you may remember that at our May meeting last year we provided an exhibition of some of our old documents, one of which was the original minute book of that old Lodge Ho. 78, but neither of these two Lodges lasted very long and in 1761 the Moderns granted their second warrant to Hull, No. 267. Again this didn't last very long but in 1781 the Rodney Lodge and in 1783 the Minerva Lodges came into being, both Moderns, 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 the Minerva, the only Lodges operating in Hull at that time were two Military Lodges attached to the 2nd Royal Lancashire and Cumberland Regiments of Militia, Nos. 120 and 215 on the roll of the Ancients. It is clear from the petition for this 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 those Lodges and the Commanding Officer of the Garrison.

Would you not think then Brethren 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, Watchmaker, Silver Street,

Thomas Brown, Publican, Wincolmlee.

Joseph Levy, Watchmaker, Blanket Street.

Thomas Johnson, Stationer, Market Place.

Samuel Abrams, Jeweller, Kingston Court.

Thomas West, Merchant, French's Gardens.

Israel Shaddock, Shoe Maker, Dock Bridge.

Andrew Mc.Laren, 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 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 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 in Hull. We know nothing of the men to whom our Warrant was first issued in 1756, we know little of them to whom it was confirmed in 1775 but although we know little about anyone who may be considered as founders 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 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 172 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 the foundation stone that 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, 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 a foundation stone of a Masonic Lodge building, and was evidently written specially for that of the Humber Lodge, Osborne St. 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 and colour and enthusiasm which was so popular in the early part of the nineteenth century.

There was a procession through the streets to the site, and when all were assembled, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master made the following proclamation.

"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 1627, 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 1981, the old Lodge was celebrating the 154th 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, forty years ago this very night following our annual celebration, 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 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 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 Lodge, and remember with gratitude all 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 Brethren and Brethren be pleased to stand,

Take your glass, and in darkness and in silence Honour this most noble toast,

Bro. Lt. Wm. Grow., R.N.

Bro. Thomas Feetham,

Bro. Joseph Eglin,

And all our Founders.