

HUMBER LODGE No 57. Founders Toast 10th May 1994

Tonight we celebrate the 167th Anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone on the 7th Hay 1827 in Osborne Street and I quote from the inscription on the stone. "This, the first stone of a Masonic Hall intended for the reception of the number warrant No 73 ". It is my duty, pleasure and privilege to address you on this occasion.

Many years ago, I had to submit a critique of a book entitled 'Down with School' in which the author advocated the abolition of schools. Being a teacher at that time I was sure that I would disagree with him. After all No school - No pupils - No job - No money, a vested interest. The more I read however the author caused me to change my opinion and agree with many of his sentiments, fortunately they were never implemented and I kept my job and salary.

When I was asked to give this toast I hoped to avoid giving a potted history of the Humber Lodge. Indeed much of this was reviewed last month by W. Bro. Downing when he presented that lovely shield with the Humber Crest upon it to the Worshipful Master for the lodge's use.

As I perused the preparation of the speech I began to feel that some explanation should be given, especially to our newer members, of the paradox that appears between the date of registration of our Warrant 1756 - the date of reissue of the warrant 1775 - the formation of the lodge in Hull in 1809 - the date on the Centenary warrant 1877 and the warrant for the bicentenary 1977. Only the last two dates seem to have a relationship 1877 and 1977 and then only to themselves. How then do we explain that which at first sight appears a paradox. By following the example of the Senior Warden in the answers to the first degree questions we give a truly 'Masonic Explanation'.

The warrant we hold was reissued by the Grand Master of the Ancient Grand Lodge to Patrick Vaughan, Edward Ledward and Thomas Griffiths to form a Lodge No 53 in Liverpool in 1775 even though it appears to have been originally registered at Grand Lodge on 19th Liay 1756. Records of its use between 1756 and 1775 do not appear to exist. This Lodge No 53 in Liverpool had a chequered career and finally became dormant in 1807 but the warrant was retained though not in use.

This had become common practice with the passing of the Secret Societies Act in 1799 it was illegal to form new lodges "but the law could be circumvented by using an existing warrant issued prior to 1799. In 1809 there were four lodges meeting in Hull. The Rodney founded in 1781, Minerva 1783 and two Military Lodges No's 120 and 125 attached to Regiments stationed at that time in the city, but shortly to be moved to military duties elsewhere, leaving only the Rodney and Minerva, Some ten members of the Military Lodges, residents of Hull, not military personnel therefore realised that shortly their lodges could be too far away for them to attend. They could have considered joining the Rodney or Minerva but would have been unwilling to do so as these were Modern Lodges, that is they were registered under the Grand Lodge of the Moderns whereas the Military Lodges were registered under the Grand Lodge of the Ancients with the Duke of Athol as its Grand Master.

This split in Grand Lodge had come about in 1751 when some brethren not agreeing with the reforms imposed by Grand Lodge had left the parent body and formed an alternative Grand Lodge of England according to the old institutions. The Ancients as they became known maintained that they alone preserved the Ancient tenets and practices of Freemasonry.

Until the reunion in 1813 there was great rivalry and mistrust and it was unusual for a Modern to join an Ancient Lodge although he could do so if he was re-obligated and paid the fee equivalent to that paid by a new initiate. An Ancient however would not contemplate joining a Modern Lodge. Consequently these 10 Brethren wished to form their own Ancients Lodge in Hull. They apparently obtained the warrant of the Lodge No 53 and petitioned the Duke

of Athol, Grand Master of the Ancients to transfer the meeting place from Liverpool to Hull. As in the same way we have over the years transferred from Osborne Street - Wellington Lane - Park Street - and latterly to Dagger Lane. This petition was granted and the meeting place altered to Hull but as the warrant had been dormant for two years it accounts for the difference in the re issue and centenary dates 1775 and 1877, 102 years but only 100 years of working consequently the bicentenary was 1977 a further 100 years of working.

So on 16th March 1809 the petitioners held their first meeting as the Ancient Knights Templar Lodge No 53 at the Fleece Inn in the Market Place, presumably this was the name of the Liverpool Lodge which they transferred. One year later they changed the name to the Humber Lodge No 53, this being considered more appropriate.

On the reunion of the Grand Lodges all existing Lodges had to be absorbed and some re numbering was necessary and Humber became No 73.

Again in 1832 the United Grand Lodge re considered Lodge numbers, maybe because some Lodges had ceased to exist and Humber became No 65. It was not until 1863 that the Humber received the number it holds today.

To return to my theme, on the 16th Marchy 1809, the petitioners held their first meeting in Hull. It would be nice to be able to say - 'and they lived happily ever after'. Unfortunately this was not so. In 1815 there were only 28 members. At an emergency meeting on June 21st 1819 to elect the officers only four members put in an appearance. Three days later even the offer of a free meal only managed to gain support from 5 people. On the 12th June 1821 there were only 11 members on the books.

In 1824 there were 12 members but at this point the wheel of fortune began to turn in favour of the Humber Lodge. The Rodney & Minerva Lodges were experiencing difficulties and dissention and a number of brethren became joining members of the Humber. Two of these were to be especially welcome - Bro. Crow accepted on 6th October and Bro. Feetham on November 3rd 1824.

Both were keen and dedicated Masons and they inspired by example and enthusiasm and financial assistance bringing about an upsurge in the Humber Lodge fortunes. It was mainly by their efforts that land was bought and the Foundation Stone layed in Osborne Street, three years later, on May 7th 1827.

The following month 6th June, another turn of fortune, Brother Eglin, a Minerva member, became a joining member. He must have been well known and enthusiastic as ten days later he was elected Senior Warden.

These three Brethren now worked tirelessly for the Lodge and on 3rd October 1827, 5 months after laying the foundation stone, the Lodge was officially opened.

From that time the Lodge has prospered , 13 years later, in 1840, the mortgage debt was paid off and Bro Feetham detailing progress stated that Humber Lodge now had more members registered with Grand Lodge than any other Lodge in England. The prosperity of the Humber Lodge continued to grow along with its membership . At one time there were over 300 subscribing members. Although our numbers today are nearer 100 I feel our enthusiasm, dedication and pride in our lodge will ensure its perpetuity and that in another 167 years some other Past Master will be cajoled , like me, by the Lecture Master to propose this toast on the 334th anniversary.

There have been disappointments the greatest of these must surely be the loss by enemy action of the Lodge in Osborne Street. Ironically this was on the night of 7/8th May 1941, immediately following the Lodge's 114 celebration of the laying of the foundation stone. As the Lodge was still set out all the regalia, artefacts etc, with the exception of the warrant were lost.

The warrant, irreplaceable as it is, luckily and miraculously survived so serving to this day as a link to our past and a light to our hopes for the future. The only other remains were the minute books which were always kept at a house

away from the Lodge.

Ever since 1827 the anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone has been celebrated as the time when the Humber Lodge began to prosper.

Coupled with this celebration are the names of Bro. Crow, Bro. Feetam and Bro. Eglin as being the Founders, Benefactors and leading lights behind the upsurge in the fortunes of the Humber Lodge. We should however on this evening remember all members, distant past - recent past and present who have or do give tirelessly of their time and efforts to maintain the progress of our fine Lodge. Some of these have been or are once again Joining Members and very welcome and helpful members they have proved to be - true Masons all.

Brethren from the foundation stone layed on the 7th May 1827 we have raised (though somewhat figuratively) a superstructure perfect in its parts (well nearly) and honourable to the builder, Will you now stand and in darkness and in silence and without acclamation honour the most noble toast to all our founders and predecessors but more especially:

Bro. William Crow

Bro. Thomas Feetham

Bro. Joseph Eglin.

Brethren our founders.