

FOUNDERS TOAST – 12th MAY 1998.

Presented by W. Bro. K. L. Graham.

Worshipful Master, Worshipful Brethren, Brethren.

I find it a great honour to be allowed to propose the Toast to our Founders. Many of our older or long standing members will have heard these details many times before, and I hope they will hear them many more times in the years to come.

Well Brethren, tonight marks the 171st anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Lodge Building in Anne St. Hull. During the Lodge's long history it has seen many problems which have been overcome, and that is why we are here tonight.

We often refer to Bros. William Crow, Thomas Feetam and Joseph Eglin as our Founders- but in point of fact, they were our Saviours. Due to split in the Minerva Lodge - then No. 467 - these Brethren became joining members of the Humber Lodge in 1824, and they were responsible for getting the Lodge back on its feet through their hard work and generosity.

Freemasonry goes back long before that. It is thought possibly to somewhere in the East, where the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans held rites and ceremonies similar to our own, and wore aprons very much like those we now wear. These meetings were behind closed doors, and of course there are many fine examples of Masonry in these countries to this day.

One of the earliest known Masons in this country was Elias Ashmole, the famous antiquary whose collection of curiosities formed the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford. An entry in his diary dated October 16th 1646 states 'I was made a Freemason at Warrington in Lancashire.'

As far back as 1725 an old Lodge in York made itself into the Grand Lodge of All England, although history tells us that 4 London Lodges which met at various taverns formed the Premier Grand Lodge of the World in 1717. It is from this that masonry which is in existence to-day can be traced.

In 1751 there was a split in the Grand Lodge of England - between the 'ancients' and the 'moderns'. An entry in the minute book of Humber Lodge dated June 7th 1809 shows a modern mason wishing to join was re-obligated and charged one guinea. However the breach was healed in 1813. Also in 1809 several Brethren in Hull applied to Brethren in Liverpool for the purchase of a warrant which was not in use. This was eventually purchased. It was at first known as Ancient Knight Templars, and met at the Fleece Inn, Market Place, Hull. However, on July 2nd 1810 the name was changed to the Humber Lodge. On June 4th 1811 the Humber Royal Arch Chapter was formed which held meetings every Sunday night. In 1812 it was decided to fine any member of the Lodge who was found whispering during a ceremony. The fine for this was 2s.6d. Officers were also fined for arriving late, or for non-attendance. Another decision was that every member should pay a shilling a year to pay for coal to heat the building.

By 1817 the Lodge was in financial difficulties and nine members agreed to lend it 43 guineas. However, this did not

solve the finances of the Lodge for long, so it was then decided to sell the furniture in order to liquidate the debts. The sale raised the grand sum of £61.12s.2d. The warrant, jewels and some clothing were taken into possession by the Treasurer because of a financial dispute between him and the Lodge, and in 1822 an attempt was made to adjust this difference. The warrant was eventually recovered by a rather devious means. As a result the warrant was withdrawn in 1823 for some 11 months. When the Lodge was again in working order there were 12 members, and one very ordinary book was used for minutes, - cash - and ledger.

As I said earlier 1824 was the turning point in the Humber Lodge's financial and membership problems. As well as the 3 Minerva Brethren who joined us, there were nearly all the Brethren of the disbanded Rodney Lodge. The Humber Lodge purchased some equipment from the Rodney Lodge for £15.6s 11p. Incidentally the Rodney Lodge was the first Lodge to erect a Temple in Hull - on the south side of Mytongate, in 1800.

In 1825 Bro. Crow became W. Master (some 8 months after joining) with Bro. Feetam as his Junior Warden - although there were only 10 Brethren present.

Later it was proposed that a building of our own should be erected as membership was growing, and it was becoming somewhat cramped at the various taverns where meetings were normally held. Soon a special meeting was held at a premises in High St. It was agreed to purchase 220sq. yds of land on the north side of Osborne St. for £204.16s. and on the 19th April 1827 a contract was signed for the building of a single storey Lodge building. The Landlord of the Turks Head Inn - where meetings had been held - fearing that he was about to lose a valuable customer became awkward, so the Brethren had to leave straight after a ceremony with all their equipment. The next meeting was held at Humber Tavern in High St. and after that at the Neptune Inn in Chapel Lane. This continued until the new Masonic Hall was ready.

The Foundation Stone was laid on the 7th May 1827 by the R.W. Bro. Robert McKenzie D.P.G.M. and some 4 months later the building was complete. Thus the Humber Lodge entered a new epoch in its history. It had safely emerged from the dangers of insolvency, inanimation and unruliness, which at one time threatened to engulf it. Unfortunately this same building was destroyed by enemy action some 114 years later on May 7/8, 1941.

In September 1834 the Lodge suffered a blow with the death of Bro. Crow, the principal founder. His remains are within a tomb by the altar rail of Holy Trinity Church. He was twice W.M. of the Minerva Lodge and twice W.M. of this Lodge. He had made a donation of £100 to the Lodge building fund, followed by a further £32. He was 63 when he died. There was a second blow in 1836 when Bro. Eglin left England to live in Hamburg, and some 3 months later he passed away aged only 34. Following these two deaths it was decided to ask the members to subscribe for a portrait of the remaining founder - Bro. Thomas Feetam. Four guineas was raised for this portrait.

Bro. Feetam eventually passed away on December 31st. 1858 aged 65. Not only was he the last founder, but he had served the Lodge as Treasurer for 30 years. Something else which happened in 1858 was that the Lodge purchased 2 houses adjoining the Lodge building in Osborne St. for £385.00.

The Lodge has had many influential members over its' long history - both in civil and masonic life. There have been members of Parliament, Mayors of Hull, doctors, architects and other prominent citizens, many of whom held high active rank within the order. One of these was Jeremiah Stark who was Provincial Secretary for 14 years and Lodge

Secretary for 30 years. From the issuing of our first warrant in 1756 to the present day the Lodge has had several numbers - 53, 73, 65 and eventually 57.

Our history tells us that during the time when the Lodge was not able to meet in Osborne St. due to building work, the Minerva Lodge were pleased to let us use their Lodge.

An important announcement was received in 1877 when Grand Lodge of England gave permission for its members to wear a centenary jewel. May I quote from our history –

'Be careful who you admit into the craft, the want of care in this particular ought to be most jealously guard against. The men who disgrace masonry are those who have been admitted without proper enquiry'.

The years 1888 and 1890 were important ones as properties in Anne St. were purchased for future enlargement of the Lodge, and 1894 it was proposed to carry out alterations at a cost of £2,950.00 but this was not proceeded with for financial reasons. Following the destruction of the building in 1941 somewhere else had to be found. Eventually other premises were purchased for our Lodge. These were in Wellington Lane and were consecrated on 7th May 1949 - some 49 years ago. However the Lodge was advised that a lot of money needed to be spent on the property if we intended to stay there, and the fact that it was found expensive to maintain and run a Lodge on our own brought the decision to sell it - and this in less than 10 years. The Lodge then shared the Masonic Hall in Park St. which was our home until 1989 when we moved back into this building; and as we know there an attempt recently to move back to Park St.

Brethren, may I further quote from our history something which is rather apt at the moment.

'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for Brethren to dwell together in Unit'.

It is often very difficult in a Lodge for everyone to see 'eye to eye' on all matters concerning its governing, but if we do differ from time to time, let it be in brotherly spirit and give each other credit for good and honourable intentions.

Brethren, it saddens me when I read the list of books, paintings engravings etc. which were lost when our own Lodge was destroyed by enemy action on the night of 7/8 May 1941. I know for instance one painting of a prominent Past Master was painted by the Beverley artist, Fred Elwell, who was a member of the Constitutional Lodge.

Brethren, the three great founders of the Lodge - Brothers Crow, Feetham and Eglin and all our other founders should be remembered to-night. I ask you to rise and drink with me a toast to all these great masons of the past.