

## **FOUNDERS TOAST Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2003.**

Presented by W. Bro. B.A.DeVine, P.P.G.Supt.Wks.

Worshipful Master and brethren - This evening we commemorate the 176<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone of the Humber Lodge in Anne Street, Hull on 7<sup>th</sup> May 1827.

Some brethren present, either member or visitor, may wonder why we choose to remember an event long gone and indeed a building that has ceased to exist. After an outline of our history hopefully you will understand why we still continue a tradition started in 1828 on the first anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone.

Every Humber member has the opportunity to look into our history and I am no exception. One book that I studied prior to this evening included a copy of the summons convening the lunch meeting of the Lodge on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> May 1941; a significant date for the Humber brethren. The only business shown on the summons was the celebration of the 114<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone. Many present this evening, myself included, were in Hull on the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> of May in 1941 when more than 420 people were killed. The Lodge was destroyed and almost everything but the Minute Books was lost but fortunately a member passed the ruins on the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> May. He saw the warrant hanging on the still-standing chimneybreast, jumped off the tram, retrieved it and hid it under his coat. If the warrant is examined a scorch mark can still be seen. We owe a debt of gratitude to two Lodges, the Minerva Lodge and the Thesaurus Lodge. Both gave the Humber Lodge the use of their premises over the following years. Indeed the Minerva Lodge helped preserve our Lodge as their forebears had done more than a century previously. But that is recent history.

The Humber Lodge first saw the light of day because of the presence in Hull of two regiments, namely the 2<sup>nd</sup> Royal Lancashire Regiment and the Cumberland Regiment. Both had Masonic lodges attached, the former had Lodge No. 120 and the latter No. 215 and they met at the Citadel under the banner of the Antient Grand Lodge of England. These two military lodges had each initiated local people into their respective lodge. Word came that the regiments were to be posted elsewhere and the local brethren feared that they would be left without a lodge or a meeting place as the only Masonic lodges that would remain were 'Moderns' and they were mutual in not recognising each other. These brethren petitioned the Grand Lodge to recognise them and to issue a warrant permitting them to meet as a new lodge. A problem soon arose as a recent Act of Parliament forbade the creation of any new societies or clubs, as there was great fear at this time of the events in Europe as Napoleon sought to enlarge his empire and it was thought that such organisations could be a meeting place for spies. However, a clause in the Act said that Masonic Lodges founded prior to 1799 were exempt from the legislation and Grand Lodge used this exemption on more than one occasion to allow the formation of a lodge by issuing the warrant of a dormant lodge. The warrant of the 'Antient Knights Templar Lodge', No. 53 founded in Liverpool some fifty years earlier was thereupon legally allocated to the Hull petitioners in 1809. The Lodge was renamed the following year as the Humber Lodge with the number being altered to No. 73 in 1813, changed again in 1832 to No. 65 and finally to our present number '57' in 1863. Grand Lodge issued our first centenary warrant in 1877. Research by W. Bro. Clifford Jones suggests that a member of the Antient Knights Templar Lodge took the chair of the Humber Lodge thus providing an unbroken link with the original home of our warrant.

From 1810 the Lodge made steady progress for a few years but problems arose and 1822 saw the Treasurer report to the Provincial Grand Master that great disharmony prevailed both within and without the Lodge and also that irregularities were occurring. The Lodge was in such a poor way that the organ and other furniture had to be sold to pay off debts. The warrant was withdrawn but happily better times would soon dawn for the Humber Lodge.

In the years between 1809 and 1822 the Lodge was often divided but 1823 onwards saw brethren from the Rodney and Minerva Lodges joining those original members who had petitioned Grand Lodge for the issue of a warrant. These new members breathed new life, purpose and harmony into the failing lodge.

It may be thought a paradox that brethren who joined an already existing lodge are honoured as its founder members. It is for their work in rescuing the Humber Lodge and making it one of the largest and most successful that we remember them.

In 1824 a former member of the Minerva Lodge, Bro. Lt. William Crow was accepted as a member of our Lodge. Other former Minerva brethren soon joined him; amongst them notably were Bro. Thomas Feetham and Bro. Joseph Eglin.

Before these brethren joined the Humber Lodge appears to have met in almost every public house in the centre of Hull. Things were soon to change. The new brethren thought the venues were not in keeping with their Masonic philosophy and they resolved to acquire land and build themselves a meeting place. Disharmony once more arose but not amongst the brethren. The landlord of the public house where the Lodge was currently meeting heard about the plans for a new building, and being angry about the loss of their revenue, ejected the members in the middle of a ceremony. They walked down the street, (with the candles still burning), to a nearby hostelry that had a more agreeable landlord and there finished their business.

The three brethren mentioned previously, Bros. Crow, Feetham and Eglin worked tirelessly and within four months of the proposal to erect a Lodge they had raised the necessary funds, purchased the land and the foundation stone was laid. No time was lost and eighteen weeks after the laying of the foundation stone the building was completed and consecrated.

All three brethren, Bros. Crow, Feetham and Eglin became the Worshipful Master of the Humber Lodge within a very few years and I, for one, am proud to have succeeded them.

Because of their efforts and example the Humber Lodge from a very small beginning rose to be well respected throughout Freemasonry. At its pinnacle some fifty or so years ago the Lodge had more than 300 members and met fortnightly. Those early brethren would be proud of the tree that grew from the acorn which they had planted.

Brethren, you might now understand why we honour our three brothers and think of them as our founders - within three years of joining the Lodge, when others may have been thinking of taking an office, they had through their efforts had not only built a Lodge but had helped shape the lives and actions of not just of their contemporaries but also of us, their successors.

Brethren, please rise and in darkness and in silence I ask you to honour the toast  
to our Founders,

Brothers Crow, Feetham and Eglin.