

178th Anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone on 7th of May 1827,
Founders Night Toast Tuesday 10th May, 2005.

Presented by W. Bro. W. E. Burnett J.P.

Worshipful Master and Brethren, it is my honour, this evening to follow in the footsteps of many illustrious Brothers. Tonight I submit the toast to our "Founders", Bros William CROWE, Thomas FEETHAM and Joseph EGLIN. At the same time we celebrate the 178th Anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Humber Lodge building in Anne Street.

For the benefit of our newer Brethren, this isn't so much a toast as a mini Prestonian Lecture. It may seem a little strange to be celebrating the laying of the Foundation Stone of a building which disappeared in 1941 whilst at the same time honouring, as our Founders, three worthy Brethren, who joined our Lodge in 1824, some 68 years after our Warrant was signed by the Grand Master of the Ancients, the Duke of Atholl. It was issued to a Lodge in Liverpool.

Brethren, bear with me, and I hope to make things a little clearer.

This celebration, at our May meeting, gives us a unique opportunity. Each year we can reflect with pride, upon our heritage and consider those Brethren who went before us. They have contributed much to our beloved Lodge's prosperity and perpetuity.

The early history of our Lodge is well documented, but for clarity we should consider the historical overview.

I said earlier that our warrant was issued in 1756 to a Lodge in Liverpool. George the third was on the throne and Handel had composed "La Rejouissance" from "Fireworks".

The warrant became dormant and in 1775 was re-issued as No 53, to a Lodge which became known as the Ancient Knights Templar Lodge, meeting in the Strand, Liverpool.

At this time Mozart was composing his "Rondo" in B flat Major and on the 19th of May of that year (1775) the first shot of the American Civil War was fired at Lexington.

This could be the start of a Lecture about Masonic Composers - but I digress.

The Ancient KT Lodge prospered for many years in Liverpool, but sometime after 1804 it came under censure and the Warrant was withdrawn. Across the country in Hull, William Wilberforce was putting the finishing touches to his Anti-Slavery Bill.

Across the Channel, the Napoleonic War was raging.

In 1809, 10 citizens of Hull petitioned to form a new Lodge in the town. These applicants had been attending 2 Military Lodges. Given the current Political situation, the permanence of the 2nd Royal Lancs and the Cumberland Regiments Lodges was by no means secure. They had no hesitation in supporting the application.

The Warrant was transferred to the Petitioners on 24th of February, 1809, and continued its existence as the Ancient KT Lodge No. 53 in Hull.

In 1810 the Lodge was renamed as the Humber Lodge and renumbered as No. 73.

Brethren, an examination of the Lodge records shows that on the 6th of February, 1811, it was resolved that Brethren found to be whispering whilst the Lodge was at Labour be fined 2 shillings and 6 pence. Half a Crown was an enormous amount of money in those days. I wonder what the fine for "Tutting" was?

For the years between 1817 and 1820 no Lodge records survive but we know that it went into a serious decline. It had only 11 members and met at various Public Houses in the Town, such as the Turks Head in Mytongate and the Humber Tavern, in Humber Street. These Taverns appear to have gone the same way as our records!!

Further examination of our hand written minutes shows an important occurrence on the 6th of October 1824:- Lt CROWE, a member of the Minerva Lodge, became a Joining Member of Humber. In the same year, Bros FEETHAM and EGLIN, also members of Minerva cast their lot with the Humber Brethren.

It is interesting to note that Bro CROWE took the Master's Chair of the Humber Lodge within months of joining.

The membership of these Bros signalled a dramatic upturn of interest in the Lodge. Furthermore there was a much needed improvement in its finances.

On 23rd of March, 1827, Bro Crowe chaired a meeting at Bro Harper's house in the High Street, which resolved to purchase ground on the north side of Osborne Street for the purpose of erecting a new Masonic Hall.

Five days later a Building Committee was formed and an agreement signed for the sale of the Land to Bro CROWE and others.

Only three weeks after that the plans had been prepared and a tender to build the Lodge accepted. One of the members, Bro. KIDD tendered the extraordinary sum of £340 -7 - 2d. (Tuppence)

Three weeks later on the 7th of May, 1827, the event, which we celebrate with such Pride this evening, occurred - the laying of the Foundation Stone.

The ceremony was carried out by W. Brother R. M. Beverley, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master with great Pomp and Splendour. A procession was formed, with everyone wearing full Regalia, whilst Musicians played a Solemn Air.

I wonder Brethren whether it would be possible, today, to complete a building project, from concept to Opening Ceremony in 149 days !! I doubt it.

Bro FEETHAM was elected WM of the Humber Lodge twice. The first time he followed Bro Crowe in 1827, when George the Fourth was Prince Regent. The second time was in 1850 when Victoria was on the throne. Tom FEETHAM died, aged 65 yrs. in 1858.

Bro EGLIN took the chair immediately after Bro FEETHAM. He died aged 34 in 1836.

Bro CROWE, however, was the first of the three to slip this mortal coil on the 12th of September, 1834. His remains were interred in a tomb within the Altar rails of Holy Trinity Church.

A significant honour for a worthy Brother.

Our Lodge was renumbered to its present No. 57 in 1863.

In 1877 Grand Lodge awarded us our Centenary Warrant, by my calculations this is over 100 yrs. since the reissue of the document in 1775. BUT there is NO "Accounting" for Grand Lodge.

We prospered. We went from strength to strength. At times we had over 300 members.

The Foundation Stone had been laid on the 7th of May, 1827. On that date in 1941 the Brethren paid 3 Shillings each to attend a Banquet in the Building, to celebrate its Anniversary. That night it was destroyed by Enemy Bombing.

One of our Brethren took the tram to work the next morning. He was horrified to see the remains of the Lodge building smouldering, with the Warrant still hanging on the remains of a wall. He jumped off hastily and recovered it. Scorched but unsullied.

This was an eventful month elsewhere, Stalin had succeeded Molotov as the Soviet Premier, Rudolph Hess had crash landed in Scotland, the Royal Navy sank the Bismarck and in America Mrs Zimmerman gave birth to a son - later to be known as Bob Dylan.

One wonders whether the Bro who rescued our Warrant was humming one of the popular tunes of the day as he went to work that morning, perhaps "You are my Sunshine", "Dancing in the Dark" or just maybe one of Glenn Miller's hit tunes.

Brethren, upon the Foundation Stone, laid on the 7th of May, 1827, the Superstructure of the Humber Lodge was raised, Perfect in its Parts and Honourable to the Builder.

I would submit Brethren that through the Integrity and Sincerity of its Brethren, throughout the ages, it continues to be so.

Our late W. B - Bill Downing says it all I think, "It is right and proper that on this day, each year, we should take stock of ourselves and our beloved Lodge and remember with gratitude all our forebears, who have contributed to the Prosperity and Perpetuity of this Lodge, and may this time honoured toast be proposed till time shall be no more".

Brethren this is why we honour our 3 Brothers this evening. Without their dedication, generosity and enthusiasm, it is likely that the Humber Lodge would have ceased to exist.

So, Brethren I ask you to be upstanding, in darkness (ADC turns lights off) and in silence. I ask you to honour this most noble toast, to Bros CROWE, FEETHAM and EGLIN and all our Founders. (Dirge played by Organist)

D.C. (Quietly) "Brethren be seated" ADC switches the lights back on.

W. Brother Bill Burnett J.P. PPGSTWD. 10th May, 2005.