

182nd Anniversary of the laying of the Foundation stone on the 7th of May
1827, Founders Night Toast, Tuesday 12th May 2009.
Presented by W Bro J R Swift

Worshipful Master, W Brethren and Brethren it is my Honour this evening to follow in the footsteps of many brethren of the Humber lodge and submit the toast to our Founders, Brothers William Crow, Thomas Feetham and Joseph Eglin.

At the same time we celebrate the 182nd anniversary of the laying of the Foundation Stone of the Humber Lodge Building in Anne Street.

I was particularly pleased to be asked to submit this toast, because nine years ago in the year 2000, the millennium year, I had the tremendous privilege to be the Master of this wonderful old lodge, and now to find my self standing here before you in order to submit this toast to our Founders in what is our Bi-Centennial year. This I consider a tremendous privilege

For the benefit of the newer Brethren it may seem strange to be celebrating the laying of the foundation stone of a building which was destroyed some 68 years ago in 1941, whilst at the same time honouring our three founders, who in fact joined the lodge in 1824, many years after our warrant was signed by the Duke of Atholl who was the Grand Master of the Ancients.

This annual celebration does however give us the opportunity not only to reflect upon our incredible heritage, but also to remember those many illustrious brethren who have gone before us.

The Humber Lodge came into existence because of the presence in Hull of two regiments, namely the 2nd Royal Lancashire Regiment and the Cumberland Regiment.

Both these regiments had Masonic lodges attached to them, the former had the Lodge No.120 and the latter No 215 and they met at the Citadel under the banner of the Ancient Grand Lodge of England.

Despite these being military lodges some local people had been initiated, but when it was heard that these regiments were to be posted elsewhere, these masons feared that they would be left without a lodge, as the only Masonic lodges that would remain were 'Moderns' and it was mutual that they would not recognise each other.

Therefore ten of these brethren decided to petition Grand Lodge to be recognised, and to be issued with a warrant permitting them meet as a new Lodge.

The ten brethren were:-

Thomas Larard, Joseph Levy and Denton Northgraves, All Watchmakers.

Thomas Brown and Andrew McLaren both Publicans

Thomas Johnson – Stationer,

Samuel Abrams - Jeweller

Thomas West – Merchant,

Israel Shacklock – Shoemaker

George Larkin – occupation unknown. I think you will agree brethren a diverse range of occupations.

Now this petition created a problem, as a recent act of Parliament forbidding the creation of societies or clubs had recently become law, however a clause in the act allowed for Masonic Lodges founded prior to 1799 to be exempt from the legislation, and Grand Lodge used this exemption on various occasions to allow the formation of a lodge by issuing the warrant of a dormant lodge.

So the dormant Warrant of the Ancient Knights Templar lodge No 53 which had been founded in Liverpool some fifty years earlier was allocated to the Hull petitioners in 1809. The following year the lodge was renamed The Humber lodge, and in 1813 the number was changed to No.73 and again in 1832 to No.65, and finally to our present number 57 in 1863.

From 1810 the lodge progressed steadily but by 1822 problems had begun to arise and the Treasurers report to Provincial Grand Lodge described how great disharmony prevailed within the lodge. Indeed the lodge was in such a poor way that furniture including the organ had to be sold off to pay debts. At this time the warrant was withdrawn and the future seemed bleak, however happier times were about to dawn for the Humber lodge.

The following year in 1823 saw brethren from the Rodney and Minerva Lodges joining the the original brethren who had petitioned Grand Lodge for a Warrant, and new life was breathed into this failing lodge. It was shortly after this in 1824 that a member of the Minerva Lodge a certain Bro.Lt William Crow was accepted into the Humber Lodge, and soon after he was joined by Bro Thomas Feetham and Bro Joseph Eglin, indeed in 1825 Bro Crow became Master of the Humber Lodge. It may seem a paradox that we honour these three brethren as our founders, for they were not members of the Humber lodge at its conception, but it is because of there efforts in rescuing the Lodge and making it so successful that we remember them each year.

Since the birth of this Lodge the Brethren have met in many public houses in Hull such as the The Turks Head in Mytongate and the Humber Tavern in Humber Street sadly all now gone with the march of progress.

It was decided that a more suitable meeting place was required, so three years after Bro Crow joined the lodge he chaired a meeting at Bro Harper's house in High Street which resolved to purchase a plot of land on the north side of Osborne Street for the purpose of erecting a new Masonic Hall. Within five days a Building Committee was formed and within three weeks plans had been prepared and a tender accepted.

Would you believe only three weeks later, on the 7th May 1827 the event which we celebrate with such pride this evening, the Foundation Stone laid.

This ceremony was carried out by W Brother R M Beverley the Deputy Provincial Grand Master with great splendour, a procession was formed with everyone wearing full regalia.

Sadly our beautiful old Masonic Hall was destroyed by enemy action on 7th May 1941; a significant date for the Humber Brethren, The only business mentioned on the summons that day was the celebration of the 114th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone. That night the City was heavily bombed, some 420 people were killed and our building destroyed. Almost everything was lost, but our ancient Warrant was spotted by one of our brethren, Steward Bro Alfred Pickersgill saw it hanging on the still standing chimney breast, and at great personal risk he rescued it.

All three of our founders were elected Master of the Humber Lodge within a few years of each other, and it makes me, and I am sure all the other past masters of the Humber Lodge immensely proud to have been one of their successors and to see our names on that Past Masters board on which there names appear. W Bro Crow passed away in 1834, W Bro Eglin in 1836 and W Bro Feetham died in 1858

Brethren, because of these three brethren's hard work, effort and dedication, the Humber lodge has grown from a small beginning and risen to become very well respected throughout Freemasonry, a Position which it still holds and I am confident that witnessing our present Master and officers as they conduct the lodge business, and the potential we have in our newer brethren, that well respected position will continue long into the future.

Indeed I firmly believe that in another two hundred years, another Brother of the Humber Lodge will be stood in front of the brethren and will be submitting this very same toast.

Brethren- upstanding, in darkness and in silence I ask you to honour this most noble toast, to Brothers Crow, Feetham and Eglin and all our Founders.