

FOUNDERS NIGHT TOAST 9th MAY 2017

W. Bro. Philip Watts

Worshipful Master, Worshipful Brethren and Brethren, it is the custom of the Humber Lodge that at the May meeting a Past Master submits the Founders toast, and tonight that honour has fallen on me.

I did ask our Steward Bro. Walker who produces our wonderful menu cards to leave the back of them deliberately blank as he normally prints a précis of the history of the Humber Lodge there. In which case you could have just read that.

But tonight we are celebrating the 190th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone for what was to become the Humber Lodge Building situated on the corner of Anne Street and Osbourne Street on the 7th May 1827.

However the history of the Humber Lodge predates this by some 18 years. Two military lodges the 2nd Royal Lancashire Rgt. Lodge No. 120 and the Cumberland Rgt Lodge No 215 would meet at the Citadel where they were based under the auspices of the Antient Grand Lodge of England. Both these lodge had initiated local people, word came that both these regiments would soon be posted elsewhere and the local brethren feared they would be left without a lodge or meeting place, as the only Masonic Lodges remaining were "Moderns". These local brethren then petitioned the Grand Lodge to recognise them and to issue a warrant permitting them to meet as a new lodge. But due to fears of a French invasion and spies acting on behalf of Napoleon an Act of Parliament had been created forbidding the creation of any new society or clubs, however a clause in the Act said that Masonic lodges created before 1799 were exempt. So Grand Lodge used this exemption to allow the formation of a lodge by issuing the warrant of a dormant lodge, and so the warrant of the Antient Knights Templar Lodge No 53 founded in Liverpool was legally allocated to the Hull petitioners in 1809. The first meeting taking place at the Fleece Inn Market Place on the 16th March 1809. William White was installed as Master with Thomas Larard Senior Warden and Samuel Shacklock as Junior Warden. To give some perspective to this event it was just 1 month after the birth of 2

men whose lives have a huge impact on the world we live in today namely Felix Mendelsohn and Abraham Lincoln who were born in February 1809 Mendelsohn being the elder by 9 days.

The following year on July 2nd 1810 from the first minute book it was resolved by a committee and a majority of members that this lodge by the name of Antient Knights Templar should in future be called from its vicinity to one of the famed rivers in Great Britain the Humber Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons remaining the same no. 53. The No. was changed by the Union of the two Grand Lodges in 1814 to 73, it changed again in 1832 to 65 and finally to our present No. 57 in 1863.

In researching this toast I read through the first minute book which provided a fascinating insight in to how things ran then. e.g. Oct 4th 1809 John Greenwood was initiated and then passed to a fellowcraft. This was a regular occurrence. On Oct 18th a name that will be familiar to you all, Zachariah Pearson who left Pearson Park to the citizens of Hull was also initiated and passed on the same night.

Oct 25th sounds a merry night as it is recorded that much drinking done to celebrate the 50th anniversary of George 111 reign. A busy Christmas ensued that year on Christmas Eve, six Fellowcrafts were raised to Master Mason, Leak, Randerson, Snow, Milbourne, Thorn, and Everingham. Three nights later on the 27th Dec. five more were raised. Thomson, Braithwaite, Locking, Johnson and Legge.

Being a retired seafarer myself I was particularly intrigued by the number of foreign mariners who were accepted into the lodge, Dutchmen, Germans and Danes. e.g. Jan 7th 1810 Vincent Coin an American mariner was balloted for initiated and passed all on the same night.

Again this appears to have been regular practice. In fact on Jan 4th 1815 a John Gronholm a Master mariner and native of Finland was balloted for initiated, passed and raised on the same night. Not all got through quite so easy one entry shows a finger pointing to two exclamation marks with the words. The hand of opposition and petulance!

What must have been a disappointing note an entry for April 7 1811 read Sunday no Liquor!

But to get back to the matter in hand from 1814 the lodge suffered a period of steady decline whether this was to do with the combining of the Ancients and Moderns to create a United Grand Lodge is a matter of conjecture.

By 1819 the Lodge fell to a very low ebb indeed having moved from the Fleece Inn to the Black Swan in Dock Street 9 members contributed towards a loan to the treasurer of 43 guineas to pay off its debts. On the 21st June 1819 an emergency meeting was called to elect officers for the ensuing year. Only 4 members attended so business could not be transacted. A further meeting was arranged for the 31st July again apart from the Tyler only 4 members turned up, and as a last resort agreed to sell off the Lodge furniture in order to liquidate the debts. However the treasurer (probably still owed money) hung on to the warrant.

There are no records of any further meetings until Nov. 1820, when due to the lack of a warrant, an unconstitutional meeting was held at the Black Swan. The treasurer left the warrant in the safe keeping of the landlady with instructions that she must not hand it over to anyone but himself. The meeting ensued with much disharmony, disobedience and discord, during which the W.M. excused himself and persuaded the landlady that the treasurers instructions did not include himself the W.M. and she duly handed over the warrant to him, being a cautious individual he then proceeded to hide the warrant in an adjacent empty house.

The treasurer must have been in a rage to find he had been tricked and that his hold over the Humber Lodge had been spirited away. He therefore appealed to the P.G.M. Lord Dundas who promptly suspended the warrant.

By 1824 the warrant had been reinstated and on Oct. 6th Bro. Lt. William Crow R.N. of the Minerva Lodge was accepted as a joining member, he was followed on Nov. 3rd by Bro. Thomas Feetam also of the Minerva Lodge as a joining member.

These two being young, enthusiastic and generous galvanised the Humber Lodge and transformed its fortunes, membership increased rapidly with many joining from the Minerva Lodge and the recently defunct Rodney Lodge.

The next significant date is March 23rd 1827 when a meeting was held at Bro. Harpers house in High St. Bro. Crow taking the chair it was resolved that a subscription be entered into for the purpose of erecting a new Masonic hall and that a committee be formed of Humber and Minerva Lodges and that ground of some 220 sq. yds. on the N. side of Osbourne Street be purchased for this purpose. Only 5 days later a committee had been formed and signed an agreement for the sale of land in Anne Street to Messrs Crow and others. At this point, for some unknown reason the Minerva Lodge withdrew from the project.

Three weeks later plans had been prepared and the lodge accepted a tender from a Bro. Kidd for the erection of the building in the sum of £340 7s 2d. Just 3 weeks after that on May 7th 1827 the anniversary of which we are celebrating this evening the laying of the foundation stone took place.

The ceremony was performed by W.B. R.M. Beverley D.P.G.M. with tremendous pomp ceremony and splendour. A procession was formed in public everyone wearing full regalia and musicians playing a solemn air.

So far you have heard nothing of the third member of this triumvirate. Bro. Joseph Eglin of the Minerva Lodge became a joining member in June 1827 obviously highly regarded as he was elected S.W. 10 days later and he with the aforementioned Bros. Crow and Feetam became the driving force, working tirelessly in the upsurge in fortunes of the Humber Lodge. Did he join Humber because the Minerva Lodge had withdrawn from the venture? We can only speculate.

Sadly the building they worked so hard to establish no longer exists as we all know it was destroyed by enemy action on the night of 7th May 1941 ironically the 114th anniversary of the laying of the foundation stone. Our surviving artefact from that night is our

warrant that has seen the Humber Lodge through famine and feast - taken down from where it hung in the destroyed building by a member passing by the following morning.

Since 1827 we have been celebrating the laying of the Foundation Stone long may we continue to do so.

Before submitting the toast, I would ask that the brethren please rise.

THE TOAST IN DARKNESS AND IN SILENCE WE HONOUR Bros. Lt. WILLIAM CROW, THOMAS FEETHAM, JOSEPH EGLIN and all our Founders.

Brethren OUR FOUNDERS