

Trinity Lodge No. 4751: A Century of Light, Service, and Brotherhood

**Worshipful Master, Provincial Grand Master, Distinguished Brethren,
and brethren all:**

Tonight, I invite you to a short journey with me through one hundred years of Trinity Lodge No. 4751—a story not just of dates and events, but of enduring values: faith, hope, charity, service to our community, and love of our fellow man.

The Birth of Trinity Lodge

Our story begins with the origins of Freemasonry in Darlington and the distinguished Restoration Lodge No. 111. Why “Restoration,” you may ask? And what role did it play in the formation of Trinity?

A review of the Grand Lodge records online reveals that many of our founders were initiated into Restoration Lodge. In fact, our first Worshipful Master, Arthur Henry Betts, became a Mason by being initiated into Restoration Lodge in 1905. Moreover, several of our founding members, also members of Restoration Lodge, went on to form our Mother Lodge, The St. Cuthbert Lodge in 1909.

This enthusiasm for Freemasonry led to a boom in new lodges, reflecting the spirit of the era. Between 1761 and 1910, Darlington had just three lodges, but after the Great War (1914–1918), interest surged. The societal shifts brought by the war ignited a renewed desire for fraternity and purpose, leading to the creation of five new lodges in Darlington between 1920 and 1929—including Trinity Lodge in 1925. Some of our original members were veterans, men who had forged unbreakable bonds of brotherhood in the trenches. For them, Freemasonry became a way to transform hardship into hope, embracing the ideals of unity, charity, and service to others.

The name “Trinity” was chosen with great thought, reflecting both the historical and religious ties to Darlington. Just as Trinity Church was

established as a daughter to St. Cuthbert's, so too was our Lodge a daughter to St. Cuthbert Lodge, symbolizing both continuity and a new beginning.

The Call to Consecration

The journey to our consecration began with a letter sent on January 22, 1923, inviting select brethren to help establish a new lodge. The letter called for the selection of the Master and Wardens, and for naming the new Lodge. It was a moment of vision and unity, as Past Masters and brethren gathered at 26 Pierremont Crescent to lay the foundations of what would become Trinity Lodge.

Consecration: A Defining Moment

On June 9, 1925, the United Grand Lodge of England issued our Charter. Preparations began immediately, and November 11, 1925—Armistice Day—was chosen for the consecration. This was no ordinary date; it was a day of remembrance and hope, marking the end of conflict and the beginning of a new chapter for our Lodge.

The ceremony was held at Freemasons' Hall, Archer Street, Darlington, led by Deputy Provincial Grand Master W Bro Cuthbert Wilkinson and attended by 15 founders, 40 Provincial Officers, and 100 visiting brethren. It was a momentous gathering, filled with solemnity and joy, marking the birth of a Lodge dedicated to service, brotherhood, and the highest Masonic ideals.

The first Worshipful Master, W Bro A. H. Betts, was installed, and the new officers were appointed. The Installation Addresses were delivered by prominent Provincial Officers, and the Provincial Grand Chaplain gave an oration on "The Nature and Principles of the Institution," followed by a choral anthem—a fitting tribute to the spirit of unity and hope that defined the day.

A Unique Masonic Treasure: The Tyler's Sword

During the consecration, a remarkable announcement was made. Bro J. Yorke, Senior Warden of Lennox Lodge No. 123, donated a ceremonial sword for the Tyler's use. This was no ordinary blade—it had belonged to the late W Bro Dr. William John Hammond, a distinguished Surgeon Major of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, a reserve unit, and a well-known medical practitioner in the South West.

One of eight brothers, he attended Sherborne School along with six of his other brothers and was one of three who went on to impressive careers. Canon Charles Edward Hammond became bursar and Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford; Major General Sir Arthur George Hammond, holder of the Victoria Cross won as a Captain in Afghanistan, and likewise Dr. William Hammond became noted for his medical endeavours.

Dr. Hammond was a man of extraordinary Masonic service, having been initiated into St. Cuthbert's Lodge, No. 630, East Yorkshire in 1871. He went on to hold Grand Rank in nine different orders and became the first full-time Librarian and Curator of the United Grand Lodge of England. His sword, now entrusted to Trinity Lodge, became a lasting symbol of dedication, sacrifice, and the enduring legacy of those who serve both Masonry and mankind. It is a tangible link to our past, a reminder of the values we cherish, and a unique piece of Masonic history that continues to inspire us today.

On the day of our consecration, the Provincial Grand Master and the Consecrating Officers were elected as Honorary Members. With our founding, the number of Lodges on the Provincial Roll rose to 99.

The ceremony and installation began at 3.00 PM and concluded at 5:15 PM, officially marking the birth of Trinity Lodge. At that time, we became the seventh Craft Lodge to meet at Freemasons' Hall, Darlington—a number that has since grown to 13 Craft Lodges and numerous companion orders as of 2025.

The First Regular Meeting

The first regular meeting of Trinity Lodge took place on Wednesday, November 25, 1925. That evening, the Brethren paused in solemn remembrance of Her Majesty Queen Alexandra The Queen Mother, who had passed away 5 days earlier on November 20, 1925, expressing their sympathy for Their Majesties King George V and Queen Mary.

Among the first major Lodge decisions were:

- The bylaws were formally approved.
- Two candidates, Mr. Claude Frederick Betts (a solicitor) and Mr. John Hebden (a schoolmaster), were proposed for initiation. Claude was the son of our first Worshipful Master, Arthur Henry Betts and therefore a Lewis.
- The Lodge held its first official initiation, one month later on December 23, 1925, when Mr. C. F. Betts became our first candidate to be made a Mason. Claude went on to have a distinguished masonic career holding Grand Rank and active Provisional Rank.

At the first meeting, the Lodge also collected its first charitable donations—raising one pound, six shillings, and eight pence (equivalent to approximately £63 in today's money, based on the Bank of England's inflation calculator). This set the foundation for a century of charitable giving and community support.

Over the decades, the Lodge has supported countless causes, from the Royal Masonic Benevolent Institution to local charities, always guided by the principle that charity is the heart of Freemasonry.

Through war and peace, prosperity and challenge, the Lodge has remained steadfast in its commitment to faith, hope, and charity. Whether welcoming back brethren from military service, supporting families in need, or embracing new technologies and traditions, Trinity Lodge has always looked forward while honouring its past.

A Living Legacy

In recent years, the Lodge has continued to embody these virtues. The Ray Wallace Thompson Legacy, for example, established a charitable trust to support members of the local community, reflecting both professional pride and a deep commitment to helping others. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Lodge demonstrated resilience and care, supporting members and the wider community through unprecedented times. During these troubled times, we also lost 6 of our most loved and respected senior masons finding it difficult to give our respects to departed merit. None were however lost to COVID, I might add.

In 2021, Trinity Lodge surpassed its charitable fundraising target for the Provincial Festival, achieving 160% of its goal, a total donation of £40,513, a testament to the generosity and dedication of its members.

Finale: Closing Remarks

As we reflect on 100 years of Trinity Lodge, we are deeply grateful to those who came before us. They built not just for themselves, but for generations to come. As John Ruskin reminds us, “When we build, let us think that we build forever... Let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for.”

Brethren of Trinity Lodge, we are those descendants. And we do thank them—not for the bricks and mortar alone, but for the enduring spirit they enshrined.

This lodge was built on Faith—faith in one another, in the Craft, and in the moral compass that guides us. It was sustained by Hope—hope that what they built would endure, inspire, and uplift. And it has flourished through Charity—through love expressed in service, compassion, and brotherhood.

The true glory of Trinity Lodge lies not in its age alone, but in the lives it has shaped, the values it has preserved, and the light it continues to shine. Let us honour the past not only with memory, but with action. Let us build forward—with faith in our principles, hope for our future, and charity in our hearts.

So here's to the next hundred years.

Let that Latin saying “In Principio Et Semper”—remind us that “as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be”

Worshipful Master, Provincial Grand Master, Distinguished Brethren, and brethren all.

That concludes my short ramble through some of the elements of the history of Trinity Lodge. May I suggest you will find out much more in the history booklet I have put together for you which you will find at your place setting for the Festive Board.

Brother Senior Warden thank you the use of your pedestal and you brethren for manner you have received my short commentary on the history of Trinity Lodge.