

A Brief History of Threlkeld Public Room



Stuart Cresswell

Our Public Room or Village Hall was opened on Thursday 18th December 1901.

The suggestion that it was needed had been raised seven years earlier in a petition, by the young men of the Village to the Parish Council, for the establishment of a Reading Room. The petition had been signed by most of the inhabitants of Threlkeld.

Mr John Crozier ("Squire Crozier") had bought 255 square yards of land for £21-5s-0d (£21-25) and given it to the Parish. He also helped financially with the building costs.

Plans for the building were drawn up by Mr Thomas Hodgson and approved by Penrith Rural District Council. In February 1901 the Parish Council asked Messrs J Airey and T Watson to estimate the probable cost.

The tenders for the building came to £417-7s-0d (£417-35) with all the cutting of foundations and quarrying and carting of stone to be done free by the farmers and others in the village. However fund raising was a serious problem and was only partly solved when the Blencathra Lodge, being greatly inconvenienced by not having a room to hold their social gatherings, offered £300 on loan at 3.5% interest. The committee was still in debt at the Opening and had not provided any literature nor a billiard table and not all the furniture requirements had been completed. Fund raising activities had included lectures - one had been: " My Impressions of Paris and the 1900 Exhibition" illustrated by 130 slides given by Mr James Whiteley, the Schoolmaster. It had raised £1-15s-0d (£1-75). Mr Broatch had "exhibited his gramophone". The Blencathra Minstrel Troupe gave a concert.

Through 1901 Parish Council meetings tell of progress (and lack of progress) in the construction.

Clearly by June 1901 things had not got very far because Mr Whiteley, as Secretary to the project committee and Parish Clerk, called a special meeting of the parochial electors to obtain a loan on the security of the rates. This was something the committee had sought to avoid because the main contributors to the rates were the farmers and it was thought that they would have little benefit from the hall. However now they had to consider this step because of the lack of volunteers in getting and carting stone. There was only £41-19s-3d (£41-96) in the bank and several large promises had yet to materialise.

There was a good attendance of electors and clearly the committee had done its homework having obtained guidance from the County Council and the Local Government Board on exactly how they should proceed. Letters from both were read to the meeting. Before the matter was put to a vote, the Rector (Rev J O Crosse), Mr Crozier and the Parish Clerk spoke about the need for the proposed room.

Mr Crozier then made the magnificent offer of £100 - in addition to the site already given. Bear in mind that £100 in 1901 is equivalent to over £6000 100 years later in 2001. This offer put the meeting into much better humour and offers of carting came rapidly. Offers were made by Messrs T Jaques, W Tyson, J Dixon, J Birkett, W Taylor (for Threlkeld Hall), G Gaskarth,. Mr Crosse offered to pay for 20 loads. Mr J Airey reported that Mr Robinson the aerated water manufacturer would give one weeks carting and the Chairman - Mr Bawden - said that Mr W Robinson would cart the building sand and Mr J Tinkler would give one days carting. Messrs J Rice and L Stewart (sic) would cut the foundations free. Messrs J Rice, J Mills, and E Rice offered to sell a total of 300 loads of stone at half price while Mr Robert Stuart promised 40 loads free. As a result of all these offers it was agreed to adjourn the meeting for the time being to see whether the work would be carried out by volunteers. In fact quarrying, sledging and carting started immediately.

In July 1901 the committee accepted tenders for the erection from Messrs R & F Hall, Blencathra Street, Keswick, masons, £230-10s-0d (£230-50); Messrs Milburn & Son, Borrowdale Road, Keswick, joiners, £152; Mr R J Railton, 49 Main Street, Keswick, painter etc, £15-14s-6d (£14-73); Mr G H Dunbobbin, Temples Court, Main Street, Keswick, plumber, £17-5s-0d (£17-25). Work was to start at once and it was anticipated that the room would be ready for Christmas.

In August 1901 the committee paid for 50 loads of stone to keep the work going until the farmers could return to carrying stone after getting in their crops.

At the meeting in September as it was reported that the roof was being raised, Mr Hodgson was asked to inspect the work and the first payment of £120 was made.

In November the Parish Council approved the Regulations for the Public Room Management Committee. The first committee comprised: J Crozier (or the owner of The Riddings) and all the members of the Parish Council with Rev J O Crosse, Mr J Whiteley (elected Secretary), J Airey, J Edwards, T Stuart, W Pattinson. The Trustees were Mr Crozier and the Parish Council. The Parish Council at the time comprised Messrs. Bawden (Chairman), Greenwood, Jacques, Watson, John Robinson, J Birkett, Hindmoor and Cockbain. Unfortunately Mr Cockbain died the week before the Opening.

The report of the Opening in the Mid Cumberland & North Westmorland Herald (a former name of the Cumberland and Westmorland Herald) said:

"The Public Hall of Threlkeld, though not pretentious, is no mean structure. It occupies a prominent site on the eminence at the west end of the village, on the highway from Keswick to Penrith. Its architecture is simple yet exceedingly neat, with a beautiful symmetry of proportion."

There were just two rooms - the large room

"intended for use as a concert room, a recreation room, and a large meeting room, and would be subdivided by a curtain, or, perhaps at a future date, by a movable partition, into a reading room and a Parish Council meeting room ... 48 ft 6 in long and 24 ft 18 in wide, and the adjoining room, which would serve as an ante room when concerts were held and at other times as a billiard room, was 22 ft long by 17 ft 6 in wide, large enough to accommodate a full-sized billiard table."

The large room was equipped

"with strong and handsome Windsor chairs, and will accommodate from 200 to 250 persons".

The Opening Ceremony and celebration started in the afternoon. Mr J W Lowther MP was presented with a key and unlocked the lower (west?) door to allowed everyone to enter the building. The platform party was Mr Bawden (Chairman), Mr Lowther, Rev J O Crosse, Rev C Dowling (vicar of St John's) and Mr Whiteley the secretary.

The programme appears to have been:

Formal Opening

Welcome and thanks	Rev J O Crosse
General history and report of the scheme	Mr James Whiteley
The Opening Speech	Mr J W Lowther MP
Vote of thanks to Mr Lowther	Mr Bawden (Chairman): Seconded by Mr Jacques
Reply	Mr Lowther
Vote of thanks to the Chairman	Rev C Dowling seconded by Mr Hope, Keswick
The National Anthem	

After the formal proceedings:

Public Tea - a knife and fork tea

(Ladies Committee: Mesdames Crosse, Whiteley, Jacques, Greenwood, Watson, Edwards, Stuart, Airey and Miss Robinson.)

Concert (starting at 6 o'clock):

Mrs Gregory accompanied the singers on the pianoforte

Miss Lawson	<i>Kathleen Mavoureen</i> <i>The Last Milestone</i>
Mr Gregory	<i>The Veiled Picture</i> <i>The Pilot</i>
Miss Hall	<i>The Arab's Bride</i>
Mr Beadle	<i>Deep in the Mine</i> <i>The Highwayman</i>
Miss Tangye	<i>The Gift</i> <i>The Lighthouse Lights</i>
The Hall Brothers	<i>The Larboard Watch</i>
Miss Tyson	<i>Love's Old Sweet Song</i> <i>The Lost Chord</i>
Mr Tangye	solo on Violin solo on Mandoline
Mr Broatch	two exhibitions on his gramophone
Mr J Mayson	recitation: <i>The Last Shot</i>
The Nigger Persuasion Company*	<i>The Black Schoolmaster</i>

* A talented troupe of minstrels from the Granite Quarries.

Dance

For the young people kept up "to the sma' hours"

Music by Mr Mawson's String Band

During the Opening and afternoon music had been provided by the Keswick Temperance Brass Band - leader: Mr Mawson.

The Opening Function's total receipts were £26-5s-6d (£26-27) and the profit (a record for Threlkeld) was £14-9s-7d (£14-48)

Further work - Later History

Explosions – two one in 1920s and one in 1960s

Extensions – new reading room in 1920s possibly to support the wall damaged by the first explosion. Store room and toilets much later

Finances – the Mortgage from the Blencathra Lodge of Mechanics was not paid off until 1948!