

Cellardyke Town hall

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OPENING OF NEW TOWN HALL IN CELLARDYKE.

Yesterday the new Town Hall in Cellardyke, presented to the community through the munificence of the late Mr David Fowler, Loudon, and Mr S. Williamson, M.P., was formally opened in presence of a large assembly. For several years past great inconvenience has been experienced owing to the want of adequate accommodation for the holding of public meetings, and attempts were made at various times to induce the Town Council to proceed with the erection of a new Town Hall. The old hall, which was ancient date, and could only accommodate about fifty persons, was getting into a state of disrepair, and was totally insufficient for the requirements Kilrenny and Cellardyke. Various schemes were proposed, and it was ultimately suggested that, instead of the establishment in East Green, belonging to David Fowler, London, being converted into a reading-room, &c., for the fishermen, something more should be done in the way providing accommodation for the Young Men's Christian Association and for the general public. The late Mr David Fowler had for years been considering how he could most beneficially confer some gift on his townsmen, and after mature deliberation with Mr Williamson it was resolved that they should jointly make a proposal to the Town Council to erect a new Town Hall. This magnanimous offer was graciously accepted; and a plan, prepared by Messrs Henry & Hall, architects, St Andrews, having been approved of, the foundation-stone of the new building was laid 5th April 1883 by Provost Watson. The architectural appearance of the building (a detailed description which is appended) reflects the greatest credit on the architects. The acoustic properties of the hall are excellent. On the recommendation of the Provost and Magistrates, yesterday was observed as a holiday in the burgh, and the public buildings were decorated with flags. The Artillery and the Rifle Volunteer instrumental bands paraded the streets in the course of the forenoon. A large number of the fishermen assembled in front of Marsfield House, where Mr S. Williamson at present residing, and that gentleman appeared and addressed them shortly. Shortly before twelve o'clock a large concourse of people congregated in front of the Town Hall, while James Street, leading it, was crowded both sides. A number of fishermen met Mr Williamson his way to the Town Hall and carried him shoulder-high to the door. After the Rev. Mr Ray had offered an appropriate prayer,

Mr Williamson, M.P., said that for some time past he had looked forward with pleasurable anticipations to the day when he might be permitted to hand over to the municipal authorities of their ancient Royal burgh these new municipal buildings, which the inscription told them had been erected by his well-beloved schoolfellow David Fowler and himself as a token of deep interest in their native town. (Applause.) The mention of Mr Fowler's name reminded them that he had gone from among them to a better world since the time when these buildings were projected, but his representatives loyally carried out his intentions. Nay, more than that—his brother, Mr George Fowler, who, regretted to say, was not among them that day, supplemented the original undertaking of his brother, and he desired it distinctly known that between them they had borne the half of the entire cost of the building as well as of the furnishings. (Applause.) There was one emphatic lesson taught them by the absence their friend from the proceedings that day - namely, that what work they found ready for their hands to do they had better do while health and strength were given to them; and it permitted pure spirits to know what took place on earth he could not but believe that he would rejoice with them that day over that good work accomplished. (Applause.) Now, as to the

building itself and its uses and purposes. In the first place, he was sure that the municipal life of the burgh would find a more fitting and creditable home than it did in the building which, with perhaps few regrets, they had to pull down. He sincerely hoped that the new building would give fresh inspiration and aspiration to those who ruled in civic matters over the community, and serve a stimulus to progress and improvement. (Applause.) He trusted its future history would mark it a sort of abode of love —free from the acrimonious contentions that characterised some Town Halls - (laughter)—but which he was bound to confess he had never heard laid to the charge the Town Council of Kilrenny. (Applause.) He did not say that all differences of opinion in regard to municipal matters were regrettable, but hoped that courtesy and mutual respect and forbearance would always characterise the Magistrates and Town Council of that old burgh. But, added to that home for municipal activities, they had, as it were, welded into it premises which they trusted might conduce to the social welfare of that enterprising and growing community - (applause) - and he would not be invidious when he said that in their original inception of that work they especially meant to benefit the hardy and brave fishermen of Cellardyke. To a considerable extent the uses to which these adjuncts were put would be experimental, and much - indeed everything - depended on the interest which might be taken in them by the people themselves. He sincerely hoped the reading-room might be a success, and might be patronised. He did not require to recommend the smoking room - (laughter) - at the top of the edifice. When they all gave up smoking it could put to better use, he had no doubt. (Laughter and applause.) There was room for a cafe, he had doubt, in Cellardyke and he begged it be clearly understood that the idea place of concourse and friendly meeting, away from the temptations of the public-house, occupied a foremost place in their original intentions. He commended it to them, and expressed a fervent hope that they would combine to make it a success and a blessing. He asked for a benediction on all their works from on high, remembering the words “Unless the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it.” He expressed a fervent hope that the pile of buildings might subserve good and useful purpose in promoting the civic and the social, the material and the moral, welfare of that growing community. (Applause.) He concluded by expressing the pleasure he had in handing over the keys to the worthy Provost, as representative of the Town Council and the inhabitants of the burgh. (Cheers.) . .

Provost Watson thanked Mr Williamson, in the name of the Town Council and the inhabitants of the burgh, for the magnificent gift he had just handed over to them. (Applause.) There was only one thing to damp their joy that auspicious occasion, and they deeply regretted that one of the donors, the late David Fowler, was not spared to see the completion of the noble edifice. He rejoiced to see - and every one present did so—one so nearly related to him present. He was confident that every one of the inhabitants; of the burgh wished Mr Williamson to be long spared to come amongst them, and when that generation had long passed away that house would stand as a memorial of their generous gift to their, native town. (Great applause.)

Mr James Fowler expressed the pleasure he felt at being present, and on behalf of his late father and himself thanked them for the manner in which the gift was received. (Applause.)

The company adjourned to the Town hall where Provost Watson, in a few appropriate remarks, produced burgess tickets conferring the freedom of, the burgh upon Mr S. Williamson, Mr George S. Fowler, and James Fowler. Mr Williamson and Mr James Fowler thanked the Town Council for the honour which had been conferred upon them, stating that they would, respond more at more length at a subsequent stage the proceedings. Mr Jamieson, the Town Clerk, intimated that it would be recorded in the minutes of the Council that John R Darsie and Mr John Williamson had presented a telescope and stand and barometer to the building.

THE LUNCHEON.

At two o'clock between two and three hundred sat down to lunch. Provost Watson, who occupied the chair, was supported on the right by Mr S. Williamson, and on the left by Mr James Fowler. Amongst those present were—Provost Anderson, Anstruther; Provost Henderson, Pittenweem; Provost Peattie, Crail; Bailie Gilmour, West Anstruther; Bailie McGregor; Mr Jamieson, Town Clerk; Mr D. Cook, solicitor; Bailie Hall, St Andrews; Mr Henry, do.; Mr Stewart, Kirkcaldy; Mr Ketchen, Elie; Rev. Mr Smith, Rev. Mr Butchart, Rev. Mr Ray, Mr J. Dixon, Mr Morris, Elie; Bailie Graham, Messrs McIntosh, bankers, &c., &c.

Provost WATSON said that Town Council, conferring the freedom of the burgh upon the three youngest burgesses, were not only conferring honour upon them, but they were conferring honour upon themselves. (Applause.) Their own services were quite enough for all that they could give them, but, apart from that, on looking over the old burgh records he found that in the case of Mr Williamson one his ancestors was made burges in 1688, nearly 200 years ago. (Applause.) He was elected a Town Councillor 1692, and sat nearly sixty years a Councillor. Other ancestors of the same name were members of the Council after that, but in coming nearer to their own time Mr Williamson's respected father was made Manager of that burgh in 1829, and held the office until 1847. (Applause.) These were long and faithful services. He could not praise the ancestors of Mr George and Mr James Fowler, but he had lively recollection of the work done by George Fowler's father and James Fowler's grandfather. Forty or fifty years ago their town was in a far different state from what it was when Mr James Fowler lived, and the reforms which had been made since then had been comparatively easy from what they were when he was Manager. He thought that services such those rendered by the ancestors of their youngest burgesses deserved all the honour that they could give. He proposed the health of the three youngest burgesses, (Great applause),

Mr S Williamson who was received with applause, said that if the Apostle Paul was not to be blamed for being a little boastful when he declared he was "a citizen of no mean city", so he hoped he might be permitted to express some legitimate pride at the honour they had done him and his friends making them burgesses of the ancient Royal Burgh of Kilrenny. It so happened that they were now as burgesses engaged in commercial undertakings, and that great Commercial Advantages had been gained in former times by being made freemen of important towns, which was a preliminary step to their becoming members of trading Guilds and Societies. It would be an interesting investigation to his friends and to himself to find out whether or not they were to have, say, the monopoly of supplying at their own prices (laughter)—nets, lines, and oilskin jackets in all time coming to the hardy and enterprising fishermen of Cellardyke; but if the burges tickets placed in their hands did not confer any such special and peculiar trading advantages they were at least certain they were the tokens of something they valued far more highly—viz., the goodwill of that community. (Applause.) He would simply add for himself and his friends it would be their duty and happiness ever to retain the regard and esteem of the inhabitants of their native town. (Applause.) It was something to be made a burges of a burgh of the great antiquity of Kilrenny. He then sketched the history of the burgh, observing that the name of Fowler was the very first which appeared among the Magistrates in the ancient records; while his own name, Stephen Williamson, appeared as Treasurer early as 1693, and also in the Council records. They were therefore, children of the burgh, so to speak, and now burgesses, with the fortunes of which their names and their families in past times had been identified. That rendered their enrolment as burgesses appropriate in itself, as it was a graceful act on the part of the municipal authorities. It was a matter of more modern history that his father and Mr George Fowler's father were both Chief Magistrates or Managers of the burgh in recent times during its temporary disfranchisement - a disfranchisement which seems to have arisen from an excessively small and unimportant irregularity connected with municipal election in 1823. It was a pleasant reflection that they were made burgesses of a town rising in industry and in population.

Towards the close of last century trade seemed to have languished, and population to have decreased. In 1753 the inhabitants numbered 1348, while in 1801 they had fallen to 1043. The population in 1881 was 3198, of whom 2759 resided within the municipal boundaries. Although the old trades of weaving, brewing, and malt-making, with a little direct trade to the Continent of Europe, had become extinct, the fishing industry had greatly increased. The number of boats in 1868 was 150, manned by 450 men and boys. The total value of boats, nets, and lines was £34,130, while the number of boats in 1883 was 203, manned by 650 men and boys. The boats were now built of a much larger size, and consequently he found the value of boats and gear had increased to £63,940, being nearly double the value estimated so recently as 1868. Cellardyke stood next to Buckie in the number of its boats and fishermen. It closely approached Buckie, and so might be reckoned the second largest fishing community in Scotland. He was sure that so far as concerned industry, energy, bravery, and good conduct the Cellardyke fishermen were second to none in the United Kingdom. (Applause.) Now, it was only fitting, that the institutions of the town should keep abreast of its growing importance. That new hall, he hoped, would be the centre of many beneficial efforts for the good of the community. He earnestly hoped that the other portions of the building might be productive of great social advantage to the people of Cellardyke. It would be mere affectation on his part did he not recognise that the honour conferred upon them that day was to commemorate the fact that they had endeavoured to provide in a suitable and substantial way a home, so to speak, for the municipal and social life of the town in its mere outward manifestations. If by so doing they were advancing the happiness of their fellow-townsmen, and had gained their appreciative regard, he was sure they would be amply recompensed. (Applause.)

Mr James Fowler thanked the Provost for the kind way which he had referred to his late uncle and himself. He felt that great honour had been conferred upon him that day, and it would have been a great pleasure to his father could he have been there to have witnessed that gathering in that fine hall. He hoped it would prove as useful it was ornamental, and be of great service to the town. (Applause.) Bailie Sharp proposed "The Neighbouring Burghs," coupled with the name of Provost Anderson, Bailie McGregor gave "Success to Cellardyke and New Town Hall," and ex-Provost Martin replied. Mr James Smith proposed "The Clergy," and the Rev. Mr Anderson responded. "The Press" was given by Mr D. Cook, and replied to by Mr George Innes. Treasurer Thomson proposed "The Architects," which Mr Henry replied. "The Contractors" was proposed by Councillor Skinner, and was acknowledged by Bailie Gilmour. Provost Peattie gave "The Magistrates and Town Council of Kilrenny," and Bailie Sharp replied. On the motion of Mr S, Williamson, a vote thanks to the Chairman concluded the proceedings.

A conversazione was held in the evening in the hall, which was densely crowded in every part, between 500 and 600 persons being present. Several hundreds were unable to gain admission. Mr Williamson occupied the chair.

Provost Watson, in a few felicitous remarks, adverted to the handsome gift which had been bestowed upon the burgh and the great interest the Chairman manifested in the fishermen. He eulogised Mr Williamson for the efficient manner in which he attended in the House of Commons to all that related to fishermen.

The Chairman, in the course of his remarks, specially referred to the cafe connected with the hall, and trusted that everyone would do his utmost to make it successful. He alluded to the prosperity of those instituted in Liverpool, where they were not only withdrawing large numbers from the public-houses, but were yielding 10 per cent. Their drawings last year were nearly one hundred thousand pounds.

Mr Martin, in proposing the health of Mr James Fowler, trusted that they would have cookery classes in connection with the hall, where the young women could be trained to cook a plain substantial diet for their husbands.

Mr James Fowler thanked the meeting for the kind manner in which his name had been received.

In the course of the evening Mrs Williamson addressed the meeting, principally referring to the cafe, and urging the community to support it. The coffee, she assured them, was made on the French principle, and they would find it superior to anything they had ever tasted.

Provost Wilson shortly spoke of the great importance of the fishing interest, believing that there would be very scanty fare at many a board were it not for what was provided by the fishermen.

Mr John Carstairs replied.

A choir under the leadership of Mr Watterstone rendered some excellent pieces. Amongst those who gave solos were Miss Jamieson, Miss Fortune, Miss Mackintosh, and Mrs Williamson, the latter being encored for "Comin' through the Rye." The proceedings throughout were of an enthusiastic character.

DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING. The new building is built partly the site of the old Town Hall and Public Shambles and partly the property acquired for the purpose from Mr Brodie Nicholson, and has a frontage to the west of about 75 feet and to the south of 45 feet. The accommodation on the ground floor consists of a large coffee-room or cafe (36 feet 20 feet), with its kitchen and stores, while there are also on this floor the main entrance, staircase, Council-room, town officer's dwelling house, &c. The first floor contains the Town Hall (50 feet 30 feet), reading room (27 feet by 20 feet), and ante-room (15 feet by 11J feet). The second floor, which is above the south front, only contains large smoking-room and amusement room, where draughts, chess, or other games skill may be played. The west elevation shows the principal entrance to be through handsome wrought-iron gate, under pointed and boldly moulded, arch into the vestibule, the walls and ceiling of which are faced with ashlar, and the floor paved with marble mosaic tiles. In the vestibule, to the right, is the entrance to the cafe, and in front the entrance-hall and staircase (35 feet by 11 feet); the left is the Council chamber (18 feet by 13 ½ feet), with a panelled dado all round, and carved oak chimney piece, with marble impost. Ascending the stair, which is 5 feet wide, with a wrought iron railing, the Town Hall is reached. The hall is divided into four bays, having hammer-beam principals and a boarded ceiling, divided into panels by the purlins and by ribs screwed through the rafters. Large mullioned and transomed windows in the bays both sides give ample light. Ventilation is secured by fresh air inlets through the outer walls, vertical tubes, and the foul air is extracted by one of Buchan's patent exhaust ventilators encased in a wood framed and slated turret. Two handsome coronae and four brackets of hammered iron, illuminated and gilt, light it with gas, and a carved oak chimney piece with marble inposts finishes the upper end of the room. Special attention has also been given to the ventilation of the café and to the reading and smoking rooms. With regard to the architectural style the aim of the architects has been to produce a building that would be in harmony with, and help perpetuate the old Scotch style so well exemplified in the coast burghs, notably in the Anstruthers, Crail and Pittenweem – happy hunting ground of innumerable artists, with its steep roofs, crow stepped gables, quaint corbelling, and tall chimney stacks. The walls are built of rock faced rubble work with scabbled dressings, the windows and other openings being moulded. Over a door in the south front there is a moulded panel in which is carved the burgh arms and motto. The roofs are covered with green Buttermere slates and finished with red ridge cresting from the works of Stanley Brothers of Nuneaton. The old burgh cross, with its date 1643, is of much historic interest

has been carefully re-erected against the wall of the hall to the right of the entrance. When taken down from kit's original position in front of the old hall, to which it was attached by iron clasps, it was found to have been broken in three pieces, suggesting some earlier removal, but the pieces have been carefully put together again as they came down. A panel in the wall above the cross bears the inscription;- "Erected by David Fowler and Stephen Williamson for municipal and other purposes in this their native town 1881" the total cost of the erection and furnishing of the building and purchase of ground will be about £3500.

