

25th January 1912

NEW HALL AT DONNINGTON

Yesterday's Opening Ceremony

By the Hon. Mrs Farquhar

Description of the Building

By the erection of the new Parish Hall, which was opened yesterday (Wednesday) afternoon, a long-felt want has been filled in the Parish of Shaw cum Donnington. In the past, there has been no building with the exception of the schools in which a public meeting, entertainment or dance could be held, but this has at last been remedied. The scheme was inaugurated about a year ago by the Rector, the Rev. Kingsley Kefford, and estimates having been secured it was found that £450 would be needed for the erection and furnishing of a suitable building. The matter was energetically taken up by the Rev. Kingsley Kefford, who secured the hearty support of the Parishioners, with the result that £375 of that amount has already been secured, and there should be little difficulty in getting the remainder of the money. Sufficient funds having been secured to make a start with the building the work was put into the hands of Messrs Houghton and Hitchman, builders, of Donnington, and any-one visiting the Parish Hall and seeing the place completed, cannot but recognise that they have turned out a most excellent job.

A MODEL HALL

Although the Rector, at the opening ceremony, said that they had taken utility, rather than architectural beauty, as their standard, yet the building with its exterior of rough cast, surmounted by a roof of a rich red colour is decidedly not unpicturesque, but may be said to be in harmony with its rural surroundings. And while this is so, there is no doubt as to the utility of the hall. Indeed, in the writer's opinion, it may well lay claim to being the best arranged and most useful building of its size in the locality. The interior is sixty feet by twenty-five feet, exclusive of the rifle range, which runs down one side and is separated from the main building by shutters. So that it can either be shut right off, or in the case of the place being used for dances, the shutters can be let down half way and the range is transferred into a ready-made refreshment buffet, and for this purpose it has been wisely furnished with a gas stove.

The height of the building is twenty-one feet to the ridge and nine feet to the eaves. The hall is constructed of timber framing on brick footings, covered on the exterior with cement rough cast on expanded metal lathing. The interior is lined with match boarding, stained and varnished. The picturesque red roof is covered with asbestos slating. At one end of the hall is a commodious stage which can, if wanted, be shut off and used as a separate room. There are also retiring rooms on either side of the stage. The whole of the building is lighted with incandescent gas and warmed with gas steam radiators. The premises are built on a portion of the glebe land which the Rector wished to give for the purpose, but the Ecclesiastical Commissioners held that in fairness to his successors that the land should be purchased, and this was done. The committee which had charge of the building arrangements consisted of the Rector, Col. Ricardo, the Hon. A E Gathorne-Hardy, Mrs Hardy, Mr G J Watts, Mrs Farquhar and Mr Hitchman. The trustees are the Rector, Hon. A E Gathorne-Hardy and Mr Walter Farquhar, whilst the committee of management consists of the Rector, Col. Ricardo, Messrs. G J Watts, E Palmer, E R Flint, A Maslin, E Hitchman, G Payne, A Slack, J Stevens and E Roberts.

THE OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony which was performed by the Hon. Mrs Farquhar of Shaw House, was quite brief. Supporting Mrs Farquhar on the stage were the Rector the Rev. Kingsley Kefford, Mrs Kefford, Mrs Sperling, Col. Bull and Col. Ricardo. After explaining the history of the scheme the Rector called on the Hon. Mrs Farquhar to declare the Hall open, and this she did in a graceful speech. The Vicar expressed regret that his two fellow trustees, the Hon. A E Gathorne-Hardy and Mr Walter Farquhar were unable to be present due to business engagements. As regards the hall itself, they started about a year ago with the idea of a building, the cost of which at about £450. They did not aspire to architectural beauty, their great need was utility and he thought he might claim that they had got it. They had a most excellent hall and they had also secured £375 of the money they wanted. The building was therefore practically paid for. The furnishing of the hall owed a great debt of gratitude to Mrs Ball for her present of a grand piano because after all, that would have been one of the biggest items they would have to face. The beautiful stage curtains were also a present from Mrs Ball. The question of how to wipe off the remaining debt and also pay for the upkeep of the hall. This they hoped to do by subscriptions, by entertainments and by letting the hall, and he might add that they had provided to fit the hall for all possible engagements and even to instal a gas range. Then to make the whole thing a success, they had gathered together a committee of management and as far as possible it had been made representative of both parts of the Parish. As Chairman they had Col. Ricardo. and as Hon. Sec.

and Treasurer Mr G J Watts, and this they would agree was making a good start towards the complete success of the management. The Rector then concluded by asking Mrs Faquhar to declare the hall open.

The Hon. Mrs Faquhar said she had much pleasure in declaring the hall open as she had taken great interest in it and she hoped it would be an enormous success. She would like to say her son was sorry that he was unable to accompany her, owing to being detained in London on business.

She felt that they should record a debt of gratitude to Mr Kefford for having started the scheme and for the trouble he had taken to bring it to successful issue. She was sure that having seen the building they would all agree with her that they had every reason to congratulate him heartily upon the issue of his efforts. She trusted that the building would be of great use to the Parish and that people would pass very pleasant evenings there. She was especially pleased to see that a rifle gallery had been included in the arrangements of the hall, because it was most important that their boys and young men should learn to use a rifle properly. Before she sat down Mrs Faquhar said she would like to propose a vote of thanks to Mr Kefford for all he had done in connexion with the hall.

This was seconded by Col. Ball.

The Vicar said what he had done was from a sense of duty and that the Parish needed a hall, and that every-body had backed him splendidly. The ceremonial part of the proceedings concluded with a vote of thanks to Mrs Faquhar proposed by Col. Ricardo.

THE OPENING CONCERT

Rector and Mrs Kefford, Hon. Mrs Faquhar, Col. Mrs and Miss Ricardo, Mr Cyril Tubbs, Col. and Mrs Ball. Mrs Spérling, Mr and Mrs Rowland Sperham, Mr and Misses Loudon, Mrs and Misses Jobson, Mr Walter Money, Mrs Gipps, Mr and Mrs Gardiner Leader, Mr Frank Leader, Mr and Mrs Palmer, Mr and Mrs and Miss Watts, Miss Effie Day, Miss Hayhoe, Mrs E R Flint, Mr and Mrs Lawrence, Mr and Mrs G Budd, Mr and Mrs W H Houghton, Mr and Mrs Hitchman, Miss Coles, Mr E Watson, Mr and Mrs G Payne, Mr and Mrs Runham, Messrs Maslin, Rowles, Read, etc.

A high class concert had been arranged for the occasion at which pianoforte solos were given by Miss Effie day and Mr Gardiner Leader, and cello solos by Mrs Rowland Sperling. The last named were the gem of the programme. Mrs Sperling who will be remembered by musicians as Miss Dorothy Kingsmill, getting a full rich tone out of that beautiful instrument. She also contributed an obligato to one of Mr Gardiner Leader's songs.

The hall is splendidly constructed for sound and the vocalists and instrumentalists were heard to full advantage.

At the conclusion of the concert, Rev Kingsley Kefford proposed a vote of thanks to the performers and said how grateful he was to Messrs. Houghton and Hitchman for the way they had met him on all points, and for the excellent work they had put in.