

DUNFERMLINE JOURNAL

November 28th 1874

LAYING THE FOUNDATION STONE OF BALLINGRY PARISH SCHOOL

On Thursday last, the ceremony of laying the foundation stone of Ballingry Parish School buildings at Ballingry was celebrated with Masonic honours. The important event excited a good deal of interest throughout the district, so much so, that a large number of people unconnected with Free Masonry accompanied the brethren to view the proceedings at Ballingry, two or three miles from Lochgelly. The morning had been wet which made it very dirty stepping on the country roads, but shortly after ten o'clock the rain ceased, and it continued fair during the day. The brethren of the "Minto Lodge", Lochgelly, met in the New Hall, about eleven o'clock, where they were joined by deputations from the Lodges in Dunfermline, Crossgates and Leslie. Being marshalled in order they left Lochgelly about noon, headed by the local instrumental band, and proceeded northward to the place where the buildings are in course of erection, which is about quarter of a mile beyond the newly erected houses forming Lochore village. Before relating what followed, however, it may be profitable to make a brief statement respecting the school which was the occasion of so widespread and interesting regard.

The School Board of Ballingry having found that the present schoolhouse at Flockhouse was insufficient in respect of accommodation, and otherwise unsuitable because of its situation, resolved about the beginning of the year to erect new school buildings, and also a schoolmaster's house. In their search for a more favourable spot they fixed upon a site on an elevated situation at the corner of a field to the north-east of Hynds farm steading, and close to the public highway. They then requested Mr Andrew Scobie, architect, Dunfermline, to prepare plans and specifications for a school capable of accommodating 250 pupils; this building together with the schoolmaster's house was estimated to cost £2,000. The plans were submitted and approved, and thereafter tenders were accepted from the following tradesmen - For the mason work - Messrs Williamson, Kinglassie; joiner work - Mr David Henderson, Lochgelly; plaster work - Mr Schoolbred, Lochgelly; slater work - Mr I Donaldson, Kelty; and for the plumber work, Mr Porteens, Kinross. Mr Horn, Dollar, was appointed Inspector of the work. The building will be constructed on the gothic type of architecture, showing a frontage of 105 feet with 55 feet on the sides. When finished they will have a picturesque appearance on their elevated situation, and also from the contrasting colours of the Whinstone and freestone with which it is being erected. It is flanked with gables having four mullioned windows and label mouldings, the whole finished with free-stone couracry. The primary object of the Board was to select a site in every way conducive to the health of the pupils both for air and light; the same principle has been studiously kept in view in all the sanitary arrangements, inside as well as out. This is shown in the construction of the classrooms, which will be well ventilated - the height from floor to ceiling being fifteen feet. There is a mixed classroom, another for the infant department, two smaller classrooms, a lavatory, and cloak and hat room. The school-rooms are to be heated by what is known as the Manchester school grate; the cold air is admitted by an aperture in the wall communicating with the back of the grate where it is heated and ascends in flues to within 18 inches of the ceiling, where it is then given of into

the apartments. The teacher's house forms the right wing of the buildings and is divided into five apartments. To this there is attached a garden, and two separate play grounds for boys and girls. When these buildings are completed and occupied it is expected they will meet the requirements of the district, and to this there has been added the efforts of the School Board in the neighbouring parish of Beath. At their desire Mr Scobie has in hand plans for a school at Cowdenbeath, which is intended to accommodate 550 pupils - these buildings also include a school-master's house.

The company representing the various bodies of Freemasons reached the partially erected building between one and two o'clock and took up their position around a stone in the South-east wing where all the requisite preparations had previously been made. The proceedings were conducted with impressive solemnity, the band having played the Old Hundred, the Rev Mr Pennel, minister of the parish and chairman of the School Board, offered up prayer. At the request of Mr Andrew Galloway R.W.M.; one of the brethren placed in a cavity of the lower stone a bottle containing the names of the members of the School Board, the names of the Kirk Session, several coins of the realm and copies of newspapers. Two of the operative masons filled up the cavity and spread a bed of lime, the upper stone was lowered into its place; after which the brethren in compliance with the mysteries of their craft applied to it the level, square and plummet; it was declared to be correctly adjusted; corn, wine and oil were then poured upon it, three raps were made with a mallet, and the Master invoked a blessing on the work and on the objects of the building. The pupils attending the parish school were on the grounds under the charge of their teacher, Mr Keppie, and near the close of the ceremony they united in singing a hymn. Mr W.B. Constable, Jun, secretary of the School Board then read a minute of the above proceedings after which Mr Galloway briefly adverted to the inestimable benefits of education for the furtherance of which the building was being erected. He then called for three cheers for its success. The Rev Mr Pennel expressed gratification at meeting so many of the brethren; occasions like the present were calculated to promote respect and friendship, and having thanked the brethren for their attendance he reciprocated the sentiments of the Master that the purpose of the above might be greatly successful and also that the brotherly love which subsisted among the Masonic craft might continue and go on to increase. He then presented to Mr Galloway a silver trowel, bearing an appropriate inscription, as a memorial of that days work and the part he had fulfilled in conducting the ceremony. The gift was duly acknowledged after which the company returned to Lochgelly.

THE DINNER

The members of the Minto Lodge, and the brethren forming the deputations from other lodges, and also members of the Ballingry School Board dined together in the Lodge Room of the Minto brethren during the afternoon; upwards of sixty gentlemen were present. The Rev Mr Pennel presided; and the duties of croupier were fulfilled by Mr Galloway, and Mr R. Lindsay.

The Chairman gave the usual loyal and patriotic toasts, and Dr Mungall having replied for the volunteers.

Mr A Galloway proposed "The School Board of Ballingry". The company had earned the approbation of the Lodge, they had enjoyed a day's outing and done good work. That work had been originated by the School Board of Ballingry, and what they had just been engaged about they had done it well. He would not go into any minute but there was a remarkable coincidence connected with the whole thing, he did not know if it had been suggested by the Board because of their sympathy with Freemasonry, but strength and beauty which were essential attributes of the craft, had been prominently brought forward by the School Board. First there was the selection of the site, and their care for the health of the pupils, in that they had displayed wisdom like sensible men. The materials of the building were composed of whin-stone and freestone which gives strength to the whole fabric. He hoped that the praiseworthy manner in which the Board had sought to carry out their duty would meet with the success they all desired.

The Chairman responded, and thanked the company for their good wishes. He could assure them, the Board had had tough work. To begin at the beginning. Before 1860 the heritors of the parish became convinced of the necessity of providing better school accommodation if they would do justice to both teachers and children. The school buildings were awkwardly placed with an open drain near them. Plans were drawn up for a new school which would have suited at that date, but the difficulty was to get a site and obstacles came in the way. The Education Act came into operation and the School Board was elected. Much deliberation had taken place, and a great deal had to be done before the red-tape objections were overcome, and he expected they would have the approval of the ratepayers for what they had done. It was a building for which they would have no cause to feel ashamed. It would not be a barn altogether, there would be some ornamentation. That subject had caused the only cross at the Board. One member took a partiality for another site and afterwards resigned. They had gone on - there were differences of opinion occasionally - but every one could not expect that effect would be given to his views, he had been outvoted himself about the appointment of the officials, and had submitted to it. Having thanked the company for the part they had taken in laying the foundation stone, he said he had never seen during his intercourse with freemasons, since he was admitted to the Lodge in Glasgow, anything prejudicial to his work as a preacher of the everlasting gospel. He felt really proud of their sympathy, and but for the state of his health he would visit their lodge oftener.

Dr Mungall proposed "Success to the building".

Mr R. Lindsay replied, and stated that he had built the village near the school, which would be another monument to the name of Lindsay. He was very pleased to see the School Board of Ballingry had been equal to their duty in devising means to meet the educational wants of that large and increasing population. That district of country was not the least historic in Scotland. It was in that district that the Caledonians waged war with the Roman Legions under Agricola, indeed up to the present day it was not known whether the final struggle took place at the foot of the Grampians or there. He hoped that the building would become a monument of the skill of its architect, Mr Scobie.

Mr Henry Cook proposed "The educational interests of the district". Those interests were in the keeping of the School Board, and they all felt that the well-being of the Ballingry parish was committed to good hands. Their craft took a great interest in that district, there was a vast amount of mineral wealth there yet to be got at, and it was desirable that the intelligence of the people should keep pace with their industry. There was another feature peculiar to the district which accounted for the large quantity of stones there if the report was true. An ancient gentleman who should be nameless - he was not a mason - gathered his lap full of stones for the purpose of filling up Lochleven. On the way North the apron strings broke, and hence the immense quantity of stones in Ballingry.

Mr Keppie, parish teacher, Ballingry, replied, and gave a brief description of the progress of education in the parish, where he had taught during the last 17 years. In 1831 the population of the parish was 278, in 1851 it was 548, then ten years later it was 736, and in 1871 it was 982. The old school house had been erected in a most unfortunate place so far as sanitary considerations were concerned, but he had gone on with it all these years and made the best of it. The heritors were not unmindful of his work, for during that period they increased his salary. But Acts of Parliament are passed at times, and when they do come into operation they make great changes. Respecting the School Board he could not desire to be under the supervision of better men, who had really at heart the well-being of the district. He felt proud to say that day's work was one of the most pleasing days of his life. When the school was ready for occupation the compulsory classes would be put in operation, and he could ensure them that no effort would be wanting on his part to cope with the duties required of him.

Mr Gillespie proposed, and Mr MacDonald Bucklyvie responded to the toast of "The Clergy".

Mr H. Cook proposed the "Minto Lodge" of which he had once been a member before entering the lodge at Crossgates. Mr Galloway acknowledged the compliment on behalf of the lodge. Mr Cook proposed "The mining interests of the country" with which the well-being of the district was bound up; desiderating for the locality the introduction of additional trades where there was no such water power at their disposal.

Mr George Gillespie proposed the Agricultural interest, to which Mr W.B. Dick responded.

Mr W.B. Constable gave "The Town and Trade of Lochgelly" which was acknowledged by Mr Bethune, merchant.

Songs were contributed by members of the company at intervals, and the proceedings through the day were conducted in lively satisfaction.

