

Staveley & District History Society

Journal Spring 2011

CONTENTS

- 2 **Chairman's report**
Iain Johnston gives his report on the past year
- 3 **A tale of two fires**
Mike Houston recounts the story of two Staveley fires in October 1936
- 5 **The village hall key to come home**
Mike Houston tells the history of the Village Hall key and its imminent return to Staveley
- 8 **Tales from the Tapes – Sam Crossley**
The second instalment of Mike Houston's interview of the late Sam Crossley
- 12 **Financial Accounts 2010**
David Hooson provides a summary report of the Society's finances

The views expressed in articles in this Journal are those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Society.

Cover photo: Staveley Village Hall Key – to return home after 75 years

The next issue of the *Journal* (the Summer issue) will be published about the 12th August 2011. Any contributions (letters, articles, etc.) should be with the Editor no later than the 30th June.

Chairman's Report

As I write this, I marvel that another year has passed. It seems hardly any time at all since I wrote my previous annual report for the Journal. This has been another very busy and successful year for our society. For the majority of our members and visitors the main feature is the splendid programme of winter meetings with a particularly wide range of speakers on an equally wide range of topics. Some of our evenings have been amongst the best I remember with first class speakers who enthuse their audience with fascinating facts and anecdotes which they are able to hand on to us



generously illustrated through their own obvious interest and enjoyment. We are very fortunate to be able to call on so many good local speakers and equally fortunate that our committee takes pains to find them and mould the topics into such an absorbing programme. It is always particularly satisfying when we have members of our own society who can bring their enthusiasms and interests to share with us.

The summer walks too were particularly interesting this last year. We didn't have the pain of the midges that attacked us on our evening in Longsleddale the previous year but we did have memorable visits with wine and canapés in the magnificent surroundings of Reston Hall, a fascinating evening learning about Hag End and a most stimulating afternoon visit to Ravenstonedale. But wonderful as these evenings and outings are, they are not the full range of activities which we undertake.

Preparations are currently in hand to mount an exhibition in Staveley Roundhouse to mark the 20th anniversary of the founding of this society by Joe Scott. I cannot help but think that Joe would be extremely proud of the success of his idea – an idea which started with a few members and has grown into one of the largest history societies in Cumbria. The exhibition will depict 200 years of the history of this area and will include many extracts from “A Lakeland Valley Through Time” and much more. Successful as our society may be we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. History is being made all the time and it is our responsibility to ensure that it is recorded. We already have a considerable bank of oral history – interviews with residents who remember times gone by and it is vital that we continue with this task. That sort of personal history tells so much more of the life and times of people in Staveley and surrounding areas, their work and their enjoyment, the hard times and the celebrations. That depth of information is not the stuff of history books but it is the real history of this place. It is vital that we keep seeking out this information before those memories are lost.

Your committee is keen that we develop our knowledge surrounding the names on the war memorial and continue the excellent work done in recording the memorials in Staveley churchyard. It is important that we also bring up to date the information we have about the headstones and memorials in both Kentmere and Ings. Unfortunately

we have not been as successful in keeping a record of changes to the buildings and the fabric of the villages. We urgently need someone to re-form and co-ordinate a buildings group to enhance our archives of data about some of our historical buildings and the changes that have taken place over time. Some of those changes are happening at present and should not go unrecorded. There is so much to do and we have all of the talents we need within our society. I am proud to be your chairman and I delight in working with a splendid committee but we could always do with more help. We are always happy for ‘observers’ to come along to our committee meetings but in addition, if anybody has a particular interest they would like to follow or if you are looking for help with a project or if you can offer some expertise, please come forward and let us know. This has been a good year, and looking at the programme for next year, the momentum is continuing. I certainly look forward to great things to come.

Iain Johnston

A tale of two fires

The week leading up to Friday October 10th 1936 must have been a momentous one for Staveley and district. As well as a detailed report of the opening of Staveley Village Hall, the *Westmorland Gazette* on that Friday also carried reports of fires in the area. The headlines read **£5000 Blaze at Staveley Woodturning Mill** and **The Millriggs Blaze - 8000 cubic yards of hay destroyed**.



On Wednesday 8th October the Windermere Fire Brigade was summoned to the barn at Millriggs at 8.45 am. As there was a possible danger to other farm buildings, the Kendal Brigade was also called as a precaution which was fortunate as the supply from the Windermere engine failed. The roof of the barn had fallen in and

the doors leading into the shippens and stables on each side of the barn were burnt through when the Kendal Brigade arrived.

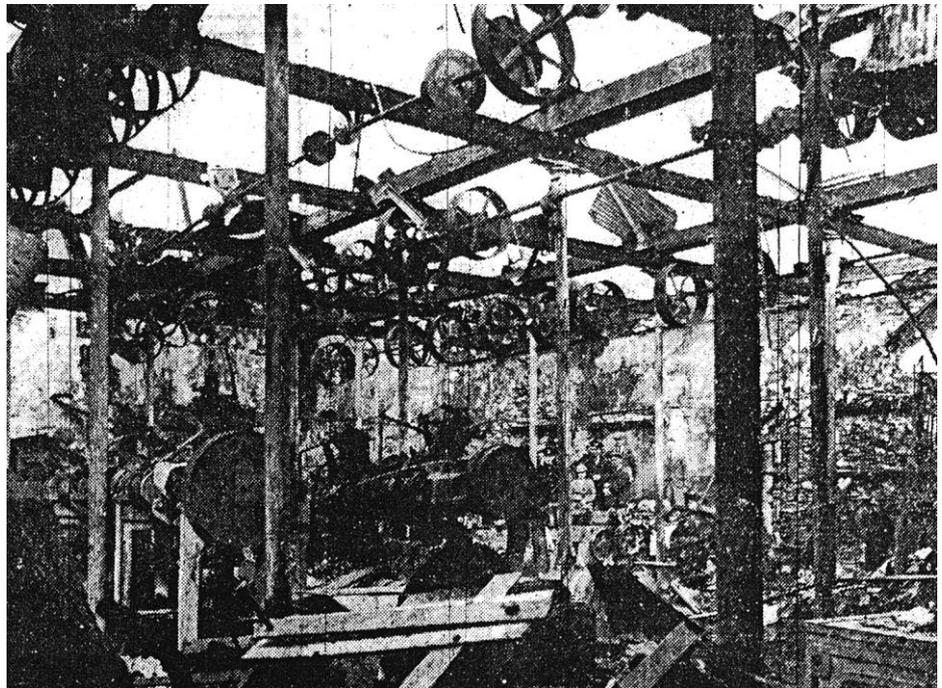
The Kendal engine was immediately taken to the River Kent some 500 yards away and four lines of hose were used to carry a pressure of 112lbs/sq in. Communication between the engine and the scene of the fire was by the telephone equipment of the Kendal Brigade. After some four or five hours of work, the Windermere Brigade

having already left for home, the fire was completely under control. At the request of Mr. Taylor, the tenant, however, the Kendal Brigade stayed on whilst the burning hay and straw mixed with hundreds of broken slates were moved into an adjacent field.

At 9.30pm the Chief Constable was considering withdrawing the Brigade when a phone call was received to attend the outbreak at Staveley. As the Brigade always carried 600 yards of spare hose, no time was lost in having to collect the hose laid at Millriggs. Soon after 1.00 am on the Thursday the Brigade returned from Staveley as there were still occasional bursts from the last mowstead being extinguished by twelve voluntary workers. It was 3.00 am after almost 20 hours of continuous work before they returned to Kendal only to return at 8.00 am to control several outbreaks in the smouldering heaps of hay.

One of the first persons to discover the outbreak at Staveley Woodturning Mill was Mr. J. (Johnny) Crawford who, until the arrival of the village brigade had tried to fight the flames single handed. The lights of the new Village Hall had failed during a rehearsal of *Yellow Sands* and those taking part included two firemen, so the entire company, still in costumes, ran to render assistance to the local brigade. Edwin Brockbank, managing partner of the firm, telephoned the Windermere Brigade but, realising that further assistance was necessary, summoned the Kendal Brigade, still at Millriggs, and the engine, with its 600 yards of spare hose, left for the mill.

By this time hundreds of people from Staveley and the neighbourhood had gathered and there were many voluntary helpers. Sacks of bobbins and reels were removed from the store room which was in danger, and furniture was moved from houses nearby. The Kendal Brigade utilised two lines of hose at one end of the burning building



while the Windermere engine was pumping from the other end. The local brigade continued their efforts from a fire hydrant. The main efforts were now directed successfully towards preventing the fire spreading to other departments of the mill as a few yards away a huge quantity of wood was stored. All three brigades continued until 1.00 am when the fire was well under control.

On the Thursday morning workmen at the mill were busy clearing away the tons of debris. Valuable machinery, which 24 hours before had been working at full pressure, was discoloured by rust and lay derelict amongst the debris. Thousands of reels littered the ground inside and outside the premises. The machines destroyed included those used for reeling, pumping and boring. The 100 hp gas engine which, with a water turbine supplies power for the factory, was also badly damaged. The damage was covered by insurance.

[Much of the material used in this item was taken from reports published in the *Westmorland Gazette* and we are grateful to the Local Studies section of the Kendal Library for their help and in giving us access to their records.]

Mike Houston

The village hall key to come home

In late summer 2010 the Society was approached by Mr. Gerard Leighton who lives in Faulkland, Somerset, seeking guidance regarding the long term keeping of the ceremonial key used by his grandfather, Harold Mather, for the official opening of the Staveley Village Hall in 1936. Mr. Leighton, who is a member of the Society, believed correctly that his grandfather met a substantial proportion of the cost of providing the village with a new hall. The key in question is brass with an elaborate handle decorated with three incised, gothic style trefoils and is engraved on one side *Staveley Village Hall, October 3rd 1936* and on the reverse *Presented to Harold Mather Esquire JP*. Subsequent discussion with Mr. Leighton led to him offering the key to the Staveley Village Association with a view to it being displayed in the Village Hall.



The Mather family has firm links with Staveley and Ings, having acquired Middle Fairbank in the mid 19th century. They progressively built up an estate containing coppiced woodland to provide material for their bobbins in their mills in Bolton. Following his marriage Harold

Mather built Sidegarth off the Crook Road, first as a holiday home, then extended it, on retirement, as a permanent residence. His chauffeur's daughter, Joan Lyon (née Steele) recalled early memories of Sidegarth in Issue 14 of the Journal Winter 2008/9. But to get back to the opening of the Village Hall and the ceremonial key, Mr.

Leighton informs us that it came to him through his mother, Margaret (Peggy) Mather who was the youngest of Harold Mather's four daughters.

The opening ceremony was reported in detail in the Westmorland Gazette on October 10th 1936, Mr. Mather and the Women's Institute coming in for special mention. The following attempts to summarise the article which ran to some 2,555 words: *The new hall which cost £3,600 was opened on Saturday afternoon in the presence of a large and distinguished company by Mr. Harold Mather of Sidegarth who gave material and much appreciated assistance to the project. Nearly every house in the village was represented at the opening and many natives returned home for the event. Mr. Edwin Brockbank who presided*

introduced Mr. Mather, accompanied by his daughter, saying that there was only one name on the lips of the Management Committee as the person who should perform the opening ceremony and that was Mr. Mather. Mr. Malcolm Shaw the architect from Kendal then presented a



gold(sic) key to Mr. Mather, who, on turning the lock, declared the hall open amid loud applause. Miss Mather was presented with a bouquet by Miss J. Brockbank and the crowd flocked into the hall, every available space being used for seating and many having to be content with standing.

The distinguished company on the platform included Mr. Oliver Stanley (M.P. for Westmorland & President of the Board of Education), Mr. G.M. Pattinson, Mr. A.H. Willink, Mrs. & Miss Challiner, Mr. John Somervell, Mr. & Mrs H. Airey (Mayor & Mayoress of Kendal), the Revs, E.W.J. McConnel (vicar of Staveley, who composed a special hymn of thanksgiving for the occasion) and E.U. Savage (Vicar of Ings) W. Heyes (vicar of Crosthwaite) and R. Armstrong (superintendent minister, Kendal Stricklandgate Methodist circuit), Mr. E. Brockbank (vice-chairman of the general Committee and joint secretary with Mr. J.C. Robinson), Mr. J. Thomas and Mr. H. Pattinson.

Many individuals had supported the initial impetus provided by Staveley W.I. which had resulted in the successful scheme being brought to fruition. The village now had its hall and not only has it proved to be worthy of the village, but the vision of those early pioneers has been achieved. In addressing those present Mr. Mather sincerely trusted that the hall would add to the well-being, recreation and pleasure of the inhabitants of the surrounding district, both now and in the years to come. It was

hoped that it would encourage mental and physical education and go hand in hand with the lighter side of life. It was intended the stage would be suitable for dramatic presentations, choral concerts and the like, while the floor had been made suitable for dancing using maple wood at considerable extra expense, especially for the young people. Not only was the building convenient, but architecturally beautiful. The architect had spared no pains to make it so. The trustees and committee of the Men's Institute had co-operated and allowed their buildings to be joined up, thus providing an excellent supper room and it was hoped the mutual advantage would be continued.



Mr. Edwin Brockbank, chairman of the Finance Committee, said that five years previously a commission of inquiry had examined the question of a public hall for the village. Mr. Mather was approached and he promised his support which had been given unsparingly. He thought that without his aid the hall would not have been possible. The contract for building, exclusive of fittings, was £2,480. In addition, there had been £1,000 in furnishings and extras. The chairs had cost £220 and the surround of the building £75. Up to that afternoon they had £2,957, which left about £500 to be raised. Nearly everyone in the village had subscribed and the Council of Social Service had given them £350 and loaned them £500 free of interest. It was fitting that the find cheque of £100 was presented by Miss Challiner on behalf of the W.I. at the meeting. In total the W.I. contributed £500, most as a result of the 18 collectors who had worked week by week for a number of years collecting the money. Their effort

had been second to none in the annals of Women's Institutes throughout the country.

It is important that the key should come back home and we shall keep members in touch with the future of this symbol of the efforts made in the past to provide us with our excellent village hall. It will be on display for the first time at the April exhibition.

The full report of the ceremony can be read in the Westmorland Gazette of the 10th October 1936 in the local history section of Kendal Library.

Mike Houston

Tales from the Tapes – Sam Crossley (ctd from Journal 20)

You told me that you got married and you had a pound and sixpence when, you first had your salary; there must have been sometime when you weren't working otherwise you couldn't have met these nice young lasses in those days.

When we were young, the wife worked right opposite the front door in a bakery, it was Threlfall's Bakery right opposite the road, she only got two and six a week for her learner baker, a confectioner, I had three and six pocket money so we didn't have much between us. There was no dances or public houses or owt like that, we just managed Windermere pictures once a week and then we were hard up.

Now - you say it was opposite the entrance there, what's in its place now; which was the bakery Sam?

Er, 't was the fruiterers, it was the chemists shop then the fruiterer took it over, that was the bakehouse. Next to it where the hairdresser is was the big doors there and Threlfalls used to keep the wagons in there, they had about 3 or 4 horses at one time,

What other shops were there in Staveley?

Oh there was one, two, three, four confectioners, there was what the Spar now and there was about three or four small ones. Just like in someone's parlour, they used to sell



Threlfall's Grocers on The Green

sweets, there was one right opposite the chemists, Jack Whittam (?) they'd a little shop, there was one next door to where we lived up at Church View. We moved into it after when t'old lass died. There was a little toffee shop on Eagle bridge in a little wood hut there. I think there was another one on the Banks. And about four little grocers shops all used to make a living. There's one little Spar now isn't there?

Yes it's amazing that..

Aye.

Because you say that of course Staveley has grown a lot since those days..

Oh twice the size now aye twice the size.

Now that's the shops Sam; what other occupations, what other trades were there carried on in the village; was there a blacksmiths?

Two blacksmiths aye, Dick Taylor in the Abbey Square, then there was Tom Park up at Barley Bridge, he used to shoe horses, aye.

And what sort of other occupations were there? Were there joiners?

Joiners er yes two joiners, Johnson Joiners - there now and Jimmy Taylor that had a joiners shop where the bottom place of the Kentmere Ltd is, down at the bottom end. He had a joiners shop there. That was the only two, I don't think there was any other. There was just a bobbin mill up Windermere Road, Paxtons and Bethoms bobbin mill higher up. That they used to call Garden Crafts, probably at some time they used to make mebbe garden furniture or something, but I don't know, before my days.

Now you said Sam that you used to go up on the fields when you were a little lad, when you got a little older, what sort of pastimes did you have, did you play local football and cricket?

Oh yes, I played for Staveley, football until I was about 40. I played for Windermere a year or two but mostly for Staveley then. We had a good team then. Course we had a bit of a following then because there was nothing for other folks to do - only come to the football match because there was no wireless and no telly - no television or anything that they could sit and watch then, so they used to come and watch the football match on the Recreation Ground. Aye we'd a good team then.

Who were the fellows that played?

Those that played? Well before I started or while I was playing?

Both.

Well before I was playing, oh aye all these, when I was about three they had a rugby team in Staveley and they were all locals. But the footballers was Henry Huck and Scottie Murdoch, Jack Bell, Albert Ellwood, Tom Jamieson, all chaps thats gone now. Eric Iveson, Mitchell - I forget his first name, he was killed in the war and goalkeeper. That was before we started. Then when they give over we were old enough to tek over playing football.

And then who was in your era then Sam?

(Sighs..) Robert Bethom, Fred Edmundson quite a few from Kendal.

You imported them then?

Aye we imported a few from Kendal.

Right, you were working once...

We were working on the engine, one winters night during the war and all the roof had to be blacked out, you know there was no lights had to be shown and PC Willy was coming up, about where you live somewhere, and he saw this light in the engine house so he come to turn us off, and he came in and fell head first into the tar pit – (laughs) - we spent t'next hour with sacks trying to rub him down to clean him off afore he could go home. Aye he went head first into the tar pit, what a mess he was.

And what do you think would be say the major change in Staveley then Sam?

At Woodturning? or after the big fire? Always remember Mr Brockbank was with us about 8 oclock down at the Eagle and Child, We were considering forming a British Legion Brass Band in the village, then somebody come in and said Woodturnings on fire so Mr. Brockbank off. That was about mebbe 7 or 8 o'clock at night. Then after that it burned the bobbin mill down altogether but then after that they didn't put the shaftings up. There was about 5 or 6 big shaftings with belts on that used to drive every machine. But all shafting they put up was one connected to the turbine, and they took all the shaftings down and all the machines were motorised then. That was a big difference.

Then did you ever get that Band formed then Sam?

Yes, aye we formed a Band, aye there was a Band in the village then, brass band.

And when did you perform with your brass band then?

Ah don't know, that would be in t'early thirties

wouldn't it? Oh we used to play up and down the village; it petered out eventually, we knew people got fed up of coming, like a lot more bands they've gone now, aye.



The Staveley Silver Band in 1938

And did you play yourself Sam?

Aye, ah wasn't so good, I used to play too much by ear. I couldn't read music or anything, I just had to hear a tune and I had it.

And which was your instrument?

Cornet, aye, I'd have never made a good player cos I couldn't read music. I used to play by ear too much.

One of the things that I find fascinating Sam is the business of the roads, you know that you were telling us before, they were all no tarmacadam or anything.

Aye there was all the stones were broken to put on the road, were broken with a hammer. A man used to break them in the roadside. He used to sit away there and got so much for a yard of stones. He used to sit away there in all weathers breaking these stones into pieces about inch and a half square or something like that. There was no crushers or anything like that. That was what they used on the roads then. Aye it was a cold job in winter for those old chaps, sitting on the road sides breaking stones.

For that you're thinking right between here and Reston say and in the village itself.

Aye y' needed quite a lot of stones.

But you wouldn't need worry about the traffic Sam, about cars?

Oh no, there wasn't any cars in those days, about a dozen of us used to go int' Abbey Square and put our caps down and have a football match, aye there was only horses and carts, there was no traffic.

Were there a lot of horses in the village itself Sam? You mention 3 at Threlfalls.

Aye there was only three there, but the farmers round about had plenty. They used to come into the village for their feeding stuffs at Threlfalls - used to sell feeding stuffs. Freddie Suarts and there was quite a few and we used to have what we called bogies, you know - a box on two wheels and two shafts and a shovel inside and we used to follow the horses up and down and wherever they'd bin and get the manure into the bogie. And that's what we used to use in the garden to set the potatoes. Ah we used to get all our manure off the roads then.

And had you a garden attached to your house had you Sam?

No, no, we had a - where Scroggs Close is now aye they were all gardens.

They were like allotments were they?

Allotments, aye and opposite side of the road was allotments, Kents, Kents something it is.

Yes Kents View or something.

Aye they were all allotments, we all had gardens there, aye

And were you a good gardener yourself?

No, I didn't do, my father used to do a little bit, aye I didn't do much.

(to be concluded in Journal 22)

Financial Accounts for the year 2010

Publication of the Spring issue of the Journal gives me an opportunity to provide an overview of the Society's Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2010.

The Society's main source of income is membership subscriptions which are a little less in 2010 at almost £950. Sales of the Lakeland Valley book and DVD are much reduced on the previous year as are sales of Occasional Papers and Staveley Walks book. Sundry items of income bring the year's total to almost £1100.

Expenditure is mainly Speaker Fees, Hire of School Hall, Journal production costs and purchase of display boards for the forthcoming exhibition. Subscriptions to other organisations together with the Insurance Premium and other sundry expenditure are in line with costs incurred in 2009. Total expenditure in 2010 is almost £850.

The year-end balances of both Current and Deposit Accounts with Alliance & Leicester Santander Bank shows the healthy state of the Society's finances.

The accounts were presented at the AGM on 12 April and for those not present, copies of the detailed accounts are available to members from the Treasurer.

Again thanks are due to Mr Arthur Lloyd who has checked the recorded entries and found the Society's books to be in order.

David Hooson, Hon Treasurer

(This is David's last report as Treasurer as he is standing down at the AGM. His contribution to the Society since taking over from the late Tony Williams in 2001 has been much appreciated – Ed)