

## 100 YEARS AGO

(July 11, 1907)

Saturday will long be recalled by the villagers of Clashmore as a day of delight and good fortune. It was truly a red-letter day in their history. Gratitude is admittedly the rarest of virtues, but it is a charge which cannot be honestly levelled against the inhabitants of the picturesque little village of Clashmore and surrounding district, so far as the opening ceremony of the Carnegie Free Hall and Library there on the 6th was concerned.

All were there. The smile of approbation or the manifestation of cool indifference are readily shown by the countenances of a gathering of some two hundred and fifty people, and on Saturday the veriest stranger could not miss being impressed by the feeling of obligation that literally shone from the faces of the community then assembled for the first time in their really beautiful new free hall.

Many and considerable have been the advantages that have accrued to the favoured people of Clashmore, directly as well as indirectly, since the day good fortune decreed that Dr and Mrs Andrew Carnegie should make Skibo Castle their Scottish home for six months in the year, but now the crowning touch has been given to all previous benefactions by the presentation of this free and endowed building, of which many a town containing a population of as many thousands as there are hundreds in Clashmore and district would be proud to possess.

The ceremony took place at three o'clock, Mr Hardie, factor on the estate, handing Mrs Carnegie a silver key, in name of the architects Messrs Ross & McBeath, Inverness, with which to open the door, and keep as a memento of the occasion. Before doing so Mrs Carnegie expressed her own and Dr Carnegie's satisfaction at the completion of what she hoped would prove a boon to the community. From the first day they had spoken about its erection, it had been a continual joy to them to watch the growth of the building. She earnestly hoped that it would be a source of great pleasure and profit to all of them, and induce them to meet and know each other better, for to know each other better was to like each other better. Dr Carnegie and herself wished it to be understood that the building was dedicated to the uplifting of the people, and she trusted it would help to bring into their lives more sweetness, happiness, and light.

Amidst applause the door was then unlocked, and the public admitted. Miss Gillespie, Dornoch, officiated at the organ and after the singing of the 100th psalm, a programme of song by the school children of Clashmore, under the direction of Miss Pauline, and of speech-making was gone through.

Dr Carnegie, who was looking well and bright, addressed the meeting as follows:-

Friends and neighbours of Clashmore and environs, who have kindly come to the opening of this hall, we rejoice to see so many present and also that after the dedication of the hall we are to have, as the first ceremony performed in it, the giving of prizes to the winners among the young people at our school, a very appropriate beginning.

This hall must be credited to the initiative of Mrs Carnegie, who has wished to see it erected since the time we had the rare privilege of calling Skibo our own. I think it had its primary growth in her mind through the absence of a church in the village, in which all the people in and around it could worship. But unfortunately, when we come to the question of churches in Scotland, and especially here in the Highlands, we meet with a very difficult and deplorable state of affairs.

It is not only one church which has to be built in Highland places, but often three does not embrace all the religious sects. Four are sometimes found to be necessary, and then there are only a few worshippers in each. Mrs Carnegie and myself and all connected with us hope that this beautiful hall may be found suitable by all the different varieties of the same great Presbyterian faith and of all other denominations, for such church services as they may desire. All are equally welcome. The general use of the hall by all congregations will give us the greatest pleasure. The organ that we have here can easily be screened and kept silent where it is not desired in connection with the worship.

There follow many other uses for this hall. Today, for instance, we have the giving of prizes to the children of the school, a beautiful ceremony. We hope that many concerts and other elevating, instructive, and enjoyable entertainments will be held, and especially do we hope that lecturers coming to larger places in the neighbourhood can be obtained to lecture here upon interesting and entertaining subjects. We must strive not only to make people wise, to cram them full of knowledge, but we must also try to make their lives happier, to bring into them more of sweetness and light, and every happy evening the people of Clashmore and their neighbours spend in this hall will be a positive gain." [...]

The building is of excellent design, with clock tower in the centre. The stone used is the same as in Skibo Castle, taken from Evelix Quarry on the estate. The hall is a particularly handsome one, with platform and pipe organ at one end. The roof is span and arched with principal couples. The reading-room is commodious and finely finished with pitch pine, as are also the library, lending room, and ladies' and gentlemen's anterooms and cloakrooms. The basement contains the heating apparatus, the building being heated with hot water, while there are also fire places to be used for choice.

The contractors in chief were Messrs A & D Smith, Inverness; Messrs R Macrae & Sons, Dornoch, plumbers; Mr R Ross, Spinningdale, plasterer; and Messrs Mackenzie and Moncur, Edinburgh, the heating. Miss Lizzie Ross, Clashmore, has been appointed librarian.

\*\*\*\*\*



The Carnegie Hall, Clashmore, was officially opened 100 years ago by Mrs Andrew Carnegie, wife of the millionaire philanthropist, using a magnificent silver key. The key was again on display at a party in the hall on Friday evening to mark the centenary. Pictured with the key are, left to right, hall committee chairman Lorna Sawyer and two of Andrew Carnegie's great-grandchildren, Margaret Thomson, Ospisdale, and her sister Mary. Picture: Fergus Robertson. See *Clashmore news*.