

INTRODUCTION

The Baslow* Hydropathic Establishment, to give it its full name was for fifty years the dominating feature of the village in the period 1881 to 1830 although to the people of Baslow represented wealth and privilege, they were very proud of this magnificent building which had brought such a strong feeling of importance to the village. Whilst it was not sufficiently equipped to merit spa status, it established a certain kinship with Buxton and Matlock, the two chief spas in Derbyshire.

As one who was born and lived under its shadow for 22 years, I formed a great affection for the place. It brought so much life and movement into the village during the first thirty years of its life, and actually was the heart of the community. What a tragedy it was that such a well planned, excellently constructed and imposing building should have such a short life.

First of all let us consider how it all began, and the reasons for carrying out such an ambitious project in first place. We will then go on to study a description of the Hydro itself, and the spacious Grounds surrounding it. Following this we will consider the amenities offered to the visitors. Finally we will deal with its decline and fall, culminating in its demolition in 1936.

HOW IT ALL BEGAN

A Mr. Pawson, a prominent Sheffield business man, was the originator of the idea that a well-managed hydropathic establishment at Baslow would be a profitable investment for a company, a benefit to the village, and a very great boon to the people of Sheffield and Manchester and neighbourhood. He mentioned the matter to a few of the leading citizens of Sheffield, and they agreed with him as to the desirability of such an institution being placed in Baslow. Preliminary enquiries were made as to the possibility of obtaining a suitable site etc. and these proved more than satisfactory. Accordingly a limited company was formed to carry out the scheme. The Directors were Mr. Henry Pawson, Mr. D. Ward, Mr. W. H. Brittain, Mr. C. Hall, Mr. W. K. Marples, and Mr. S. Smith with Mr. J. W. Barber as secretary, and Mr. S. L. Swann as the architect. The capital was fixed at £20,000 in 2000 shares of £10 each, and the whole of the shares were quickly taken up. The site selected for the establishment was at the foot of Yeld Wood, on a south-facing slope, commanding excellent views over Chatsworth House and Park.

On July 21st. 1880, one of the most interesting ceremonies ever known, probably, in the history of Baslow took place when the Chief Magistrate of Sheffield the Mayor, Mr. Edward Tozer, laid, in the presence of a large assembly of spectators, the corner stone of the block of buildings that were to be known as the Baslow Hydropathic Establishment. The occasion was a very pleasant gathering of Directors, shareholders and friends. The company left Freemasons Hall in Sheffield at twelve, in about a dozen carriages, and proceeded by the way of Owl Bar to Baslow. The Wheatsheaf was reached shortly before two o'clock, and there, luncheon was provided in a tent on the lawn. After the luncheon, the company proceeded to the site where already a large company had assembled. Ald. D. Ward, Chairman of the Directors, addressed the meeting, and said that they had met to lay the foundation stone of an institution which he believed, which his co-directors hoped, and which he was sure all the shareholders trusted, would be one of the most successful institutions of the kind in the country. The want had long been felt of an institution of

that kind in the neighbourhood of Sheffield. There was there a population of something like 300,000, and Manchester, which was only about 35 miles away, there was a population of 500,000. Those of them who resided in Sheffield felt that they required some place or other to which they could go from time to time from a Saturday to a Monday, or even for longer than that. On these grounds they had determined, as directors and shareholders, to build that institution in order that they might come there and enjoy themselves away from the smoke that they had in Sheffield. Having spoken of the pleasure it gave them to have the presence among them of the Mayor, he proceeded to speak of the beauties of the locality in which the establishment would be situated, and added that it was possible that at no distant day a railway would run through Baslow, and then their building would need to be enlarged. As directors they were proud of the course they were taking, and believed a new era was being inaugurated in Baslow. It was not their intention to interfere with those who had got their inns and hotels there. Those who came to the institution would come for strictly hydropathic treatment; but they could go down to the inns and hotels and enjoy themselves as they liked. Although they had not selected their medical practitioner he hoped Dr. Wrench would render them such valuable assistance as they might require. He went on to say that the Duke of Rutland had kindly offered them whatever site they chose to select, and Mr. Swann, their architect, was to be congratulated on the choice he had made, Mr. Ward then presented to the Mayor a silver trowel, the gift of the Company, a mallet the gift of the architect, and a level the gift of the builders, Messrs. Armitage and Hodgson. The trowel bore the following inscription:— "Presented by the Baslow Hydropathic Company (Limited), to Edward Tozer Esq. Mayor of Sheffield, on his laying the foundation stone of the Eagle Tor Hydropathic Establishment, Baslow, near Chatsworth, 21st. July, 1880." The Mallet and Level were similarly inscribed. Under the stone was placed a bottle containing copies of the Times, and the Sheffield Independent and Telegraph. The Mayor, having performed the ceremony, addressed the assemblage. The Master Cutler, Mr. J. B. Jackson, also spoke in favour of the project, and said how pleased he was to see that so fine a building was about to be erected. Mr. R. W. M. Nesfield, Agent to the Duke of Rutland, also spoke, followed by Mr. H. Pawson.

Cheers were given for the Mayor, the Master Cutler, the Duke of Rutland, the ladies, and for the success of the institution, and the proceedings terminated. Another hour was spent in Baslow, and soon after six o'clock the company returned to Sheffield, having had an exceedingly pleasant excursion, all the arrangements having been most complete. In the evening the workmen employed on the building were entertained by the directors, the architect, and the contractors to dinner at the Devonshire Arms.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDING AND GROUNDS

The buildings were designed in the free treatment of the Tudor, or early domestic style of architecture. The plan took the outline of a parallelogram, and every effort had been made to keep the lay-out of the rooms as simple and convenient as possible. The Corridors and Passages were well-lighted from the exterior wall, thereby giving easy means of ventilation. The main entrance was approached by means of a raised terrace. The Ground Floor consisted of a spacious corridor running east to west, with a well-proportioned dining room at one end and a drawing room at the other, capable of providing ample accommodation for 150 visitors, each

The Baslow Hydro

room being 58 feet by 28 feet exclusive of its large bay window, and in the rear were private sitting rooms. There were also ladies' and gentlemen's bathrooms, having each their own private staircases to the several floors. These bathrooms were arranged on the separate sides of the building, the gentlemen's bathroom being fitted up with a good-sized plunge bath. At the rear of the building there was a billiard room with two full-sized tables, and an assembly or ballroom, 58 feet by 30 feet. Both Billiards Room and the Ballroom were only one story high, and were lighted and ventilated from a glass roof on top. The first and second floors consisted of bedroom accommodation with suitable and modern conveniences. The basement was used for the Manager's private room, kitchen, scullery, stillroom, with servants offices etc.

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