

Dundee Advertiser, Wednesday, October 15th 1890.

COMPLETION OF THE BLYTH HALL, NEWPORT

UNVEILING OF BUST OF MRS BLYTH MARTIN AND PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS

Last night a ball was held in the Blyth Hall, Newport, to celebrate the completion of the adjoining Lower Hall, Committee Rooms, and Municipal Buildings. About 200 ladies and gentlemen were present, including Mr and Mrs Blyth Martin – in whose honour the ball was given – Mr Leng, M.P., Mrs and Miss Leng; Chief Magistrate Scott, Senior and Junior Magistrates Walker and Millar, J.H. Walker; Captain Scott, of the Mars, Mrs Scott, Mr F.E. Scott, and the Misses Scott; ex-Provost Robertson and Mrs Robertson, Dr Stewart and Mrs Stewart, Miss Hain, Mr W.N. Walker and Mrs Walker, Mr J.J. Johnstone, Mr David Alexander and Mrs Alexander, Mr James Reoch and Mrs Reoch, Mr Durham, Mr Andrew Meldrum and Mrs Meldrum; Mr Shields, Perth; Mr James Sturrock and Mrs Sturrock, &c.

The gallery was well filled by the general public, and the hall was beautifully decorated with flags and evergreens, and these, with the bright dresses of the ladies, made a gay and animated scene. The platform was also decorated with plants and flowers in a very effective style.

Mr Leng, M.P., Chairman of the Blyth Hall Trustees said:- A distinguished stranger approaching the pier on the Ferry Steamer said to me, "What a delightful situation; but what a wicked place Newport must be to need so many churches." (Laughter.) That was an instance how the worst construction is generally put on everything. If he had known how good we all are he would have said, "What saints you must be, to have so many sanctuaries." (Laughter.) I suspect, however, that we are not much worse nor much better than other people, although our lines have certainly fallen in a pleasant place. (Applause.)

We are here to-night on the first of two gay and festive occasions to celebrate the completion of this hall by the addition of well planned and convenient Committee, reading, and library rooms, and an elegant lesser hall for social meetings. For these we are indebted to the munificent liberality of Mrs Blyth-Martin, whom we are glad to see present with us to-night. (Loud applause.) That lady has further provided the funds for rooms and offices for the Police Commission, the Parochial Board, and the School Board, the interest on which will be met for a term of years in the shape of rents, which will afterwards become an endowment for the repair and maintenance of the hall and its appurtenances in all time coming. (Applause.)

The trustees of the hall, the Chief Magistrate, his colleagues, the members of the Public Boards, and others thought it due to Mrs Blyth Martin that the accomplishment of what she has had in view for a number of years past should be publicly recognised. Chief Magistrate Scott, who is to follow me, will convey to Mrs Martin in a permanent, visible, and tangible form an expression of our warm appreciation of the exceedingly useful manner in which she is perpetuating the memory of her esteemed brothers, Henry, Charles, and Thomas Blyth Martin. They were, each

and all of them, remarkable men. Mr Henry Blyth took a leading part in putting an end to the abominable lodging-houses for the poor in Dundee and Lochee which preceded the present well-managed Poor-houses.

He was also extremely desirous to provide a class of self-contained dwelling-houses for working men, to prevent them living in those “villages up common stairs” which excessive feu-duties and speculative builders have combined to make too common in our large Scottish towns. It was unfortunate that through the blundering mismanagement of others his scheme was unsuccessful, but it was well-intended, and deserved to succeed. I have always regretted that the large employers in Dundee have done so little to ensure their work-people – so many of whom are women and girls – being decently and comfortably housed. Mr Thomas, who was in partnership with his brother Henry, was a remarkably well-informed man, and excellent in social qualities.

Mr Charles Blyth, who was for some years a near neighbour of mine in the West end of the village, had not a little to do with the building of Messrs Gilroy’s splendid Tay Works, and was a model mill manager, respected alike within the works and outside them. Reserved in manner and reticent in speech, he had great natural dignity. By the erection of this Blyth Hall Mrs Blyth Martin may be said in legal phraseology to have “seized” an estate for many of the inhabitants of Newport. It is a gift of great and enduring usefulness, and with the growth of the village will become more and more useful. I am hopeful that the village library, to which Mr Edward Moir for upwards of twenty years, without fee or reward, has devoted himself, will now be considerably enlarged, and that there will be a reading-room, where the principal magazines and newspapers may always be seen.

The small hall is also admirably adapted for social, and, I may even suggest, matrimonial functions. It now only remains to me to unveil the fine portrait bust of Mrs Martin, which is in future to adorn this hall. It is the work of Signor Tatlioni, one of the most successful sculptors at the Vatican, and we trust that as long as the Blyth Hall endures this bust will remain in it to perpetuate the memory of the fair benefactress of the newly-formed burgh of Newport. (Applause.) Mr Leng then, amidst great applause, unveiled the bust.

Chief Magistrate Scott said – It has devolved upon me, as Chief Magistrate, to present Mrs Blyth Martin with a tangible testimony of our appreciation of her liberality to the burgh. (Applause.) After careful consideration, it was resolved that this should take the form of an illuminated address upon vellum stating the benefits she had conferred upon us, and be signed by the members of the various public Boards, and by as many of the inhabitants whose signatures could be conveniently obtained. It has been thought that a volume of this nature containing such a record, with a long line of signatures of those living around her, would tell better than anything else of the high respect and good-feeling in which she is held, and would be greatly prized by her. (Applause.)

This volume, enclosed in a suitable casket, will pass down to succeeding members of her family, keeping green in the memory of her brothers, and more especially that of Mrs Blyth Martin herself, the inheritress of their wealth, and the wise and generous almoner who judged so well how that wealth should be used. (Applause.)

Mr Scott then read the address as follows :-

□□□ *The important additions recently made, in accordance with arrangements which Mr Blyth Martin kindly assisted Chief Magistrate Scott in devising and carrying through, increase the indebtedness of the community to you in having perfected the accommodation of the Municipal Boards and the adjuncts to the Hall.*

□□□ *That you may be long spared to witness the advantages which the Hall will confer on all classes in Newport is the heartfelt prayer of –*

□□ *Signed by Trustees of Blyth Hall, Magistrates and□□□□□ commissioners, Parochial Board, School Board, Ministers of Religion, 60 Householders, and Office-Bearers of Newport, Literary Society.*

It gives me great pleasure, Mr Scott added, Mrs Blyth Martin, to be the medium of making this presentation to you. I have now had the privilege of your friendship for many years, and I most cordially reciprocate the sentiments in that address, and, on the part of the inhabitants of the burgh, I re-echo the wish which closes the address, that you may be long spared to witness the advantages which the hall confer on all classes in Newport. (Applause.)

The address was enclosed in a handsome oak casket designed by Mr J. Murray Robertson, architect, and ornamented in ironwork by Mr Schryver, of Brussels. The address was beautifully illuminated by Mr Harris, architect.

Mr Blyth Martin, on behalf of Mrs Martin said – Mr Leng, ladies and gentlemen, - My wife desires me to thank you, as Chairman of the trustees of this hall, and Provost Scott, the Hon. Secretary, and the other trustees individually, for the valuable services you have rendered in devising and carrying out the recent important additions and improvements here. They must have occasioned you much thought and trouble, and she is pleased to see that you have been so successful. In particular, she thanks you for providing a habitation for her Roman bust which you have just uncovered. (Applause.)

Amidst the multitude of your public engagements I am sure we all feel obliged by your presiding this evening. To Provost Scott, and to Mr Ernest Scott, we are indebted for the carrying out of these excellent arrangements which contribute so much to our pleasure and comfort. I will conclude these remarks by assuring you my wife will feel amply rewarded for her large outlay if you and the good folks of our beautiful Newport will make frequent use of the hall. The lectures and concerts provided by the Literary Society are excellent and worthy of our support; and the Library and Reading-Room will, I think, prove attractive as well as educational. I have no doubt that our young friends are literally on the tip-toe of expectation, and will be more anxious to hear the music than speeches such as mine. I wish you all a happy evening's enjoyment. (Applause.)

Mrs Blyth Martin said – Provost Scott, ladies and gentlemen, as representing the community of Newport, you have just put into my hands a very handsome and lasting memorial of this eventful evening. It is very pleasant to receive such a flattering address from one's friends and neighbours, but none more especially one so numerous signed as this. The casket in which it is contained seems to be of beautiful artistic work, and will be carefully preserved by me. I am grateful for the good wishes it expresses, and cordially reciprocate the same to you and my other friends. Newport has always been a favourite residence, not only of mine, but also of my late brothers. The large sum spent on this and the other buildings was for the benefit of Newport, and will prove a lasting and useful memorial of them and myself. (Applause.)

I have never regretted the step I have taken in this matter. It has been approved by my husband, and I cordially thank you and the other gentlemen who have done so much towards the completion of the whole work, and I hope the accommodation will prove all that can be desired for a long time to come. (Loud applause.)

Dancing was then begun to music by Mr Wallace's string band. There were over 80 couples on the floor, and the arrangements were carried out by Mr F.E. Scott. Dancing was continued with much spirit until an early hour this morning.