



Modern Day View of The Bear Hotel and Corn Exchange

Devizes Bear Club

The annual meeting of the Devizes Bear Club, was held on Friday last, at the Bear Inn. The object of this Institution, is to educate and clothe a certain number of boys, and after their education to place them with respectable tradesmen, and finally to assist them to embark in business for themselves. During the last year seven boys were apprenticed; four of them (through the liberality of Mr Estcourt and Mr Pearse), by means of nominations on the Broad Land Charity. It was from a convivial meeting that his Institution originated; and we believe its prosperity is in some degree owing to the celebrating its anniversary by a convivial meeting. There is no other Charitable Institution in Wiltshire that is so celebrated: it is therefore the means of bringing together a number of gentlemen from different parts of the county, to spend a few hours in friendly and social intercourse, and to promote the purposes of benevolence and usefulness. Not the slightest particle of politics appertains to the Institution. The Marquis of Lansdowne has presided at one anniversary, and Mr Estcourt, the member for the University of Oxford, at another. The Earl of Kerry was to have taken the chair on Friday last, and had liberally contributed towards the festivities of the day, by sending a remarkably fine turtle, and some venison; but in consequence of severe indisposition, he was prevented from attending. Mr C.L. Phipps, at he unanimous request of the company, supplied his Lordship's place, and did all in his power to promote the harmony and conviviality of the meeting. His introductory remarks in proposing the various toasts, shewed great taste and judgement, and did not indicate the least party bias. The first toast, after the removal of the cloth, and also the very last that was drunk, was "*The King, God bless him!*" and at each time with immense applause.

"*The Queen* and the rest of the Royal family," was also loudly cheered; - indeed we may say as much of every toast that was proposed; the cheers accompanying some being louder and longer continued than others.

The Chairman coupled the toast of *The Navy*, with the health of an officer whose gallantry was well known to all present – Captain Taylor.

The gallant Captain, in returning thanks, said, that for the difficulties and dangers a British seaman encountered, he sought no higher reward, next to the consciousness of having *done his duty*, than the approbation of to his King and Country.

“The Army” was next drank, and with it the health of an amiable neighbour, Major Olivier. Major Olivier expressed his acknowledgements.- In proposing *“The Bishop and the Clergy of the Diocese,”* the Chairman emphatically observed, that no one could be more sincerely attached to, or desirous of upholding the Church Establishment than he was. The Rev. Mr Phipps (the Chairman’s nephew) in acknowledging the compliment paid to the Bishop and clergy, said, he could take upon himself to assert, that the Clergy, as a body, were at all times most anxious to promote acts of charity. –*Our excellent Lord Lieutenant, the Marquis of Lansdowne,* was the next toast; after which, the chairman proposed *The Members for the Northern Division of the county.* Mr W. Long returned thanks; and expressed his regret to find that there was a diminution in the funds of the Charity. When he had the honor to preside at a former Anniversary, he set the example of doubling his subscription, in the hope that it would be generally followed. His friend, the Recorder of the Borough, had recommended another mode of enhancing the funds, which was, that every member then present should attend the following Anniversary, and bring a friend with him. Now although he had not literally done that which the Recorder had recommended, “brought a friend with him,” yet he had to propose a friend as a new member, Mr John Clark of Trowbridge. Mr W. Long apologised for the absence of Mr Methuen, which was entirely owing to indisposition.

The members for the Southern Division. – *The Members for the Borough of Devizes* – Mr Locke said he had taken a great interest in the Charity long before he filled a public situation, so that his presence among them must not be attributed merely to his being one of the representatives of the borough. He believed that Mr Salmon and himself were the two oldest members of the Club, and there had been but few anniversaries which he had not attended. It was a Charity that did honor to the town, and he hoped that its prosperity would increase. Mr Locke then alluded to the disappointment which Lord Kerry must feel at being prevented from filling the chair on that day. He had seen his Lordship yesterday, and he was then in hopes that he should be well enough to attend. The Chairman also spoke in a similar effect regarding his Lordship – *The Mayor of Devizes* – In the absence of the Mayor, the Recorder returned thanks, and observed that the Mayor had been a member of the Club for a period of 30 years; and when he stated that his Worship had only once been absent from an anniversary, the company, he was sure, would agree, that nothing but necessity had prevented his attendance on that day. – In proposing the health of *Mr Neeld*, who was nominated the President for the next year, the Chairman observed that no one was capable of rendering greater assistance to the charity than Mr Neeld, and he felt assured that no one would be more ready to render it.

In returning thanks, Mr NEELD said, he would follow the example of his friend, Mr Walter Long, and introduce the name, though not the person, of a new member. He then proposed that his brother, Mr John Neeld, might be admitted a member of the Bear Club; and after assuring the company, that he and his brother would do all in their power in furtherance of the objects of so excellent an Institution, Mr Neeld reminded the company that there was a sort of fancy fair and dahlia show at Chippenham on the 8th of September, for the benefit of the National and Sunday schools of that place, which would form a new era in the town of Chippenham. In matters of that kind, Chippenham was but in its infancy, and required some protection and patronage from their neighbours on the hill, who had been longer accustomed to them. He should therefore feel much gratified, by the presence of any of his friends from the town or neighbourhood of Devizes.

©Wiltshire OPC Project/2014/Maureen Withey

Mr Neeld, in a very complimentary manner, then proposed the health of the Chairman, which was drank amidst tremendous cheers.

The Chairman appropriately expressed his thanks for the very flattering manner in which his health had been drank; but at the same time (he observed) he could not help expressing his conviction that he was unequal to the task of filling the chair; and that he had made a very inefficient substitute for Lord Kerry. *The Steward of the Club* was next drank; the Chairman having prefaced the toast by observing that the late and the present Mr Salmon had nourished and brought up the charity from its infancy; that its prosperity was in a great measure to be attributed to them; and that but for the continued fostering care of Mr Salmon, there would be a great falling off in its funds. He had no doubt therefore that he should be readily obeyed when he called upon the company to fill a bumper, and drink to the health of Mr Salmon.

This toast, as it deserved, is always drank with the loudest tokens of approbation. Mr SALMON said that he had commenced his connection with the Bear Club, when he was 19 years of age, and that from that time to the present, he had never been absent but on one anniversary, and then in consequence of ill-health. To say that he had taken a warm interest in the prosperity of this Institution, as well as of many other Institutions, which conduced to the interest of the town and its inhabitants, would be only to speak of the principal events of his life; and to say that she should continue to do so, would be merely shewing that he could not shake off those habits which had become interwoven with his existence. Mr Salmon paid a high compliment to the Rev. Mr Phipps, who has introduced into the school a new and improved system of instruction; and had paid a great deal of attention to the improvement of the boys. The Society (Mr Salmon said) had also been much benefited by the assistance of Mr Henry Butcher, who had filled the office of secretary.

Mr Henry Butcher's health was then drunk, and the compliment acknowledged – *The Justice of the Borough*.

In returning thanks, Mr T. ESCOURT said, that meetings like the present were calculated to promote a kind and neighbourly feeling, which should be a great object, in these times, with those who had the best interests of their country at heart.

The Recorder of Devizes. – Mr Ludlow Bruges returned thanks.

Mr Hughes proposed *the Marquess of Bath and the Yeomanry Cavalry*. – Capt. Phipps returned thanks.

The Corporation of Devizes. – Mr Tylee returned thanks.

Mr Salmon proposed the health of a valuable and highly respected friend of his – a very old member of the Bear Club, to whom they were indebted for much valuable assistance – especially for the frequent nominations of boys from the school to be apprenticed by the Broad Town Charity, of which he was one of the Trustees – he meant *Mr Estcourt*; but he did not propose his health merely as a Benefactor to this Institution, but as a gentleman who, in every relation of life, was truly estimable; who had for many years been the friend and neighbour of most of the company, and to whom the county of Wilts and the town of Devizes in particular was indebted, not only for the valuable services he had rendered in the various offices he had filled, but also for this munificent donations for every purpose of public improvement. The toast having been drank with great respect, Mr T, Estcourt returned thanks. Mr W. R. Brown, then proposed a bumper to the health of one of the most amiable and benevolent men in existence – *Mr Pearse*. Drank amidst shouts of applause. – *Mr Neate, an old and much respected member of the Society*. – Mr Neate returned thanks. – *Mr Warriner and his fox hounds*. – Mr Warriner returned thanks. – *The Medical Profession* – Dr Dyke returned thanks. – *The Corsham Troop of Cavalry* – Mr P Methuen, jun. Returned thanks.- A bumper was given to the better health of Lord Kerry – 3 times 3 were given to
©Wiltshire OPC Project/2014/Maureen Withey

the King: The National Anthem was sung, and the company separated. Mr Mallinson's comic songs greatly conduced to the hilarity of the evening.

Mr Lord, of the Bear Inn, provided a sumptuous dinner for the occasion, and distinguished himself as an excellent and liberal caterer. There was every thing in season: turtle, fish is great variety, a profusion of venison, poultry, &c., followed by one of the finest desserts we have ever seen at a public dinner; and the wines were remarkably good.

The following new members were proposed during the evening: Mr John Clark, Mr John Neeld, Rev. Mr Majendie, Rev. Mr Patteson, Rev. Mr Heathcote, Mr A Phipps, Mr C. Tylee, Mr Sainsbury of Bellevue, Mr Oram, Mr S. Lavington, Mr Roach, Mr T. North, and the Rev. Mr Fulford.

A prior engagement prevented admiral Sir Philip Durham from attending; but the gallant Admiral wrote to his friend, Capt Tayler, requesting him to spare no expense in promoting the festivities of the day. Mr Locke and Mr T. Estcourt presented the company with a fine buck each, in addition to Lord Kerry's presents."

Devizes and Wiltshire Gazette, 3 September 1835