

From the *Belfast News Letter*, Friday, 6 March 1840

BELFAST NEW MUSIC HALL

On Tuesday, a meeting of the members of the Anacreontic Society, and shareholders in the New Music Hall, was held in that building, for the purpose of receiving a report and statement of accounts from the building committee, and determining on the time and manner of opening the Hall to the public.

Before the meeting commenced we had an opportunity of going through the building, and were much struck by the evidence of taste and public spirit which it presented. The music room is particularly deserving of admiration. It is a splendid apartment; and we believe we are correct in stating, that it is decidedly superior to any of the kind in Ireland, and is surpassed by very few in the sister country. The building is an ornament to the town, and reflects great credit upon the spirit and enterprise of those gentlemen who have been chiefly instrumental in promoting its erection.

Before proceeding to what took place at the meeting, it may be satisfactory that we should state the dimensions, &c. of this important addition to the public buildings of Belfast.

The building is 96 feet long, towards Arthur-street, with front of 46 feet wide to May-street, standing on a plot of ground 54 feet wide, leaving an area of four feet at each side. The ground being limited from front to rear [*sic*], did not admit, of any area towards May-street, which is a disadvantage to the building, it being deserving of a more spacious plot of ground, so as to give it a more imposing effect.

The elevations partake of the Grecian character, or, perhaps, more properly, the Italio-Grecian, the columns being after the example of the Ionic Temple on the Ilissus, near Athens, and the members and mouldings being also Grecian; but the great height to which the building had, of necessity, to be raised, in order to afford all the required accommodations, height of ceiling, &c. detract from the severe character of purely Grecian examples. In this respect, the architect had a great deal of difficulty to contend with, the front being so narrow, in proportion to its required height.

The front, towards Arthur-street, is good, in consequence of its greater extent, and the two, viewed in perspective, produce a pleasing effect. The Building contains the Music Hall, or Concert-room, which is 70 feet long, 35 wide, and 30 high; with a gallery of 16 feet wide, situated over the grand stair-case, making the entire length inside 86 feet.

This room is decorated with pilasters, of plain but appropriate character, surmounted by a bold entablature, from which the arched or circular ceiling springs. This latter is divided by massive beams, into deep coffers or panels [*sic*]. At the remote end of the room a spacious alcove, or elliptic recess, with niche head, has been provided for the orchestra; and, of the latter, several convenient closets are provided for the reception of musical instruments, music books, &c. and a private stair for the accommodation of the performers, with a hall-door from the same.

The Concert-room is approached from May-street through a commodious hall, having a staircase 15 feet wide, and the soffet [soffit], or under side, panelled. A similar stair, of about four feet wide, leads right and left to the gallery. The Concert-room is to be lighted by a magnificent chandelier, in the centre, as well as by auxiliary ones of smaller dimensions. In the ceiling of this room, a peculiar mode has been adopted, to promote ventilation, to obviate the oppressive feeling produced by large assemblies, combined with the great heat occasioned by gas.

Immediately under the Concert-room is a Supper-room, forty-two feet long, thirty-three wide, and fourteen high, connected by three pair of folding doors, with a Committee-room, twenty-three feet by thirty-three, so that the whole may be thrown into one, forming a room 65 feet long, by 33, suitable for public meetings, dinners, &c.

These rooms are finished in a corresponding style, with pillasters round the walls, and deep coffers or panels in the ceilings. The folding doors are of a lofty, spacious description of peculiar construction, formed to fold up, so as to occupy but little space, and to be quite out of the way, when it is required to extend three rows of tables for a public entertainment.

Under these rooms, a large kitchen is provided, with spacious cooking apparatus, and accommodations for a porter and his family, to take charge of the building, leaving a very extensive cellar, suitable for a bonded store, wine vaults, or any such purpose, having a separate gate of entrance from the Stable-lane. The chimney-pieces and grates of the principal rooms are of a solid, massive character, and comport well with the other parts.

The building is of a very great height, yet appears to stand remarkably well. The situation was most unfavourable, having been the site of an old river, which formerly ran in that direction; but every precaution has been taken to render the foundation secure, as far as possible.

The roof of the main building is so contrived, that nearly five feet of the height of the Concert-hall ceiling has been gained out of the angular space, formed by the timbers, which, in most buildings, remain waste and unoccupied, but is here turned to a useful account.

The gallery is lighted through horizontal sashes, forming some of the compartments of the ceiling; and these being glazed with ground glass, produce a pleasing effect. The working, drawings, and specifications were furnished, and the erection of the building superintended, by Mr, Thomas Jackson, Architect, 20, Waring-street; and, we need scarcely add, that the work does him great honour. The building was erected by Mr. P. Lundy, Builder, Joy-street, whose care and execution have, most deservedly, called forth the warmest approbation.

The Marquis of Donegall had been expected to take the chair; but, whether owing to his Lordship having forgotten the hour of meeting, or being unable to attend, he was not present, and John Cunningham, jun. Esq., one of the most liberal shareholders, was called to the chair. J. Cameron, Esq. Secretary to the Anacreontic Society, was requested to act as Secretary to the meeting. Dr. S. Thomson then read the following :—

“SECOND REPORT OF THE BUILDING COMMITTEE,
TO THE SUBSCRIBERS OF THE NEW MUSIC HALL.

Belfast, March 3, 1840.

“Gentlemen – Our report of the 4th September, 1838, put you in possession of our proceedings up to that date.

Your resolution of September 8, 1838, having directed us to proceed with the erection of “the Hall,” agreeably to the enlarged plans, then approved of, we have been diligently employed therein, and are now able to announce to you, the completion of a substantial building, ornamental to our town, creditable to the architect and contractor, and, we believe, well adapted for its intended purpose. In order to carry your instructions into effect, your trustees, in making the different contracts, have necessarily subjected themselves to liabilities to a large amount; and, though we are happy at having to report that the exertions of the Finance Committee, appointed to obtain additional subscriptions, have been very successful, yet when it is considered, that, out of a community so large, so liberal, and so wealthy as Belfast possesses, only about 170 persons have as yet become contributors, we think it only necessary to appeal to the public, to ensure the raising a very considerable sum, by further subscriptions, and we rely on the zealous co-operation of our constituents, to enable the trustees speedily to fulfil their engagements.

Amount of contract for building,	£2,550
In addition to which, it is computed, that to complete and fit up the rooms, &c. there will be required a further sum of ...	£690
Making in all a probable expenditure of	£3,440

To which your Treasurer has received in all subscriptions,	£1,928
Net produce of sale of old room in King-street, interest received for money in Treasurer’s hands, and subscriptions not yet paid (but expected to be so,)	£452
Total,	£2,380

Leaving a sum of about £1,000 still to be raised. A detailed statement of the Treasurer’s account, and, also, of the estimated expenses yet to be provided for, is herewith submitted to the meeting. We have much pleasure in reporting, that we expect to have the interior of the building so far completed, as to permit the rooms being publicly opened about the end of March, should such be the wish of the shareholders; and in conclusion, we now recommend to the meeting to take into consideration, and to determine, on the mode most desirable for carrying this into effect.”

The resolutions (as given with the names of the movers and seconders, in another column) were then proposed, with scarcely, a word of observation, except from one or two gentlemen.

Mr Bates, in seconding a resolution, expressed the obligations under which the meeting must feel to those who had so zealously exerted themselves in obtaining subscriptions towards the building. He said, also, that he had no doubt that the Finance Committee now appointed

would be easily able to raise funds for defraying the debt which had been incurred. The purpose, he considered, was such as deserved every encouragement, as an institution of that kind was calculated to promote refinement and good feeling in the public mind.

Dr. S. Thomson said, that the intention had always been, to open the building with a public Concert, but that it had been expected that the Concert would be made productive. This expectation, however, had been abandoned, inasmuch as it was felt that, in order to procure such vocal and instrumental performers, as would enable the Society to open with a Concert worthy of the building, no profit could be expected. Already, some performers had been engaged; and a correspondence was opened with others. Every thing would be done to procure performers worthy of the occasion.

G. T. Mitchell, Esq. having been called to the chair, the marked thanks of the meeting were voted to John Cunningham, jun. Esq; and the meeting separated.— *N. Whig.*