

A MEMORABLE DAY FOR KETTLEWELL.

ELECTRICITY INSTALLATION OPENED.

Though isolated amid the hills of Wharfedale remote from a railway and without a telephone, Kettlewell can boast of a luxury often denied to much larger communities. On Saturday afternoon there was opened in this quaint little village of 300 inhabitants what is claimed to be one of the smallest installations in the Kingdom for supplying electricity to the public. True, it was of more than local significance. True, it afforded evidence of Kettlewell's enterprise, but it was also indicative of the progress which is being made in the direction of utilising the streams and waterfalls of the Yorkshire Dales for the purpose of generating electricity. There are rich possibilities for the future of the dales in the development and extension of these undertakings. Already installations have been established at Grassington, Askrigg, Bainbridge, Reeth, and now Kettlewell, and similar projects are on foot at Gargrave and Arcliffe. To what extent these installations will prove beneficial to the industries in their respective areas remains to be seen, but it can with confidence be said that the innumerable water courses of the Yorkshire Dales represent a power ready for utilisation which has scarcely yet been tapped.

The History of the Project.

But to return to Kettlewell and its little enterprise. Hitherto the village had relied upon oil and, in a few instances, acetylene gas, for its illumination. There does not appear to have been any serious complaint as to the inefficiency of this method, but Mr. W. P. Inman, the postmaster, long ago conceived the idea of harnessing to a turbine the small stream running through the village and transmitting its power into electrical energy. He thought about the project long and deeply but to him it presented several difficulties, the principal of which had reference to the finances of the scheme. Eventually he mentioned it to a

few of the leading residents, among them Mr. O. Robinson, Mr. C. H. Walsh, and Mr. Leonard Gaunt, well known manufacturers in the Bradford trade, who spend much of their leisure time at Kettlewell, and take a keen and active interest in its welfare. He also took into his confidence Mr. W. L. Carradice, the village schoolmaster; Mr. J. Raw, a joiner; Mr. J. H. Coates, a farmer; and others who were ever ready to assist any object calculated to benefit the village. Little time was spent over the preliminaries. Expert advice was taken and the Kettlewell Electricity Supply Company Limited, with a capital of £225 in £1 shares, fully paid, was formed on December 13th, 1912. The contract was let to Mr. J. Banks, electrician, of Keighley Road, Skipton, on December 31st last, and work commenced on the first day in the New Year.

The Works and Their Possibilities.

At the bottom of a garden which slopes to the banks of what is locally known as Kettlewell Beck, a little to the east of the village, is situated the plant. It comprises a "Turgo" turbine of ten horse power, a dynamo of six kilowatts at 230 volts, capable of 515 revolutions per minute, together with governors, switch board, and other necessary appliances. A weir, built of concrete 1ft. 9in. thick, has been laid into the rock in the bed of the stream, and there is a pipe line, with a twenty-one foot fall from there to the powerhouse. The latter is a neatly built stone structure with concrete foundations. In connection with this diminutive installation there are four miles of aerial cable, and it is worthy of note that the amenities of the village are in no way interfered with. The cable runs from chimney to chimney, and there is only one pole belonging to the company in the whole of the place. Not a single penny has been paid in respect of way-leaves. The works are of a sufficient capacity to generate power for 400 lights, and the heartiness of the welcome extended to the new illuminant is evidenced by the fact that 60 premises are already connected.



Reading from left to right the names are: Mr. C. H. Walsh, Mr. H. O. French (accountant), Mr. J. Banks (engineer), Mr. Percy Inman (secretary), Mr. Ottiwell Robinson (chairman), Mr. J. Raw, Mr. L. Gaunt (Farsley), and Mr. Carradice.

Photo by MISS A. CARVER-SHAW, Bradford.

A hundred years ago, Kettlewell's postmaster had a brilliant idea. Percy Inman had a vision – to harness the beck running through the village and turn it into electricity.

Kettlewell, then consisting of 77 houses and around 300 residents, used oil and acetylene gas to power lights and machinery. It was several miles to the nearest railway station, there was no public telephone and the village was connected to the outside world by just a single telegraph wire.

By all accounts, the villagers were perfectly happy with their lot, but **postmaster Percy Inman** had long considered the idea of hydro electricity – which at the time was being taken up in villages and towns across the country. When in August, 1913, Kettlewell turned on its lights at a ceremony attended by just about everyone in the community, it became the smallest village in the country to have electricity.

Over the previous two years, great advancements had been made in the utilisation of water power both for the lighting and machinery and many towns and villages in the North Riding were going straight from candles and oil to electricity. This was due to the abundance of small streams in the Dales, reported the Herald in March, 1913. Many schemes were in their infancy, but Grassington and Askrigg already had theirs up and running.

In Grassington, a dynamo from the River Wharfe supplied villagers with electric light and was so successful, it had been extended to Threshfield. It was used for street lights, for the church, chapels, private houses and shops. It was also used to power machinery, circular saws and even organ blowing.

Kettlewell was considered the ideal village for the utilisation of water power. The village at one time had been known for its lead mines and had a population of 600, but with the mines closed down, the population had dwindled to around half. It was now known as a health resort with many visitors in August and September coming for the bracing air.

Postmaster and secretary of the scheme, Mr Inman managed to convince enough wealthy businessmen with connections to the village to get on board and the Kettlewell Electricity Supply Company Ltd was formed. Also

on board was the village schoolmaster, Mr WL Carradice; a joiner, Mr J Raw, and Mr J Coates, a farmer – all with an interest in working for the benefit of the village. It was on December 13, 1912, that the company was officially formed – with a capital of £625 in £1 shares.

The contract for the work was awarded to a Mr J Banks, an electrician of Keighley Road, Skipton, and work began on January 1, 1913. The turbine was provided by Gilkes and Co of Kendal; the dynamo by Horace Green and Co of [Cononley](#); and the switchboard by the Midland Electrical Co. The contractor responsible for the weir, piers and power house was Mr Calvert, of Kettlewell. The plant was built at the bottom of a garden sloping down to Kettlewell Beck, a little to the east of the village. It consisted of a 'Turgo' turbine of ten horse power and a dynamo of six kilowatts at 230 volts, which was capable of 515 revolutions per minute.

A weir, built of concrete, 1ft 9ins thick, was laid into the rock at the bottom of the stream, and from there, a pipeline with a 21ft drop, led to the powerhouse. The powerhouse itself was a 'neatly built stone structure' with concrete foundations. Electricity from the powerhouse was distributed through the village via four miles of aerial cables. It was worthy of note, reported the Herald at the time, that the cabling in no way interfered with the amenities of the village. The cabling ran from chimney to chimney and only one pole from the company was needed. It was estimated that power from the beck was enough to supply 400 lights, and by June, 1913, 60 premises in the village were connected up.

At the grand opening, in June, 1913, most of the village turned out for the occasion. Mr Ottiwell Robinson, chairman of the new company, congratulated the village for its enthusiasm towards the project and he hoped those who had taken up a supply would not be disappointed.

The parish council had not taken up electric light, but Mr Robinson pointed out the company would supply the council, at "very reasonable terms". There was much laughter amongst the crowd, reported the paper, when Mr Robinson made a joke about the company not wanting to "make brass". "They could not press the parish council to take a supply for public lighting purposes in as much as they were shareholders and someone might have

turned round and said ‘those chaps are after making brass’,” reported the Herald.

“But the promoters of the scheme could assure the villagers that if they desired the light for public purposes the company would, if they had the current, be glad to supply the council on the most reasonable of terms.” He added it was very novel that Kettlewell, six miles from a railway station, without a public telephone and connected only by a single telegraph wire, now had electric light.

Following the speeches, the day was then given over to festivities. The children ran races in the streets and afterwards sat down to tea with the adults. A dinner was provided for the directors and a few invited guests at the Racehorses Hotel, where it was predicted that a company dividend of five per cent would be paid in the first year. It was also announced that no directors’ or secretary’s fees would be paid in the first year. Around 200 attended an evening dance in the Mechanics Institute, paid for by the company directors.

As the sun went down, reported the Herald, the new light shone out from many windows, while the village maypole looked ‘strangely modern’ with a circle of electric globes around the top. “It was a memorable day and one which the Dalesfolk will cherish the happiest recollections,” reported the Herald. Water power continued in the village until the 1950s with the arrival of the National Grid.

Eighteen months ago, the efforts of the old company’s modern equivalent, Kettlewell Hydro Electric Light Ltd (HELL), came to nothing when it tried to re- establish hydroelectricity in the village. The group, including the vicar, the Reverend Peter Yorkstone, had spent the previous year monitoring river levels on a daily basis. The group’s aim was to resurrect a dam in the same place and size of the original one. But in July 2011, the group was told by the Environment Agency that the dam in the beck could not be reinstated because of flood risks.

The Craven Herald. January 19th 2013 Reporter Lesley Tate