

## **The Settle Conservative Club**

### **Graham Cross and Michael Slater**

In 2016 a collection of documents and books concerning the Settle and District Conservative Club House Company Ltd was discovered, dating from 1899. The purpose of the company was to erect a building to accommodate a Conservative or Constitutional Club to promote Unionist principles. An article about the Club House Company was published in the North Craven Heritage Trust Journal in 2017 and the material was deposited with the North Yorkshire County Council Record Office in Northallerton for safe-keeping (now catalogued under ZLP 1/1 and ZLF 16/19).

In 2024 two Minute books were found in a cupboard in the present Conservative Club premises on Station Road, one of which (1880 -1898) shows that a Settle Conservative Club had been established in May 1880, meeting in various places in Settle. The second book (1901 to 1919) concerns the setting up of a 'New Club to be called the Settle & District Conservative Club & that the Club be carried on in the New Premises now being erected in New Street Settle, the exact details of the tenancy to be subsequently agreed upon.' - at the current location in Station Road. The New Premises were built and owned by the Settle and District Conservative Club House Company Ltd and rented to the New Club. The two Minute books discussed here concern the Club, not the Club Company. These two Minute books with several copies of letters, balance sheets and a notice about the billiards room are now kept at the North Yorkshire County Council Record Office in Northallerton for safe-keeping.

The first Minute book ends with the Club Committee Meeting report of 4 April 1898 referring to the forthcoming AGM on 21 April 1898, with several blank pages following. In 1899 a meeting was held in the office of Messrs Charlesworth & Co. to discuss the question of forming this Conservative Club House Company, many of those present having been members of the old Club Committee. There was a transition in 1899 from the Club meetings held in the rented Town Hall rooms to a newly constructed building in 1901.

The second Minute book notes a first New Club meeting on 23 May 1901 typewritten and pasted into a book purchased from Craven printing and Stationery Company, Settle, 19 June 1901.

These Club Minute books illuminate the operation of these ventures at the turn of the 19th / 20th centuries. This note has been added to the website [www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk](http://www.dalescommunityarchives.org.uk).

### **The first Minute Book 1880-1898**

A selection of items has been made. The Minutes are rather scanty and several statements are not understood. A somewhat incoherent picture of proceedings emerges. The last page is for 4<sup>th</sup> April 1898.

The first book notes a meeting of Conservatives (convened by circular) at Mr Charlesworth's office, 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1880, 28 persons being present, including J. Birkbeck jnr and Dr Edgar. A provisional committee of eleven persons was set up.

The copperplate handwritten records are attractive.

# The Annual General Meeting

was held in the Piccadilly Room April 16<sup>th</sup> 1891 -  
John Birkbeck Esq. the President occupied the Chair,  
and about 20 members attended. Mr John Wilson was  
elected honorary Treasurer, and Mr M. Mason hon.  
Secretary. Mr Saml Hadfield was elected Auditor, vice Mr  
John Hargraves deceased. Messrs Thomas Holmes, James  
Holmes, F.C. Stanley, J.C. Wellington, J. Woolstencroft,  
and G.K. Charlesworth were elected Committeemen for  
two years. Votes of condolence with the family of the  
late John Birkbeck Esq. the former president of the  
Club, and with the relatives of the late Mr John Hargraves  
who held the office of Auditor for 10 years, were passed  
in silence. Votes of thanks for past services were  
accorded to the Treasurer & Secretary -

On the motion of Mr M. Mason seconded by Mr  
G.K. Charlesworth - the following Resolution was adopted:

"The Members of the Settle and District Conservative  
Club desire at their Annual General Meeting to  
"express continued confidence in the Foreign, Irish,  
"and Domestic policy of the present Government and  
assure Mr Walter Morrison the Member for the Skipton  
Division, that his action in supporting the Government

## **The Church Institute, the Old Court House, the Craven Assembly Rooms**

The Settle Church Institute is mentioned frequently. It was set up in about 1874 (Lanc. Gaz. 14 Nov. 1874) and met first in the National School Room (built 1856). It seems that the Institute did not own premises; some meetings and events took place in the National School and the Music Hall (now Victoria Hall).

The objects of the Church Institute were to have ‘a reading and refreshment room, library, discussion class, lectures, entertainments and whatever else may tend to the instruction and reasonable recreation of the members.’ Yearly subscription was 6s for members, 10s for honorary members. John Birkbeck junior gave a lecture on Alpine travel to the Church Institute. In 1876 it was decided by the Church Institute to obtain a billiard table and a table was ordered (but not said where it was to be put). In 1878 a Church Institute Cricket Club was formed.

The Old Courthouse located in Bishopdale Court at the time (not as now in Station Road) became the Craven Assembly Rooms at one end and a warehouse at the other (now converted into flats: Hudson, NCHTJ 2005). The Settle Church Institute probably rented the Craven Assembly Rooms, accessed from Bishopdale Court, from the owner (Mr Charlesworth?).

In May 1880 ‘The defeat of the Conservative cause in the West Riding of Yorkshire has had the effect of re-invigorating the Conservatives of Settle.’ (Lanc. Gaz. 1 May 1880). ‘It has been resolved to form a club ... but it appears there is an intention of merging the Church Institute into the new club ... ’ (the club being at the ‘long established Institute called Settle Church’.) By November 1880 ‘The Late Church Institute ...’ is reported (Lanc. Gaz. 27 November 1880). The final general meeting of this society was held in The National School. The residue of Institute funds was to be applied to redemption of pew rents in Settle Church.

The rented Assembly Rooms were available for meetings of the New Conservative Club with use of the Billiard Room. Generally, Club meetings were noted as held at the ‘Rooms’. In June 1885 other premises were being sought, perhaps to reduce expenses.



*Assembly Rooms in Bishopdale Court, Settle*

Sub-committees were set up on almost every decision of the Conservative Club Committee, for example a new committee ‘to procure Political Lectures and a Lamp to be suspended over

the Club door (by private subscription.)' When the lamp arrived it was found to be much larger than expected but it was put up. The stone disc remaining high up over the Assembly Rooms entrance was probably where it was placed – with what looks like a disconnected gas supply.

In May 1893 Mr Winskill's plans and tender for the erection of a new club were proposed and it was decided to hold a bazaar to raise part of the money required. But in June 1893 a report was requested on premises in the Town Hall and the old Wesleyan Chapel. It was then resolved to accept the offer of premises in the Town Hall at a rent of £28 pa. New fenders, chair repairs and hire of a cleaner were needed. Club furniture was to be removed from the Assembly Rooms and the town hall cellar to be let at £5 pa. (actually £3). The Billiard room, Reading Room and passages were to be covered with linoleum and an inner door for the vestibule constructed. Donations were needed to cover the expense. Presumably the idea of building new premises was premature.

### **Membership matters**

John Birkbeck jnr Esquire was usually chairman (i.e. Colonel John Birkbeck of Anley 1872-1935 alpinist, son of member John Birkbeck senior the alpinist, 1817-1890) John senior was first president. The chairman is referred to as Jno Birkbeck Jr Esq, a rather dated form of writing John. Other members acted as chairman when necessary.

Gentlemen above the age of 18 years could be admitted as members, having signed a statement that 'it is their intention to become members of the New Club.' Membership was agreed by ballot with a blackballing rule of two thirds in favour. One potential member was blackballed in October 1882. This rarely happened but in later years 'on a ballot J C... was not elected.'

At the second meeting, held in the Court House, the rules were drawn up, the name changed from Constitutional to Conservative Club and age limit made 17 years. It was noted that some members had not signed the declaration. The strict text of the Rules had to be adhered to. Members were allowed to smoke in the Reading Room after 6 pm. Ten more members were elected, but one was not - the spelling of whose name was questioned.

The Rules are not known. The club rooms were to be open 8 am to 10.30 pm except on Sunday. The rooms were proposed to be open all night on Christmas Day, and New Year's Day also until ½ past 11 pm for a week after Christmas Day. This matter was discussed every year. No proposed person was to be allowed into the rooms before being accepted as a member by the committee (Visitor rule). Six members (of the committee) were to be elected for one year and six for two years.

The conduct of members was occasionally a source of concern. The secretary had to write to one member that in view of 'his conduct in the Rooms they would feel obliged to put into force Rule 24 if such conduct was continued.' In December 1881 a vote was taken on ... ..'s conduct when six voted for his expulsion and two against (Rule 24). Mr ... .. wrote to apologise for his conduct but a new vote was still for expulsion. In April 1883 he was chairing a meeting! Notice as to mis-conduct of members was to be put up in the rooms and the caretaker to report any mis-conduct to the committee. Mr R... was asked to appear before the committee 'at the next meeting' or send in his resignation. It was decided to put up notices as to the bad language used by certain members and that if it was continued persons so offending would be expelled from the club. A number of members continued to use the

club after default of payment of subscriptions. In July 1884 four members were named as defaulters. In April 1890 '... if H B...'s subscription for last year was not paid this week that he should cease to be a member of the Club.' (He ceased to be a member).

On 11<sup>th</sup> August 1890 a vote of condolence with the family of the late Mr John Birkbeck of Anley (1817-1890, alpinist)(former president of the club) was carried. He was replaced by John Birkbeck jnr as president. V(ictor) J(ohn) Birkbeck was elected member in February 1891 (bn 1873? army officer). In April 1892 W. A. Stackhouse Esq (Captain, Major in 1897) was elected president. In May 1893 'A president shall be elected at the AGM for one year.' The portraits of the two Birkbeck presidents were to be enlarged.

Presumably access was not controlled and anyone could walk in. A reward of 10s was offered for information about damage to the club 'on Saturday evening last'. A note was to be sent to 'dummy's friends to ask him to keep away from the club ...' Dummy appears to have previously been a source of trouble.

A proposal that Long Preston Conservative Club members be honorary members was rejected.

### **Finance**

Financial matters seemed not to be in good shape much of the time. At the start in October 1880 a committee was formed to solicit donations to pay off the Club's debts perhaps for expenses already incurred (furniture £7 and £9-4-41/2). The treasurer was instructed to pay the Church Institute for furniture (when funds allowed).

At the Annual General Meeting held in the Mechanic's Institute in April 1881 it was decided to pay the treasurer and secretary 3 guineas each for the year just ended. The annual subscription was 2s a year. The treasurer's balance in April 1881 was £1-19-8. In October 1882 a Voluntary Subscription system was to be started.

April 1883 the balance was £4-2-7. The directors of the Settle Gas Co. were requested to reduce the price of gas to 4s per 1000 feet (*sic*). In March 1884 subscriptions were raised from 6s to 10s (Rule 15). Billiard players were to pay 6d a week rather than a fee per game. In April 1884 the balance was £8-16-4. The treasurer undertook in November 1884 to obtain from five gentlemen a guarantee of £5 each for the club account and guaranteed to repay the following May.

A missing letter containing £1 was supposed to have been stolen from the club. The secretary had to ask the Church Institute about giving up possession of either the lower or upper rooms and what rents were required. The treasurer and secretary combined post was to be paid £3-3-0 a year instead of being paid to each of two persons.

A sub-committee was elected June 1885 to look out for new premises. Mr Charlesworth's offer of the club premises at the sum of £150 subject to eight rent charges was declined. (Was Mr Charlesworth owner of the Assembly Rooms at this time?) Notice was to be given to quit the premises on May 1<sup>st</sup> 1886. In April 1886 the balance was a healthier £23-13-3.

April 1888 Treasurer's Statement of Accounts  
Bank balance £6-6-11

*The Treasurer in acc with the Liffle & District Conservative Club*

| Receipts                               | £         | s        | d        | Expenditure                | £         | s        | d        |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------------------------|-----------|----------|----------|
| Balance for April 5 <sup>th</sup> 1887 | 13        | 16       | 11       | Rent                       | 26        | 12       | .        |
| Subscriptions                          |           |          |          | Gas 3.18.9. 4.5.5. 3.14.11 | 11        | 19       | 1        |
| 1 at 2 guineas                         | 2         | 2        | .        | Coals                      | 5         | 2        | .        |
| 13 at 1 guinea                         | 13        | 13       | .        | Labouring firewood &c      | 17        | 19       | 10       |
| 2 at 10/6                              | 1         | 1        | .        | Newspapers                 | 11        | 15       | 7        |
| 54 at 10                               | 25        | 7        | .        | Shirts                     |           |          |          |
| 5 Associates                           | .         | 10       | .        | Cheque Book                | .         | 2        | 6        |
| Insurance for 1886-7                   | 4         | 12       | .        | W. Mansley for alterations | 2         | 10       | 2        |
| Billiard & Card fees                   | 20        | .        | 3        | Printing &c                | 1         | 6        | 6        |
| Rent                                   | 6         | 18       | .        | Cards                      | .         | 13       | 6        |
| Sale of newspapers                     | .         | 14       | .        | Paid by Treasurer          | .         | 8        | 3        |
| "                                      | .         | 13       | 10       | Water Rates                | 1         | 8        | 5        |
| "                                      | .         | 13       | 5        | Lips & Mafers              | .         | 5        | .        |
| "                                      | .         | 17       | .        | Repairs to Table (no acct) | .         | 8        | 6        |
| Wm Mansley for Wood                    | .         | 7        | .        | Locus of Picaro            | .         | 7        | 6        |
|                                        |           |          |          | Coals (no acct)            | .         | 16       | 8        |
|                                        |           |          |          | Remuneration               | 3         | 3        | .        |
|                                        |           |          |          | Balance in Bank            | 6         | 6        | 11       |
|                                        | <u>91</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> |                            | <u>91</u> | <u>5</u> | <u>5</u> |
| Examined & found correct               |           |          |          |                            |           |          |          |
| John Hargreaves                        |           |          |          |                            |           |          |          |
| auditor                                |           |          |          |                            |           |          |          |
| 20 April 1888                          |           |          |          |                            |           |          |          |
| of rec. since                          |           |          |          |                            |           |          |          |
|                                        |           |          |          | Wm Mansley Junr            |           |          |          |
|                                        |           |          |          | Chairman                   |           |          |          |

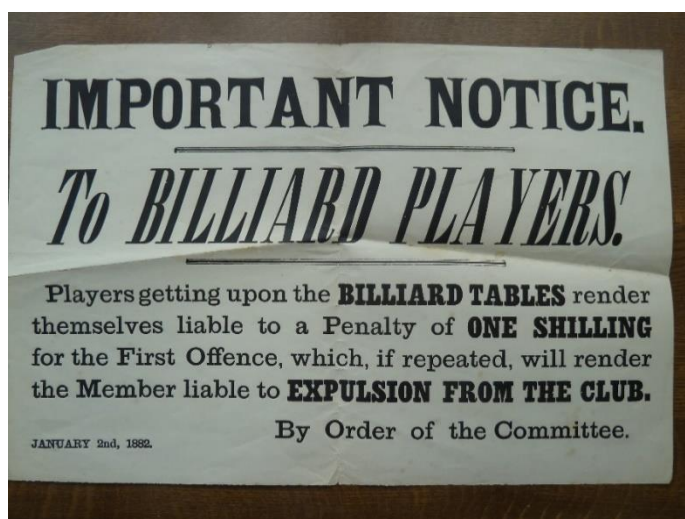
April 1891 canvassing for donations took place to clear existing debt and by April 1892 the club was free of debt.

### The Billiards Club

Billiards played a large part in the club activities, its finances, its organization and troubles. In September 1880 it was proposed that for one night the committee room be used for a meeting of Gentlemen interested in forming a Billiard Club but this was rejected. However, something must have been agreed since the members volunteered £65 to buy a new billiard table, half

repayable by the club after one year, the rest when possible. Later entries in the Minutes show that Mr Charlesworth and Mr Swale lent tables to the club. The billiard room was to be opened once the rules had been determined and a charge of 2d per game of 50 be made. The fee for 50 points was later reduced from 2d to 1d, the loser to pay. The venture must have been successful because permission was given to the Billiard Table Committee to put up another billiard table. But in June 1884 it was decided to close one billiard table. In July 1884 the committee decided to reimpose the fee of 2d. The payment rules seemed complicated and occasionally changed. Billiards 50 points up should not last longer than 20 minutes, the loser to pay the fee of 2d and the winner to see that the loser pays. No game was to be started after 10.30 pm. No game of 100 points should be played after 7 o'clock. A glass-fronted box for reception of billiard fees was put up and a new billiard ball was procured. In February 1881 one gas jet in each circle over the Billiard Table was to be cut off so that a jet could be placed over the marking board. In 1883 eight jets were to be cut off the gas brackets in the billiard room. A sub-committee of three was elected for repair of the billiard table. Another draft (*sic*) board was to be obtained.

Behaviour left something to be desired. A slate and fee box was provided for the Billiard Room but it seems that payment was not always made and the box was burgled. 'The outrage committed upon the fee boxes in the Billiard room, in cooperation with Supt. Inman ... with a view to the detection of the offender.' Safety locks to billiard fee boxes were added and the sub-committee was to see that games were paid for. Payment defaulters were reported in 1887. There was a 1s penalty for getting on the billiard table and members were told not handle the cushions. Further warning was given about getting on to billiard tables and playing Napoleon (card game). A member was told that 'if he be again seen in the Rooms that in future the Rule 6, as to a fine of 1s being inflicted upon players getting upon the tables, would be enforced.'



'B. H... be asked to pay 3s for damage done to the Billiard lights' (on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1898).

Maintenance was frequently required. Billiard balls required 'turning' and some linoleum was needed. The tables had to be repaired. It was agreed 'To pay for the three shares in the Billiard Table taken from the Church Institute and that a new set of Balls be procured.' One member undertook personally to procure a new billiard ball. One chalk pocket, four heavy and two light cues were to be obtained. Three new cues were bought (i.e. they were not

personal property). Repairs were needed - new leathers were to be put on the brasses of the billiard table.

Finance was often an issue so it was decided to limit opening time of the Billiard Room as an economical experiment. To raise money a billiard tournament was to be organized, a challenge to play billiards with the Ladywood Club was accepted and a match with Long Preston Conservative Club was to be arranged. Billiard matches with Clapham Reading Room were arranged. Sub-letting of part of the club's premises was to be considered. One billiard table was to be advertized for sale - to be offered with accessories at a price of £28. A 'Free and Easy' was to be held at intervals in the billiard room. In 1888 a billiards handicap 6d fee and prizes was proposed.

In 1889 it was decided to paper and clean the billiard room. 'Paper and paint the billiard and reading rooms and put up a partition to make a card room in consideration of the landlord (Mr Charlesworth) ventilating the billiard room at a cost of more than £7.' It was probably smoking causing a problem. A Notice was put up in the billiard room, requesting players not to let lighted tobacco fall on to the cloth.

Various caretakers were employed in later years. Mr Wilson was to be paid £4-4-0 pa for brushing the billiard table daily, ironing the table three times a week, tipping cues and winding the clock. The billiard box was to be cleared once a fortnight. In December 1896 Mr J. Metcalfe was appointed Billiard attendant at 2/6 a week, 10.00-1.00, 2.00 – 4 pm, 5.30 to 9.30 pm, slightly different on Saturdays. He was also required to clean and iron the table and tip the cues at 1s/week. In January 1897 'J. T... be written to as to his assaulting J. Metcalfe.' In February 1897, the secretary had to write to J. Metcalfe and request him and his friends not to make use of the Club contrary to the rules. By April 1897 it was resolved that Mr Metcalfe's resignation be accepted!

### **The Games and Reading Room**

There was a sub-committee for games and newspapers and purchase of furniture from the Church Institute. In November 1880, the account for furnishing etc. had to be paid out of the funds in hand.

The game of Napoleon was to be strictly prohibited but later the committee agreed that Napoleon be played only on Saturday evenings.

Dean (the caretaker?) was ordered to report any infringement of Rule 21 to the committee. A fee of 1d per person sitting down to play cards for the rest of the day was charged, two card tables only to be used at once in the Reading room. This rule was rescinded at the next Special meeting. The committee were taking steps with a view to the 'detection of the person or persons who broke down the Card Box and that if discovered the offender would be expelled.'

The purchase of papers and their resale was a continuing theme. The secretary was directed to affix a notice that periodicals were not to be removed from the room and that the newspapers for the present half-year would be sold 'on Saturday evening'. A list of newspapers for the ensuing half-year was settled and the 'sale of the same was fixed for next Saturday.' Later, newspapers were to be sold quarterly. The members were free to make suggestions and the list was changed frequently. At various times over 20 years some of the newspapers and magazine titles were:

Strand Magazine, Athletic News, Exchange and Mart, The Times, Daily Telegraph, Lancaster Observer, The Graphic, Chambers Journal, Illustrated London News, Sporting and Dramatic News, Daily Graphic, Punch, Lancaster Standard, Northern Daily Telegraph, Sporting and Dramatic News, Field, Yorkshire Post, Manchester Courier, Morning Post, Moonshine, Liverpool Courier, Manchester Evening Mail.

In 1888 – newspapers expenditure, £11-15-7; sale £2-18-3. At some point readers were only allowed 10 minutes to read any one paper!

The Reading Room required ‘half a dozen good strong chairs (not armchairs) to be bought.’ A Complaint book was to be provided. The repair of a bookcase with a view to formation of a library, perhaps as a memorial of the Queen’s Jubilee, was proposed. The bagatelle room was to be sub-let to the Young Men’s Friendly Society at 3s/week – the table to be removed and put in the billiard room. The room was sub-let but with reserved access to the existing coal place. The rent was later reduced to 2s/6d. In 1890 the bagatelle table was sold to the Horton in Ribblesdale Reading Room for 5 guineas.

### **Politics**

A political sub-committee was formed and various actions and sycophantic submissions to the Government were made during years of some political turmoil in UK, South Africa and Ireland particularly.

It was proposed that a petition be signed in favour of Sir Michael Hicks Beach’s motion on the Transvaal. The rooms were to be closed for one hour on the 26<sup>th</sup> April during Lord Beaconsfield’s funeral (Benjamin Disraeli). A gift to the club of his picture was made. The rooms closed from 2 to 3 pm for Lord F. Cavendish’s funeral (Gladstone’s right-hand man.) During the election (of 1882) the Reading Room was to be used by the Election Committee to make arrangements for the canvas(s) of Settle.

The list of Voters for Settle was gone through with a view to fresh claims and objections to Liberal voters. It was decided not to hold a public meeting (the Liberal meeting being considered a fiasco). No action was to be taken with respect to uniting with the Liberal party with a view to obtaining the appointment of Settle as the centre of a new Division under the Government Redistribution Bill.

The Revd N. I. Birkbeck presented a picture of Her Majesty. An offer was made by two members to frame the portrait of Her Majesty free of charge. Regret was expressed on the death of Lord Iddesleigh (the Conservative politician Sir Stafford Northcote, joint leader of the Conservative party).

A typical fulsome address, April 1887: ‘The members of the Settle and District Conservative Club recognizing the anxious and arduous duties imposed at the present time upon Lord Salisbury, Lord Hartington and other leaders of the Unionist party in consequence of the joint action of a considerable number of unscrupulous members of the House of Commons tender their hearty acknowledgement of the determined and hitherto successful attitude assumed by the Government and loyally supported by many of the most influential Members of the late Liberal Government opposing the forces of disruption and assure Lord Salisbury and those who are acting in concert with him that they have the unflinching support of a majority of Unionists in this part of Yorkshire.’

In 1887 it was felt desirable that a public Unionist meeting be held in Settle (in the Music Hall). There was an 'Address of support to Lord Salisbury Government' in 1888 and support of the actions of Balfour in Irish affairs.

Another fulsome address, in April 1889, to leaders of the Conservative and Liberal Unionist parties was made:

'The Members of the Settle and District Conservative Club view with entire satisfaction the course of events which has marked the wise and patriotic government of the country at the hands of Lord Salisbury and his Colleagues. Whilst the blessings of peace have flowed from the fine but consiliatory policy adopted towards foreign nations the unflinching and impartial administration of the law in Ireland under Mr Balfour's direction has decreased agrarian and other crimes almost to vanishing point and the carrying of many important acts of domestic legislation during the past 3 years in the face of unprecedented obstruction has proved the Unionist compact to be unassailable and abundantly disproved the assertion that 'Ireland blocks the way'.

In April 1890: 'This meeting desires to express its continued confidence in the Government of Lord Salisbury which has afforded peace abroad and prosperity at home. Thanks to Mr Balfour's admirable administration of the affairs of Ireland the state of that country has changed from rebellion to repose. Mr Goschen's financial schemes have enormously reduced taxation, whilst the combines of Mr Stanhope and Lord George Hamilton has raised the efficiency of the army and navy. The loyal and unwavering support accorded to the Government by the Liberal Unionist party affords abundant proof that the fusion of the two parties will prove permanent in the face of a National danger. This meeting also assures Mr Walter Morrison, the member for the Skipton Division, that he still possess the entire confidence of those by whose suffrages he was returned at the last election, and pledges itself to the support of his candidature by all lawful means at the next General Election.'

A meeting to consider the Home Rule Bill (concerning Ireland) was held in March 1893.

### **Maintenance**

A caretaker was needed to keep the rooms in order. It was resolved that Dean be paid 6s a week for cleaning and 5s a year for firewood. Dean to receive 5s for extra work at Christmas 1880. Dean to be paid 7s a week. A member and his son offered to have the rooms cleaned and attend as Billiard Marker for 10s a week.

Mr Nebly was given 5s a year for repairing and winding up the clock. In 1883 it was said that the room was not being properly cleaned and he did not attend to the clock. Mr Hardacre the then cleaner was asked to resign and the secretary to appoint a successor. However, Mr Hardacre was re-appointed with two week's notice. Hardacre was not to commence cleaning until after 10 pm closing time. Then he was told that the committee were not satisfied with his service and he was to attend the next committee meeting. It was decided that he should continue, he promising amendment. May 1885 one month's notice given to Hardacre. The new cleaner was to be paid 6s a week in summer and 7s a week in winter with an allowance for extras. Caretaker salary was later raised to 8s/week in winter.

Matters of painting and ventilation of the rooms were raised. A tender of £2 for papering and cleaning windows of the Billiard Room was accepted. The Club rooms were decorated by the caretaker for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

Amongst other maintenance matters were dilapidated and broken chairs to be repaired, repairs to the lavatory were needed (more than once), the billiard table cloth was to be exchanged, one card table covered with oil cloth and new blinds put up. A small gas jet was to be put at the billiard marker, the fireplace in billiard room to be blocked up and the other repaired. In 1893 the exterior lamp was to be removed (from the stone disc over the doorway with a gas connection?)

Club furniture was insured for £150.

### Other events

A ball at Ashfield was proposed but rejected in early years but one was held in Victoria Hall in January 1894. The desirability of holding a banquet was discussed. It was also decided by five against three not to have a Demonstration (with no explanation about such an event). A supper at Christmas or New Year was proposed, at member's expense. A Members' dinner was held at the Royal Oak in January 1883, at a cost of 2/6d each.

Members were invited to present a paper to be read on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September. In October 1882 a suggestion was made to put up a notice desiring members to give Lectures or conduct Debates during winter, but no resolution was arrived at. Mr Birkbeck promised to open a debate on the 'House of Lords' and to find some public speaker to give an address in the Music Hall.

Another concert for members was agreed as well as social evenings in winter months. A smoking concert was to be arranged and singers obtained.

### The second Minute book (1901 to 1919) concerning the new building

The first page is a valuation of the Old Conservative Club Furniture totalling £40-19s. It is notable for the items 12 smoking chairs, 9 small chairs and a copy of Whitakers' Craven of two volumes (The history and antiquities of the deanery of Craven, in the county of York). Even the curb fenders, buckets and brushes, the fireplace and a swing door are included.

A handwritten list titled 'Valuation Old Conservative Club Furniture' dated 'May 21 1901'. The list is written on lined paper and includes various items with their corresponding values in pounds and shillings. The items are listed in two columns, with the values in the right column. The total value is given as £40 19s.

| Item                      | Value           |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Billiard Table & marker   | 20 - -          |
| Cupboard with glass doors | 2 - -           |
| Swing door                | 10 - -          |
| Fireplace                 | 3 - -           |
| 4 Card Tables             | 1 8 -           |
| 12 Smoking Chairs         | 3 - -           |
| 9 Small Chairs            | 18 - -          |
| 1 Oak Chair Antiques      | 10 - -          |
| 1 Clock                   | 10 - -          |
| Notice Boards             | 4 - -           |
| Oak Seating & Platforms   | 3 10 -          |
| Pictures                  | 2 - -           |
| Reading Room Table        | 1 5 -           |
| Whitakers Craven 2 Vols   | 1 10 -          |
| Curb Fenders              | 4 - -           |
| Buckets & Brushes         | 5 - -           |
| Umbrella Stand & Sundries | 5 - -           |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>£40 19 -</b> |

May 21 1901



*The New Conservative Club building in Station Road, Settle*

The membership application form of May 1901 states that the new 'building is expected to be ready before 1<sup>st</sup> September and Gentlemen of the Unionist Party are invited to join. The building contains two Billiard-rooms, Reading-room, &c, &c.; and a Bath will also be put under the charge of the caretaker for the use of Members on payment'. (Total fees for the year of £1-7s were later recorded and the rate changed to 4d with towel and soap and 2d without). Occasionally someone was not admitted to membership. In 1912 'Bona Fide Conservative and Unionist Members of Giggleswick, Langcliffe and Stainforth Reading Rooms or Institutes may become Associates of the Club'.

The first general meeting of the Members of the New Conservative Club was held in the Church rooms at Settle in 1901, C. A. Swale presiding. The club was to be called the Settle and District Conservative Club, carried on in the 'New Premises now being erected in New Street Settle, the exact details of the tenancy to be agreed upon'. The members club is a separate entity from the Settle and District Conservative Club Company Ltd with its 30 shareholders owning the new building. Mr Morrison was invited to be the first president. The duties of the caretaker were then listed, and he to have three rooms and use of the bathroom, scullery and other offices but must allow committee meetings in the parlour if so desired. The rates, taxes, lights and fuel were to be free for the caretaker. A tender was requested with the salary required per week and four applicants were interviewed. Mr Hilton asked for 19s per week but declined to take the shop, so Mr Wallbank was offered the post at 18s a week.

The Club Company elected a secretary, treasurer and six company members for its committee and the general club members elected a president, an auditor and six other members. Mrs Birkbeck held shares in the company. (Major, later Colonel, John Birkbeck J.P. acted as a chairman on several later occasions so was still a member). The Rules were as for the first club with only minor changes. A Special General Meeting was held in the new premises in October 1901.

Politics were still an important issue, viz., 'The object of the Club is to further the Conservative Cause therefore it is the Duty of any Member as an honourable man to give Notice to the Secretary should his Political, Principles not coincide with those of the

Conservative Party so that the same may be considered by the Committee'. Mr W... was told in 1905 that he could not be a member of both the Liberal and Conservative Clubs at the same time. An even lengthier declaration was proposed in 1906. The Register of Voters was looked at occasionally, presumably to find new members. Debates on 'The House of Lords' and 'Conscription' were held in 1909.

In 1905 it was minuted (letter from Mr Charlesworth) that 'it was only fitting and right that a portrait of Mr Swale should be placed in the Club alongside the portraits of other notable workers in the Conservative Cause in the District, and that (if) he (Mr Swale) presented the Club with such a portrait the Committee would accept the same. He (Mr Charlesworth) was also of opinion that the building of the present Club was the best piece of work that had been done for the Conservative Cause here, and that, had it not been for Mr Swale's exertions, the building would never have been put up at all'. President Mr Walter Morrison gifted the club his photograph in 1907.

The billiard fees frequently came up for discussion e.g. – '2d for the old table per game of 50 up and 4d per 100. Three pence per game of 50 up and 6d per game of 100 on the new table.' 'Upper table 6d per 100 and Lower table 4d per 100'.

A dance committee and a Registration committee were formed. A resolution was put forward that a bookcase should be put up in the Assembly Room and '... only ordinary whist, chess, and draughts be played in the second billiard room'. Practically all matters affecting the operation of the club were managed in this very formal manner, meetings being held every month. Even at the 1902 AGM the sale of newspapers and old packs of cards were items on the agenda. Arrangements for Christmas and New Year were made as before – 'the front Billiard room to be open all night on Xmas eve and New Year's eve.' The committee were to divide themselves into Wardens every month to help the secretary and caretaker to maintain good order.

For hire of the upstairs room for lectures etc.: 'without gas 7s 6d inclusive, with gas for lecture 12s 6d, for lecture with lantern 15s. For dance till two 25s, for all night 30s.' An Annual Ball is noted in January 1902 but was postponed because the Mikado was taking place in the Victoria Hall. A smoking concert was considered but it was left to the secretary to ascertain the feeling of the patrons as to its being held on Ash Wednesday. Mr H... was asked to report on the gas (buying a gas governor was agreed). A social event was organized by the Dance Committee and the Band Committee, the club to supply all refreshments except aerated waters, tickets Ladies 1s 6d, Gentlemen 2s and Double 3s. A complaint about removal of the 'Field' was received, followed by ordering the Bradford Observer instead of the Leeds Mercury, and adding Strand and Answers.

The secretary explained that both billiard tables belonged to him (Mr Swale) and were lent to the club. The new chairs were lent by Mrs Birkbeck. The old billiard table was to be purchased from Mr Swale for £20. A set of pyramid balls was considered. (Pyramid pool, or simply pyramids, is a form of pool that was played mainly in the 19th century. It was one of several pool games that were popular at this time, and was forerunner to modern games such as eight-ball, blackball, straight pool, and Russian pyramid. Along with black pool, it was one of the progenitor cue sports of snooker.) Much discussion followed for a long time. A Handicapping Committee was set up. The Rules and fees for using the billiard tables seemed to get more complex as years went by ('for Pyramids, Pool Snooker Pool and Shell-out'.) The

Billiard fee envelopes were disappearing mysteriously. Members had to be reminded many times to pay the fees.

The accounts for 1901/2 show how important the billiards and cards income was to cover expenses, notably the amount spent on printing of papers (e.g. AGM and Rules) posted to members. The supply of hot water was questioned, presumably to cut costs of solid fuels. The gas bill (for lighting) was also high.

| <u>RECEIPTS:-1901-1902:-</u> |     |    |     |
|------------------------------|-----|----|-----|
| Subscribers                  | 59  | 19 | 6   |
| Billiards & cards            | 43  | 3  | 9½  |
| Sale of furniture            | 40  |    |     |
| Dance profits                | 4   |    |     |
| Hire of Assembly room        | 1   | 5  |     |
| Sale of old iron             |     | 7  |     |
| Bath fees                    |     | 6  | 3   |
| Visitors                     |     | 2  | 6   |
| Sale of papers               | 1   | 17 | 3   |
|                              | 153 | 7  | 1½  |
| <u>EXPENDITURE</u>           |     |    |     |
| Rents                        | 39  | 5  | 3   |
| Caretakers                   | 27  | 13 |     |
| Craven Printing              | 23  | 5  | 10  |
| Coal & Coke                  | 16  | 11 | 5½  |
| Gas                          | 101 | 2  | 10½ |
| Printing                     | 2   | 11 |     |
| Rates & taxes                | 4   | 13 | 9   |
| Sub to central assn          | 1   | 1  |     |
| Sundries                     | 1   | 19 | 7   |
|                              | 133 | 9  | 2   |
| <u>SOCIAL A/C</u>            |     |    |     |
| Gate money                   | 2   | 5  | d   |
| Tickets sold                 | 4   | 10 | 0   |
| Aerated waters sold          | 3   | 3  | 6   |
| Provisions sold              | 1   | 4  | 3   |
|                              | 15  | 14 | 5½  |
| <u>EXPENDITURE:-</u>         |     |    |     |
| Music etc                    | 1   | 19 | 6   |
| Provisions etc               | 7   | 11 | 1½  |
| Alterations to premises      | 1   | 10 | 7   |
| Sundries                     | 1   | 16 | 7½  |
|                              | 12  | 17 | 10  |

The purchase of a Ping-pong outfit was advised, players to pay a fee of 1d per 15 minutes, lengthened to 20 minutes after some discussion. No smoking allowed in the Ping-pong room. A proposition was made that Lady Conservatives could join the Club on payment of 5s pa and the usual game fees. Strong objections were raised but a limit on attendance of ladies up to 6pm was agreed.

A more formal library was established with a set of Rules. An Assistant Librarian position was discussed at the 1903 AGM.

## Settle Conservative Club Library.

### **RULES.**

This Library is open for the issue of books to Members of the Club and Subscribers on Tuesday Mornings from 11 to 12 o'clock, and on Friday Evenings from 7 to 8 o'clock only.

No Member or Subscriber shall take a book unless it has been issued and entered to such Member or Subscriber by a Librarian.

Only one book can be taken out at once.

Any Member or Subscriber taking a book from this Library will be allowed 14 days to have it in such Member's or Subscriber's possession.

Any Member or Subscriber keeping a book beyond the time specified and allowed, shall, on returning such book, pay a fine of 1d. per week or portion of a week, and no fresh book shall be issued to such Member or Subscriber until the fine be paid.

If any book be damaged whilst in the possession of any Member or Subscriber, such Member or Subscriber shall, at the option of the Committee, either replace it or pay for its repairing.

If any Member or Subscriber lose a book, such Member or Subscriber shall pay for it, at a price to be estimated by the Committee.

No person shall be allowed to select a book from the shelves; the choice must be made from the catalogue.

All books must be returned to the Library 7 days before the 31st of March in each year for overhauling, and no books will be issued until the first Library day in the following month.

The Reading room pendant was to have 'two incandescents put on' (only in the 1890s was electricity becoming introduced to communities). In 1903 a gas jet was proposed outside the upper Billiard room door. It was 'recommended that the Gas Bill for the Ball should be paid in full' ! In 1905 an estimate of the cost of lighting the rooms with Inverted Burners was to be made. The matter of lighting was often discussed, the cost being substantial. Coal and coke tenders were requested every year, usually from Mr C. Lord and Hector Christie. The cost of cartage of coke from Settle Gas Works had to be ascertained at 10d per ton.

The Bradford Observer, Graphic and Chambers Journal were discontinued and the Daily Mail, Illustrated News and the Harmsworth Magazine were substituted - 10 minutes allowed for reading. Changes were made every three months on members' requests. The cutting out of paragraphs from newspapers was to be severely dealt with. Some papers were being mutilated and taken off the premises. A 10s reward for information was offered 'to the person

laying information that would lead to the dismissal of the Offender'. In 1908 the papers taken were:

Graphic, Sketch, Pearson's Magazine, Strand, Punch, Chamber's Journal, Story Teller, Daily Mail, Yorkshire Post, Manchester Guardian, Daily Telegraph, The Field, Tit Bits, Athletic News, Lancaster Observer, Craven Herald, Yorkshire Evening Post, Yorkshire Evening News and Exchange and Mart. In 1916 '... notices had been purposely covered up especially with regard to the card fees ... and if the practice was persisted in that Card playing be discontinued'.

A damper was to be put in the caretaker's kitchen fire range (presumably to cut down on fuel). The Settle Bowling Club was required to pay 6d a year for use of the road through the Conservative Club premises since they had no right to use the same. Mr Metcalfe was allowed to use the Assembly Room for his dancing class at 7s 6d instead of 6s 3d per night. Mr Swale loaned a piano for use at entertainment, dances etc. The Primrose League was allowed to put a cupboard on the top landing to hold crockery at a charge of 6d per year.

In February 1904 several members said that they wished to be able to play darts in the Assembly Room – at 1d per night.

Redecorating was considered in 1904. '... colour washing and whitening of the Lower Billiard Room and the Reading Room: The billiard room walls to be prepared and coloured pink with a Dado of a darker colour and a line about three quarters of an inch wide. The ceiling to be whitened. The reading room walls to be prepared and coloured a very light green and the ceiling whitened.' (A book of colours was then produced and costs proposed of £4-18-6 and £2-12-6). The room walls needed painting because of 'the striking of matches and otherwise damaging the walls thereof ...'. Lavatories (two) to be of a dark colour. A notice to be put up asking members not to pencil mark the walls. In later years redecorating was effected usually after much discussion.

Miss Stansfeld asked that the Flag presented by her to the club be hoisted on the King's Birthday, Coronation Day, Primrose Day, Empire Day and any other appropriate occasion.

A New Clock was discussed in 1908.

In January 1914 Col. Birkbeck was in the chair recording the death of the Secretary and Treasurer Mr C. A. L Swale. The piano lent by Mr Swale was left to Mrs Bulcock in Mr Swale's will and she was offered £7 for the same: otherwise to remove the piano.

## **World War I**

At the January 14<sup>th</sup> 1915 meeting it was decided that 'the Reading Room be open on Sunday for soldiers only'. This is the first indication of the impact of the war on the club. On 16<sup>th</sup> August 1915 Mr R. W. Garner was appointed Representative of the Club to act on the Settle District Recruiting Committee. On 25<sup>th</sup> October 1915 the financial position of the club was considered and the Secretary explained that many members were serving at the Front and that several Honorary subscribers had halved their subscriptions. The salary of the caretaker at 12s a week was thought to be far too large and was reduced to 10s plus payment of rates on the house and shop. He agreed to 10s but could not also pay rates. It was then agreed that he be paid 9s without also paying rates. The cost of coals, rates and income tax threatened the club's financial solvency. A threatening letter from the Bank of Liverpool in Settle asked for the account be put on a business footing. (The bank was owed £97-3-8). 'Owing to so many

Members having joined the Forces or left the District, it was considered that unless some person or persons of means could be found to guarantee the Account the Club must close its doors until after the War'. A proposition was put that the 'Club be closed 1<sup>st</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> November 1916 and the caretaker was put on one month's notice but he could stay in the house with gas free.' The motion was defeated.

A letter dated 30 March 1916 to Lieut. Col. J. Birkbeck (3/6 Duke of Wellington's Regiment, Clipstone Camp, Notts.) referred to the Bank's letter saying that the balance at March 1915 showed a loss of £34-4-11 and that Mr Charlesworth would stand as Guarantor until some arrangement was made. If all outstanding subscriptions were collected the negative balance would still be over £70. 'Rumours have reached several of the Members of the Committee that several ladies in the District wish the Club to be carried on until after the War, and that then a Bazaar or Sale of Work or something of that description could be held to wipe out the debt, but I have heard nothing first hand. The Members themselves would be willing to hold Socials and Whist Drives for the Club Funds, but in these times they have an idea they would not be supported.' Mr Morrison would then be contacted about the matter.

In October 1916 it was decided to darken with distemper all the blinds, the caretaker to do the work. By November money was urgently needed by the club. By October 1917 the bank debt was still about £100 and again it was proposed to close the club. The Secretary was to write to the president Mr Morrison to explain the position. The caretaker was asked to use as little coal as possible but use coke instead and allow the fire to go out in the early evening and place two bricks in the grate. The Club House Company Ltd had allowed the Club to operate rent-free during the war last years. By October 1919 the balance was £19-7-3 and the caretaker's salary was increased to 12s a week. Somehow the financial situation had been improved.

At the AGM in May 1919 the War Memorial Committee were asked to suggest to the Parish Meeting 'That the Comrades of the Great War, being wishful for an Institute to be built in Settle, as a War Memorial, and that the Members of the Settle Liberal Club, and the Settle Conservative Club be approached as to their willingness to cease as such, and that if arranged, the Conservative Club Buildings be taken over as such War Memorial Institute'. This suggestion was rejected.

## **Conclusion**

The Settle and District Conservative Club and the Settle and District Conservative Club Company Ltd survived the first world war, but only just. They had the support of local worthies and had many members, subject to vetting. The general organization was by committees and sub-committees for practically every decision. The behaviour of some members in the billiard room, the games and reading rooms and in the toilet was occasionally reprehensible. The payment of subscriptions and fees (or lack of) for use of the rooms was often of cause for concern. The costs of gas lighting and type of lighting over the billiard tables was frequently discussed. The Minutes ranging from 1880 to 1919 offer insight into what was a provincial Gentleman's Club in Settle.

(October 2024).