

Rigg's Windermere Hotel

The railway to Windermere opened in April 1847 [1]. It was owned by the Kendal & Windermere Railway Company, a company with shareholders which also provided at least some of the finance for the construction of the Hotel [2]. At this time the hotel is referred to as 'Birthwaite Hotel' and is not yet completed [1]. This name, however, is soon superseded; the 1849 Mannex Directory states 'Here is a splendid hotel, denominated the Windermere Hotel' [10], and the census returns of 1851, and those of following decades, gives it as Windermere Hotel [5]. The term 'Rigg's Windermere Hotel' first appears around 1854 in travel guidebooks to the Lake District, in advertisements placed by the hotel [IJ, 6]. This seems to have been common practice of the time, maybe to make an establishment seem more welcoming and individual, with other local hotels also referring to themselves with the names of the manager eg Cloudesdale's Crown Hotel, Bowness [6]

The hotel was built by the local family firm, Pattinsons, with Abraham Pattinson being in charge at the time [WH, 4]. The architect was Miles Thompson of Kendal [WH, IJ]. The hotel officially opened on 12 May 1847 [WH, 3].

Richard Rigg was not from a wealthy family. In 1841, aged 26, he was living with his father John Rigg of Applegarth Farm at Middleton near Kirkby Lonsdale, a hill farm of 50 acres. Richard's elder brother, also named John, continued to live at the farm and inherited it after the death of their father [IJ].

Richard Rigg is described as the first landlord [3], tenant [4] or proprietor of the hotel [7]; he also owned and ran the successful related coaching business, including the mail contract - he was known as the Coaching King [IJ]. It seems likely that he owned a stake in the hotel at the outset and he

may have built up his stake over many years with profit from the coaching business, perhaps to own it in full [IJ].

In 1851, the census return gives Richard Rigg, aged 36, as the head of household at 'Windermere Hotel' and his occupation as 'Innkeeper'. In 1861 he is described as 'Hotel Manager' but still living at the hotel. Richard is married to Sarah and their children are John, Thomas, Mary, Richard, Sarah, Jane Anne and Lucy Anne.[5]

Richard Rigg was a highly respected and well liked member of the community and described as 'one of the most respected hotel keepers in the North of England [3, 7]. He died in July 1866 after a long illness, aged 52 [7]. According to the probate of the will his son John was 'hotel-keeper' of Windermere Hotel at the time of his father's death [IJ].

The census return of 1871 gives Richard's son, John Rigg, aged 25, as head of household at Windermere Hotel with occupation 'Licensed Victualler & Farmer'. Also given at the hotel are John's sister Mary as 'housekeeper', his brother Thomas as 'landowner', and younger siblings Richard, Jane Anne and Lucy Alice - all scholars [5].

John Rigg owned the large house 'Applegarth' on College Road, built in 1891, possibly as his private residence until his death in 1927, and presumably named after the family farm in Middleton [IJ,8]. In 1872 Thomas Rigg took the lease of the Grange Hotel in Grange-over-Sands and became the 'hotel-keeper' until his death in 1913 [9, IJ].

The Rigg family continued its association with the hotel and in 1928, Mr Bruce Rigg, a grandson of Richard, is said to own the hotel [3].

References

[WH] Information from current Windermere Hotel

[IJ] Ian Jones, respected local historian

[1] Westmorland Gazette 24/4/1847, p3, report on the opening of the railway.

[2] WG 5/8/1848, report on half yearly meeting of the Railway Company including the information that the Company had taken part in the construction of a hotel at Windermere.

[3] Lancelot Steele (1928) 'Windermere: its growth & history'. Lanty Steele was the Rigg's stable manager for many years and so would have personally known the Riggs family. He was born about 1845, and lived in Windermere from around 1858 [IJ].

[4] Private document of the Pattinson family.

[5] Census returns for 'Windermere Hotel' 1851, 1861, 1871

[6] Martineau, Harriet, (1855) 'A Complete Guide to the English Lakes', Whittaker and Co, London, 1855; published 1855-71.

[7] Kendal Mercury 14/7/1866 p5&8, obituary.

[8] Information from reception at Applegarth Villa hotel

[9] Kendal Times 24/8/1872, report of Grange Hotel Co Ltd AGM

[10] Mannex Directory: Mannex, P J, History, Topography and Directory of Westmorland and Lonsdale North of the Sands in Lancashire (1849) Simpkin, Marshall and Co, London

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Windermere & Bowness Civic Society

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