

The Incredible Mr Lamb

This article commemorates the life and work of a most remarkable man, Mr William Joseph Lamb, who lived in the district for most of his working life. For his time in Allithwaite there is some source material available in the Cartmel Almanacs from 1888 onwards, and the Grange Red Books record later years, Also there are minutes of the Easter Vestry Meetings from 1907, and minutes from Church Council from 1920 to provide a further insight into his life. Census records up to 1911 have also been used in the preparation of this article. However, it was only when we were loaned two scrap books by Mrs Lamb, the wife of Mr Lamb's late grandson, that his full life and contribution to society was revealed in all its glory.

The commemorative plaque in St Mary's Church Allithwaite (fig.1) records his long association with the church. However this is only a small part of his contribution to society. Not only was he respected as a teacher and member of the church, but his phenomenal contributions to the community shaped the local society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.



Fig. 1: Plaque in Allithwaite Church.

William Joseph Lamb was born in West Derby, Liverpool in 1847. He qualified as a certified teacher at Chester Training College. He married Elizabeth Entwistle in Liverpool in 1871. They had five children:

Albert was born in 1872 in Cartmel;
William E. was born in Liverpool in 1874;
Edwin was also born in Liverpool in 1878;
Annie was born in Edge Hill in 1882;
Percy was born in Allithwaite in 1890.

Cartmel

He had been appointed schoolmaster at the boy's School of Cartmel in October 1870 and he remained there until the summer of 1876. One year Cartmel National School had a successful inspection with the arithmetic in the upper class particularly good. Whilst at Cartmel William was involved in the Church as the organist at the Priory, and was recorded as playing the Death March of Saul as a last tribute to the memory of the late Lord Richard Cavendish. He also presided at the organ at the annual choral union of the Rural Deanery of Cartmel with 142 voices. He was a distinguished member of the Priory as he had the honour of making the leaving presentation to Canon Hubbersty. William Lamb also contributed to community life as an accomplished performer and accompanist in various fundraising concerts amongst other things. On one such occasion in the company of distinguished patronage in Holker schoolroom, Mr Lamb sang 'The Larboard Watch' with Mr Winson (the school master of Allithwaite) and later sang in a quartet with Misses Drewry and Townson (the daughter of the vicar of Allithwaite). He was the secretary and treasurer of the Working Men's Club also sang at their regular concerts. Mr Lamb was the accompanist and again sang at a school concert in Arnside School in aid of the sick Poor fund. The Glee Club entertainment in the schoolroom included a reading by William entitled the Ugly Dog and on another occasion accompanied the choir in connection with the Temperance Society.

In the years just prior to leaving Cartmel he was the secretary of the Cartmel Cottagers and Amateur Floral and Horticultural Society, with his speciality being cut flowers, and he audited the accounts of the Cartmel Agricultural Society in 1874. In 1876 he moved to Liverpool to run a new school associated with St Bridget's Church. However, William and his family were living in Oswestry in 1881 before moving to Allithwaite in 1882.

Allithwaite School

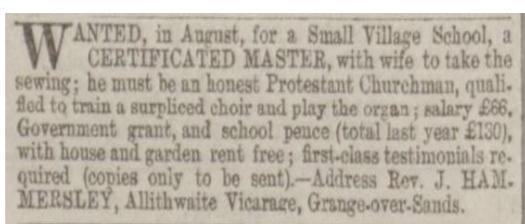


Fig 2: Advert for the post of school master in Allithwaite in 1882.

He was recruited as the headmaster at Allithwaite from 1882 (fig. 2) and was living at Lambert House in 1891 [3], with the property later known as The School House. In Allithwaite School Admittance Register it states that he left in 1897 but that he was headmaster again for three months from October to December 1916. The school made great progress under the master Mr W J Lamb. The attendance more than doubled from thirty in 1884 to sixty-six in 1888. Plans were been prepared for the enlargement to accommodate fifty more children and provide a better space for meetings and lectures. The building of the new wing was estimated at the modest sum of £150 and a grand bazaar was organised in the Grange Institute for the purpose of fundraising. The following year the newspaper reports the school reopening with its new extension and the occasion was marked by a concert arranged by Miss Dunkley of Moorhurst, Kents Bank. The extension, measuring 20 feet by 17 feet was built of stone from

Allithwaite Quarry. A revolving shutter separated the new room from the old one. The room was fitted with one of the new patent Manchester fire grates, which supplied a constant stream of hot air in addition to the heat obtained from the fire. With the new extension, the number of pupils soon rose to up to seventy-five in the 1890's. However in 1896 the school received a warning for discipline and elementary subjects and William retired the following year, although he remained associated with the school for many years serving on the management committee.

St Mary's Church Allithwaite



Fig. 3: William Joseph Lamb: organist, choirmaster and lay reader.

On his return to the District in Allithwaite, William (fig. 3) immediately took up the responsibilities as Organist and Choirmaster at St Mary's Church. The recruitment advert for his post at Allithwaite School (fig 2) had ensured that the master was to be someone who was also a talented musician and choirmaster as well as the school teacher.

William Lamb and the vicar organised annual summer trips for the choir and there are two reports presented here which probably occurred in the 1880's. On one

occasion 26 members of the choir travelled to Grasmere, taking the train, steamer and char-a-banc. On another occasion 21 choir members travelled to Blackpool on the steamer. Sunday collections were made on behalf of the choir to fund the trips and the annual supper. The trip to Southport in 1923 must have been something special as a train was arranged with LMS for the occasion. Also in the 1880's the choir made another bold statement when the men and boys of the choir agreed to dispense with the use of surplices and they also wished to form a mixed choir in future. The musical portion was reported as recently somewhat toned down and seemed to give entire satisfaction to the congregation, and this was reflected by the increased amount in the annual collection for the choir! The choir formed themselves in to a Glee Club and met fortnightly to study secular music, and they planned a series of popular readings for the benefit of the village.

He became a 'parochial' lay reader in 1910, and this was raised to diocesan reader having regularly taken duty during the Rev Gilbertson's long-term illness in 1929. William was an ever-present member of the Church Council since its formation in 1920, and was the nominated representative to the rural and diocesan conferences. During the annual vestry and other meetings William Lamb would frequently be the proposer of motions. One common topic on the agenda of meetings was either the repair or replacement of the choir hymn books or psalters.

Community

There was clearly a strong sense of community and to aid the fund-raising for the Institute Billiard Room, Mr Lamb, as musical director and pianist, founded the Amateur Minstrels for the purpose of giving a series of entertainments. The room was packed for the first performance in

November 1895 with all seats taken up and a large number standing to see a variety show, compared by Mr Wm Robinson, of songs, dances, speeches and a sketch. At the conclusion of the concert the band continued playing for dancing. The Minstrels made a welcome reappearance in February 1896 with an entirely changed programme and performed to a packed and enthusiastic audience with dancing afterwards until 2am. The Minstrels also appeared throughout the peninsula, and featured regularly as entertainment at the school / Sunday school parties held each January.



Fig 4: William Joseph Lamb was Chief Officer of Allithwaite fire brigade

On leaving the school, William continued as a teacher of the piano and violin, and supplemented his income as the local rate collector. His energy appears boundless and if you needed an organiser for a committee William was the man to call on! He was captain of the fire brigade (fig. 4), member of the Technical Instruction Committee, and secretary for numerous organisations including the Church Institute, the Cartmel Parish Horticultural Society, Cartmel Entertainment Committee in 1899, Church of England Men's Society and Cartmel Sheep Dog Trials. He was a member for Allithwaite Lower and Cartmel Parish Councils and sat on the Highways

and Public Health committees, and he was Guardian for the Poor. He also found time to be the local correspondent for the Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Courier.

Family

After William retired as the master from Allithwaite National School, the family left the School House and moved to Greenfield House, and then some years later they resided at West Lynne. William's children Albert, William E and Annie were often reported as performer at Mr Lamb's local entertainment: Albert as an actor in sketches and performed the duties of starter at the sports programme to commemorate Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897; William E. as a singer (and playing the bones and tambourines in the Minstrel shows); and Annie as a singer in the Glee choir and violinist. The only record for Mrs Elizabeth Lamb was that she was a member of the Church choir. However, during the time when William was the school master in Allithwaite, she will surely have been very busy with the sewing (fig. 2)!

Celebrations for such a prominent family attracted large numbers of the community: there were 50 guests at their silver wedding anniversary party at Lambeth House (later known as the School House) with a sumptuous meal followed by an excellent programme of dance music played by Mr Lamb and the two eldest sons Albert and William. For William E's marriage to Miss M A Robinson in July 1896, the couple were gifted over 100 presents, amongst which was a 'well filled purse' from the members of the choir and parishioners. When Percy Lamb and Harry Higgins were about to immigrate to Canada in 1911, the two were given a farewell party in the Institute to wish them "God Speed". Percy followed his sister to Canada, as Annie had married in 1910 and settled there with her husband Mr Jas Rowlinson.

In 1921, the Golden Wedding anniversary celebration of the Lambs created much interest in the district. Friends and parishioners crowded the Institute for a presentation and goodwill messages.



Fig 5: Gravestone in Allithwaite Cemetery.

Mr Lamb was clearly held in great esteem in the Parish, and in 1923 when he was ill, the church council agreed to donate the collection from Whitsunday to assist him meet the expenses incurred during his costly illness. William died in Allithwaite in 1929 at the age of 82 after a short illness, and his remains are interred in Allithwaite Cemetery (fig 5). His wife Elizabeth predeceased him in 1921, and she is buried together with her husband. William remained active right until the end, having just recently started conducting the newly formed orchestra just prior to his death. In his obituary, he was described as a grand old man with a cheery and sympathetic nature. To celebrate 47 years of long and distinguished service to the Church, the money raised by public subscription in his memory was used for an electrical installation in the church and a brass plaque (fig. 1) in the church now located by the lectern commemorates this.

Phil & Pat Rowland v1 July 2015