

An extract from the *Lancaster Gazette*, 11th August 1888

The sequestered and out-of-the-way district of Lowgill, Tatham Fells was the scene of a very interesting and unusual ceremony one Wednesday afternoon in 1888 [8th August] namely the laying of the foundation stone of a new church and which duty had been undertaken by Mrs Arthur Wellesley Foster, wife of the Rev. A.W. Foster, rector of Tatham. The want of a new place of worship had been felt for some time and the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of her Majesty Queen Victoria seemed to have brought the matter to a climax, the building of the new church being considered as a memorial of Her Majesty's completion of her 50 year reign.

The parish is wholly agricultural and pastoral, and of trade, manufacturers or commerce it is destitute and its inhabitants are decreasing in number. In 1888 there were about 250 inhabitants, mostly small tenant farmers and their families. The structure which the new building is intended to substitute is described by Baines as 'a little chapel, dedication unknown but which existed in 1577. In 1630 it was returned as being five miles from the church of Tatham, standing quite beyond any inhabitant of the parish very inconveniently.'

It was re-built or restored in 1840 and raised about a yard in height, prior to which time we are informed it was a very primitive structure, the roof open to the ceiling and thatched outside, the floor being of clay and covered with rushes for warmth.

Very little was left of the old building in 1888 but from what could be seen it had apparently been whitewashed inside and out up to the last.



Tatham Fells chapel before demolition in 1888

See [Tatham History Society website](#)
for larger versions of these images

In its demolition nothing of an antiquarian nature had been discovered excepting an old window of the time of the Tudors and this will be replaced in the new church. The old chapel was not pulled down until it was absolutely necessary, for the builders said it was hardly safe and could not have stood another twelve months.

The new church will be in the perpendicular style of architecture and is being erected on a site some twenty yards or so to the west of the old chapel on the hillside overlooking the valley and will be easily visible for some distance.

Four o'clock was the time fixed for the stone laying and as the hour approached a fair number of persons were assembled. The day was very fine, and a capital hay day – plenty of sun and wind – and as days of this description have been few and far between this summer, the farmers could be seen on all sides in the hayfields busily engaged in taking advantage of it. Consequently not many of the farming class were present.

The clergy and choir assembled in the school-room which is in close proximity to the old chapel and walked in processional order to the site of the new church singing Hymn No 391, A. and M., 'Onward Christian Soldiers' and then arranged themselves round the platform which was occupied by those who were going to take chief part in the event of the afternoon.

A form of service for laying the foundation stone of a church or chapel was then commenced, the prayers being intoned by the Rev. J. Marshall and the responses sung by the clergy and choir. Offertories in aid of the building fund were taken during the singing of hymn 394, A. and M. Prayers and a psalm followed after which Mr Paley, the Architect, presented Mrs Foster on behalf of the building committee with a handsome silver trowel. Mrs Foster took the trowel and spread the cement over the stone in a very practical style as though 'to the manner born' and then the foundation stone was lowered into place on the northern side of the base of the chancel arch. Mr Paley then presented Mrs Foster with a mallet with which that lady gave the stone some smart raps to fix it in its bed. Having examined it with a critical eye to see its lines fell exactly on those of the lower stone said in clear and distinct tones 'In the faith of Jesus Christ we place this foundation stone in the name of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Ghost'. Another prayer was then read followed by the anthem 'This is none other than the house of God'. The trowel and mallet were both dated 8th August 1888 and were then enclosed in a handsome casket which, with the mallet had been made out of the old oak taken from the chapel by Mr. T Marshall of Bentham. In a cavity in the stone a bottle was placed recording the work that was being undertaken with the names of those taking part in it and also the names of the Vicar and Church Wardens. In addition to this, copies of the Lancaster Gazette, Guardian and Observer a few current coins of the realm and also a few Jubilee coins were added.

After the proceedings connected with the ceremony of the foundation stone-laying had terminated, tea was served in the schoolroom adjoining and of which a considerable number partook.