**Essays on Mount Crosby - Piano at the Hall**

Through the efforts of some near to me, I have been more in the company of pianos lately than when I was younger, and up close I have come to realise what a power they have for creating enjoyment for both the player and the listener. These late ones are not my first pianos; that honour belongs to the small upright one at the Mount Crosby Hall that is now, like so many other lonely machines, pushed aside and sort of forgotten. But what tales it could tell if it were able.

When the hall was built in 1919 (and extended in 1920) it displaced the old school building (near the shop) as the venue for meetings and dances - and one of the first things desired for the hall was a piano. On the 8th November 1919, just a few months after he became Chief Engineer and President of the Mount Crosby Progress Association, Jack Dann organised a plain and fancy dress ball with the object of raising funds for the purchase of a piano. As it happened, the piano was first played that night, in the company of about thirty dancers in neat, and some grotesque, costumes with characters as diverse as the "Yachting Set" , "Monkey Soap", "Lady of Last Century", "Mrs Newly-Wed", various coloured "Pierrots", and numerous other characters among which there was a notable absence of the military (no soldier, airman or sailor). That, I am certain, was no coincidence but likely a selection in deference to the recently returned men of the War.

The hall and its piano became central to many dances, parties and weddings until the age of recorded music lessened piano's pre-eminence. If the hall could talk, and the hall's opinion was to be based on everything that has brought joy to its occupants over the years, you might ask the hall:

"What do you think Hall?"

And Hall would say to you: "I like a Piano."

And if you said to Hall: "Look, pianos are expensive, and I can use recorded music for my dance."

What do you think of that? "Hall?"

Hall would say: "... I like a Piano"

(the inspiration for these thoughts comes from the words of Louis Kahn, Architect, 1901-1974).

Col Hester