

Oban Times Buildings

Built in 1883 the Oban Times Buildings was the office and printing premises of the Oban Times Newspaper.

The Oban Times was originally owned by James Miller a bookseller and stationer whose premises were situated on George Street. Originally called the *Oban Monthly Pictorial Magazine and Register of News for Argyll and the Isles*, the paper was first published in 1861 and sold for one penny. In 1866 he changed the name to *The Oban Times and Argyllshire Advertiser* and the paper was published weekly. Shortly afterwards he began printing the paper from his new offices on John Lane.

In 1881 James Miller died aged just 30. His sister persuaded his friend Duncan Cameron from Edinburgh and whose family were from Appin, to buy the paper which he did for £4,000. The paper continued to be printed at John Lane. In April 1882 there was a 'Great Exhibition of Electric Light', where electric light was first demonstrated in the town. A dynamo machine was placed in *The Oban Times* printing office and driven by the steam engine used to print the paper. A cable transmitted the electricity to the premises of the Oban Scientific and Literary Society in Craigard Road about three hundred yards away, on wire elevated on poles.

In 1882, Duncan Cameron purchased the piece of land on the shore where he planned to build new offices, shops and flats. The Oban Times Buildings were designed by local architect John Fraser Sim. His original plans for the building were designed to provide maximum accommodation for minimum cost. However the owner Duncan Cameron rejected these as miserable and stated 'we must spend more money on the buildings'. New plans were drawn up and work began in 1882. Within a year the building was completed within the budget of £3,700. The front of the building consists of a double window divided by a mullion with inset columns of polished red granite. Each opening has a pane of glass designed to resist the fiercest storms. Sculptured trusses carry the oriel windows which rise to a height of 40 feet. Around the top of the building is a balustrade of turned stone columns broken in the centre by a pediment surrounded by a classic vase. Behind the balustrade is a flat roof and a former employee of the newspaper recalled that staff often played badminton there after work!

Originally there were two entrances from the esplanade; the one to the right still gives access to the office and flats above where the one to the left which gave access to the warehouse is now a window.

A dinner was held to celebrate the completion of the building in the Great Western Hotel in 1882. Local dignitaries were invited along with the 40 stonemasons, 12 joiners and 10 plumbers who had worked on the building. A stipulation for the dinner was that everyone in attendance regardless of occupation or social standing was on that night equal.

Area 7

Duncan Cameron left Oban to work in the family business in Edinburgh. His younger brother Waverley took over the running of the paper. But tragedy struck on 4th June 1891 when Waverley Cameron was drowned in a yachting accident near Lismore.

The Oban Times moved from the esplanade to its present premises in 19??

The building is Category B listed.

Independent Church

Around 1800, sermons were conducted for members of the Independent later the Congregational Church on the shore close to the Oban Times Slipway. They were unable to secure land to build a church, as at this time as the established church were against any other religious body. Insults and missiles were allegedly thrown at them by members of the established church during their sermons.