

HIDDEN GEMS AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE
THE ABBEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



THE OLD BELLEVUE GARDENS TEAROOMS, FARRIER COURT, GLENGORMLEY

The Cavehill and Whitewell Steam Tramway was described in 1889 as a commuter and tourist line commanding superb views of mountain, lush valleys and sea.

The term 'tourist' as applied, mainly encompassed the population of the rapidly expanding City of Belfast whose jaded citizens sought to escape their often dark and gloomy surroundings by embarking on a leisurely journey to Glengormley, in one of the new steam trains. To promote the full potential of the line, a leisure and fun park was created at the end of the tramway, soon to become known as Bellevue Gardens.

Amidst the display of colourful shrubs, bushes, flowers and rustic paths was a charming wooden chalet type teahouse that was erected in 1882. It was equipped with a veranda promenade which when the weather was fine opened to a dance floor.

Throughout the season, refreshments in infinite variety were served to those early excursionists in the splendid tearoom, whilst lively bands of musicians catered for the dancers all day and into the late evening.

For almost 40 years this tearoom was widely used. Sadly, in the lead up to the opening of the new Bellevue Gardens at Whitewell in 1920, the old gardens were progressively run down. In November 1928, the old National School was moved to the tearooms after a fire at the Barron Hall. The tearooms were later to become an air raid precautions post, social club, Citizens Advice Centre and finally a Scout Hall.

Today, the building lies derelict with the ghosts of the past.

Stewart McFetridge