

Press Release 23 February 2010

THE ARMITT MUSEUM AND LIBRARY AT AMBLESIDE

Through the hard work of staff and helpers, the Armitt Library and Museum Centre in Ambleside escaped serious damage to its precious collection of documents, paintings, and artefacts in the November floods. But it has been closed to the public since then in order to dry out the building and replace damaged carpets.

But the flooding deepened an existing problem. The Armitt has operated at a loss for some time and the Trustees have decided that unless a solution to its financial problems can be found the current temporary closure will become permanent. This follows years of declining grant support and stalling of negotiations with the University of Cumbria over securing the Armitt's longer term future.

The plight of the Armitt was aired at a meeting of supporters on Tuesday who were saddened to face the possible loss of this iconic 100 year old South Lakes Institution.

Peter Jackson, Chairman of the Armitt Trust said,

"The Armitt is unique in covering not only the history of the Ambleside area, but more particularly, the lives and work of the group of extraordinary people who lived here, such as Ruskin, Charlotte Mason and Beatrix Potter. Ambleside seems set to lose its College, and it would be a double tragedy if the Armitt went the same way. If the collection has to be broken up and dispersed to other museums and libraries it would be a major loss to the whole Lake District, not just Ambleside. I know other people are as upset at this prospect as I am.

But in order to continue we need to raise #20,000 in the short term and put measures in place to ensure the Armitt's long term financial viability. Increasing revenue will be part of the solution, but if it is to survive we need to seek financial support and more volunteer help from within the community. I have already been approached by one offer of financial support and I know there must be others out there who will be willing to step in to assist. The Armitt has been here for nearly a century. What will future generations think of us if we let this happen on our watch?

Despite all its efforts, the local community may not be able to stop the closure of its college. But the future of the Armitt is different. It is in our own hands."

The Trust has stepped back temporarily from its planned closure and has decided to seek sufficient public support to enable it to open its doors once again.