



NEWSLETTER NEWSLETTER NEWSLETTER NEWSLETTER NEWSLETTER

Newsletter January 2005

No 57

We apologise for the late arrival of this Newsletter. The words “floods” and “power cuts” come to mind!!

Public Meeting 25 November 2004

Yet another capacity audience ensured the success of the pre-Christmas meeting. This, now traditional, evening provides an opportunity for the Committee to say ‘thank you’ to members for all the support they have given during the year.

As it came at the beginning of a season of good will, there was no mention of public toilets, the Shire Hall, the townscape or the continuing threat to the children’s play grounds, all matters troubling the county town of Westmorland. Rather, the evening was devoted to nostalgia and relaxation and the efforts of Graham, who was ably assisted by Brian Holmes, were much appreciated. The slide show they provided was a real treat. Over 150 new slides were added to the Society’s growing archive during the year.

The title of the slide show, “New slides of Old Appleby”, was well chosen as the images, made possible by the kindness of those who allow their precious original photographs to be copied onto slide, demonstrated Appleby’s ever changing, yet somehow never changing, streetscapes over a period of more than one hundred years. As well as pictures of buildings there were many of Appleby folk, young and old, who have contributed to the town’s social fabric. A highlight of the evening was a selection of images copied from an autograph album kept by a volunteer nurse at Appleby’s Red House Hospital during World War I. For the first time, we could learn a little of the identities and thoughts of just some of the wounded soldiers who were returned to some kind of normality, thanks to the care afforded by V.A.D. nurses all those years ago. The nurse’s family has cared for the autograph album for almost a hundred years and it was a privilege to have been allowed access to it. The person who now looks after it and who loaned it to the Society was in the audience as a guest.

Following the slide show there was a raffle and following the raffle came the other highlight – the buffet supper. Members, guests and visitors thoroughly enjoyed the refreshments provided by Committee members and Committee members’ wives and friends. Thanks go to Olive Airey and her team of helpers for all their hard work, before, during and at the end of the evening. A number of visitors who had come along to “see what it was like” were prompted to join the Society that evening – always a good sign and much appreciated by the Committee.

A full report of the evening appeared in the *Herald* on 15 January 2005.

From the Secretary: a huge vote of thanks to Graham and Anne. Putting the slide show together takes a lot of time and we appreciate the results so much. Another huge vote of thanks to Brian, whose wizardry with the technical side of things adds to the magic.

From the Chairman

I think the Chamber of Trade deserves a pat on the back for its 'Christmas Cake' shop window competition. Shoppers certainly stopped to stare at some quite beautifully-crafted sugar and icing creations. Congratulations, too, to all those who put so much time and effort into making them. Could we ask for it to be an annual event, please?

Many thanks also to everyone who contributed to the success of our pre-Christmas 'slide show'. Last January I was wondering whether we would discover sufficient 'new' old photographs to make the event worth while. As it turned out there was no problem – but please keep them coming! If we have sufficient material, the next slide show will start in Bongate – that's a promise. There is always a bit of a rush towards the end because I talk too much and images of Bongate, coming as they do at the end of the presentation, tend to flit on and off the screen, leaving little time for comment. We'll go the other way round next time.

As you know, we invited the current owner of the 'Red House' album as our guest. She has asked me to let you know how much she enjoyed the evening and your company.

Townscape

Towards the end of the Newsletter you will find a report of your Committee's meeting on 30 November 2004. Things have, of course, moved on since then and those of us who reside within the CA16 postal area will have received a copy of Capita's proposals. We have also had the opportunity to discuss the plans with Capita's representatives. The Society was invited to comment and our submission was sent off to arrive before the deadline of 23 December. The response ran to five pages, too long to repeat in full in a Newsletter. However, a copy has been placed in the Society folder in Appleby Library. Members wishing to have a personal copy are invited to contact either Vivienne or Graham.

Our reply was tinged with a mixture of sadness and frustration. Sad, because the latest proposals have ignored Appleby's history and tradition. Frustration, because of the last minute rush which was totally unnecessary.

The recent history of Appleby's various townscape restoration proposals begins in 1997 with the Donaldson-Edwards Partnership report. Next came Eden District Council's 'mini Penrith' (1998). The Appleby Alliance proposals (2000) were modified by Appleby Town Council (2001) and it was that plan that was accepted by both Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council. Both Councils promised a financial contribution (£130,000 from E.D.C. and £370,000 from Cumbria).

As far as I know, everyone concerned had a realistic expectation of seeing that scheme implemented in due course. We realised that planning rules and financial constraints would influence the final outcome but no one expected to see a fourth set of ideas.

Unfortunately for Appleby, Cumbria County Council privatised much of its workload in 2001 and its Design Services Department, along with much else, fell into the hands of Capita plc. Appleby's townscape was up for grabs again. Long serving members of Cumbria County Council and Eden District Council's Planning Department who had helped formulate the Appleby Alliance ideas were no longer involved. Any new plans would be drawn up by people with little or no idea about where Appleby was, never mind what its residents and their representatives wanted. In July 2002 we learned that Capita was about to begin design work on an Appleby town centre 'enhancement'

scheme. When we learned that Capita was not required to take account of any previous proposals, we expressed concern to Appleby Alliance and to our County Councillor.

Nothing was heard from Capita until May 2003, when its representatives came to a public meeting in Appleby to listen to our views which would be incorporated into their proposals. The Society made written and personal submissions to Capita, offering to show them photographs of 'old Appleby' and, most importantly, to determine whether they were going to follow previously agreed proposals. Sadly, none of that got us anywhere. It also became clear that our County Councillor, Mary Warburton, had little or no influence over Capita – she was unable to get anything from them, either.

Capita promised a public consultation exercise at which we could discuss its proposals in 'Autumn 2003'. Nothing happened. 'Late Spring or early Summer 2004' came next. Nothing happened. Time was running out. A young man asked if he could look at photographs of 'old Appleby' as he worked for Capita and had been drafted in from the 'north east' to come up with a townscape scheme for Appleby. That was in September 2004. He was never heard of again.

In October 2004, representatives from Appleby Town Council/Chamber of Trade/this Society were treated to proposals 4, 5 and 6 – options for the transformation of Appleby into something it had never been and never wanted to be. These, it seems, were drawn up at very short notice by David Boulton, an independent landscape architect to whom Capita had sub-contracted the job! Such was the degree of scorn poured on his proposals by everyone at the meeting that we saw nothing more of them. On the plus side, Mr Boulton had now been to Appleby to give his presentation, so at least he knew where to find the town again. Perhaps for the first time, he was alerted to the previous three townscape proposals.

There was another public meeting on 8 November, at which Mr Boulton came up with his plan D – Appleby's plan 7. It was better. Then, in December we were able to see plan 8 at a public display on 10th and 11th of that month. Questionnaires were circulated and replies were required before Christmas TO ENABLE CAPITA TO KEEP TO THE NECESSARY TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION. What cheek! Two and a half years after Capita told us that they were the new boys on the block and we would be hearing from them, they gave us a week in which to choose between Capita's preferred options. Our preferred options, accepted by our Town Council in March 2001 and later agreed by Eden District Council and Cumbria County Council will have to be dragged back onto the negotiating table QUICKLY. But who is to do that? Capita's timetable does not include Appleby Town Council. As things stand, Capita will put its scheme to Cumbria County Council for approval. As things stand, Appleby Town Council will be a bystander, as will Eden District Council, notwithstanding the fact that the entire area to be 'enhanced' is within a Conservation Area. As things stand, Cumbria County Councillors will be virtual bystanders as there is no evidence to suggest that councillors or even the County Council has much influence over its privatised army.

The tragedy is that the people who drew up the proposals have little or no knowledge or understanding of Appleby and, what's more, they might not have their contract with Cumbria County Council renewed. A town, which has taken over 1000 years to evolve, could be transformed (sorry – enhanced) by an army of occupation that will do what all armies of occupation do eventually – move on.

Secretary's Note:- The Townscape proposals were considered at a meeting of Cumbria County Council's Local Committee for Eden on 19 January. The meeting, starting at 11.00 a.m., in the Supper Room and was open to the public. (Sorry this was not out in time for members to get this information in time to attend!)

Local Government

We are often warned not to believe everything we read in newspapers. So, when I read that Eden District Council's 'green box' scheme had resulted in financial losses for Cumbria Waste Management, the company that used to collect our paper and cardboard from our house fronts at no cost to us either as householders or council tax payers, I wondered how Eden District Council had managed to achieve such a result in a comparatively short time.

Cumbria Waste Management's service cost us nothing as it was self-financing. Eden District Council's 'green box' scheme, whilst being a useful service, costs us a great deal. But the change has left Cumbria Waste Management with only 3,000 households to collect from, instead of the original 15,000. In order to compensate, the District Council has agreed to pay Cumbria Waste Management £710 per month until April 2005. After that date, Eden District Council will include the last 3,000 homes in the 'green box' scheme at an estimated annual cost of £14,000.

This all seemed so silly that I stopped reading the paper and read Agenda Item 6, Eden District Council Environmental Committee, November 11 2004. The paper was correct! A once free service now costs us a small fortune and to include the last 3,000 homes in the 'green box' scheme will cost £14,000 per annum.

If we cannot go back to the position where Cumbria Waste Management did it free of charge, why not leave the remaining 3,000 households with Cumbria Waste Management? To pay them £710 per month works out at £8,520 per annum, considerably less than the £14,000 Eden District Council proposes to pay some other contractor.

But its only money. By the way, the same Committee paper recommended the employment of an additional member of staff to promote recycling schemes in Eden. Cost? £15,000 per annum.

One month later, Eden District Council was full of self-congratulation. Targets for recycling have been exceeded and central government has given E.D.C. £16,000 to 'encourage recycling'. That is enough to pay the extra member of staff. Good news indeed. But, hidden in the small print was the uncomfortable fact that we are sending more rubbish to landfill sites than ever before.

How? Why? Could it be that the waste paper, etc once collected by Cumbria Waste Management is now included in the District Council's recycling figures? If it has, that might explain the 'improvement'. If, on the other hand, we are recycling more whilst still putting more into landfill, there needs to be an explanation. Andrew Yates, E.D.C.'s Assistant Director (Environment) is quoted as saying, "In some ways we are shifting rubbish from footpaths to community sites" If he means that there is more fly-tipped rubbish, that was inevitable. If he means that we are taking more rubbish to Flusco or Kirkby Stephen rather than pay E.D.C. to collect it from our homes, that, too, was inevitable. If he means that, by charging for bulky items to be removed, E.D.C. has actually made things worse, as some forecast, its time to think again.

Members will note that our next meeting on 27 January is on the subject of recycling and waste minimisation. Could be interesting – why not come along?

There was an advertisement for a Town Clerk for Appleby in the same paper. A part-time post to accompany the part-time assistant Town Clerk and a part-time financial assistant. Another lost opportunity. We forecast just such an outcome in the previous Newsletter.

Penrith has a professional managing its Market Towns Initiative, Kirkby Stephen Town Council has appointed a professional to manage its Vital Villages Scheme and Alston is considering appointing a professional to manage its Town Hall. Appleby aspires to become a Quality parish

Council and yet cannot get beyond three part-timers instead of a clerk qualified to manage the Council and advise on improved business and tourism opportunities. Why not? Looking back over the past ten years, there have been several calls for a town manager but I cannot find any reference to a 'senior Councillor' taking a lead. 'Senior councillors' are a left over from the glory days when Appleby was a municipal borough and aldermen ruled the roost. But, aldermen were elected by their fellow Councillors every six years. 'Senior Councillors' are not. I have always supported Appleby's proud history and traditions and I do not object to the longest serving Councillors continuing to wear the red gowns, once reserved to aldermen, on formal, civic occasions. But I do object to the red gowns being worn as a badge of office that signifies rank. Red gowns do nothing of the sort. All Councillors are equal and the public has a right to expect each Councillor to be seen to be equal.

Fifty years ago the retiring Mayor Cllr Betts had a message for the aldermen. "If they think they can run the town I will tell them different. It is time the aldermen realised that the Councillors have a say and that they will have a say." Fifty years is surely long enough to wait!

The third item of note in that same newspaper was a report of E.D.C.'s Community and Economy Committee declining to accept a recommendation to merge the Tourist Information Centres at Kirkby Stephen and Appleby. Which was a relief, especially as Eden District Council does not own Appleby's T.I.C. – we do. However, the article had me off again, this time to read the 67 page consultants' report that contained the recommendation.

Eden District Council paid an unknown sum to 'Yellow Book', a Glasgow-based consultancy, to carry out a best value review of the District Council's support for the local economy with particular reference to the delivery of economic development and tourism.

At long last we might find out how Eden District Council proposed to progress its declared intention to "prepare a museum development plan" and to "develop with partners a programme for improving access and interpretation of heritage sites across Eden, especially in the Eden Valley." As previously pointed out in the Newsletter, it is fairly clear that these fine expressions of intent, so important to the future of our Shire Hall, were made to impress the Audit Commission and were not intended to be actioned. Still, the consultants would, surely, have something to say on the matter in a report 67 pages long. Sadly not. This begs the question, "How on earth could the consultants do a best value review of Eden's delivery of economic development and tourism without even mentioning its ill-fated museum service?"

What I did read, however, was frightening. The consultants found the tourist information staffing levels 'adequate' but went on to point out that the equivalent of just one post-holder was working on Eden District Council's development, marketing and business support. In the consultant's words, this was "just about adequate to cover current activities but does not leave much scope to become more proactive in relation to new project development". No help for the Shire Hall there, then.

Reading on, I saw that the consultants had interviewed a number of council employees – consultants do that – they borrow your watch and then tell you the time. Its not new. Still, in the context of saving Appleby's Shire Hall, what about staff who declare, "There is no economic development strategy or even an annual action plan" and, even worse in my view, "There is no clear strategic direction from members (Councillors) or senior officers". Hardly a surprise, but damning of both elected Councillors and senior officers.

A report to the District Council's Resources Committee in December contained the following, "It is clear that the Council does not have the resources, either in terms of time or expertise, to embark on

(advising on contracting out council services) without external assistance. It is arguable that there are more pressures on senior officers at Eden now than in the mid 1990s". The report was prepared by Steve Huddart, Director of Technical Services. The same man who explained that he was too busy to carry out Councillors' instructions to complete a review of the council's museum service. An excuse that Councillors lamely accepted.

Whilst waiting impatiently on a stranded train before Christmas, I found myself reading anything I could find. Eventually I got to the staff recruitment pages of the *Scotsman*, where I found an advertisement for a Director of Technical Services for Scottish Borders Council at a salary of £84,000 (almost exactly the sum that Eden District Council hoped to save by closing many of our public toilets). I realise that a direct comparison with any post-holder in Eden District council might be unfair but it was interesting to see that Scottish Borders Council expects its Director of Technical Services to work in partnership with the community and to be passionate about delivering "100% customer delight". If only!!

Returning to the consultant's report on best value, I saw that it contained a list of partners with whom Eden District Council progresses various initiatives relating to business development and tourism. I was surprised to see that Appleby Alliance was not included. This was odd, as Appleby Alliance is shown as a partner in the Carlisle and Eden Local Strategic Plan and Appleby Alliance lists Eden District Council as a partner when it seeks funding. For example, when Appleby Alliance approached Appleby Town council for funding, it listed Eden District Council's Economic Development Officer as a partner in its business/tourism related 'projects'. Business and tourism were the issues that the consultants were asked to look at – but perhaps they missed the Alliance role. On the other hand, if E.D.C. does not have a partner in Appleby with whom to discuss matters such as the Shire Hall, two things spring to mind. Appleby Town Council needs to step forward very smartly OR Appleby Town Council needs to appoint a professional town manager to do the job.

Recent experiences, however, do not auger well. When the Society asked the Town Council how its initiative to save the Shire Hall was progressing, we were advised that a District Councillor had been asked to take the matter up. When we asked the Town Council to liaise with E.D.C. to arrange a practical solution to voluntary litter collection, we were advised that the matter had been passed to a District Councillor. When we asked what the Town Council proposed to do about the Cloisters, we were told that a District Councillor had the matter in hand. Which leads me to wonder if our Town Councillors are satisfied with answers like that? Do they sigh with relief when told that District Councillors have a problem in hand or does it worry them? Do they treat promises by District councillors as a breathing space during which nothing needs to be done or do they ensure that matters of importance are subject to continuing minutes until something is done?

I do get side-tracked. Sorry about that. Back to the consultants' report. It contained a number of key conclusions:-

- The need for Eden District Council to have a clear corporate commitment to economic development;
- the need to prepare, with partners, a focussed economic strategy and
- a need to adopt a more dynamic approach to the development of projects and to allocate sufficient staff and resources to support the development and delivery of a service commensurate with the Council's ambitions.

The last one can be loosely interpreted as suggesting that, if the District Council continues to issue glossies full of good intentions, it should also put our money where its mouth is.

The consultants considered the problem to be so serious that Eden District Council was urged to get its act together before the end of 2004 or by March 2005 at the very latest.

Now we are, perhaps, in a better position to understand why the District Council has failed to complete a review of its museum service and why it has not even made a start to implement changes that might have ensured a future for our Shire Hall. But, understanding why nothing has happened does not explain why the District Councillors have not bossed the job as we have a right to expect. As our Member of Parliament has pointed out, there is nothing he can do if Councillors are unable or unwilling to ensure that their instructions are carried out. Which poses the question – RUBICON? (R)Are (U)You Buggers In Charge Or Not? Of course, we must hope and pray that our district Councillors are in charge and capable of looking after our interests. We have seen that Eden District Council claims neither the staff nor expertise to do its present work without recourse to consultants and contractors. Now read on. For some reason known only to a few, the Deputy Prime Minister has identified Eden District Council as a ‘Class One Responder’ in the event of a civil emergency or disaster! Eden District Council must now carry out a risk assessment and formulate a plan. The Chief Executive, Ian Bruce, has warned Councillors that the effectiveness of the risk assessment would be judged during any subsequent inquiry following a major incident. Failure to carry out an adequate assessment would, he warns, land the District Council in hot water.

Now, there’s a very good example of the District Council putting the public first. A failure of the District Council’s emergency procedures might see death and destruction on a large scale but, never mind the mayhem, let’s worry about the Council’s reputation.

Thank goodness the Council has a Community Safety Officer. Now she has a job on her hands! Although I’m taking bets on how long it takes the Council to employ an Emergency Planning Officer – unless, of course, the job is contracted out!

It’s not all doom and gloom. Eden District Council has been awarded a Charter Mark – recognition from central government for excellence of services. The Charter Mark was awarded for council tax and business tax collection. In other words, Eden District Council has been given a gold star because we are good at paying our bills. There seems to be a strange logic at work there.

Having mentioned central government, Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture, etc. seems determined that we will have regional government one way or another. Apparently she liked the T.V. series ‘Restoration’ and it gave her an idea – she is probably entitled to one a year. Heritage Lottery funds will be allocated to good causes on the basis of votes received following similar programmes in the future. Fine, if your building is in Liverpool or Manchester with their millions of voters. What chance the Shire Hall? And, people will be given the chance to tick boxes on their lottery tickets to indicate how they would like money spent ‘in their region’. Fine, if you are in Manchester or Liverpool

Just to make certain that we understand how important regional government is and how very wrong we were to suggest otherwise, Mr Hoon has provided us with a regional regiment.

Policing

Our police did a grand job during the recent floods and storms and we pay tribute to them and to all our emergency and voluntary services.

Behind the scenes though, nothing much to report as we enter 2005. The Parish Newsletter has not told us any more about the proposal to recommence the Town Council’s informal police liaison arrangements.

In 2003, Cumbria Constabulary was criticised by the Audit Commission for its failure to record crime properly. The Police Committee Chairman said that he was sad about that as crime reporting was the main thing he kept his eye on. In 2004, Cumbria Constabulary was criticised by the Audit Commission for its failure to record crime properly.

Since 2000 the Police Authority members have awarded themselves a 400% rise in their expenses allowances. Cumbria Constabulary has had to cut back on its recruitment of regular officers, community support officers and civilian support staff as it is short of money.

In November 2004, Eden District Council's Environment Committee received a report from its Director of Corporate and Legal Services. It included an eight-page report from a focus group (8 members of the public) that was 'facilitated' by an independent market researcher who was, no doubt, well paid for his or her ability to ask a few simple questions. As a contribution to our overall knowledge of crime and disorder in Eden, it was of doubtful value.

However, Councillors did learn that, "Violent crime accounts for 14% of all crime in Eden although compared to other districts in Cumbria Eden has the lowest percentage accounting for only 7% of all criminal damage in Cumbria." There was no punctuation in the original sentence either but, put commas where you will, I challenge members to make sense of it. Fortunately, it made sense to the District Council's solicitor and to the Councillors responsible for allocating public money to the fight against crime. Have faith!

Freedom of Information

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 came into effect on 1 January 2005. The principle underlying the Act is that all information held by a public body is to be made available to the general public on request. There are a number of exclusions and exemptions but public bodies must apply a presumption in favour of disclosure and it is up to them to be satisfied that they have genuine grounds for not supplying information.

Eden District Council's Resources Committee received a lengthy paper on the matter in December. Eden District Council has committed itself to conducting its affairs in a transparent manner and to enabling public access to information when appropriate. Requests for information must be in writing and must outline the information requested. Applicants need not give a reason for the request and there is no need to cite the Freedom of Information Act. Eden District Council is under a duty to give advice and guidance to applicants and would-be applicants. Replies to enquiries must be sent within 20 working days. Correspondence to E.D.C. should be addressed to the Department of Corporate and Legal Services at the Town Hall, Penrith, CA11 7QF.

Your Chairman has a copy of the paper considered by E.D.C. if any member would like to read it.

The Act applies to all public bodies but, at the time of drafting this, no local council has published its policy. There was nothing in the *Herald* on 1 January, the day on which the Act came into force, but councils will, presumably, publish something very soon. After all, it is difficult to imagine that local authorities will want to keep their transparency arrangements secret!

Richard Turner, the Government's Information Commissioner has warned public officials that they cannot hide behind the 'not in the public interest' exemption and that the presumption is always in favour of disclosure. In his view, greater openness is in the public interest and public bodies must not seek to reverse the presumption.

It will be interesting to see how things work out.

History Slot

Thanks to *Appleby At War* by Fiona Thwaytes (1995) we know quite a lot about Appleby during the second world war but, as this year's Exhibition hopes to cover the 1935-1950 period of the town's history, this History Slot is intended to encourage members and readers to add as much as they can.

As early as March 1938, the Town Council resolved to urge the County Council to implement the government's required arrangements for air raid precautions. Mr J F Whitehead, who was Deputy Mayor and Chairman of the Appleby Branch of the British Legion called a meeting of Legion members at which 40 Applebians volunteered for duty. A further 65 Legion members from local villages came forward. An appeal was made for members of the public to swell the 'ranks'.

In April 1938, North Westmorland Rural Council considered its position in the event of war. Arrangements would need to be made for a flood of refugees who would move inland should the east coast be attacked. The Fire Brigade covered most of north Westmorland, parts of Cumberland and the Borough of Appleby. The joint fire brigade committee would be asked to report on its preparedness and requirements.

The Deputy Mayor's appeal for 'volunteers' from Appleby to step forward met with a poor response. Mr Whitehead wrote to the *Herald*, pointing out that, should there be a war, volunteers would be required for fire fighting, first aid, air raid wardens, rescue parties and decontamination squads. Women as well as men would be required in large numbers. Vehicle drivers were especially required.

Westmorland County Council established a committee structure to deal with a possible emergency. The Executive Committee would comprise key members of the County Council and there would be Area Committees based in Appleby, Kendal and Windermere. Area Committees comprised representatives from the Town Council, British Legion, Red Cross, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Women's Institute, medical officers, Borough Surveyor, electricity Supply Co., police, fire brigade and others deemed necessary. Appleby's Area Director was to be Surgeon Commander Thwaytes.

Appleby's Area Committee first met in May. It comprised R J Dawson, H C Knight and G H Heelis (Council), J F Whitehead (British Legion), Supt Dickinson (police), G S Evans (Fire Brigade), F T Balmer (Borough Surveyor), Miss Lawson (V.A.D.), Mrs G C Atkinson (Women's Institute), Mrs Chatfield (Nursing Assoc), Drs Fowlie and Sime, J W Williamson (County Surveyor), L S Chapman (Schools) and Mrs S Summersgill (Women's Section British Legion). Mr Whitehead was appointed Chairman, with Mr T Longstaff as Secretary. (We have included the names in the hope that relatives/friends may be able to tell us something.) Appleby was subdivided into eight areas for air raid precautions and wardens were appointed to each.

In August 1938, Appleby's Air Raid Precautions Scheme (A.R.P.) was up and running. Each area required three wardens. A storeroom for 10,000 respirators was needed. The Scheme covered casualty and ambulance, rescue, decontamination, repairs to essential services, fire and transport. Mr J F Whitehead was Director, with H C Knight as Deputy; Drs Fowlie and Sime were responsible for casualties and ambulance; Mr J W Allinson had charge of rescue, demolition and decontamination; F T Balmer, Borough Surveyor, was in charge of repairs to water mains, whilst T Dawson, gas works manager, looked after gas. Mr W Bellas was responsible for electricity and Mr J Massom controlled transport. Volunteers were still in demand for first aid and V.A.D. Girls were required for assembling gas masks. (Once again, does any of this trigger a memory?)

In October 1938, Mr D Macrae was appointed as chief A.R.P. Warden and Mr W Scorer, Coroner for North Westmorland, was to be his deputy. The required census of gas mask requirements was complete. Mrs Rigg, Elm Bank, had offered the coach house as an emergency fire station. (That

fills a gap in our knowledge of fire stations.) Mr Scorer complained about the lack of mortuary facilities in Appleby. Mr Whitehead reported that Surgeon Commander Thwaytes had been recalled to his command and that his place as Area Director would be taken by Mr McIver from Orton. A test of air raid sirens was approved (as more than one is mentioned – where were they?). Mr Evans reported that the fire brigade was ready but delays must be expected when it came to extra equipment as urban areas had priority.

In February 1939, Mr P O'Neill, A.R.P. controller for Westmorland made his way to Appleby in dense fog to present A.R.P. badges to twenty two V.A.D. nurses in Bongate Institute (we know your names – please get in touch if you are still about). Does anyone have a badge we could borrow for the exhibition?

In April 1939, respirators began to be issued throughout North Westmorland, not because there was an immediate cause for concern, but because all available storage space had been used up. This was completed by August. Anti-gas helmets for infants under 2 years and respirators for children aged 2 to 4½ years would only be issued if there was an emergency.

In July 1939, Westmorland Education Committee discussed a requirement to cater for a large number of children from Tyneside. Some members of the committee expressed concern and wondered about the cost. The committee also considered the provision of shelters at secondary schools. There was no support for an elaborate and costly scheme for shelters but the surveyor would look at where best to provide slit trenches. Primary schools were not a problem as they would be closed in the event of war. The committee was opposed to providing concrete shelters on grounds of cost.

3 September 1939 – war was declared. On 9 September, the government issued its air raid arrangements. Warnings would be by a warbling note on sirens or by whistle blast. No warnings were to be given except on police instructions. On hearing a warning, people were to take shelter and remain there until the 'all clear', which was a continuous note on a siren or whistle lasting two minutes (ever tried blowing a whistle for two minutes?). Gas warning would be by hand rattle. The 'all clear' would be by handbell. People were advised to keep off the streets where possible. Everyone had to carry a gas mask. Labels with names and addresses had to be sewn into children's clothing in positions where they could not be removed. All cinemas and places of entertainment were closed. All sports events and gatherings for amusement were banned, whether indoors or out. Churches would not close. Schools in reception areas would remain open until evacuation arrangements were complete. Coal, gas and electricity was rationed. Vehicle and bicycle lighting regulations were introduced to keep lights to a minimum. Animals were not to be destroyed. Pedestrians were not to use torches. There was not a sugar shortage. All retail prices of essentials would be fixed.

In September 1939, Appleby's Hospital Supply Depot opened in Ribblesdale House, Clifford Street. A report dated January 1940 shows that Mrs Renshaw was in charge, with Mrs Jago as deputy. Lady Hothfield was Secretary. To date, the depot's volunteer force had made 56 nightshirts, 30 helpless case shirts, 56 pyjamas, 62 pairs of operation stockings, 33 pairs of socks and mittens and 1300 surgical dressings. More volunteers were required. By the end of the war in Europe, it had produced over 19,000 garments and countless miles of dressings. (Were you involved? Do you have any tales to tell?)

In April 1940, the Education Committee was informed that the only school to provide any form of shelter was Appleby Grammar School but a combination of frost and poor wood had caused it to collapse. The committee agreed that children would be safer in their classrooms and that was that. (Any knowledge of Westmorland's only school shelter?)

Given the Society's 'difficulty' with the Town Council about paper records, the following item was mildly amusing. In January 1941, our council was fined fifteen shillings for burning old records on the Butts during the hours of darkness. Two regulations had been broken – a failure to send the paper for salvage and showing a light at night.

Also in January 1941, North Westmorland Rural Council noticed that, whilst part of their area had been covered from Penrith for fire brigade purposes, this had not been the case since 1939! Once the position was made clear, the council realised that it was not best placed should a fire occur north of Appleby and new equipment was authorised. The council was 'unhappy' with the arrangements whereby its fire brigade was under the control of the A.R.P. authorities.

In March 1941, North Westmorland held a 'War Weapons Week' which resulted in over £111,000 being raised in Appleby.

The Borough Council discussed fire watching. There was no fire watching arrangement in Appleby. Councillors were told that the 'call out' arrangements for alerting the emergency services was adequate. (Mary George and Una Harrison are invited to record just what those arrangements were!) A list of unoccupied premises was available at the police station. This was reconsidered in September 1941 and a voluntary firewatching scheme was introduced, based on the eight A.R.P. areas. Each group of volunteers would be supplied with a stirrup pump, two buckets, a rake, one long shovel, one fireman's axe, four steel helmets and sandbags. (Any knowledge?)

In September 1941, the Borough Council was required to draw up a schedule of railings that could be sent for salvage. The only railings to be excluded were those preventing animals from straying and those of special historical or architectural interest. By October, the only items on the list were the chains from the town's posts and chains. Several councillors objected to even this small sacrifice on the grounds that vehicles would park on the grass verges. The Mayor, Lord Hothfield, did not consider any of Appleby's railings to be superfluous, apart from those round St Lawrence Church, which he considered 'derelict'. The Ministry of Supply was not impressed but it was not until March 1942 that a meeting with a government representative resulted in a schedule being agreed. One councillor said, "If railings are going to win the war, let them have them." (Were the railings from your property taken?)

In mid 1942, the local newspapers began to carry reports of Home Guard activities. Whether this was because the threat of invasion was behind us or for some other reason is not known but they were often so amusing that several episodes of *Dad's Army* might well have used the stories.

One extract will have to suffice. Other information will be part of the exhibition. "And now the camping season has begun we wonder whether camping would be possible with turnips, hay and harvest following each other without a break. Nobody could leave work for as long as a week. Every weekend from 25 July until the weather becomes unsuitable is allocated. D Company opened the camp and were blessed with perfect weather. They had time to settle in and visit the pub before lights out at 11 p.m. but they were rudely awakened in the early hours to obliterate some paratroopers. Things got worse and they had hardly finished breakfast and a wash before a farm lad came rushing in to pant out that the countryside was crawling with Germans. So, out they went again to settle the blighters, came back hungry but victorious just in time for a large dinner and bed. In both the exercises and in the preparation before camp, the newly formed Cadet Cycle Corps did a splendid job! (The original piece is longer than that but the reference to the Cycle Cadet Corps has already sparked one former member of the Corps to get in touch – were you another?)

Another article concerning manoeuvres which 'we will need to speed up' ends with a reference to the excellent 'tea and wads' provided by the W.V.S. (We know that the Appleby branch of the

W.R.V.S. , as it became known, is, sadly, no longer in operation but would any member of the former W.V.S. or anyone else with information please get in touch – photos would be treasured.)

In July 1944, the *Herald* contained a letter of thanks from the headmaster of South Shields High School, whose pupils and staff were about to return home, having been billeted in Appleby for most of the war years. (We know a bit about this but there is much more to learn – can you help?)

In July 1944, the Borough Council discussed the pending arrival of some fifty evacuees. Whilst schoolboys were returning home, there was another national need. The requirement to house thousands of people who had lost their homes through bombing. The Appleby and District Labour Party objected to the way in which billets had been allocated. It seemed to them that the practice of placing bombed-out families with working class families should cease and that larger houses should be considered first. (This is one aspect of Appleby's past that we know little or nothing about. We do know that Castle Bank was requisitioned by the Council and we know how contentious that proved to be! But does anyone have a tale to tell about any of this?)

An indication of just how tight rationing was comes from a report of six bananas being brought to Appleby by Stoker J Knowles, Royal Navy, from Gibraltar. They were auctioned in aid of the Air Training Corps and made the staggering sum of £3 5s 6d. About 2 weeks average wage. (Tales of shortages and rationing will be welcomed, as will tales of 'ways round' the rules.)

Then, in May 1945, the papers were full of Appleby's V.E. Day celebrations. They included flags in honour of returning prisoners of war, church services, fancy dress parades, effigies of Hitler and Mussolini burned on a twenty foot tall bonfire, a display of coloured lights and fireworks (more probably thunder flashes used in military exercises, St Lawrence Church flood lit and Eden Bridge illuminated. (We know that film was in short supply but there must be a picture or two out there somewhere. Memories also welcomed).

And there's a stack more. But we need to know the everyday tales of what it was like in Appleby during the war. Working hours, jobs, etc. With your help it can be a jolly good exhibition and everything we learn will be that little bit more for the town record before memories of World War II are gone for ever.

Committee Meeting 30 November 2004

Coronation Park

We have received further letters from Eden District Council advising us that they have the matter of trees, footpaths and damaged railings in hand and that work will soon be allocated to contractors. We shall see.

Public Toilets

The position adopted by Eden District Council remains unclear. A press report following the District Council meeting in October suggested that the plans to close or transfer responsibility for several public toilets had been 'suspended'. An editorial in the same newspaper suggested that the Council had done a 'U' turn – (not a 'U' bend). The District Councillor for Shap wrote to the *Herald* to point out that the matter had simply been remitted to the council committee that approved the original plans for reconsideration. The Society received a letter from the District Auditor pointing out that there was little point in progressing the Society's concerns as the original decision had been "rescinded". However, we are assured that, despite the ambiguous words being bandied about, the District Council's Scrutiny Committee intends to start again.

The Town Council working party met on 22 November to consider its next steps. We were told that the Town Council had agreed to put its complaint to Eden District Council 'on hold' on 10 November. We were concerned to hear that this decision had not been communicated to Eden District Council. The Mayor promised that this omission would be rectified.

The working party accepted that Councillor Langan, who is a member of the District Council's Scrutiny Committee, would not be in a position to 'bat for Appleby' during discussions. The reason for that is fairly obvious. Councillors on committees are there to consider matters on an Eden-wide basis and, should they try to raise a parochial matter, they are instantly shot down, as happened to Councillor Morgan when he tried to raise the proposed closure of Coronation Park at a committee meeting. The rule is logical – councillors who are on committees are better placed than, say, councillors affected by the public toilets debate but who are not on the committee concerned. There must be no suggestion of undue influence. So, having Councillor Langan on the Scrutiny Committee means that discussions with Eden District Council will have to be conducted at Town Council level, just as they will be in every parish affected.

The working party also noted that Appleby Town Council could avoid the risk of double taxation i.e. residents being charged twice for the same service by both District and Town Councils – by insisting on any agreement between town and district being on terms set out in the government's Quality Town and Parish Council Scheme. This provides for management of (public toilets in this case) being delegated to a parish council on terms agreed between the parties. The cost to Appleby of running our public toilets would be met by Eden District Council and recovered via the council tax. Under such an arrangement Appleby Town Council could manage our public toilets, determine hours of opening, etc and enter into contracts for maintenance. Agreed costs, which would almost certainly result in an overall saving, given what Eden District Council pays, would be recoverable from Eden District Council.

It seems simple and obvious. The Society has made the same points over and over again. Now that the matter is being reconsidered, perhaps the simplicity and legality of the existing rules for local government can be considered, whereas they were studiously ignored by Eden District Council first time round.

The Town Council working party agreed a draft submission to Eden District Council,, which welcomes the decision to reconsider the outcome of the earlier review. Appleby's preferred option is for Eden District Council to continue to provide four public toilets in Appleby at its expense. If Eden District Council needs to save money, it should:-

- seek to reduce its internal charges;
- seek to renegotiate its contract with Task Force Eden;
- consider bringing the work 'in house' and ask other councils how they manage to provide a service at a much lower cost to council tax payers;
- consider a meaningful consultation exercise with parish councils.

Cloisters

At our previous committee meeting we agreed to ask the Town Council if we could assist its campaign to have the Cloisters repaired and the offending ramp removed. We offered to contact English Heritage and to send them photographs of the damage if the Town Council thought it would help its case. We received a reply that ignored our offer and informed us that Councillor Langan had agreed to contact Cumbria County Council. Your committee agreed to ask English Heritage to exercise its power to require the Town Council to have the Grade II* building repaired. (Because the Cloisters is Grade II* listed, the building is in the domain of English Heritage rather than the District Council. English Heritage can exercise considerable powers. The Cloisters is owned by

the Town Council.) Your committee also agreed that the Society cannot watch chunks of the building being removed by passing vehicles and not at least try to protect it.

Town Clerk's Office

A simple "sorry about that" a few months ago is all we asked. Now the matter has escalated to questions in the Council Chamber and to the Acting Town Clerk being asked to apologise for what she put into the minutes! It was not the Acting Town Clerk who caused the problem. A small matter on a scale of one to ten but, as the offending minute challenged the integrity of the Appleby-in-Westmorland Society, we agreed to require the record to be put right.

Spring Exhibition 2005

Information on Appleby's Second World wartime exploits is beginning to trickle in. Most notably, so far, was a letter sent within hours of receipt of the Newsletter from a member who was a member of the Cadet Cycle Corps! The History slot in the January Newsletter will be devoted to Appleby during WWII, hoping it will jog memories.

Townscape

We agreed that 'Plan D', which was put to a public meeting on 8 November, was an improvement on Plans A, B and C, which had been shown to the Town Council at an earlier meeting. The committee was pleased to see a good turn out of members, each of whom seemed to have brought the 'flyer' from the previous Newsletter with them. We have written to Councillor Warburton for a copy of the current proposals but, whilst we would have liked them for our Society meeting on 25 November, nothing had been received when your Committee met on 30 November. We have had no indication of when the public display, promised for mid December, is due. Hopefully it will take place and will be a matter of history before this Newsletter is circulated.

Chairman's Note:- Councillor Warburton passed our request to Capita. As is usual in such cases, Capita has not replied to her or us.

Shire Hall

Your committee looked at the calendar to see if it was April 1st. The Society wrote to both the Mayor and to Cllr Langan on 30 October urging both the Town and District Council to do something and to be seen to be doing something about the Shire Hall. The Mayor replied, saying that he had passed our letter to the Acting Town Clerk for attention and the Acting Town Clerk wrote to say that she recalled the letter but could not find it. Nothing was heard from Cllr Langan. The Shire Hall is in Bongate Ward. On 22 November, the Mayor told your Chairman that Cllr Langan had passed her letter to Cllr Morgan because he is on the Eden District Council committee that deals with such matters.

For all the reasons given under the 'public toilets' item, the last person able to influence the debate is a councillor from Appleby who is on the committee concerned. Members are reminded of what was said to Cllr Morgan at a meeting of the District Council's Community and Economy Committee in 2003, when he tried to draw the committee's attention to the threat of closure faced by Coronation Park. "He is looking after his own patch and damn the rest of the district." Cllr Morgan's brave attempt to have Coronation Park exempted from the closure programme was both criticised and rejected.

Sadly, it was not April 1st – it was not all a joke – and lumps continue to fall from the Shire Hall as well.

Oral History

Volunteer interviewers have come forward, one of whom is making a start. Olive agreed that another tape recording machine can be bought to enable all the volunteers to undertake interviews. We still need a typist/keyboard operator to type up the interviews. Enquiries are being made to try and get funding so that we can offer some payment for this work.

Membership/Treasurer

A 'final reminder' letter has brought results and subscription renewals continue to be made. 3 new members joined at the November slide show and two more people expressed their intention to join after the Christmas break. Olive reported a balance of £4398.48 as per the October bank statement. £72 had been paid in since and £241.44 had been paid out (Newsletter costs, subscriptions for Cumbria Local History Federation and British Association for Local History). The slide show had made a profit of £110.22.

Appleby Smarter

The Chairman reported that the group (Cllr Harland, Carl Bendelow and Graham) had met on 15 November. No progress has been made by the Town Council on the matter of pavement signs. There is nothing to suggest that the agreed signboard for High Wiend might, one day, appear and pavement signs are now chained and padlocked to the Cloisters – a building actually owned by the Town Council. Cumbria Highways continue to be pressed to repair the wall at the junction of Garths Head Road and Bongate which was damaged several years ago. The Society reported that we had not heard any more about an improved collection arrangement before the litter picker co-ordinators could begin work. By chance, a letter from the Mayor dated 15 November arrived a few days later. We had asked the Town Council to contact Eden District Council to work out a timetable for the collection of litter collected by volunteers. We were told that a District Councillor was arranging for a lady in Battlebarrow to get an extra wheelie bin for garden waste! (Chairman's note – I'm sure you'll agree, it would be funny if it wasn't true.) Eden District Council has informed us that its enforcement officer is dealing with the razor wire at Appleby Castle and the wire "will be removed shortly" – that was dated 3 November. We were also reassured that English Heritage is aware of and involved with the roof repairs at the Castle.

Outside Visits

An evening visit to Appleby has been arranged with the Shap Local History Society. It will take place on Monday 27 June and visitors will arrive at St Lawrence's for a 7.00 p.m. start. Further details will be publicised later.

From the Secretary

Next Meeting

**Thursday 27 January 2005
7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall**

Speaker: Ms Kim Williamson

“The Future of Recycling and Waste Minimisation”

Cumbria County Council’s Recycling and Waste Minimisation Officer tells us something of the County Council’s plans for these important issues.

Young Enterprise North West

We have been approached by this organisation which, in conjunction with Appleby Grammar School, is working with pupils aged 15-19 running their own companies. To this end, the organisation is looking for Business Advisers to become involved. The students gain real business experience as they elect a Board of Directors, raise share capital and finance a product or service, take it to the market place and gauge customer demand by marketing to real life customers. Finally, they present a business report and financial accounts before liquidating their Company. If any member is interested in being a Business Adviser they can contact Alastair Bell on 017683 51547 for further information.

Please Note

If you have enjoyed reading this Newsletter and are not already a member of the *Appleby-in-Westmorland Society*, you could have it delivered free to your home six times a year simply by joining the Society.

A £6 individual/£10 family subscription also entitles you to attend six bi-monthly meetings free. These are usually held in the Supper Room of the Market Hall on the last Thursday of January, March, May, July (our A.G.M. meeting), September and November at 7.30 in the evening.

Application forms are available at the Library; from our Secretary – tel: 017683 51597; from our Chairman – tel: 017683 53063.

The contents of this Newsletter may be freely used to the advantage of Appleby-in-Westmorland but, in order to comply with their wishes, the **personal histories** of living persons MUST NOT be used in whole or in part without the written consent of the Society which retains the copyright.