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Newsletter March 2006

No 64

Public Meeting 26 January 2006

Our speaker for the evening was Andrew Radcliffe and the title of his talk was “Confessions of a Portrait Painter”. During his introduction, the Chairman paid tribute to Andrew’s contribution towards the ‘Townscape’ debate. When the threat of sandstone pavements reared its head, it was Andrew who took his camera to Penrith, Carlisle and Barnard Castle. There is no doubt that the images he recorded were influential in the later stages of the discussions.

With his relaxed and informal style, Andrew enthralled his audience as he told us the stories behind some of his paintings. He started by showing us the picture of two teenaged girls, painted in the mid-1970s while he was working as an art teacher in Manchester. The success of this picture was the catalyst for him becoming a full-time artist.

As well as lots of self-portraits and portraits of his wife, we saw paintings of politicians, industrialist, academics, artists and churchmen, as well as studies of students and staff of several schools at which Andrew had been artist in residence. Local “celebrities” also featured, including Gervase Markham, Lady Hothfield and Judge Blackett-Ord. There was a portrait of Ken Dodd, too, which had resulted from Andrew being asked, during a Radio Cumbria interview, who he would most like to paint. Highlights of the ‘exhibition’ were several portraits of HRH Prince Charles and the portrait of Society Vice-President, Lance Thwaytes.

To go with the wonderful pictures, Andrew told interesting and amusing stories and the audience was sorry when the evening had to end.

A full report of the evening appeared in the *Herald* on 25 February 2006.

From the Chairman

The Newsletter is somewhat earlier than usual. This is so that members can be given as much notice as possible of the annual exhibition put together by the Society in the Tourist Information Centre. Entitled “Appleby’s Architectural Heritage – a Photographic Walk Round Appleby in 1975”, the exhibition will run from 4 March to 29 April.

“The People of Appleby-in-Westmorland deserve a Quality Parish Council”

My sentiments entirely, but not my words. Councillor Morgan said them at a Town Council meeting in July 2003. He went on to say that, until Appleby had a Quality Parish Council, it risked being marginalised “as not being worthy of acknowledgement”. The Appleby-in-Westmorland Society agreed with him and offered to support the Town Council as it progressed towards that objective. We have renewed our commitment at each of the Society’s annual general meetings since.

Central Government published its outline proposals for Quality Parish Councils in 2000. The idea is that parish councils that comply with national guidelines governing the way in which they operate, communicate, spend money and elect councillors will be permitted to undertake some of the functions currently carried out by district councils. In November 2001 the Government published details of the scheme. Parish councils which satisfied “minimum standards” will have the opportunity to benefit from the devolution of services and resources from district councils.

As Chairman of the Cumbria Association of Local Councils, Keith Morgan told the *Herald*, “This Government initiative opens up a new future for town and parish councils and will greatly assist what we are already trying to achieve here in Cumbria. Many town and parish councils will welcome this chance to attain Quality status because it will bring additional resources and the opportunity to achieve real benefits for their communities.” On 12 March 2003, Keith requested that ‘Quality Parish Council’ went on the Town Council’s agenda. In November 2003 a sub-committee of Councillors reported that “small adjustments only” will be required and then the Council can make a formal application.

Those ‘small adjustments’ included employing a Town Clerk with appropriate qualifications, organising a council centre or councillor surgeries and having an unqualified auditors’ report. The rest of the criteria were already fulfilled. Communication via the Church Newsletter was already up and running. With a few ‘twiddles’ the Council would be able to “provide a better service to our residents and create a more positive future for the town and can have more power to our elbow than before.”

In 2005, the Town Council appointed an unqualified clerk, there is no council centre and no provision for councillor surgeries and the less said about the council’s finances the better.

Unfortunately for Appleby, Councillor Morgan’s prediction seems to be coming true. At the annual town meeting in April 2005, the Mayor, Councillor Harland, told residents that trying to get a response from any of the principal authorities was “like beating your head against a jelly” as “they absorbed what was said but did nothing”. In other words, Appleby Town Council IS being marginalised and IS NOT WORTHY OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

In December 2005 Councillors listened politely whilst a representative of Cumbria Association of Local Councils outlined the Quality Parish Council Scheme. Thus, four years after Cllr Morgan welcomed the scheme and two years after the Town Council said that it was on the brink of success, councillors went back to the very beginning.

Every so often we hear how important the ‘King James II Charter’ of 1685 is to the town and every so often we point out that it was not ‘adopted’. In the words of a Government Commission report of 1835, “The corporation got rid of this charter’ and Appleby continued to be governed by ancient usage.

Not much seems to have changed. I wonder just how serious the Town Council was when it said it wants to “provide a better service to our residents and create a more positive future for the town”? (Nov 2003)

On the bright side, there is a glimmer of hope. Even the Mayor thinks so. In a letter to the Society, in which he suggests that Appleby may yet do something about Vital Villages, Cllr Harland writes, “It seems we are attracting more active councillors now and this raises our hopes for progress.” Cor! What more can I say?

We can dream

A few years ago the Town Council reorganised its committee structure. The revised system worked for a while and then collapsed. Now every Councillor can turn up at any committee meeting. They even send apologies for not attending committees to which they are not appointed. Cllr Maguire summed up the situation best at a council meeting in February when he said that committees should be reduced in size as the present system duplicated work and resulted in boring council meetings.

The outgoing Mayor has 'flagged' the need for another look. I hope he used a red flag.

The consultants that reported on the future of New Fair found that the Council has no policy for tourism or business development. It should. Until it does, bodies such as the Chamber of Trade and Appleby Alliance have no natural focal point in the town. The Audit Commission was unhappy with the state of the Council's finances. There is a plethora of sub-committees and working parties that seem to report to the full Council rather than to a 'parent' Committee such as General Purposes.

Why not four committees – Finance; General Purposes; Planning; and Tourism and Business Development? Four committees, each with four Councillors. Every Councillor with a job to do. No more than one 'senior Councillor' to any one committee. Each committee to appoint its own Chairman. No 'passing the buck' to an Eden District Councillor who just happens to be a member of the Town Council.

Can we afford it?

Before I start, let me apologise for annoying the Town Council yet again. In my defence I call Lord Justice Sedley who has ruled that "free speech includes the irritating, the contentious, the eccentric, the heretical, the unwelcome and the provocative Freedom only to speak inoffensively is not worth having". I don't think I've been heretical – but the rest apply.

A few short years ago, Cumbria Association of Local Councils sent a pamphlet entitled, "Go on. Get involved" to every household. It urged residents to seek election to parish councils. It pointed out that Councillors would soon be able to claim expenses. They can now. Up to £3,000 a year. Appleby Town Council has decided not to introduce the scheme, "at the moment".

Just as well. Our town precept – the amount we hand over to the Town Council every year – used to be about £25,000 per annum. Four years ago it went up to £35,000 but that was so that the town could contribute £40,000 towards the cost of the new sports hall. That £40,000 has been handed over. So the precept for 2006-7 should come down to about £25,000.

Dream on. It will go up to £35,324.87. Just imagine the effect of sixteen Councillors claiming £3,000 in expenses. It would go up by another £48,000. Can we afford it?

Ian Campbell, whose article on local council elections appears later in the Newsletter (see Crazy, or What?), thinks that Appleby should consider whether a town of our size needs sixteen Councillors. It's a good point. Why do we have sixteen? One answer is, "Custom and practice." It has always been done like that. "We, the common council, called the sixteen of the said borough" So began a Town Council minute of 1715. Time for a change?

How did you find out about the precept for 2006-7? I read about it in the *Herald* on 24 December 2005. The Town Council set the figure at a meeting on 14 December. There was nothing about that meeting in the Parish Newsletter for December/January. The February Parish Newsletter has a reference to the December meeting, which reads, "Resolved that minutes C1/12/05 to C20/12/05 of the meeting of the Council held on 14th December be signed by the Mayor as a true and accurate record."

At the February Finance and General Purposes Committee and again at a full Council meeting on 8 February 2006 Councillors discussed the effect of the precept and the reasons behind such a dramatic increase. But neither during the debates which were open to the public nor in the minutes which followed was the sum £35,324.87 mentioned. A rise from £25,000 to £35,324.87 amounts to a 41% increase in your precept. All other local councils will be capped if they exceed 5%.

Once again, thanks to the *Herald* for keeping Appleby informed. Perhaps the *Herald* should consider applying for Quality Parish Council status. It certainly is “effectively communicating and actively engaging the community”, a requirement of the Quality Parish Council scheme. I can read the Parish Newsletter and find details of a petty squabble about whose name should appear first on an attendance list but I have to read the *Herald* to find out how much tax I will have to pay to the Town Council. Our first and only opportunity to challenge the precept will be the annual Town meeting in April. Too late. We will have received our council tax bills by then.

Members who attended the Society’s Annual General Meeting will recall that we discussed some of Eden District Council’s proposed cut backs. We did not like some of the things we saw but we did see them in a publicly available paper circulating in July 2005 – a full nine months before the financial year 2006-7.

It hasn’t been easy to find answers as to why the precept has been hiked up. We know that the Town Clerk, who is the Council’s Responsible Finance Officer, recommended the increase. We know that, at the December meeting, she gave Councillors a summary of the Council’s financial position as at the end of November 2005. We don’t think that she gave Councillors a copy of the ‘approved estimates’ for 2006/7. If we are correct about that, this was a clear breach of the Council’s financial regulations.

We know that, by reading her report to Councillors, that she thought we should continue to pay the extra £10,000 per annum as it was a “small price to pay” for:-

- a Town Council to represent residents at all levels on all matters, both large and small;
- a Town Clerk to provide administrative and accounting support to the Council, act as a central point of contact and oversee the workings of the Council’s organisation and staff.

In her report, the Town Clerk compared Appleby with a ‘smaller’ town in the Eden Valley, “no prizes for guessing which one.” Her words, not mine. That was odd. I know that Applebians have scarce whispered the words, “Kirkby Stephen” since the Civil War but, as the Town Clerk lives there, she has no reason to be shy, surely? She went on to explain that Kirkby Stephen pays a higher precept than Appleby so we should be pleased to pay more. She is right about Kirkby Stephen paying a higher town council precept. But what the Town Clerk failed to mention was that Kirkby Stephen pays considerably less by way of the ‘special charge’. The ‘special charge’ is something we all pay to the district council so that it can look after our parks, gardens and open spaces. Kirkby Stephen looks after its own parks, gardens and open spaces. It also maintains its public seats and cleans footpaths. It even cuts its own grass. In return, Kirkby Stephen pays a greatly-reduced ‘special charge’.

Kirkby Stephen Town Council has completed its Parish Plan for the Vital Villages scheme, it has had a council contact centre for several years, it provides the Christmas lights every year and organises voluntary litter picks in the town.

Appleby has not yet begun its Parish Plan, we do not have a council contact centre, the Chamber of Trade begs for money every year for the Christmas lights and the Appleby-in-Westmorland Society organises voluntary litter picking.

There's 'Hope' yet

After years of asking where those lovely Band of Hope banners ended up, two have been discovered in the loft of the Sands Methodist Church. Thanks to Anne Crosby we have been able to see and photograph both Appleby and Long Marton banners.

Trees

No, not Coronation Park trees this time. What do you know about the trees behind Centre 67? Starting at the rear wall of the electricity sub-station at the back of Centre 67 there is a row of nine mature hornbeam trees, which passes behind Edenside and ends close to the river. It is, apparently, 'common knowledge' that those nine trees were planted to commemorate the nine servicemen whose names appear on the war memorial in the Cemetery. The Society would like to ensure that the trees are properly looked after in future years but, before 'adopting' them, we would like to hear from anyone who can remember when they were planted, by whom and why.

Town Council Liaison meeting

The first of hopefully many liaison meetings between the Town Council, Chamber of Trade and Community Association and the Society took place on 22 February under the chairmanship of the deputy Mayor, Cllr Rooke. The meeting discussed a number of 'difficulties' which had hampered good communication and relationships over the past year. These included - Town Clerk's hours of duty and availability; access to planning applications; the need for the Council to have agreed 'rules of correspondence'; the Town Council's need to adhere to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act; the need for the Council to better explain the increase in the annual precept and the better use of the Parish Newsletter as a means of communications with the residents.

Annual Town meeting

This year's annual town meeting will be held in the Moot Hall at 7.00 p.m. on Monday 24th April. It is hoped that it will be well advertised this year – unlike last year when only two members of the public turned up. If it becomes clear that there is insufficient space for the public in attendance, the meeting will remove to the Supper Room.

Crazy, or What?

People seem very confused and unclear about what happens when a Councillor dies, flees the country, retires hurt, sick or disillusioned, or otherwise departs from the Council. Here it is, then:

When a vacancy occurs on Appleby Town Council there is NO automatic by-election of a replacement – an election is held **ONLY** if ten voters in the ward in which the vacancy has arisen write to the Elections Officer at Eden District Council, asking that an election be held. There does not necessarily have to be 10 individual letters. One letter can be sent, provided the ten are on the Electoral Roll, live in the ward concerned and they each provide details of name, address and signature in the letter.

A Notice to this effect is to be posted “.... in some conspicuous place or places within the area of the local authority” (the regulations do not specify that it should be in the WARD, though that would seem to be sensible) [One would think that a small notice in the TIC window scarcely qualifies as a conspicuous place, especially since that placement is life-threatening!] AND “in such other manner, if any, as appears to be desirable for giving publicity to the notice.”!!!

If the statutory ten people demand an election within 14 days, the full panoply of an election takes place. Arrangements have to be made by the Electoral Registration Officer at Eden District Council to hire the hall and arrange (and pay for) polling officials and scrutineers from 0800-2100 on polling day. The date, time and place for the election is published by the Electoral Registration

Officer, but otherwise publicity for the election is up to the candidates. The Town Council does NOT have to provide polling cards. The District Council may require the Town Council to repay election expenses. [With the frequency of Appleby elections, the Electoral Officer, while mindful of the statutory rights of the citizen, is pretty daunted by having, as a duty, to lay on quite a complex operation, with stacks of paperwork, for a total, as at the last election, of 117 voters.] Votes are counted, winner duly announced, the end. Candidates have to be nominated by two electors, and do some paperwork. If only one candidate offers themselves, it is a “shoo-in” (called “elected unopposed”) and all this does not take place. (We think)

If there is no demand from the ward for an election, the Town Council must, at its next meeting, co-opt member(s) on to the Council. Even if there is more than one candidate, the Council still co-opts the new member(s) by voting amongst themselves. If several candidates offer themselves, the Council voting carries on, ‘losing’ the candidate with the least votes, until an absolute majority for one (or, we presume, more, if there are multiple vacancies) is attained. In effect **they** hold the election! Democracy in action!

Authority: “*The Parish Councillor’s Guide*” by Paul Clayden, plus a letter from the Elections Officer, Eden District Council.

Of course, one excellent way of cutting down on the trouble and expense of frequent elections is to **reduce the number of Councillors**, which we understand is within the power of the Town Council itself. This might increase Council efficiency, as sixteen seems excessive for a Town of some 3,000 souls. A reduction in Councillor numbers might even have the perverse effect of increasing interest in the post and raising the number of candidates, so that we have competitive elections and it becomes a slightly more difficult position to attain. It would be nice to think that the current flicker of interest in matters Town Council might start to abate the present voter apathy which lets the status quo amble on. Would eight Councillors seem reasonable? Or maybe twelve? “It has always been done this way” is no argument in the face of economic stress and shaky procedure! **Let’s start a debate about it in the Town!**

R Ian Campbell

Toilet Update

Not only did we save the toilets but hopefully we have persuaded Eden District Council to adopt a more robust approach to their contractors. As a result of our formal complaint, the Council is to introduce penalties from 1 April 2006 for any building works not completed by its contractor TFE Accord, within the instructed time period. As far as toilets go, I quote, “The contractor is now required to provide an inspection regime that records the results and transmits these to the Client (EDC) weekly, identifying any failures to meet the required standards and the remedies he has applied to improve the situation. The contractor’s reports and the client inspections will combine to provide an ongoing assessment of cleanliness standards, identify remediation has taken place and identify if further assessment of cleanliness standards are necessary to maintain standards.”

I think the toilets look a lot better; someone even said that they “sparkled”!, which is great. But if you do spot a problem, please report it straight away. The Shire Hall toilets badly need a few repairs and a coat of paint – a spot of enhancement!

Maggie Clowes

History Slot

Cosy Cinema

I remember Mary Furness – she worked at the Express Dairy – was in charge of the Egg Station staff and was not married until after the War. She was an usherette at the Cosy Cinema and, with a large torch, showed people to their seats. Isobel (nee Edmondson) was a cashier and it was her husband, Harvey Lewthwaite, who was doorman. Harvey was the son of Alf Lewthwaite, a stonemason of “Lewthwaite Builders and Stonemasons, Appleby”.

Shortly after the opening of the Cosy Cinema, I went with my mother and her friend to see a film, a musical – I think – called “Lily of Laguna”. We went in style – in a navy blue box-like Morris car, with running boards, which was owned by Mother’s friend’s husband. It must have been a special occasion as there were lots of “Tut-tuts” by some people in the village (Murton) where we lived. “Going off to see the Pictures” – unheard of. My uncle Kit (Tinkler) booked us seats at Evans’ paper shop, next door to the Market Hall. He worked in an office at Appleby L.M.S. Station and on retirement, after 45 years’ service, he was presented with a gold wrist watch and a push-bike, to replace the one he had cycled to work on over those years. He courted Mary Edmondson, eldest daughter of William Edmondson, Baker, Battlebarrow – for 30 years, for 20 of which they were engaged. However, they decided to call it off – by mutual agreement!

Olive Airey – your Treasurer

Hope Gudgeon recalls a couple with a caravan coming to Appleby on Saturdays and showing silent films on a temporary screen in the Public Hall before the Cosy Cinema opened. Can anyone add to that?

Let there be light (Part 6)

We ended Part 5 in July 1955. Just to recap, the Town Council opted to convert the street lighting from gas to electricity in October 1952. Various schemes were drawn up but it was not until 1955 that the Council accepted a tender of £4,346 to convert the lights in the ‘main streets’. So soon after WW2, when steel was very hard to come by, this conversion would have been limited to putting electric tops onto existing gas lamps.

In June 1957 the Ministry of Transport permitted the Council to request the North West Electricity Board to put new electric lights on Boroughgate. This included a tender for £1,265 from Stewart and Lloyds for new columns. Steel was clearly coming back onto the market as steel is what Stewart and Lloyd produced.

In October 1957 Cllr Chapman asked about progress. The Town Clerk reported that the lamp standards had not yet been delivered but he expected the scheme to be complete before the end of the year. We could not find a report telling us if it was completed but we assume it must have been. (If any member can fill that gap in our story we will be pleased to hear from you.)

In June 1959 the Council accepted further quotes from N.W.E.B. for lights between the corner of St Michael’s Lane and Drawbriggs Lane; Drawbriggs Lane to Garbridge Lane; Margaret’s Way to Colby Lane and the top of Long Marton Road.

Also in June 1959 there was ‘trouble with cookers’ in council owned houses. The new Yorkvale cookers (which we presume to have been electric – can anyone confirm?) did not work properly. The Council said the cookers were fine, it was the tenants who could not work them but, notwithstanding whose fault it was, the Council agreed to repair them at a total cost of £15.

In February 1960 the Council agreed to the last two gas-lit council houses on Thanet Terrace being converted to electricity provided the tenants agreed to pay the cost. This had been council policy.

In June 1961 a number of residents asked whether the lighting at Castle Bank Hill and Jubilee bridge could be improved. In September the Council accepted a tender to put a light at the top of Castle Bank but declined to provide any further lamps in the area. Also in June 1961 the Council relented in its previous policy and agreed that the last house on Thanet Terrace could be converted at the Council's expense provided the tenant agreed to an increase in rent. (Should we put a commemorative plaque on No. 8 Thanet Terrace?)

In October 1962 the Northern Gas Board proposed that Appleby should be supplied with butane/air gas and to provide a gas plant in the town.

In July 1964 the Civic Trust assisted the Town Council with the design of a 'comprehensive' lighting scheme for Boroughgate, Colby Lane, Doomgate, Chapel Street, Low Wiend and the 'Market Square'. The Civic Trust was especially keen to ensure that any new scheme for Boroughgate and Bridge Street was compatible with the town's architectural heritage. Two short months later Appleby recovered from this outbreak of civic pride and determined that the Civic Trust's proposals should not proceed. Instead it would ask that great upholder of tradition, the North West Electricity Board, to come up with something.

In January 1965 the Town Council purchased twelve redundant gas lights from Penrith! They paid £2.10 shillings for each post and £1 for each lamp top. Councillor C P Hirst sought an assurance that they would only be used as replacements. He pointed out that the Council should really be concentrating on electric lights.

Amazingly, although we know that a butane gas plant was built where Holme Court now stands – we have photographs of it! – we could find no record of its building or opening. Perhaps we will one day. The next report of butane gas was in February 1965 when Cllr Taylor complained that it was not providing adequate heat or light, especially in the higher parts of the town – “there is neither heat nor light in it!” he claimed, “only one in five gas lights work and in some places a kettle will not boil!” Cllr Hirst had kept a record of gas lights in the town – one particular light which had only just been serviced was only lit one night in seven. It seems that all the remaining gas lights had been recently refurbished by a Gas Board engineer free of charge – the Town Council only had to pay for fittings and mantles. Councillors were told that whilst coal gas was lighter than air and could reach the higher parts of the town easily, butane was heavier than air and so struggled up hill! The Council resolved to take the matter up with the Gas Board – “We will demand satisfaction.”

In April 1965 the Council set the rate for the following year. After many years of planning and costing new street lighting schemes the Council put nothing in the budget for street lighting! Alderman Bennison said that, whilst the scheme might be desirable, the Council's working balance was very low and must be built up. (Shades of 2006.)

Councillor Hirst objected and told the Council that women and children were afraid to walk along some of the town's street after dark. He proposed a rate increase. Cllr Graham Holmes agreed with him and pointed out that, if Appleby was to prosper, the Council must do something to better it. It would cost £8,000 to provide electric street lights for the whole town and £1,500 for the pilot scheme which had already been approved. Their proposal was defeated. (More shades of 2006?)

Not until June 1967 was the full (£8,000) scheme approved. The Town Council accepted a tender by N.W.E.B. provided the County council agreed to contribute well over half the cost (£4,774) in respect of 'county' roads. The Council had obtained permission to apply for a grant. New regulations meant that the County Council was responsible for 'county' or main roads and this would reduce the cost to Appleby. The new scheme would apply only to roads west of the river.

In September 1969 a newspaper headline read, “Another instalment of Appleby’s street lighting saga.” Two years to the month after the scheme started and things had ground to a halt. Nothing had happened since Christmas 1968. Appleby had a far from complete scheme – some lights were on when they should be off and others never came on. There had been no maintenance . The surveyor was instructed to send a strong letter to the Electricity Board, “forthwith”.

We have to end it there. Sorry about that. Had it not been for what is happening in Boroughgate as this piece is being drafted, we might have delayed this instalment until later. At the January 2006 Council meeting the Mayor was instructed to send a strong letter about the Townscape to the County Council “forthwith”. New street lights are being installed in Boroughgate. It was too good an opportunity to miss.

To be continued

Committee Meeting 6 February 2006

We welcomed Carl Bendelow whom we had invited to suggest ways in which the now ‘defunct’ ‘Appleby Smarter’ campaign might be re-invigorated and to share with us his thoughts of how best the Society might take advantage of ‘new technology’.

We agreed to a request from the Chamber of Trade and Community Association for a donation towards the cost of providing the Christmas decorations. We agreed to £50 – the estimated cost of lighting the town bridge during the holiday period.

Graham reported that the Society had been invited to join with the Town Council, Chamber of Trade and Appleby Alliance as a co-signatory to a letter to Eden District Council stressing the town’s concern at the threat to W A Developments. Graham had signed on behalf of the Society.

We noted that there will be less storage space in the library when it moves ‘downstairs’. Alternative arrangements are in hand for the Society storage boxes currently kindly looked after by the librarians. Our President, John Heelis, has transferred loan of the ‘Heelis’ scrapbooks, also housed in the library, to the Society in order that they do not have to move to Penrith or Carlisle as part of the re-organisation.

We noted with some concern that a formal letter to the Town Clerk about Vital Villages had not been well handled by her. In fact, she had declined to deal with it as the matters we had raised had happened prior to her appointment as Town Clerk. Graham reported that he had complained officially to the Mayor and that a Town Councillor had agreed to raise the matter at the next Council meeting.

In an e-mail response, the Town Clerk said that the Mayor would explain the history of Vital Villages to the Society. If that had not been silly, it might have been amusing. The Mayor visited Graham on 17 May 2004 for a briefing on the history of Vital Villages as he was anxious to make sure that progress was made during his mayoralty. A copy of Graham’s briefing note is on file. The Town Clerk must be more careful about putting the Mayor in difficult situations too often. As was pointed out in the House of Commons recently – embarrassing the ‘boss’ is an interesting career move.

Coronation Park

Still waiting for Eden District Council to remove six trees which they insist are not there.

Note: letter plus photographs of six trees which have been marked for removal for over two years sent to Eden District Council.

Townscape

Complaints have been made that the parking area was too close to the Tufton. The contractors insist they are working to drawings provided by Cumbria County Council. We understood there would be a meeting the next day.

Chairman's note: I was invited to a meeting in the Moot Hall on 7 February. The invitation came from Jim Smith, Cumbria County Council's engineer. It came by telephone at 10.00 a.m. The meeting was arranged for 2.00 p.m. I was able to tell the Mayor and Councillor Elliott as no one had invited them to the meeting. It was agreed that the parking bays should be moved to the east (nearer to Boroughgate). This work will have been well and truly completed when you read this.

Appleby New Fair

Little to report. We understand that an agreed lease is almost finalised and that insurance cover for the event will be in place. We noted that Cllr Morgan has stood down from the New Fair Joint Committee after eighteen years.

Annual Exhibition

Nothing heard from Town Council. The T.I.C. manager wants it to go ahead and has allocated all of March and April for it. We had requested a modest financial underwriting by the Town Council, should we incur expenses only to find that the exhibition space is unavailable but the Assistant Town Clerk advised that such a request would have to be put to the Town Council for a decision. Without such an undertaking, your Committee agreed that we would not be able to agree to the T.I.C. manager's request for an exhibition and that the Assistant Town Clerk would then be able to let the space to one of the 'many groups' who, she claims, wanted to use it.

Chairman's note: We are pleased to report that the deputy Mayor cut through the red tape and gave the Society the required assurance. The exhibition, entitled "Appleby's Architectural Heritage", will go up in the T.I.C. exhibition space during the first few days of March and will run until the end of April. For the record and to avoid future misunderstandings by Town Council staff, the original letter to the Society asking for local groups to use the newly opened exhibition areas was sent by the Town Clerk, Charles Hirst, in November 1995. We understand that much of the Council's 'memory bank' was destroyed during the 'tidy-up' that took place at the end of 2004. The Society will always be pleased to share its information with the Town Clerks if they ask.

Police Reorganisation

In the absence of any real information about the effect of revised policing arrangements for Appleby, we agreed to write to the Chief Superintendent at Carlisle. A reply is awaited.

Note: Graham and Cllr Rooke will meet Appleby's new Inspector – sorry, local problem solver – on Friday 3 March.

Shire Hall

Ian reported that he had written to Cumbria County Council asking for information but had received no reply.

Membership/Treasurer

The public meeting on 26th January resulted in five new members. Others continue to swell our ranks. Olive reported a balance of £4697.21 as at the end of December 2005.

Oral History

Nothing to report.

Planning

John Hodge reported on the 'local difficulty' he had experienced when trying to contact the Town Clerk so that he could look at planning applications – something which had been simple when the previous Town Clerk was in post. She had given him her mobile 'phone number so that he could make appointments. We have pointed out that we don't want appointments – we want to see the plans. John will shortly test the new arrangements.

Appleby Smarter

It was agreed that Ian Campbell would liaise with the Chamber of Trade as a necessary first step. The Society will encourage members to use the 'yellow forms' available in the Tourist Information Office. We have been given an assurance that all matters reported will be passed to the appropriate authority and 'will be followed up by Councillors' where necessary. We look forward to seeing that work in practice.

Medical Centre Lamps

We agreed that Graham would contact the owners of the medical centre now that it is officially open and see if they would like the lamps. If they do, we shall do our best to get them there.

Settle-Carlisle Railway 20th Anniversary

14 July 2006 marks the twentieth anniversary of the re-opening of many of the smaller stations on the line. The Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line have asked the Society if it is prepared to prompt other voluntary groups in Appleby to consider marking the occasion in some way during the first two weeks in July. We agreed to send a circular letter to organisations we thought might be interested. We will probably put on a slide show and perhaps a photographic exhibition. It is not intended that we do more than encourage local groups and then forward details of planned events to the co-ordinator who will publish and distribute a booklet throughout the U.K. publicising all the events along the line.

Police Liaison Forum

We noted with concern that threatened cuts to local police cover have not been challenged by the Town Council. We also noted, perhaps with even more concern, that the Town Council established a five-man working party to discuss policing in Appleby in October 2003. Councillors Maguire, Morgan, Langan, H Potts and Hayes were appointed to it. A year later, the Town Council agreed to consider a police liaison committee. As nothing seemed to have happened Graham asked whether the Society should organise something. He reminded the Committee that the Society had organised a very well-attended public meeting on policing in 1992 and asked whether it was time to do it again. Committee members thought we should but that we should first write to the Town Council to ascertain what progress was being made or any plans it might have.

Police 'column' in Newsletter

It was agreed to repeat our offer of space in the Newsletter for a contribution on local policing to our new police inspector.

Any Other Business

Ian gave information on several matters including the Eden Conservation Area, Appleby Cemetery Chapel and EDC's Capital Programme, EDC accounts in relation to water rates for public toilets, ownership of land on either side of the river and river safety. He also raised concern about the danger to children on the pavement outside Cllr Maguire's cafe on the Sands. John advised that Hilary Wilson will come in the autumn to try and identify the apple trees at St Anne's and is also willing to give a talk in a future programme.

From the Secretary

Date for your diary

The Cumbria Family History Society is arranging a day conference on 10 June 2006, in Penrith, in the Club House of Penrith Rugby Club. If anyone is interested, please contact Vivienne for full details of the programme.

Next Meeting

**Thursday 30 March 2006
7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall**

Speaker: Mary Gould – “Fairs in the North West of England”

A lecturer at St Martin's College, Mary traces the importance and development in Westmorland, Cumberland and Lancashire of ancient beast fairs, once one of the most significant institutions in the social and economic life of agricultural communities, and shows how they link with Appleby Fair

Website: www.applebysociety.force9.co.uk

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.

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