



*Appleby in Westmorland • Root and Branch • May it Flourish Forever*

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### **Newsletter March 2007**

**No 70**

#### **Public Meeting 25 January 2007: "Traditional Food of the Lake Counties" – Ivan Day**

A wonderful evening was in prospect and an excellent audience turned out to listen to local food historian, Ivan Day. He had recently appeared on Radio 4's "The Food Programme". His talk ranged from late medieval times to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and was illustrated throughout with slides. From monks providing food and medicines to the poor, sick and infirm to delicate moulded ice creams and jellies, we learned how what you ate reflected where you came from, both geographically and socially. We learned about texts and recipes held in local archives and how these documents could tell us so much of customs and foods. As well as learning about everyday foods, foods eaten as treats, on special occasions and associated with calendar customs, we heard a whole new and bewildering vocabulary of terms for food items and pieces of equipment used in the preparation and serving of food. Ivan's knowledge is tremendous, his skill as a speaker enthralling and his entertaining demonstration of an oatcake's journey on an oatcake hurling machine will remain in the memory for a very long time.

A full report will appear in *The Herald*.

#### **From the Chairman**

Graham Coles is improving by the day, but has some way to go to full fitness. I am happy to say his noddle and typing finger are unaffected, and have been employed in working towards yet another stimulating Newsletter.

I am pleased to announce that the Appleby Record Society has elected to throw in their lot with us, and when we circulate our constitution to all members for review, we shall be proposing that the full (albeit pompous) title of the Society shall be *The Appleby-in-Westmorland Society incorporating the Appleby Record Society*. The Appleby Record Society makes up in importance for what it lacks in numbers and we have a joint problem. We urgently need storage for the records held by the Record Society until we can organise a proper Archive facility. It needs to be about the size of a principal bedroom and, of course, it needs to warm and dry, with occasional easy access for selected people from the Society. If anyone has such a spare space that they are willing to devote to such storage, please contact me or any Committee member.

Officers and Committee members will be readily identifiable at future meetings as they have been issued with badges – that is, of course, if they remember to bring them and put them on!

### Correcting the record

The Appleby-in-Westmorland Society is concerned, quite rightly, with the accuracy of information available to its member and, through the Newsletter, to the residents of Appleby. Historical data is relied on to provide a window on the past and conversely current affairs become the history of the future. May I therefore, through the kind auspices of your President, seek to correct two anomalies which occurred in the January, 2007 edition.

It is alleged that I, as Responsible Financial Officer, have "been spending public money whilst" the Council was "technically insolvent". That would have been an illegal act. As at the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2006 the Council had £3,101.02 remaining in its account, but shortly thereafter we received a rates demand and other invoices which in total exceeded this figure and thereby created the technically insolvent position. Within approximately ten days we had received income via the TIC, Public Hall and shop rents which, together with the available balances, were sufficient to cover this deficiency, and no monies were expended during this period. When the precept was received on April 19<sup>th</sup> we had in place sufficient safeguards to ensure a similar situation would not arise, although this was carefully monitored throughout the year.

The Council's finances are now secure, although under constant review. I have set out in detail in my precept statement the reasoning behind this year's increase.

Secondly, my researches concerning the ownership of the Moot Hall have "worried" certainly one member of your Society. In the short time I had available to prepare my report in September I used what I considered to be reliable historical data within the Moot Hall, i.e. a report to Council from the Clerk in 1974 and a letter from Eden District Council to Appleby Town Council in the same year, both of which referred to the timescale I mentioned. A copy of the report from 1974 has been made available to the Society. I will revert to the Association for confirmation of any historical facts, if such enquiries are required in the future, but it was interesting to note that from all available information it is still not possible to precisely date this building.

May I request that if Council critiques are to be included in future editions of the Newsletter their accuracy be confirmed prior to publication. I am prepared to have discussions with any member of the Appleby-in-Westmorland Society at any time, but it is much more congenial and less time-consuming to be able to provide accurate information before the event than embark on fire-fighting afterwards.

Cllr. Keith Budding (RFO)

*"Sent for presentation to Council Building, Appleby  
18/06/2007 10:00"*

You will also note that we have honoured our promise to let Appleby Town Council have a space in the Newsletter to counter the “far too many inaccuracies” in a previous issue. (Well, I make it one, by their count!) Happily, members of the Council differed from Cllr Patterson in believing there would be “no editorial guarantee”, and from Cllr Harland in thinking that we “continued to print half-truths” (Council Minute C18/01/07) and have submitted a counter-blast. The article has been scanned, not copy-typed, so it is an authentic reproduction of the page as received from the Town Council, with the addition of an amendment requested by Cllr Budding by e-mail. We are not sure whether the use of “your President” was intended. If it was, our President is Brigadier John Heelis. If Ian Campbell is the person being referred to, then he is our Chairman.

With that out of the way, I am happy to mention that we are co-operating with the Council on the Heavy Vehicle Count during March, and John Hodge is working with Cllr Ian Potts to try to get something **done** about the dilapidated buildings that disfigure the town at present.

We have discussed with Tony Greenwood plans for brightening up our website so, in the fairly near future these improvements should be in place, mainly aimed towards non-members and potential visitors – a general revamp, with plans for keeping the site up-to-date and relevant. But it will NOT be the same as the Council website – it would be silly to duplicate stuff. The website address is given at the end of the Newsletter but is repeated here:-

[www.applebysociety.force9.co.uk](http://www.applebysociety.force9.co.uk)

I think we can be of use to the Appleby Youth Group. This organisation is run by young people for young people basically from Centre 67 and helps provide fun and interest for youngsters. Usually, such groups are after money but, while large lumps of lucre would not come amiss to the group, they are very keen to maintain their own control of their own association. Occasionally, however, they find the need for expertise that they do not possess among themselves. To that end, I thought we could compile a list of members who have special talents and experience that might be of use to the youngsters, to be held confidentially by our Secretary, so that, if they hit against a problem they need help with, we can refer them to a listed member for that help. It could be anything – experience in handling the bureaucracy surrounding grant applications, skill in carpentry, IT expertise, gardening, cookery, electrical and electronic expertise, natural history skills, anything you know you are good at and are prepared to share with the Appleby Youth Group **WHEN ASKED FOR!** Contact Vivienne or me.

Anne Coles is preparing our usual exhibition in the Moot Hall, lasting from 2<sup>nd</sup> April to 3<sup>rd</sup> May. This year it is a display of archive photographs of local villages. Do turn up to see it – it is very well worthwhile.

You will find later in this Newsletter a piece (Fight the Flood) about restarting the Town’s preparations and precautions for dealing with **flooding**. I think this is of prime importance to our town and Cllrs Harland and Clowes deserve enthusiastic support and help for what they are trying to achieve. It is not yet a Council initiative – whether or not it becomes one remains to be seen.

I am sorry to have to report that Olive Airey, our Treasurer, is going to resign from the Committee and that post with effect from the Annual General meeting. We very much regret this decision but have sympathy with it, as Olive has worked long and hard for the Society. Committee meetings will not be quite the same without her comprehensive knowledge of Appleby and its people, and her verve and energy in getting things done. So we now face the eternal problem – find a successor. The accounts and records are not too complicated and have been meticulously maintained by Olive, so **SOMEONE** out there must feel they can take it on. Committee meetings are bi-monthly, in the evening. How about **YOU?** Again, contact Vivienne or me.

R Ian Campbell

Please note that the personal views expressed in the following **Current Affairs** and **History Slot** items are those of the author and are not necessarily the views of the Society.

## **Current Affairs**

### **Annual Town Meeting**

Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> April: 7.00 p.m.: Moot Hall. Remember, this is not a Council meeting – IT IS A MEETING OF THE TOWN'S ELECTORS. It is called by the Chairman of the Council and, if present, he should chair it. Strictly speaking, the electors can set the agenda. There is much to discuss with Councillors this year. This is your opportunity.

### **Parish Poll**

In previous Newsletters we have drawn attention to the Local Government Act 1972 and to the possibility of requiring the Town Council to conduct a poll or referendum at the request of the electorate. I am grateful to Eden District Council's Elections Officer for the following information.

At the annual town meeting (see previous item) any question is decided in the first instance by the majority of those present and voting on the question. NB: this is YOUR meeting, not the Council's.

A poll may be demanded at any time before the conclusion of the meeting. A poll cannot be called unless the Chairman of the meeting agrees OR IF A POLL IS DEMANDED BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTORS PRESENT AT THE MEETING, NOT BEING LESS THAN TEN IN NUMBER OR ONE THIRD OF THOSE PRESENT, WHICHEVER NUMBER IS LESS.

Once a poll (referendum) is requested, it is the duty of the Town Council to organise it. Strict rules apply and the District Council oversees the proceedings – just as it does with Town Council elections. The poll must be arranged not earlier than 14 days nor later than 21 days after it is called.

This little known provision is never drawn to public attention.

Perhaps the 2007 annual town meeting will be our opportunity to bring a little democracy into local government.

### **Appleby Town Council**

I had prepared a piece under this heading before I went to Carlisle for my op. In it, I compared Kirkby Stephen's measly 3% increase in the town precept with Appleby's 33%. I also pointed out that Kirkby Stephen did so much more for its tax payers with far less income than Appleby. I had written a few words about the Council's Responsible Finance Officer's difficulties when trying to prepare his budget statement for 2007/8. By late October, only one of the Council's three spending officers (the T.I.C. manageress) had submitted their draft proposals and he urgently required the other two (Town Clerk and Public Hall manager) by the end of November at the latest. The Town Clerk said she was far too busy and, in any case, would be on holiday. There is no record of what the Public Hall manager said. In the event, a group of Councillors rallied round and the job was done in the nick of time.

I had wanted to express my appreciation of the Assistant Town Clerk, who was either dismissed or made redundant, depending on which Council report you read. In the event, there was a bit of a rumpus at the Council meeting in December – something about Councillors objecting to as 'asses jibe', as *The Herald* called it and it was rightly thought necessary for the January Newsletter to carry a short recap on the history of the Society for the benefit of those many members who have joined over the years. However, I would still like to say a few words about Jo Brabbins if I may. I shall miss her. We had some cross words at times and she threatened all manner of dire

consequences if we insisted on using the Freedom of Information Act but, when she stopped firing other people's bullets and began to realise the risk the Council was running, she "sincerely apologised" for the Council's errors. It was Jo Brabbins who put her legal training to work when negotiating draft leases for the Council – something they had not had since they employed a legally qualified Clerk many years ago. I recently had occasion to read some Council minutes she prepared whilst Acting Town Clerk following the death of Brian Row. Those minutes were well written and complied in every way with the legal requirements. I wish her well.

### An Apology

Thinking about the 'asses' affair, interestingly, an Eden District Councillor, Patricia Bell, Penrith (Carleton), also writes an occasional column for *The Herald*. On 3 February, she pointed out that Councillors "can't ignore groups of people whose values we don't share .... or may disagree with. We expect to work with all members of the community. When and if we get it wrong, please say so".

At the time of drafting this item (a few days after the February Town Council meeting) I cannot add a lot to what we know already. At their January meeting, Councillors discussed our Newsletter at great length – half a page of minutes were devoted to it. Cllr Morgan reported that the District Council's Monitoring Officer had suggested that whilst "drastic action might be appropriate", he felt on the other hand ignoring it all together might be more appropriate". I am not sure whether the words "all together" should be ascribed to the Monitoring Officer, Cllr Morgan or the Town Clerk but there they are, in the official record of proceedings. If taken literally, and they must be as they have legal status now, it means that all councillors acting together should ignore our comments. The word 'altogether' has an altogether different meaning. At the end of their lengthy discussion, during which Councillors rejected a Society offer of space in a Newsletter in which they could correct our "many errors" on the grounds that we might misquote anything they wanted to say\*, they agreed that the Town Clerk should seek the advice of the District Council's Solicitor. A debate which opened with the views of Eden District Council's Monitoring Officer ended with a decision to write to Eden District Council's Solicitor for advice – same person! The matter was not discussed at the February or March Council meetings. \*Please see **From the Chairman**.

I headed this item 'An Apology'. I sincerely apologise to those Town Councillors who really are working very hard to drag the Council into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Those Councillors still living in the past must try harder. I do not want to know that the Father of the Council claims the title by two weeks. I do not want to be reminded quite so often that our Councillors do it for free – so do many hundreds of unsung heroes and heroines in Appleby. And I will scream if I have to read once more that the post of Senior councillor has "always been there" and the "Town Clerk had to be put right". The four Councillors with the longest service are privileged to wear the red robes previously used by aldermen before the post was ABOLISHED in 1974. There is no post of Senior Councillor.

Graham Coles

### History Slot

#### The Cloisters (a 17<sup>th</sup> century mystery)

As with all previous 'history slots' we will draw on a number of published and unpublished sources. Where possible, we will acknowledge the original authors and apologise for any omissions.

In September 2006, the Town Council was told that The Cloisters were a gift to the town about 180 years ago – say 1826. Not true.

Nicholson and Burn (1777) wrote, "At the entrance to the churchyard there is a convenient and decent market house or cloister which fronts the market place and was built chiefly at the expense of Dr Thomas Smith, Bishop of Carlisle; unto which also Dr Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln gave £10.

For this the Corporation pays rent at 5 shillings yearly to the vicar in consideration that part of the said building was erected upon the churchyard.” True – with the possible suggestion that it was not Bishop Smith but his predecessor who caused The Cloisters to be built.

In his superbly updated work, “The Story of Appleby in Westmorland” (2006), Sir Martin Holdgate records, “Bishop Smith also gave the Borough a convenient and decent market house or cloister which fronts to the Market Place. This stood on the site of the present cloister and was particularly used as a covered market for butter. Part of the cost of the building was borne by another old boy and benefactor of Appleby Grammar School, Dr Barlow, Bishop of Lincoln.” Almost correct – save that “gave” suggests a gift which it manifestly was not! There is also the lingering doubt about Bishop Smith’s role – see next paragraph.

Tucked away in the Cumbria Record Office is an unpublished letter. It forms part of the Machell collection. Thomas Machell was rector of Kirkby Thore and he had been encouraged to record as much of the history of Cumberland and Westmorland as he could. The letter was written by John Thwaites (1628-1699). Thwaites was nine times Mayor of Appleby and Borough Clerk for a number of years. On 2 August 1675 (the date has been carefully rechecked), he recorded the salient points of Appleby’s past – its charters, its several sackings by the Scots, its impoverished state and its inability to pay the annual tax due to the Crown. Then, seemingly to get a personal matter ‘off his chest’, he bemoaned the fact that two of Appleby’s aldermen (“the one dead and the other never gave any good”) had unjustly accused him of misusing “ye ten pounds” handed to him by the Bishop of Lincoln and intended to be put towards the cost of building a house for “ye market”. The house, “which stands on six pillars ..... will be finished within this three weeks”. His letter emphasises the fact that the money had been put to its intended use and that he valued his reputation at far more than ten pounds. We have no reason to doubt the authenticity of Thwaites’ letter and it is clearly dated 2 August 1675 suggesting that the original cloister may well be twenty years older than previously recorded. However, nothing is simple. The Bishop of Carlisle in 1675 was Bishop Rainbow (1664-1684). Bishop Smith, so often credited with building The Cloisters, was in office between 1684 and 1702.

The generally accepted authoritative record of The Cloisters is also to be found in the Cumbria Record Office. Unlike many historic records, this one found a new lease of life as recently as 1963 when Revd Dixon gave the Corporation notice to quit The Cloisters. Much muttering and mumbling went on but it was not until Alderman Whitehead (Mary George’s father) did some proper research that the ‘history’ was revealed. An agreement between Gabriel Smallwood (vicar of Appleby) and the Mayor, Burgesses and commonalty of Appleby dated 27 August 1695 (date rechecked in case of transcription error) acknowledges the fact that the “vicar did pull down and demolish severall smithies of a considerable yearly rental” which belonged to the town. The reason given for the vicar’s unilateral action was said to be the Bishop’s dislike of the appearance of the buildings in question, which he considered “a great blemish” to the approach to his church. However, the church authorities, in recognition of the fact that the buildings were not theirs to pull down, agreed to build “a cloister with a row of pillars and a shop at each end” as a replacement. The cost to the church was £100. It was also agreed that the overall appearance of church and cloister would be improved if the new building was set back slightly (“the church would be very much beautified” if a small piece of church land was rented to the Corporation at a yearly rent of 5 shillings). It was also agreed that the vicar and mayor should be agreed on what trades and professions might be carried on in The Cloisters – any dispute to be settled by the Bishop. As soon as you read the agreement, you realise that John Thwaites was not ‘getting it off his chest’ as I first supposed. Thomas Machell is mentioned in the 1695 document. In fact he designed The Cloister. So, when Thwaites wrote to him in August 1675, he was reporting progress. His Cloister would be ready within three weeks. Machell died in 1688, eight years before the agreement was drawn. Just to add to the mystery, the agreement, whilst it does not mention Bishop Smith by name, does refer

to “Thomas” Bishop of Carlisle. Smith’s Christian name was Thomas – Bishop Rainbow’s Christian name was Edward. Finally, the agreement refers to land on which The Cloisters “now stand”. The question remains – when were they built? We know why they were built – as compensation for an act of unauthorised vandalism. The original (1675/95) Cloisters were not a gift to the town. They belong to the Corporation (town council) and always have done. The evidence suggests The Cloisters were built in 1675 and that it took 20 years to draw up an agreement!

From the well-researched *Local Government in Appleby in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (Bouch 1951) we know that the Corporation paid the 5 shillings annually (more or less – there were a few arrears mentioned) and the rent remained the same up to and including 1885, when it was increased to 6 shillings on account of sewerage pipes being laid at The Cloisters.

It is also clear from the Borough records that The Cloisters were used as the butter market and that any repairs to the shops, flagstones and the cost of keeping the premises clean all fell to the Corporation. In 1712, the Corporation resolved that “the cloyster being the place appointed wherein butter for sale is to be sold, none shall expose their butter other than in the cloyster or at the Low Cross.” Rules were strictly enforced. Butter had to be sold at 20 ounces to the pound and fines were imposed for short weight. In 1788, Matthew Johnston of Stainmoor was fined 13 shillings and four pence for repeatedly seizing the butter women’s baskets and thus preventing them from exposing their wares for sale.

However, nothing lasts for ever and a Council minute of 17 December 1806 reads, “whereas the Cloisters belong to the Corporation of Appleby and are in a ruinous state and likely to fall into total decay” they should be taken down and rebuilt “in such a manner as shall hereafter be found most proper and convenient”. A small committee was formed comprising members of the church and corporation. Once again, part of the deal was continued use of a piece of ground owned by the church. Further meetings followed but the all important minute of September 1811 records the Corporation’s thanks to the Revd Shaw, the late Mayor, for a number of improvements, particularly the rebuilding of The Cloisters. A date stone adorns The Cloisters to this day, as does the unauthorised borough coat of arms. The Bishop’s arms are to be found above The Cloisters’ exit (as you leave the church). There is a sting in the tail of the Council minute which records that The Cloisters cost about £1,000 and that, had they not been designed by Smirke, they “might have been built for half the money”.

Sir Robert Smirke (1781-1867) was the architect of Lowther Castle. Other prestigious buildings designed by him include the British Museum and Covent Garden Theatre. Expensive or not, Appleby can be proud of its association with such an important architect.

The Cloisters we see today are pretty much as they were in 1811. Good quality stone was used throughout except across the back where soft local sandstone is very much in evidence. Was this ‘left over’ from the 1675 building?

A government commissioner’s report for 1835 details the Corporation’s accounts for 1834. The Commissioner asked about an outstanding debt of £450 which was said to be part of a larger debt being paid off at the rate of £150 per annum. The record shows “it is part of an annual payment of a larger debt contracted for the purpose of erecting some buildings in the town called The Cloisters and for the repayment of a cause tried in 1826 in which the Corporation was unsuccessful and which cost then upwards of £700. The value of the land subject to the dispute was very trifling and the decision is said not to have settled any important questions of right and, although concerning a trifle, is said to have its origins in the difference of political opinion between the parties really interested and appears to have been an improvident expenditure of public money.”

We have not been able to find any reference to or information about the 1826 court case but, if any member or reader is able to elucidate, we would like to hear about it.

Various photographs and records in the archives show that The Cloisters had many uses over the years. A local trade directory of 1829 shows six tradesmen in occupation of The Cloisters, only four of whom were paying rent to the Corporation. The trades are interesting. We find John Thompson, a flax dresser, who paid an annual rent of 10 guineas; Thomas Steel, book seller and printer, rent £10; Edward Allinson, druggist, 10 guineas and Thomas Groves, hairdresser and hatter, 10 guineas. Two others were obviously sub-tenants – Thomas Sayer, boot and shoe maker and William Knipe, grocer. In 1835, the Corporation accounts listed income from two shops and two houses. We know that the Gregson family occupied the left hand shop and house for many years and an advertisement printed by Messrs Whitehead on behalf of the Butter Market Committee in 1865 invited bids for the dwelling house and shop formerly occupied by Gregson (who had then moved to his handsome new building in Bridge Street – now Lady Anne's Pantry).

Another advertisement in 1884 reminds us that Mr Smith, who also ran a gents and ladies hairdressers from his shop (lower right hand side), also provided Appleby's only Fumigated and Medicated Public Baths in the premises immediately above. A first class gentleman's bath cost one shilling (5p) for which one could wallow throughout opening hours (9 a.m. to 8 p.m.) every day except Monday (ladies day). A second class bath cost six pence (2½p) but you had to be in and out within 30 minutes. If you happened to have a cold, the vapour bath was unsurpassed and it could, according to the advert, cure most things. Please see the advert, taken from Braithwaite's *Illustrated Guide and Visitors Handbook to Kirkby Stephen, Appleby, Brough and Warcop, 1884*

When built, The Cloisters had iron gates and railings but these were removed in 1919 so as not to inhibit free access to the war memorial which had been placed where it is now, just inside the church yard.

From time to time the left hand end of The Cloisters were used as Council offices. Certainly the accounts office was there for many years and residents could pay their gas bills and rates. On other occasions it housed the town surveyor and town clerk. In February 1960 Cllr Betts reported that the former public health offices at The Cloisters were in need of repairs – suggesting yet another use. The estimated cost of repair was £1,000. The building was bedevilled throughout most of the 1960s by a long standing dispute between the vicar and the Corporation. It seems that the vicar thought the rent should have increased. He was also having a running battle with the Town Council about a number of issues at the time. (The vicar, Revd A G W Dixon, was a Town Councillor, as well as later being a District Councillor.) In 1963, he gave the Council notice to quit. He claimed that he was not satisfied with the Council's plans for The Cloisters – and he also wanted to increase the rent charge. Notice was to expire on Lady Day 1964. The Corporation, which had been told by the



Factories' Inspector that its offices in the Moot Hall were unfit for use by its staff, wanted to refurbish the old Cloisters offices at a cost of £466 and relocate the new Town Clerk, Mr Cunningham, and his staff. The Corporation claimed The Cloisters as its own and made plans for the repair and relocation. Eventually the 1695 'agreement' was discovered and the vicar relented. Mr Cunningham moved to a new post in Chipping Norton in 1970. His replacement was T F Flynn. He arrived just as the newly refurbished Town Clerk's office in the Moot Hall became available and probably never used The Cloisters offices used by his predecessor. In keeping with Appleby's seeming inability to keep its buildings in repair (it is not a new problem by any means), the new Town Clerk's first task was to deal with the problem of The Cloisters offices which were declared uninhabitable. Repairs were estimated at £1,460. Some Councillors thought it would be cheaper to pull them down, others claimed that they would restrict traffic along Low Wiend once the new Health Centre was opened! There were some interesting letters of protest in the local press at the time.

In March 1971 Cllr Dixon, as Mayor Elect, wanted to provide heating at The Cloisters. He pointed out that the only other meeting place (the monkey rack) had been removed during recent alterations to the Moot Hall. Councillors were unhappy – their attitude being, "What next – heaters for courting couples in shelters by the river?" In April 1971, the Corporation accepted a tender for that part of The Cloisters once used by the Town Clerk only for the Clerk to remind them that it was not a good idea as no repairs had been completed, the premises were dangerous and a claim might be made against the Council if anyone was injured. The Council agreed to repairs!

When we embarked on our research into Appleby's public buildings post 1974, our information was gleaned mainly from contemporary newspapers. Both Eden District Council and the Town Council denied that any records of some very important discussions existed. Since we began our current series of reports, the report prepared by Town Clerk, Mr Flynn, has been discovered. The report is dated 22 January 1975 and it sets out the case for Appleby's retention of the Moot Hall, Public Hall and Cloisters (among other properties owned by the town). Mr Flynn's report on The Cloisters is quite amazing, especially as it was written so soon after the 'discovery' of the original agreement between church and town. Mr Flynn reported that The Cloisters were "held by the Council on lease for an indefinite period from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. There appears to be no title to transfer to the District Council". Mr Flynn could not have been more wrong if he tried. (Sadly, much of the rest of his report is of equal merit.) The Society is grateful to the Town Council for making a copy of the report available. It will be placed in the Society's archives.

In December 1996, the Council requested Chris Binney, a professional surveyor, to report on the condition of the three principal buildings owned by the town. His report on The Cloisters suggested the urgent expenditure of almost £10,000; this to be followed by further work costing over £11,000 within five years after which another £10,000 should bring the premises up to modern standards. To be fair, some limited remedial work was carried out in 2000 but, in general, the building had been allowed to deteriorate badly. In June 2000 Cllr Graves told the Council that, "The Cloisters are being refurbished at a very very expensive figure and the walls were pressure washed last week, but the day after there was graffiti again – obscene graffiti". He proposed that gates should be fitted to prevent access to The Cloisters during the dark hours. Nothing came of it. The "very very expensive refurbishment" comprised tidying the flags and pressure washing. Matters were not helped when Cumbria County Council put a traffic-calming ramp across the eastern end of Low Wiend. The positioning and angling of the ramp was such that high (and some low) sided vehicles were almost forced to collide with the Cloisters, causing considerable damage. Promises that this would be 'put right' during the recent townscape refurbishment came to nought. In November 1998, Revd Roger Collinson wrote to the Town Council suggesting that the refurbishment of The Cloisters should become the town's millennium project as they were in a "sorry state". Councillors were not in favour. The Council's preferred millennium project was refurbishment of the weir – a

proposal submitted by Appleby Angling Association. Appleby Town Council did, however, agree to an additional litter bin for The Cloisters. Things had got so bad by the spring of 2004 that the Society contacted English Heritage and the Town Council. We took several photographs which were supplied to the Council, Eden District Council and English Heritage. All parties promised urgent action. Our offer to assist the Town Council in its efforts to obtain redress was accepted but, in a letter dated 21 April 2004, the Council asked the Society not to further involve English Heritage until it had finalised negotiations with the County Council. Estimates for repairs were obtained and copies were supplied to the Society. Nothing happened. In December 2006, the Council could not trace any of the relevant correspondence. Fortunately, the Society was in a position to assist. Unfortunately, the Town Council is 'back to square one' and any opportunity to attract funding from external sources by way of insurance or compensation has probably been lost.

It was TEN years ago that Chris Binney warned the Council that its buildings were in urgent need of expensive repairs. Five of the eight Grade II\* listed structures in Appleby belong to the Town council. Every so often the Town Council objects when the Society points out that our public buildings are in a poor state – the Council considers our comments to be criticism – so be it. At least they react – the advice given by the Council's surveyor ten years ago was ignored! I'm not sure which is worse.

I believe the Town Council when it says that much of the extra £12,000 it will take out of our pockets next year will be spent on essential repairs to our long neglected buildings. I have no doubt that, once the buildings are professionally surveyed, the need for ever larger sums will be identified for future years. I do not and cannot speak for every Society member but I doubt whether many, if any, members would want to see the Moot Hall, Public Hall and Cloisters fall down for want of care. I object to the apparent waste of public money which disappears on administration – not that which is spent on Appleby's historic fabric. I would, however, pose a serious question. The Councillors most ready to challenge the Society when it points out the Council's shortcomings were in post in 1996, when Chris Binney's report was presented to the Council. If they and their colleagues had acted on his advice, many of today's difficulties would have been avoided.

All is not lost – last October Councillors agreed to remind their contractor that he had promised to fit a door to a toilet at The Cloisters a year previously but nothing has been done. So its true – Appleby owns a loo with a view! Perhaps it could be included in the new publicity brochure which is about to be published.

Graham Coles

### **Fight the Flood**

Bishop Nicholson, en route for Parliament in 1710, complained in his diary that he had to travel round Appleby "From ye Floods". He wasn't amused when he got here – "no compliments from the mayor, Mr Carlton". The need for Bishops to travel to the House of Lords may be on the way out but floods look as though they are here to stay. Councillor Frank Harland and I attended a meeting at the Environment Agency in Penrith on the subject of flooding and, unlike too many other meetings, found it interesting, informative and inspiring. We were impressed with all the thinking and practical planning going on at official levels, but we also discovered how much some communities are doing to help themselves and what support there is available for them. A speaker from Low Crosby, badly affected in 2005, is coming to talk about the actions his community have taken. In Appleby we have particular problems because, with a bad flood, the town is cut in two. This is a continuing problem which concerns us all – we hope many of you will come to a meeting on

FRIDAY 30 MARCH AT 7.30 p.m. SUPPER ROOM, PUBLIC HALL

Maggie Clowes

## **Committee Meeting 6 February 2007**

**Matters Arising:** an amendment to the minutes of the meeting of 5 December 2006 was required i.e Davina had reported receipt of a hand-written memoir from Mrs B Freeman and she would produce a typed copy. Ian reported receipt of a list of material with Appleby connections being held at Penrith Museum. Judith reported receipt of a very helpful response form Eden District Council regarding the matter of Memorial Trees and will organise a meeting of Mr Emmerson and Committee members so that further actions can be agreed. Discussion about Living Churchyards was deferred until Graham was able to progress the matter. It was reported that the matter of the Appleby documents being offered for sale on the internet had been resolved. Under this item, discussion took place with regard to the possibility of the Appleby Record Society joining forces with this Society.

**Membership/Treasurer:** Olive reported a balance of £5277.34 as at 31 December 2006. One new member had joined.

**Oral History:** Vivienne reported that Davina had resigned from the Committee and no longer was available to undertake interviews. Ian reported his plans to interview someone who had been an evacuee with a couple living on Boroughgate.

**Planning Townscape:** John reported he had raised no objections plans proposed for The Tufton Arms and that Bridge Street Cafe had been vastly improved. There had been no progress with regard to the dilapidated buildings which had been brought to the attention of Appleby Town Council/Eden District Council. (See **From the Chairman** for latest news.)

**Appleby New Fair Joint Committee:** Ian reported a useful meeting of the Media Group, advising that use will be made of VHF radio to advertise the event, information signs and maps will be available and brochures will be produced. But it was not clear whether the Media Group or the main New Fair Joint Committee would deal with any funds. Concern continues that there is still no sign of anyone taking on a management role for the whole event. There was no progress by the Infrastructure Working Group. There was nothing to report regarding provision of toilets on The Sands.

**Shire Hall:** Appleby Town Council is to write to Mr S Adcock complaining about the deterioration of the Shire Hall. Ian will write to Cumbria County Council's Chief Executive regarding Mr Adcock's failure to deal with our concerns within a reasonable time. Replies from Graham and Ian have been sent to Sir Martin Holdgate, describing actions taken so far regarding the Shire Hall.

**Cemetery Chapel:** a brief report of fund-raising efforts was received. We learned that a structural survey by an ecclesiastical building specialist was planned. Contact has been made with the Church Preservation Society but no response had been received to date.

**Constitution and Questionnaire:** a copy of the constitution and a questionnaire, which includes the wording of the suggested amendments to that constitution, will be circulated with the next Newsletter. The questionnaire is a revision of the one sent out when Graham became Chairman.

**Committee Changes:** as reported earlier, Davina has resigned. It was agreed that we could co-opt someone. Olive gave advance notice of her intention to resign as Treasurer at the 2007 AGM.

**Policy with regard to Town Council:** it was agreed to continue the current format of the Newsletter, including civic items as well as history and committee items and to co-operate where possible.

Correspondence received: Vivienne reported receipt of

- a letter from Eden District Council's Elections Officer in response to the enquiry about parish polls.
- a letter from Explorer Films looking for sponsorship of a project to produce a DVD about Lady Anne Clifford. The initial reaction of the Committee was positive.
- a letter from Cllr Stan Rooke in response to our letter offering to pay towards replacing/repairing the Bullring.
- an e-mail from the Cumbria Local History Federation containing details of the 2007 Joe Scott Memorial Prize Essay competition.

Future Programme: Speakers/Visits: it was agreed to arrange for Chris Robinson to be included in the 2007/8 programme with his talk on the historical geography of the Eden Valley. The Workington and District Civic Trust will visit Saturday 23 June and the Sedbergh and District History Society will visit Wednesday 16 May. The evening for the Sundial Safari will be Thursday 16 August.

Any Other Business: the date of the annual Coffee Morning is 16 June. Ian has produced badges for Committee members to be worn so that new members and visitors can identify Committee members/officers. Discussion took place regarding production of booklets about Appleby's history, using the Newsletter history slots.

### **From the Secretary**

#### **Article of interest**

Members are encouraged to read Andy Connell's article, published recently in the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society Transactions, Third Series, Volume VI, 2006, pages 195-215. The article is entitled *Blue Sky over North Westmorland: Appleby's Liberal Decade*.

#### **Next Meeting**

**Thursday 29 March 2007    7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall**

#### **"A Passion for Apples"**

**Speaker: Hilary Wilson - Local apple enthusiast tells us of her passion for orchards, apple trees and fruit production and gives a practical demonstration of grafting**

If any member would like a graft of a particular apple variety and Hilary is able to obtain it, she is happy to provide the stock. Please let Vivienne know and she will pass on any requests, obtaining details of the cost of the root stock.

**Website: [www.applebysociety.force9.co.uk](http://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.

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.