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Newsletter March 2009

No 82

Yet Another Sad Loss - John Hurst, A Personal Tribute

All too soon after mourning the sad loss of our President, John Heelis, the Society has lost another stalwart supporter. John Hurst, who many of you will remember as a reporter on and then editor of *The Cumberland and Westmorland Herald*, died in January, aged 80. John's funeral was in early February so, by the time you read this, many, many Westmerians and others from afar will have recorded their thanks to him.

Our first meeting took place in his office when I went to look at photographs of Appleby which had escaped the newspaper's modernisation process. The photographs were in 'hard copy' and could be looked at. Anything I found interesting, he allowed me to copy onto slide. By that time, John had 'retired' and taken up residence in an upstairs room at the Herald offices, from whence he hammered out his weekly 'View from the King Street Window'. The Society kept him supplied with copies of our Newsletter, which he often quoted in support of one campaign or another - most recently council secrecy, which was something to which he was very much opposed. A talented writer and newspaperman, John described the Newsletter as "energetic" and "readable".

John could not have been more helpful and encouraging. He, like me, bashed out his articles on a battered manual typewriter. He, like me, thought best when supplied with regular cups of coffee. But there the similarities end. John Hurst really was a journalist. It was his profession for over sixty years. An almost impossible act to follow, let us hope that someone with John's sense of history and social awareness continues to look from the King Street Window.

Graham Coles

Public Meeting 29 January 2009: The Red Wyvern Society

Little did we know, as we awaited the start of the talk about this historic re-enactment society, just what a treat was in store. Adrian Waite (Captain) and his wife, Elaine (Cook) arrived dressed in costume, bringing with them several examples of the 'tools of their trades'.

The purpose of the Red Wyvern Society is to re-create as many aspects as possible of life in the 15th century, a period which includes the "Hundred Years War" with France and the "Wars of the Roses", the civil war between the Households of Lancaster and of York which resulted in major battles between contenders for the throne of England as well as minor skirmishes between lesser members of the nobility. The Society brings these troubled and fascinating times back to life through presenting Living Histories and Battle Re-enactments. It usually depicts the Clifford Household – one of the most powerful in England at the time. The name of the Society is taken from the mythical two-headed and two-legged beast which could kill with a look and which was the heraldic symbol of the Cliffords.

"How is it organised?" – once a venue has been booked it is necessary to ensure correct insurance is arranged and all the required equipment is ready. This has to be loaded onto transport, taken to the venue,

unloaded and set up. At the end of the event, it has all to be packed up, loaded, taken home and unpacked. “Why do we do it?” – a re-enactment event is a very enjoyable and social occasion; members get to stay at some wonderful locations not otherwise available; all ages can take part.

As we watched slides of several events, Adrian explained a little about the weaponry and the protective clothing that was used by the soldiers. He also gave some historical background to the battles they re-enact and the families involved. Then it was Elaine’s turn as she told us about the methods of cooking and the utensils and equipment used. At an event, what members of the public see is all authentic and nothing ‘modern’ is allowed. We learned how the phrase “upper crust” came into use – the soft, upper side, of the trencher was given to nobles whereas everyone else got the burnt undersides. We then learned about what Adrian and Elaine were wearing. Elaine described her outfit which comprised the kirtle (gown) with a chemise underneath, the partlet which was used to cover her neck and shoulders as protection from the sun as well as helping to keep her warm, her shoes and her hat. Elaine also wore a belt carrying her eating knife, her drinking mug, a large dagger (necessary for self-defence), a money pouch, sewing needles, a spoon and her Cook’s knife. We discovered some of the social conventions – e.g. everyone wore a hat. For a woman it was necessary because the only person allowed to see her hair was her husband. A woman without a hat was not respectable. Adrian had come in his ‘Sunday best’ outfit. As a Captain he could afford his doublet with shirt underneath and hose. His shoes were only slightly pointed. The more pointed the shoes the less practical – the higher the status. The clothes had no pockets so on his belt he carried his money pouch, eating utensils and dagger. He also was wearing spectacles. It is believed that Italian monks wore spectacles as early as the 12th century and a portrait of a 15th century pope shows spectacles being worn.

Re-enactment society members and enthusiasts create the clothes, utensils, weaponry and military equipment. Such is the fascination with accurate re-enacting there is now an optician who creates reproduction spectacles appropriate to every historic period, using modern lenses. From adapting Second World War helmets, enthusiasts now have forges in garages and there are industrial units making armour. More slides were shown, this time of some of the battle re-enactments. Details were given of methods of fighting and techniques required for various weapons and we saw examples of swords, bill hooks, pole axes, bows and arrows and protective items such as a padded jack and chain mail. It was explained that, although the battles are not choreographed, the historical victors always won. But there have been some near-upsets. Demonstrations of sword fighting and archery are given at the re-enactment events. Soldiers on the field of battle have several ways of knowing they have been killed: if they are hit three times or hit very hard (but it was pointed out that, if there are not many soldiers available for a particular battle, they may not be dead for very long); when the line is overpowered by the enemy; when the weather is very hot and a short battle is preferred; when they are told!

A very lively question and answer session followed as members of the audience examined the items brought and wanted to know more. Adrian and Elaine were enthusiastic, knowledgeable, amusing and wonderfully entertaining speakers and we had a great evening. There is a website: www.red-wyverns.org.uk

Members may also be interested to know that Red Wyvern Society members are involved in Living Histories at the following events in 2009:-

23-25 May – Skipton Castle, North Yorkshire; 27-28 June – Muncaster Castle, Cumbria;
29-31 August – Thorp Perrow Arboretum, Bedale, North Yorkshire.

They will also be attending The Commemoration of the Battle of Towton, Towton, North Yorkshire on 5 April 2009 and the Battle of Blore Heath Re-Enactment, Blore Heath, Shropshire on 19 and 20 September 2009.

Vivienne Gate

From the Chairman

Archive

We have progressed in the Archive Room. Mr and Mrs Burns did a magnificent job of cleaning it, and a few of us went in and painted the walls and doors to freshen it up a bit. It still needs a bit of touching up, but

we can shortly start moving furniture in, and setting up the technology. We are drawing up a list of preservation sleeves, boxes and lockable cupboards that we must buy with the money given to us by Appleby Town Council, so that we can start to get people trained to use the computers. We will publish a list of the cost of archive boxes, which are very durable and quite expensive, with the object of getting you, the membership, to sponsor a box (or two!)- i.e. you pay for it and we mark it clearly with your name as having purchased it for the Archive.

Your Committee is working to try to attract more grant money from suitable agencies - Judith Sowerby has volunteered to plough her way through the turgid procedures that seem to be required; to be fair, these grant-giving bodies have to be sure where their money is going, but it does lead to a vast amount of paperwork!

So I will fairly shortly be contacting those of you who volunteered to help!

No more about the Council from me this time - there is more than enough later on - but I am still very disturbed by the amount of secret consultation that goes on without any report of its outcome.

I would like to give a reminder that I plan to stand down as Chairman at the next AGM, and we have not received any suggestions or nominations for a successor.

R Ian Campbell

Appleby Accolade

To Andy Connell for his work as Chairman of the Town Council's Joint Working Party concerned with Public Toilet provision.

Also, thank you to anyone/everyone who made getting about rather easier during our snowy days by clearing footpaths and spreading salt on steps, hills and pavements.

History Slot

George Dargue's story

From the Society's point of view this story began when George Dargue took a photograph of a young man holding the reins of a horse-drawn coal cart to our annual exhibition in 2008. The young man was George's grandfather, William Shepherd Dargue, known locally as "Shep" or "Ship". The photograph was taken in front of a vacant plot of ground which was soon to be the site of the British School (now Littlefairs). The photograph was found abandoned in the loft of a house in Hilton several years ago. Fortunately, the finder thought the young man with the horse had 'the look' of George about him and wondered if it was of interest. It was.

From the point of view of T Dargue and Sons, the business began in 1898, when Thomas went into partnership with W Ewin and co-founded a firm which lasted until 1996. Their first business letterhead clearly shows that, in common with several other firms in this area, if it needed moving, they would move it. "Coal, Coke and Lime Merchants; Haulage Contractors; Furniture Removers and Dairyman" says it all.

Thomas was the son of William Dargue, proprietor of the King's Arms Inn, Hilton, which was destroyed by fire many years ago. Chris Wilson, in his book, "Something Close to My Heart" (Appleby Records Society 1995), records that William Dargue was the proprietor between 1881 and 1885. There is no indication of when he took over but it was sometime after 1869 when George Hutchinson was the landlord. In 1897 Hannah Dargue took over and she was there until 1906 – was this when the pub burned down?

Whilst many Applebians will remember Dargues as coal merchants and dairymen, it is worth bearing in mind that much of their early business was linked to the Brackenber Moor military encampment during the years when it was used variously by the local Militia and Volunteer regiments. Dargues had the carting contract for the camp and this must have been a lucrative source of income for many years.

Thomas was born in 1860 and died on 5 March 1947, leaving a second wife, Elloner, five sons and three daughters. His sons were named George, Tom, William, Kenneth and Walter. His daughters were Tamar, who was unmarried, Hannah, who married W Idle and Polly, who was the wife of Tom Satterthwaite.

William 'Ship' Dargue was born in 1881 and died, aged 76, on 29 April 1957. He, too, was married twice. His first wife (Jennie?) died young, leaving three children, Thomas Lancelot (Lant), George and Mary. Lant was just 7 when his mum died; George was six and Mary three. William went on to marry Isabella and the couple had four children, Marjorie, Annie, Leslie and Robbie (who was killed in Egypt during WW2 aged 21).

'Ship' was a bit of a raconteur and would have enjoyed the day when he was invited to take tea with Wilfred Pickles in the King's Head, when BBC's 'Have a Go' programme came to town in 1955. He didn't make the final six who took part in the broadcast – but he did enjoy his chat!

The family farmed at Hungriggs where there was quite a bit of land on which they grew potatoes and turnips, as well as oats. Once a year, George Hullock came to the farm with his steam engine and threshing machine to crop the oats. Ken was killed in a shooting accident at the farm in 1942 and shortly afterwards 'Ship' sold most of the livestock, keeping only a few cows for milk.

There was a disused quarry alongside the lane leading to the farm which always had a deep and dangerous pool of water at the bottom. Despite grandad's instructions not to go anywhere near it, it was a wonderful playground for young boys. It was filled in when the Appleby bypass was built and you would never know that it had existed.

The milk business was centred on a yard just below the Midland Hotel in Clifford Street where the milk float and horse were kept. During the summer months the cows were put to grass in fields near the Dairy and Fair Hill. During the winter they were kept in the yard in Clifford Street which also housed a pig sty where William 'Ship' kept a couple of pigs for food. It must have been a busy place (and probably noisy, too) as there was a gas-powered stationary engine with two big fly wheels which was used to drive a corn crusher and straw chopper. The straw chopper cut straw into little pieces about two inches long and the crusher did what it says on the lid – it crushed oat seeds which were then mixed with the chopped straw to make cattle feed which the cows happily munched whilst being milked. What a contrast to the quiet cul-de-sac which occupies the site today.

When Ken died in 1942, Thomas Lancelot Dargue, 'Ship's' son, went into the coal business with his friend, Jim Deighton. When Les was demobbed in 1945, he came into the business and Jim Deighton went back to farming. In 1957 'Ship' died and Lant took over the business.

The coal came from the Midland Railway (L.M.S.) yard beyond where the Training Centre, ex goods shed, now stands. The North Eastern (L.N.E.R.) had coal drops at the closed (1962) 'top' station, which the Dargues bought in about 1952 when Mr Bevan ceased to operate his coal business from there. From that year on, the coal business was run from there.

George, whose story this is, was born at Well House, Appleby in 1929. His father (Thomas Lancelot) was mainly employed by local farmers and, as this meant moving from farm to farm, it also meant moving home quite frequently. However, he reckons he has finished his wanderings as he now lives in a superbly converted barn next door to the house in which he was born. George has three sisters. He is married to Jean and they have three daughters, Christine, Mandy and Kelly, and one son, George, who farms at Murton.

'George' has become quite a family name as there has been a 'George' in all the Dargue families as far back as George can remember.

When still a young boy, George would take his summer holidays at 20 Clifford Street where his grandfather lived and would often go out with his grandad on his milk round. One Sunday morning they were in

Pembroke Street and, whilst grandfather was away on a delivery, George filled all the pint and quart cans thinking he was helping. But he couldn't turn off the tap and so, with milk gushing down the length of Pembroke Street, George did the only thing possible – he ran. That only delayed the tanning which, he reckons, he deserved.

George well remembers two wartime incidents, which many of us have only heard about. In his own words:-

“During World War 2, when the Germans were bombing cities like Manchester and Liverpool, we could hear the planes going over us at Drybeck where we lived then and we could tell by the sound they made whether they were German or ours. The German bombers made a sound of their own. It sounded like “wow wow wow”. We had a field with a hill in it and, if we went to the top of the hill, we could see search lights over places like Newcastle and, looking in the opposite way, I suppose Liverpool and Barrow-in-Furness. There was one time when one of the opposition planes must have been chased by one of ours because he was unloading his bombs over us. I never heard a thing that night but my mum and dad had been watching from their bedroom window. There was a row of bomb craters starting in the fields near Great Asby and finishing near the last farm in Drybeck on the way to Hoff. They left great holes in the ground with soil piled up round the edges. There were about ten craters altogether but luckily all in fields. We had to fill them in with spades and shovels. (Nowadays they would have gone with a bulldozer and completed the job in a fraction of the time it took us to do it.)

Also during the war, the Forestry Commission started felling trees in Hoff Lunn Wood. We lived on a little farm at Drybeck and my dad (Lant) got a job in the wood sawing pit props. He and another man from Burrells, called Dick Bainbridge, used to saw them with a cross-cut saw. Later on they were given a chain saw with an engine at one end so they had to keep swapping over as it got very heavy. In 1942 me and a few more lads used to come to Appleby primary school for woodwork and gardening (it was more gardening than woodwork). It was always on a Friday that we were at Appleby and I used to go to Clifford Street, where my grandfather lived, for my dinner and one time when I went my Aunt Marjory said, “Come upstairs to the attic – there's something I want you to see.” We went up and looked out of the window and I saw a huge fire in Hoff Lunn Wood – the flames were sky high. When I got home that afternoon, as soon as I had my tea, I took off like a rabbit and ran right up the fields and into the wood which was still blazing like mad but you couldn't get anywhere near the fire for the heat.

There were quite a few fire crews there but most of them were on the opposite side of the wood from us. The fire fighters couldn't put the fire out and all they could do was to stop the fire from spreading to the standing trees and sawmill, which was in the centre of the wood.

I went home as soon as it started to get dark and my mother gave me a good telling off for staying so long, as she was worried about me. I was there all day on the Saturday and Sunday as well. Sunday was the day when the fires started to die down. The fire engines must have pumped thousands of gallons of water from Hoff beck and other small rivers in the area and that's when I met most of the firemen. There were teams from Appleby, Kirkby Stephen, Penrith, Carlisle, Kendal and from as far away as Barrow-in-Furness. I know this for sure because I talked to some of the crew from Barrow. It was quite interesting to a lad 12½ years old.

After all this was over they decided to move the sawmill and loading equipment to the smaller wood across the Appleby-Kendal road. At the new place I believe the trees were cut earlier so that there wasn't the same danger of fire. The man in charge of the forest was Joe Taylor who lived at Great Strickland.

There was a second fire in Hoff Lunn about 2 years later but not on the same scale as the one in 1942!

(George's memory is very good. The first fire was in April 1942 and the second in April 1944. Reports of both will appear in due course as part of the Society's history of the fire brigade.)

George left school in 1943 and was apprenticed as a vehicle mechanic at Knowles Bros (now Appleby Ford) on the Sands. Soon after he started work he was badly burned. His clothing was soaked in petrol as the result of a 'blow back' when he was filling up a car and, perhaps not realising the extent to which he was covered, he stood too near an electric fire. The result was horrendous. He ran into the street with his clothing on fire and was fortunate to come upon a quick-minded resident who rolled him in his own clothing to extinguish the flames. After that, George had the presence of mind to make it, on foot, to Dr Sime on Boroughgate. He was hospitalised and off work for six months.

There was a gas-powered lathe at Knowles' which was used to make nuts (not bolts!) and mangle rollers among other things. That is where George was introduced to wood turning – a hobby he still keeps up.

Once his apprenticeship was over he went to Kendal as a tractor and agricultural engineer before moving on to Hardy Johnson's at Kirkby Stephen, again working mostly on tractors. He was there from 1951 to 1962. He married Jean in December 1951.

In 1962 he went into the family business with his father, who had taken it over when 'Ship' died in 1957. They had three motor lorries and employed five men. The company office was at 20 Clifford Street. Both railway stations were open (just – as the 'top' station closed in 1962). Coal was ordered from Clark Taylor's at Newcastle and was sent by road after 1962 to the coal yard at the now closed Appleby East Station. The company later purchased some land between the closed railway and Roman Road and used this as their base. Fortunately some photos were taken of that yard in action but they are in private hands.

When father retired in about 1970, Les came into the business and remained until 1976, when he took a job at the Express Dairy. After that, George ran the business by himself. As the years went by, the business expanded and coal was often taken as far as Orton and Tebay as well as to the more local villages such as Ormside, Hilton, Murton, Warcop and Cliburn. A typical working day for a coalman was 8.00 a.m. to finish, with an hour break for lunch. One lorry might visit over 100 houses a day. Big drops, often up to 2 tons at a time, were at schools and business premises in the area.

George well remembers the day when he was the Tebay round, one Saturday morning, when he had a delivery to a terraced house opposite the Cross Keys. The house did not have a bathroom so the occupants used to take a bath in a tin tub in the wash-house, which was also the coal house. You guessed it! When George opened the coal house door, there was a woman taking a bath. She was shortly joined by a sack of coal which George dropped in surprise.

One of the hardest jobs which ever came their way was when Lord Hothfield sold Appleby Castle and a lot of oak furniture had to be moved to Crackenthorpe Hall. Again in George's words, "What a hard job that was. All oak wardrobes, sets of drawers and chairs and tables – down four or five flights of stairs and then up two or three flights when we got there. It was easier back on the coal rounds. We did a lot of furniture moving in those days but when I took over I used to refuse this kind of work as we were too busy with the coal."

When the business closed in 1996, it was taken over by British Fuel Ltd. This, in turn, was absorbed into Coal Products Ltd but it ceased to operate in this area in 2004. All the business records have been destroyed.

(Advert from an Appleby Town
Guide – date not known)

Current Affairs

Council Meetings 11 February 2009

There were three packed into a 2½ hour period. Two Committee meetings were postponed from 2 February because of the weather, so these were got through first. As you will see, the Finance Committee was best. The meeting of the full Council began at 7.30 p.m. with the Mayor welcoming everyone with a quote from our Chairman's piece in the previous Newsletter. This reference might have carried more weight had not the Council chamber been stripped to the bare walls in readiness for redecoration. It really was an "ill-lit, noisy, wooden mausoleum".

Councillors agreed not to accept any recommendations coming from the Committees as they had fewer than 3 days' notice of them - it was more a matter of minutes rather than days since the Committees met - but, in the event, they accepted most of them on the grounds of urgency. There was a need to approve expenditure of £400 for a road closure notice on Low Wiend to enable repairs to the Cloisters. The repairs will happen in "May, at the earliest". Let's hope it is all completed before Fair Week! Councillors noted that a well-wisher had agreed to provide equipment for the Public Hall, provided that the Council came up with £540 + VAT to make the electrics safe first. The new fire alarm system requires a number of Councillors to become keyholders. Their job would be to go into the Moot Hall to see if it was a false alarm. Cllr Duncan thought this was not a good idea as it was not sensible to enter a burning building. Councillors agreed that keyholders need only stand outside and look. Minor changes were made to Financial Regulation and the Carnival Committee is not interested in having the Council arrange its insurance.

Shire Hall Toilets

Simon Young, an Eden District Council legal officer, came to a Town Council meeting on 14 January 2009 to answer questions on E.D.C.'s proposal to transfer the lease and the troublesome toilets to the Town Council on payment of up to £50,000, subject to several conditions. I thought the questions put to him were, in the main, considered and effective. However, it soon became clear that Mr Young would not be deflected from his brief so some potentially interesting ideas could not be progressed. The good news was that E.D.C.'s latest deadline by which the Town Council was to have 'signed up' (12 February 2009) was dismissed by the Mayor. Despite Simon Young's claim to the contrary, it is clear that E.D.C. would have to put the toilets into good operational and decorative order before it could surrender the lease, even if it wanted so to do. With this in mind, the Town Council's Joint Working Party, which comprises three Councillors and three lay members under the Chairmanship of Cllr Connell, recommended that the Town Council should not continue negotiations with a view to accepting the transfer of the lease; that it should invite the District Council to enter into a partnership arrangement whereby it retains the lease and re-opens the toilets with a financial contribution from Appleby; or, if this latter idea is not acceptable to the District Council, the Town Council does nothing until the new owners (Mr H Potts and another) are in a position to discuss the future of the toilets. In the meantime, residents are to be given an opportunity, via the Heart of Eden Parish Newsletter, to express their views. The Joint Working Party's report and recommendations were accepted unanimously at the Council meeting of 11 February 2009.

Bus Shelter

Four months after Councillors were told that the 'Council's local architect' would prepare a Planning (Conservation Area) Application on the Council's behalf, the Mayor was able to report that Eden District Council had given its consent under its 'permitted development' rules. I have no idea what that means except that there is no requirement for the application to be publicised and therefore no opportunity for comments. It will be interesting to see where it goes. The good news is that, almost four years after the Council agreed to it, we might actually see it.

A Register of Council Resolutions

On 14 January 2009, Cllr Morgan claimed that the Town Council occasionally lost sight of its resolutions. The Town Clerk, without looking up from her enigma machine, duly recorded Cllr Morgan's concern which, Councillors agreed, would be discussed at a future meeting. An item was placed on the agenda of the

Planning and General Purposes Committee: “To consider whether to begin a Register of Council Resolutions for future reference”. The underlining in each case is mine.

The rules of local government state that the Clerk is responsible for council agendas; that council minutes are a legal record of council decisions; that decisions, once taken, must be implemented and that it is good practice for the minutes to state what action is required to be taken once the council has agreed to do something.

At the Council meeting on 11 February 2009, I asked, “In what sense are Council minutes not a register of Council resolutions?” It was left to Cllr Morgan to explain that, whilst the minutes were a legal record of Council resolutions, it would be useful if Councillors could have an easily accessible list of not only the decisions but also the action taken to implement them. The Council’s Finance Officer wanted to know when it would start and was told it would not be retrospective. In one sense, it was reassuring to hear the Father of the Council remind everyone that it was Council minutes and not the Clerk’s notes which formed the legal record. On the other hand, no decision seemed to have been made about who would keep the register or whether it would be available to the public.

(Editor’s note: The register is to be kept by the Town Clerk)

Council Minutes

The rules are ‘keep them simple’. I paraphrase but that is, in essence, what the rules say. They should be a record of Council resolutions and of the action to be taken to implement them. On 11 February 2009, a Councillor objected to the minutes of the January meeting claiming that the report of the question and answer session with a representative of Eden District Council was at odds with other reports seen. There was a report in *The Herald*; another in the ‘Heart of Eden’ Parish Newsletter and yet another prepared by a resident for the Toilets Working Party. The Clerk’s report had failed to record some of the more important questions and omitted some of the commitments made on behalf of Eden District Council. The Clerk said that, whilst she typed very fast, she could not be expected to catch everything. “Exactly,” said the Councillor. Cllr Connell pointed out that the report prepared for the Toilets Working Party did not conflict with the Clerk’s version but did contain more information.

Full marks. When the Mayor took office last May she gave each Councillor a copy of a Cumbria Association of Local Council’s Circular, which made it clear that council agendas, meetings and minutes should not be cluttered with ‘information’. If councillor this or that wants to tell his or her colleagues what happened at some meeting or other there are many ways in which it can be done without detracting from the real business of the council, which is to make decisions.

As recently as last November the Council appointed ex-councillor Frank Harland as its official reporter and he now sits on the ‘top table’, alongside the Deputy Mayor, when he writes his reports for the ‘Heart of Eden’, the Council’s preferred method of informing the public. Lesser reporters, like the young lass from *The Herald*, sit on the public benches. The Clerk needs to concentrate on her job, which is to listen to debates, advise on the law and procedure and record decisions.

(Editor’s note: Frank Harland was not appointed; he volunteered to continue the role he was already undertaking.

Since this item was prepared for press, the Clerk has been instructed to record only recommendations and decisions in the minutes. Excellent news.

Gentle Persuasion

I’ve tried it and it doesn’t work. I fully understand why some members wish I would be a little more conciliatory when reporting on Town Council affairs. I would like to be but I have tried gentle persuasion - taken as a sign of weakness and ignored. I have tried robust persuasion - Councillors bridle and I am ignored. I have tried cynicism - waste of time as too many Councillors miss the point. I have tried

considered critiques of Council decisions and minutes - some Councillors take offence. I have tried making a formal complaint only to be told that no-one has done anything wrong and that correct procedures are always followed.

(Editor's note: the complaint was investigated by Appleby Town Council's Staffing Committee and the outcome recorded.)

I have no confidence in the perennial suggestion that our Council will respond to a more conciliatory approach. Our Councillors are usually polite and conciliatory in the Council chamber and where does it get them? Of the fifteen Councillors in post in February 2004, only five* remain. (*One Councillor in post in February 2004 resigned in May 2005 but was subsequently re-elected.) Such a rapid turnover is not good for democracy and even worse for Appleby.

Town and Parish Councils are accountable to no supervisory authority. They are accountable to their electorate. We don't have elections and it is increasingly difficult to find people willing to be co-opted. As the Council is not accountable and is not political in the sense that residents can appeal to a party machine or to our Member of Parliament, who is going to challenge it?

However, as you will see from the next item, there is a chink of light and I will try to be good by encouraging those Councillors who want to make progress.

It Can Be Done

On 9 January I reminded the Town Clerk that she had a legal duty to ensure that details of all council contracts were placed in the public domain. On 13 January she wrote to say that details would be circulated along with the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 January. On 16 January she made the minutes available, together with the promised list, complete with costings.

Contracts have been awarded to Beacon Fire Protection (Penrith) for fire alarms, etc at £3,942 + VAT; C.B.S. Electrical Ltd (Kirkby Stephen) for re-wiring the Moot Hall and associated works at £10,980 + VAT; Parkin and Jackson (Kendal) for working on the 'steps' and Cloisters at £5,192 + VAT; Specialist UK Restorations for repairs to both crosses at £2,375 + VAT; Sawyers (Carlisle) for secondary double glazing of the Moot Hall at £2,297 + VAT. Minor contracts totalling £362.22 were awarded to Mr Pigney and Mr Furniss.

There is more still to decide - such as repairs and redecoration of the Moot Hall and two of the shops.

Full marks. Good start to 2009.

Graham Coles

Council Committees and their Terms of Reference

Last month Graham and I independently asked about the terms of reference for Council committees. The Clerk's reply stated, "It would seem they were not written down formally. It is something I am currently tightening up on. Call it continuous improvement. I feel formal terms of reference are needed for every committee and working party and that they should be written down and reviewed/updated regularly."

Terms of reference for Council's two main committees (Planning/Finance and General Purposes) were agreed in April 2006 and confirmed in July 2007. In April 2006 there were five working parties, two of which had terms of reference. By August this number had risen to 18 - there is apparently no record of their terms of reference.

On 12 November 2008 Council's agenda carried an item entitled "Review of Terms of Reference for Committees and Working Parties" - it was deferred to the next meeting, "when a structure chart would be available for members use". (This to be actioned by the Clerk.) On 10 December 2008 the Clerk was asked

to prepare a short report with suggested terms of reference and a structure chart for members to use as new Terms of Reference were discussed. For some reason this item did not appear on January's agenda.

In February, however, it became clear that the Clerk had not produced a structure chart or a report for Councillors and had no intention of doing so. Councillor Thwaytes pointed out that she was the "Council's Legal Officer", to which she responded, "I am not here to enforce the law". (See Newsletter 57 January 2005 for the Clerk's job description: "To ensure that the legal statutory and other provisions governing or affecting the running of the Council are observed". It goes on to say, "To draw up both on his or her own initiative and as the result of suggestions by Councillors, proposals for consideration by the Council and to advise on the practicality and likely effects of specific courses of action".)

Meanwhile, it would appear that this job is to be done, without any agreed structure, by the Chairmen and Vice Chairmen of working parties.

PUT OUT!

With monotonous regularity our Town Council decides that the Press and Public (P. and P.) should be excluded from their meetings while certain items are discussed. Let's leave aside the issue of whether or not this is good practice. Your local P. and P. are well trained, gather their belongings together and leave the chamber promptly when this happens. In the past this has not presented a problem since these items have usually come at the end of a meeting. However the Council's two committees now meet one after the other on the same evening. If P. and P. wish to attend both these meetings a difficulty arises when there is a 'secret' item on the agenda at the end of the first meeting. This involves leaving the Council chamber and only returning when the second meeting is convened. This happened to Graham and I on a cold winter's evening. It was made very plain that we could not wait on Council premises. Neither of us regard ourselves as disabled, in which case there might be legislation to prevent two elderly pensioners with recent health problems being expected to wait out of doors in the winter during a meeting which they had every right to attend.

But that is not the point. If a Councillor has to leave a meeting because he/she has a prejudicial interest he/she waits in the Moot Hall. A similar privilege is not accorded to residents. At the February Council meeting I asked whether "as a matter of common courtesy the Council could not provide facilities for residents excluded from meetings?" The Mayor said the public couldn't wait in Council offices; I didn't get an answer to the question "Why?" but was told that the Council would consider the matter.

Maggie Clowes

(Editor's note: the only available space in the Moot Hall is the Town Clerk's office and, because of the nature of papers kept by the Town Clerk, it is not possible for it to be used by residents excluded from meetings.)

STOP PRESS: At the meeting held 2 March 2009 it was agreed to put closed agenda items, from which public and press would be excluded, at the end of meetings.

Committee Meeting

Matters Arising from Minutes for 3 February 2009: Society Archive: details given of the meeting of the Sub-Committee; agreement reached on expenditure of grant from the Town Council's Hannah Kennington Charity on specific items of archive-friendly boxes and other storage media plus filing cabinet/cupboard; thanks extended to volunteers who are preparing the Archive Room ready for use; discussion on other funding applications to be made; some items of furniture available courtesy of Carl Bendelow. 2009 Exhibition: it is hoped that the Society will be invited to take part in talks about volunteer groups' usage of the Exhibition space in the Tourist Information Centre, which the Town Council agreed to arrange. Christmas evening: thanks to all who helped to make it another successful event. Arrangements for the raffle to be discussed at the next Committee meeting. Graham willing to show slides in November 2009.

President: the meeting with Sir Martin Holdgate had been postponed. Newsletter: date for contributions given. DVD: good choice of images. Graham to progress the project.

Reports: Treasurer/Membership: balance £6399.77; removal of family subscription and increase to £8 per person per annum has had no significant effect on membership numbers. Planning/Townscape: no objections to applications checked. Appleby New Fair: refer to later item 'Meeting with Kevin Douglas'. Chamber of Trade and Community Association: nothing to report.

Correspondence received: Windermere and Bowness Civic Society News No. 98; Federation of Cumbrian Amenity Societies advance notice of Heritage Open Days.

Meeting with Kevin Douglas: an approach had been made by Mr Douglas to meet with the Committee to discuss any assistance which could be given by the Society with regard to assisting the Multi-Agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group. (Note: The meeting took place on 9 February 2009 but, to date, no progress forthcoming.)

Appleby Grammar School Documents: Vivienne intends to deposit the documents, recently purchased by the Society, with Cumbria Archive Service at Kendal Record Office. Enquiries will be made about the safest way to obtain copies for reference by Society members/researchers.

Any Other Business: it is intended to produce a single annual report for the A.G.M. to combine the Chairman's Report and the Secretary's Report. Supper Room diary is to be checked to confirm whether the Society Coffee Morning is included for June. Committee meetings will move to a Wednesday evening.

Next meeting: Wednesday 1 April, 7.30 p.m., at 5 Friary Park.

From the Secretary

A huge thank you to the volunteers who have worked hard to get the Archive Room ready for occupation. It looks great.

You might be interested to know about Upper Eden History Society: Next Meetings: Monday 16 March 2009:- Patricia Garside "Burnbanks - a Cast Iron Community". Monday 20 April 2009:- AGM and Adrian Rogan - "Andreas de Harcla". Kirkby Stephen Grammar School, 7.30 p.m. Visitors welcome.

Our Next Meeting

**Thursday 26 March 2009
7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall**

Mrs Elizabeth Davy: "Soldiers, Travellers and a Hand in Glory"
A fascinating story of the 12 miles of the A66 between Brough and Bowes
PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS IS A CHANGE TO THE ADVERTISED PROGRAMME
– same speaker, change of talk

Website: www.applebysociety.force9.co.uk

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.

An £8 individual 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. We also would welcome corporate members; subscription £20 per annum.

Application forms are available at the Library.

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