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Newsletter May 2007

No 71

Public Meeting 29 March 2007: “A Passion for Apples”

We had heard good things about our speaker, Mrs Hilary Wilson, and her knowledge of all things pertaining to apples and were looking forward to an interesting evening. We were not disappointed. Hilary is, in her own words, an “enthusiast for the history of orchards, apple trees and fruit production”. We learned about her early days as a girl growing up in a very self-sufficient household, where she learned about the importance of food, as well cultivating and cooking. When she married and settled in Tebay she began to experiment with growing apple varieties. Having learned to graft onto rootstock (apples do not ‘take’ from cuttings), she successfully grew several varieties of northern apples, including Nelson Favourite, Ribston Pippin and Greenup’s Pippin. At Acorn Bank, Chris Braithwaite wanted to extend the apple orchard with local varieties and Hilary was able to supply them. Then came a ‘departure’ as we had a practical demonstration of grafting. A ‘whistle-stop tour’ through many centuries and many countries came next as Hilary outlined the history and the journey of the apple. Her closing words summed up her love of apples as she assured us that, “There is nothing like going out and picking a ripe apple from your own tree.” The evening ended with a lively question and answer session and audience members enjoying delicious examples of several apple recipes Hilary had brought.

A full report has been sent to *The Herald* and will hopefully appear in the next edition.

From the Chairman

Heavy Vehicle Count

Firstly, I would like to thank all those who took part in the Heavy Vehicle Count during March. The result of getting cold once a week was rather unexpected. We recorded no really significant passage of heavy vehicles during our watches. It averaged out that, during the 25 days we watched, about 16 heavy vehicles passed through Appleby in a day (extrapolated to 08.00 – 17.30) and some of them would have had permits. So, its back to the drawing board to see if we go on with this campaign and, if so, how? At least we have fact to work on and are not going to make ourselves look foolish griping about a non-existent problem!

Questionnaire

Then thank you all for responding so well to the questionnaire we sent you. We received 41 completed forms out of some 150 sent out, which is an amazing response. Their contents have all been looked at very carefully, have been noted and will be acted upon:

Constitution: The proposed amalgamation with the Appleby Record Society will not go ahead as hoped. This answers concerns expressed by several people who thought that the title of the Society would become too clumsy.

Some members wondered what a civic society is – it is a society that concerns itself not only with history and heritage but also with on-going events in the town. We have been one in effect from the start and adding this to the objectives of the Society is acknowledging that fact and making it clear that we are concerned with what goes on in Appleby and to Appleby.

Attitude to the Town Council: several members wanted the combative tone of some Newsletter items modified, with an avoidance of constant criticism. We note this. But other people said we should complain when something important is at issue. We will try and amend our judgement in this matter, to avoid accusations of carrying on personal feuds and continual whingeing but, please understand that it is sometimes very difficult!

Members were overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining our present programme of talks and visits and we had some super suggestions for subjects, speakers and venues, all of which have been noted.

If anyone wants to see the actual answers, they are welcome to approach me – I have retained them all.

House History

Answers in the questionnaires revealed that quite a few people are interested in the history of individual properties in Appleby; their design, modification and occupation. We think it might be a good idea to form a sub-group within the Society to study this aspect of the Town's heritage. Would anyone interested in joining such a group speak or write to me or Vivienne? We don't mean the major buildings – Graham has done and is doing a super job on these – rather the group would concentrate on "ordinary" houses. We've got a good start with what is held by – yes – the Appleby Record Society!

Ramp

John Hodge saw a couple of chaps surveying the banks of the river by the Sands last Thursday (19 April). They explained to him that they were surveying the bank with a view to building the diagonal ramp for horses down to the river, for use during Horse Fair Week. Of course, this has been mooted for some time but we thought had gone away because the RSPCA could not fund it. However, it seems that they have now found £18,000! The chaps said they were working for Eden District Council. We have been told by Eden District Council that Eden Property Services are about to put in a planning application to Eden for its construction. Several other authorities have to be consulted before it can go ahead, but be aware, be alert and be prepared in case **you** might wish to object to this ramp.

Appleby Accolades

While it is true that there are things to be critical of in the life of Appleby, there are many things we should celebrate. We are starting a series called "Appleby Accolades" which will mention actions, situations and people that deserve praise and that are not often mentioned in any media. For this to work, we need the help of our readers. If you know of any person or action that gets less than its fair share of recognition and where you think congratulations and praise are due, please contact Vivienne or me or any Committee member. You could perhaps write a short piece for the Newsletter. An example:-

We would like to praise several people who live and work on The Sands for their considerable efforts recently in making their area more attractive. It is the first bit of Appleby seen by many visitors, either coming down from the station or driving in from the A66. Their first impression must have been significantly improved by the recent works. Well done folks, and thank you.
R Ian Campbell

History Slot

A number of hawkeyed members picked up the point that Appleby sold its butter at 20 ozs to the pound – was this a misprint? Not to be beaten by this ‘avoirdupoisian’ challenge, I double-checked my sources. The avoirdupois system was common throughout England in the fourteenth century and was based on the pound, which contained sixteen ounces. Apart, that is, from Appleby. In Appleby butter continued to be sold at 20 ozs to the pound until 20 April 1817.

This History Slot contains a first and a last. The long-running story of Appleby’s gas and electric is brought to a conclusion and the long-awaited history of the Fire Brigade opens with an Introduction. Much of the hard work for this was done by Maggie Clowes in 2002 and my thanks go to her for her contribution and for her patience. Her title is “Chariots of Fire”.

Let There Be Light (Part 7) – continued from Newsletter 64

The Society is pleased to see that Sir Martin Holdgate’s *History of Appleby* (2006) contains a number of references to our story of gas, etc, as does the house magazine of the Cumbrian Industrial History Society, whose June 2006 edition of *The Cumbrian Industrialist* has an article devoted to the gasworks of Cumbria in which we get a mention.

The penultimate instalment in Newsletter No 64 brought us to 1969, by which time Appleby had a mixture of butane and air in its gas pipes and the Town Council was concerned about delays to the improved street lights.

There were obvious problems with both. In January 1972 the Council was still talking about the street lights and the “lack of progress” with the new scheme. Some Councillors argued against additional street lights in Bongate as the electricity supply was too poor. Gas customers in Bongate were also at risk. In December 1972 customers were woken up in the early hours by Gas Board engineers from Workington worried about a sudden failure in the butane supply which might have caused pilot lights to fail in the higher parts of town – readers will recall that butane, being heavier than air, had problems with hills at the best of times.

In July 1977 a public meeting was held in the British Legion Club to discuss the price of gas which had risen sharply due to the oil crisis. (Butane is a product of oil.) Appleby’s gas prices had shot up whilst those on natural gas had not seen prices rise. British Gas pointed out that the nearest natural gas supply was in Melkinthorpe and bringing it to Appleby would cost £800,000.

In March 1978 the ‘butane’ surcharge was reduced from 7p per therm to 3½p.

Nothing more was heard until April 1986, when Northern Gas approved a £3 million scheme to bring natural gas to the town. It would take three years and would be paid for, in part, by gradually removing the ‘butane’ surcharge over a six year period. Thomas Kirkbride, the gas works manager retired after 36 years in the post. Since conversion he had run the gas plant single-handed.

In the event, the new gas supply arrived sooner than forecast. October 1987 saw the big day and huge crowds gathered in the Market Place to watch the ceremonial switch-over. A contemporary report told us that the gas works was closed on the same day. The site would be cleared and the gas holders sold for scrap. The older of the surviving holders went to Beamish where, as far as we

know, it still is – in bits. Appleby had a population of 2,400 in 579 households, of which 308 were gas users. The great day saw pouring rain and an emergency call out for the fire brigade. A lady with an Irish accent had reported a large fire in the town centre – this turned out to be the burn-off flare, lit to mark the occasion.

Appleby settled down to enjoy its new gas supply but not the price. Consumers were still angry at the surcharge, even though British Gas reminded them that it was part of the deal to remove the premium over a six year period. Some Councillors with rather short memories argued that we should not be paying more for gas than users elsewhere.

There are bits and pieces about lighting in the ‘files’ which might be of interest. For example, it was not until 1988 that the Town Council suggested that the bracket lamp at Top Cross should be lit electrically. Eden District Council pointed out that Top Cross was a Grade 2* listed structure and even a straightforward conversion required the consent of the Department of the Environment. 1988 was obviously the year of enlightenment (pun intended) as the Town Council was also considering floodlighting The Cloisters and Top Cross. By the way, the Town Clerk wrote to E.D.C. that there were some old gas lamps in Boroughgate and asked whether they could be converted to electricity as well. (Incidentally, the Town Council also proposed that the Market area should be pedestrianised and paved at the same time, but we won’t go down that road in this article.) In the event, only the lighting of Top Cross lamp happened.

In 1994 the Town Council was in correspondence with E.D.C. (which was the lighting authority at the time) with a view to having Back Lane lit for the first time ever – a scheme which did come to fruition and for which Appleby paid the full cost (£1,240 plus VAT).

By August 2006 Appleby’s townscape refurbishment was complete, apart from the ironing-out of last minute snags. One of the snags is that the new street lamps in the town centre do not work. T’was ever thus. The dispute between United Utilities and Capita rumbles on and the Town Council writes letters to lots of people. The situation had not changed by March 2007.

The ‘top’ end of Boroughgate also has ‘new’ street lights (2006) plus the electric lamp standards from the previous scheme which were not removed when the new lamps went in. Surprisingly, some of the old lamps still light up from time to time, whilst some of the ‘new’ lights remain stubbornly determined not to light at all. Add this to the two surviving gas lamp standards and Boroughgate, above High Wiend, can be described as cluttered. We wonder if anyone cares, apart from the residents of Boroughgate, that is.

Chariots of Fire (Appleby Fire Service)

18 April 1879 and the band played, the church bells rang and an excited and curious crowd swarmed up the hill to the Midland Railway station. Why all the excitement? Not only did the town of Appleby possess two railway stations but also the age of steam was bringing a first to the county. Appleby was about to take delivery of the first steam-powered fire engine in the whole of Westmorland, as was only right and proper for the county town, outdoing its upstart rival, Kendal.

It waited there, gallant in its gleaming red paintwork, the brass on its boiler highly polished, the latest model produced by the well-known firm of Merryweather, who seemed, at this time, to have a virtual monopoly in the production of fire engines. To be known as “The Tufton” in honour of its generous donor, Sir Henry Tufton of Appleby Castle, it was harnessed to two piebald horses from the Tufton Arms. Preceded by the band of the Royal Westmorland Militia and followed by a cheering throng, it set off in fine style down the steep hill into the town and over the Eden Bridge before turning up Boroughgate to the Castle. There it made several circuits of the quadrangle before stopping to allow Mr Whitehead, on behalf of the Fire Brigade Committee, to express, “in a

few well chosen words”, the gratitude of the community to Sir Henry, who had insisted that the new fire engine he was presenting to the town should be the most up-to-date Merryweather produced.

It is not entirely clear how the inhabitants of Appleby and Bongate dealt with fires before the advent of this splendid machine. They were, of course, fortunate in that the river Eden wound its way round much of the town so that water was readily available. It is probable that, as in many small towns and villages, leather buckets, hooks and grappling irons were kept in the churches. Appleby’s fire bell was mounted on top of the Moot Hall and the alarm could be sounded at the pull of a rope permanently attached. We do know, however, that St Lawrence Church bells were sometimes used as an alternative/additional fire alarm. A case of belt and braces, perhaps. Roused by the alarm, neighbours would down tools to help each other. In many parts of the country ‘fire alarms’ were the result of church bells being rung backwards. We do not know (yet) whether St Michael’s bells were so used but, no matter, the world was changing and Appleby was modernising. A good supply of fresh mains water had become available in 1875 and disagreements about the need for a fire engine and how it was to be paid for had been resolved.

It all began on 24 January 1879, when the Mayor called an open meeting to consider the matter. The minutes of the meeting are reproduced below as an example of how it should be done:

“At a public meeting convened by the Mayor and held in the Moot Hall, Appleby on Friday the 24th day of January 1879 to ‘consider the expediency and best means of providing a fire engine and establishing and maintaining a fire brigade for Appleby and Bongate.’ The Rev James Simpson LLD Mayor in the chair.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Whitehead seconded by Edwd Heelis Jun that it is desirable and expedient to provide a fire engine for Appleby and Bongate Special Drainage District.

Mr Nanson moves that the cost of the fire engine be provided out of the rates. Seconded by Mr Sanderson. Afterwards withdrawn.

Mr Joseph Graham moves an amendment that the fire engine be paid for by voluntary subscription. Seconded by Mr Wm Noble and carried but afterwards withdrawn.

Admiral Eliott announced that Sir H J Tufton will provide at his own cost a fire engine for Appleby and district, either steam or manual as should be found most efficient.

Resolved on the motion of Mr John Whitehead seconded by Mr Thomas Dixon that the cordial thanks of this meeting be conveyed to Admiral Eliott and through him to Sir Henry J Tufton for his handsome offer.

The following gentlemen were appointed the committee to correspond with Admiral Eliott as to the engine and decide what kind of engine it is desirable to have as likely to be the most efficient and useful viz:- Messrs John Nanson, John Whitehead, William Sanderson, Edward Heelis Jun, John Martindale, William Story and William Noble – Mr Nanson to convene the meeting of the committee.

Resolved on the motion of Mr Whitehead seconded by Admiral Eliott that a vote of thanks be accorded to the Revd Dr Simpson for his service in the chair.”

(Minutes courtesy of Cumbria Record Office, Kendal.)

The meeting unanimously agreed that the town should have a fire engine and a fire brigade. Various suggestions were made as to what engine should be purchased – a new Merryweather manual engine could be bought for £150 but they might be able to obtain a second-hand one for half that price. They might be able to acquire a good manual engine for a mere £100. The Manager of the Waterworks offered the use of 140 feet of hose but the Sanitary Authority topped this with the offer of 180 feet!

Abandoning the question of hoses and engines, someone raised the vexed question of how it was all to be paid for – out of rates? (not a popular suggestion) or by public subscription? Admiral Elliott, Sir Henry Tufton's agent, now took centre stage and announced that, through the generosity of Sir Henry, the town should have an efficient fire engine. ~"But the thing should not be done by halves and he was of the opinion that a manual engine was only a half measure. He thought a steam engine was necessary." There were conditions attached to this munificent offer – the engine should be for the use of neighbouring villages and farms as well as the town and that the public should provide a proper engineer and "appurtenances" to work the engine. In fact, Sir Henry seems to have decided on the engine, which was promptly ordered. As for the crew, there was no shortage of volunteers – fifty names were put forward and nineteen selected by ballot.

Present day firemen are reminded of their nineteenth-century predecessors every time they go into their fire station. In pride of place on one of the walls is a photograph of that first crew.



Posed on and around "The Tufton", they are proudly wearing the new helmets, large and shiny, firmly anchored by chin straps which almost disappear in the depths of the luxuriant beards sported by some. Even more impressive models are worn by their Captain and Lieutenant. The money for these was raised locally and they are clearly worn with pride. A slightly later photograph shows that the ordinary suit jacket has given way to the familiar brass-buttoned tunic. Some families had a tradition of service with the Fire Brigade and you find the same surnames recurring in log books and newspaper reports. They all lived or worked in the town of Appleby, within easy reach of the engine, originally stored at one of the Inns – very convenient as there would always be horses available there to pull the steamer and within hearing distance of the Moot Hall bell. Later, they moved to a number of different locations in the centre of the town.

Shortly after its triumphant arrival, the new volunteer crew gave an impressive display of its capabilities. The engine was drawn up on the Sands, the fire lit, a line of hoses draped over the river in the direction of St Lawrence Church and a very satisfactory jet of water, about 300 gallons a

minute, rose over the church tower. One or two unlucky or unpopular onlookers came in for a drenching and “once or twice an unlucky dog coming within range of this terrible deluge was nearly drowned before it could scamper back into shelter.” The entire performance was repeated later in the day outside the Tufton Arms before an enthusiastic crowd, after which, with a warning blast from its shrill whistle, the machine was towed up the hill to the Castle, where local dignitaries had assembled. The horses were unyoked, the hoses run out in the direction of the Keep, which soon received a spectacular drenching. The Mayor once again expressed the gratitude of the community to Sir Henry Tufton who had spent over £500 on the engine and its equipment. “The engine was most powerful,” he said, “and yet was capable of being driven into the country with the speed of a gentleman’s carriage. It had been shown that in less than ten minutes after receiving the order the fire was lighted and water propelled from the engine in an enormous volume and to a great elevation.”

The ink on the local paper describing these stirring events was scarcely dry before dissenting voices were raised. Who was going to meet the cost of maintenance? Local government at the time was in the hands of Unions (groups of parishes adjoining each other). Appleby was part of the East Ward Union, which comprised Appleby itself, Bongate (or Old Appleby) and the rural area around. The engine had actually been presented to the East Ward Rural Sanitary Authority. Dr Simpson, the Mayor, might describe the cost of maintaining the engine as a “mere bagatelle” but fears were expressed that the volunteers would ere long be demanding payment. What use would the engine be to the outlying areas, considering the time it would take to get a message to Appleby and then send the engine out? (The difficulty of raising the alarm from outlying districts does not seem to have been discussed but could well have caused serious delays in getting help. The only reference I have found to this problem was in an account of a fire at Kirkby Thore, when the railway telegraph was used to raise the alarm.) Bongate, an area traditionally at odds with its neighbour, Appleby, could manage very well without a fire engine, thank you, since residents had recently, and reluctantly, as part of the Appleby and Bongate Special Drainage District, been put to the cost of providing hydrants in connection with waterworks and so could deal with their own fires. As the Mayor said, rather sadly, “[he was] sorry to find, from the tone of some of the remarks that had been made, that the engine appeared to be looked upon as a white elephant and likely to ruin the whole Union.” (The Union survived, even though all the parishes eventually had to share the cost of maintenance.)

The first call received by the new brigade was alarming. As the Moot Hall bell clanged its summons, people fled to the other side of the river as news spread that the Gas Works were on fire. Disappointingly for our brave lads, but fortunately for everyone else, the fire was not serious. During renovations some wooden boarding, coated with tar, had caught fire in dramatic fashion. The Manager of the Gas Works, being strongly of the opinion that a jet of water would do more harm than good, refused to allow the firemen to deploy their new hoses and they had to be content with pulling the burning timbers to the ground and extinguishing the flames there. However, the brigade had reacted swiftly to the alarm and soon had the opportunity to really show off their skills.

Kirkby Thore is about five miles from Appleby. One autumn evening a large Dutch barn belonging to the Hall caught fire. Electric telegraphs were sent to Appleby and Penrith, raising the alarm, probably by the Station Master or signaller at the nearby railway station. Appleby’s Tufton engine was quickly manned and pulled by three good horses from the King’s Head, arrived at the fire in half an hour. The Penrith brigade which, admittedly, had more ground to cover, arrived much later due to the fact that, according to a somewhat prejudiced reporter, “the two old stagers” pulling the engine had defective “bellows and were not up to the task of pulling a heavily laden engine over such a distance.” To add to their embarrassment, the Penrith brigade’s hoses were too short to reach the nearest source of water. The Chairman of the Board of Health, no less, organised a double line of willing workers from the stream to the engine and, by rapidly handing buckets of

water along the line, made up for the deficiency. Even so, the Penrith brigade was sent home early while the Appleby crew stayed to douse the renewed fires which broke out as the ashes were carted away. The new volunteers really proved themselves on this occasion. The reporter from the local paper, who must have been an Appleby man, enthused, "The Appleby Brigade was under the command of Captain Noble and comprises a fine body of young fellows, willing active and daring and, without depreciating any, we cannot withhold an expression of admiration at the way in which Lieutenant Noble, Messrs Steadman, Story, Whitehead and others exerted themselves to save the burning property and prevent further destruction." The barn had not been insured and, ironically, the owner had, on that very day, sent off to an insurance office to arrange this.

Appleby no longer has to rely on the generosity of a local patron to supply it with an up-to-date fire engine, nor do local supporters have to set to and raise money to equip their fire-fighters with protective headgear but the brigade is still a part-time one, manned (no women as yet!) by local men who down tools and pride themselves on the speed with which they are on the road. No longer do they have to harness up the horses or stoke the fire – local legend has it that the engineer used to race into house on route collecting shovels full of burning coals to keep the fire going – but they are still there when the community needs them; whether it is to put out a chimney fire, publicise the dangers of chip pans or deal with a major traffic accident.

To be continued

Current Affairs

The opinions expressed in this item, written and edited by Graham, are his and should any reader wish to discuss them, he is happy to do so.

An Invitation not to be ignored

Town Council minutes now open by inviting feedback. No longer will I be able to criticise. They have taken the sting out of my contribution to the Newsletter. In future, anything I write about Council minutes cannot be construed as criticism – just feedback.

So, here goes. Town Council minutes are awful. They are a strange mixture of verbatim and often pointless conversation and coded messages only understood by Councillors. Most of our Council's work is done in Committee. There are two committees and every Councillor is a member of both. Committees do not make decisions. Unless specifically authorised, committees make recommendations. When we read that the minutes of the Planning Committee and of the Finance and General Purposes Committee were "adopted", we are told nothing. Minutes should be a record of resolutions. Each recommendation from a committee should be introduced to a full council meeting by way of a proposal. Proposals need to be seconded. There might be a discussion. The minutes need only to record the decision and they should identify what action is to be taken and by whom. Our Council's minutes fail to do that.

If the Council wants to be taken seriously, it must find ways in which to ensure that its administration and procedures conform to nationally-agreed rules. For example, it must stop delegating power to a single Councillor. This rule is there to protect not only the electorate but also the Councillor concerned. When I read that Cllr Langan, who chairs the New Fair Joint Committee had been given delegated authority to renegotiate the rent paid for Fair Hill by the travellers alarm bells rang. When I read of several occasions on which Cllr Budding has been given delegated power to deal with financial matters, the bells rang even louder. No councillor can act alone. Only the Town Clerk can do that as she is the Council's responsible officer in law.

The *Good Councillor's Guide* has something to say about agendas. Yes, I know its been in the Newsletter before but I think it is important. The *Guide* points out that vague agenda items such as

“Matters Arising” should be avoided as Councillors will not know in advance what might crop up. At a recent Council meeting, Cllr Morgan asked why “Matters Arising” seemed to have gone from the Council’s agenda. The Town Clerk, who clearly reads the Newsletter as well as the *Guide*, pointed out that it was not good practice and that, in future, matters which did arise would go onto the agenda as new items, thus enabling subsequent decisions to be legal. So it can be done – slowly but surely the stranglehold of tradition will be broken and Appleby Town Council will arrive in the 21st century. I thank the Town Clerk for making a start.

Whilst on the subject of tradition, what about that strange article which appeared in *The Herald* on 24 March? As there was no Herald reporter at the Council meeting on 14 March, it would appear that a Councillor undertook to inform the public of proceedings. Not so many months ago our Council reminded us of the importance of its customs and traditions – they are unique to Appleby and must be preserved at all cost. Leaving aside the fact that Appleby Town Council began life in 1974 and that anything which happened in the Moot Hall prior to then is history, I felt slightly uncomfortable when I read just how easy it was for tradition to be cast aside. Under the headline, “Ella makes history as first ‘father’ of Town Council,” the writer told us that an 800-year old tradition had been broken when the ‘mother’ of the house proposed Stan Rooke as next year’s Mayor. To be fair to Cllr Langan, she could not have been the author. Knowing how highly she regards tradition and custom, she would never have broken a tradition and then bragged about it. Someone set her up and heads will roll. It was all so unnecessary. By the time you read this, Appleby will have a new Council which will have elected its own Mayor. Outgoing Councils simply cannot appoint the Mayor of the incoming one. I was also intrigued by the suggestion that a long-standing custom had been broken. Appleby’s earliest mayors were appointed by the monarch. Between 1312 and 1331, Appleby was in the hands of the Crown and we had no mayor, only a Keeper of the Borough. By 1725, the Lonsdales and the Thanets were taking it in turn to name the mayor. (Source – *The Story of Appleby-in-Westmorland*. Sir Martin Holdgate, 2006.) This situation would have persisted until the Reform Act 1832 broke the stranglehold. When a Government Commission visited Appleby in 1835, it reported that the Mayor was selected from the Aldermen by a majority of the sixteen Common councillors. A second Commission visited the town in 1877 and the following verbatim exchange between the Commissioner and the Town Clerk is very revealing:-

- “Q. The Mayor is sometimes non-resident?
A. He is sometimes non-resident.
Q. How long has the custom prevailed of electing a Mayor who is non-resident?
A. The custom has been beyond human memory.
Q. The Mayor is chosen from the Aldermen, is he not?
A. He is.
Q. And the Aldermen are chosen from the Freemen?
A. Yes.
Q. Must those Freemen be resident in the Borough when they obtain their freedom?
A. No.
Q. Nor at any other time?
A. Nor at any other time.
Q. In fact the whole of the principal officers of the Corporation are elected out of the Freemen?
A. Yes.
Q. None of whom need to be resident?
A. None of whom need to be resident.”

Fortunately for Appleby this tradition was broken in 1885, when Queen Victoria gave the Borough its final Charter. It was by virtue of the Charter that Appleby became a Borough at all. Prior to that, it was a Borough by prescription i.e. by common usage of the term. Interestingly, in the light

of the *Herald's* correspondent's suggestion that 2007 was the first time that a woman had nominated the next Mayor, the 1885 Charter refers to the appointment of John Bell Jnr as the first Mayor of the reformed Borough. If you are brave enough to contemplate Queen Victoria as being 'mother of the Council', your imagination might stretch to the belief that 1885 was the first occasion when a woman was involved.

Since 1974, there have been no aldermen. So the tradition whereby the Councillors appointed the Mayor from among them ended 33 years ago. And, by the way, Cllr Ella Langan, a woman, nominated Stan Rooke as Mayor in 2006, as well. I am not sure which tradition was broken in 2007.

I thought I had detected a clue to the writer's identity when I read, "This was the first time in the history of the former ancient royal burgh that a woman was father of the council". Appleby ceased to be part of the Kingdom of Strathclyde 500 years before it was granted its first charter by an English monarch. Appleby has never claimed to be a Scottish burgh. Could Ella have been the author after all? No – too obvious. This was a red herring. Whoever wrote the piece will have to do better if they want to kid me!

Still, on balance, the minutes of the Council and the *Herald* article did, if you tried hard, combine to give a sense of what had happened in the Moot Hall on 14 March 2007. This is more than can be said for the *Heart of Eden* (formerly the Parish Newsletter). Several years ago the Council agreed to use the Parish Newsletter as its preferred way in which to inform the public. Its been a bit stop-start over the years. It wasn't too bad at first – we were given a summary of the Council's significant decisions and activities; then it stopped; then it started again. When it started again it included a verbatim copy of the full Council minutes, which are still pretty uninformative. ~When, by popular acclaim, that form of reporting was ended, we had information some months but not others. The April edition, in which R E Porter gave us his version of events, told us that the minutes of two Council meetings were approved as were the minutes of two committee meetings. Minutes of the New fair Joint Committee were to hand and the Town Clerk reported. The only real snippet was a reference to "a passionate debate on what, if anything, could or should be done with the Moot Hall." It might have been of interest if we had been told what went on. But, no, the Council's preferred avenue of communication will remain forever as secretive as Council minutes.

As this contribution to the Newsletter was being finalised, I received the minutes of the Council's April meetings. In an interesting, if unwise, departure from past practice, the Finance and General Purposes Committee made six substantive resolutions. It also "resolved to recommend to Council" on five other occasions. The F and G P Committee does not have delegated powers to pass binding resolutions. Reading the minutes, I wondered about where and when committee minutes are agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairmen. It would seem they never are. Within a few days of the Planning Committee and the F and G P Committee meetings, the minutes are circulated to councillors at a full Council meeting, where they are traditionally 'adopted'. Meaning what? If the Council is to persist with its very odd Committee structure, Committee members will have to approve their minutes and have them signed as a true record before they go to Council. In fact, they don't need to go to Council. All the Council needs are the substantive proposals emanating from various committees which can then be dealt with in accordance with Standing Orders.

A New Year's Resolution?

A new Town Council took office on 9 May. Would it like to reintroduce a tradition which began in 1889 but, sadly, seems to have lapsed? The Mayor that year began his year of office by suggesting that a great deal of Council time was being wasted. He asked the Town Clerk to read an extract from Standing Orders and proposed that it should be done every year. The Town Clerk then reminded Councillors as follows, "All motions and all amendments to any motions must be handed

in, in writing, to the Mayor or Chairman before any vote on any motion or amendment shall take place and no member of the Council shall be allowed to speak more than once on any motion unless in explanation or being especially called upon to do so by the Chairman.” The Mayor added, “Some of you will perhaps remain quiet now.” We can but dream.

Annual Town Meeting 23 April 2007

Along with some twenty other residents, I attended the Annual Town Meeting. I was keen to hear more about the 33% hike in this year’s precept. I don’t think I was alone in that. Sadly, we were disappointed. Whilst the Town Clerk had kindly prepared an agenda for OUR meeting, there was nothing on it about the annual accounts. We were given two hand-outs: the Mayor’s report and the Town Clerk’s report. Both missed an opportunity. Given that decisions were taken at some of the many closed meetings held throughout that last year, we could have been told about them.

The Town Clerk did tell us that her working week had been reduced but not whether her salary had been affected as a result. We also learned that Cllr Budding was “unpaid Financial Officer” (I think she meant Responsible Finance Officer). What we were not told was when this took place and how the decision was notified to the public. So I asked. It would be so much easier if decisions such as these had been promulgated properly. So much misunderstanding could have been avoided. Sadly, secrecy reigns supreme.

I would like to quote from a minute of the Council’s Finance and General Purposes Committee held on 30 October 2006. “Members considered how best to communicate the inevitable increase in the precept to the town residents, considering such methods as a leaflet drop and/or a town meeting. it was AGREED that residents would be informed via the press report in *The Herald* from relevant Council meetings in November and December, plus an item in the December Newsletter. It was AGREED that the normal town meeting would then be held in April where further explanations could be given for the necessary substantial rise

By “Newsletter”, I presume Councillors referred to *The Heartland*, as the Parish Newsletter was then called. The December/January edition contained not a single word about the precept. The January 2007 edition of the Society’s Newsletter did carry an item about the precept but this was not because Councillors asked us to include it. *The Herald* included Cllr Budding’s ‘precept’ press release in its 23 December edition. Just how many Applebians read it over the holiday period is difficult to determine. Those of us who attended the Annual Town Meeting were a little surprised to find no budget summary available for discussion. Given the Council’s AGREEMENT to discuss the precept at the meeting, the absence of anything to do with the budget on the carefully prepared agenda was less than subtle. If it was a deliberate attempt to avoid awkward questions, it backfired. As it is a residents’ meeting, not a Council meeting, I proposed that it should stand adjourned at the conclusion of the evening’s business and that it should be reconvened at a convenient time and place when/where a summary of the Council’s finances would be available for discussion. The proposition was seconded and carried. The 2007 Annual Town Meeting is not yet concluded. The reconvened meeting will take place in the Moot Hall at 7.00 p.m. Monday 21 May 2007.

Appleby’s County Councillor was in top form. She was asked about the street lighting in Boroughgate. Was she aware that half the ‘new’ lights above High Wiend did not work? “Yes.” Was she aware that the ‘redundant’ street lights were still in situ and that some remained stubbornly lit? “yes.” Was she aware that the street lights installed as part of the Townscape enhancement were not working? “Yes.” Was she aware that the CCTV system was ineffective due to inadequate lighting? “Yes.” Did she intend to do anything? She reported that there had been a number of meetings but the contractor, Pye, seemed to have disappeared. Was she aware that the contractor for the street lighting – all of it – was Capita, to whom Cumbria County Council paid millions of pounds annually and that the lights have nothing to do with Messrs Pye? She is pondering that.

Then came discussions about rubbish and recycling. We were given a detailed description of a waste disposal plant in south Scotland and learned about E.U. proposals for future years. I was almost persuaded that Appleby was about to get a disposal plant capable of handling 1½ million tons of rubbish annually. Don't worry, we're not.

Other matters raised included the failure to open the T.I.C. on Easter Sunday – it will not happen again; the advisability of turning down E.D.C.'s offer of six portaloos on the Sands during Fair Week when the alternative is for the Town Council to accept legal and financial responsibility for the toilets in the Shire Hall block. We also learned that not all (any?) of the Council's employees have a written contract of employment. The main proposal of the evening was a proposal put forward by Cllr Ian Potts, who wanted residents to agree to a referendum on the future use of the Moot Hall/T.I.C. The proposal was carried and the Council will conduct the poll via the Parish Newsletter. It was very pleasing, so soon after drawing attention to the law on parish polls in our Newsletter, to find that a Town Councillor was first to take advantage. Whatever the outcome, it is a step in the right direction.

It won't be easy. The rearguard action had begun as I left the meeting. The traditionalists will fight tooth and nail against change. Some Councillors will have to be careful, given the propensity of Councillors to report each other to the Standards Board. A recent letter to *The Herald* was a case in point. One of our Councillors very much declared an opinion. He is now prevented from discussing it in Council and most certainly cannot vote. The rule against predisposition actually predates the draconian rules set out in the Councillors' Code of Conduct. By declaring your hand in advance, you disqualify yourself from further discussions. The letter indicated confusion. It invited the public to get along to the Annual Town meeting of Appleby Council. The Annual Town Meeting is not a Council meeting, it is ours. The Annual Meeting of the Town Council took place in the Moot Hall on 9 May 2007. The general public was not invited.. Would Councillors and Clerks please learn the difference between these meetings – they are very different in membership and terms of reference.

Whilst not wishing to influence the outcome of the Council's referendum, members may wish to be reminded that the Moot Hall was closed for several months in 1927 whilst it was "transformed". Hitherto, Councillors had sat round a table with the Mayor at its head. Now, each councillor had his own desk and chair and the Mayor had a raised table at the end. And where did the Council meet during the several months of refurbishment? You've guessed it – in the Supper Room.

Graham Coles

Committee Meeting 10 April 2007

Matters Arising from Minutes for 6 February 2007: A meeting has been arranged between Society representatives and Mr Emerson, Eden District Council, regarding Memorial trees replacements. The status of the Playing Field is to be checked with regard to recent Community Land legislation. It was agreed that, should an amalgamation happen, no place would be reserved on the Committee for a representative of the Appleby Record Society and that extra wording for the name of the Society would not be used on letterheads or Newsletters. A meeting has been arranged between Society representatives and Mr and Mrs Dybeck, Explorer Films to discuss the suggestion to make a DVD about Lady Anne Clifford. Badges had been provided for Committee members at the last meeting.

Reports:

Treasurer/Membership: balance as at 31 March 2007 - £5054.60. Expense claims and outstanding invoices requested by the end of April for inclusion in the 2006/7 year end figures. There were no new members.

Oral History: nothing to report

Planning/Townscape: no objections to applications for The Tufton, 1 Salkeld Croft, Grammar School and 14 Boroughgate. No progress with regard to any action on dilapidated buildings. John Hodge has been invited by E.D.C. to be a judge for its Building Design award scheme. Concern was expressed that he was not being kept informed regarding the townscape enhancements since the work had been completed, with particular reference to ongoing discussions about a crossing on The Sands. No progress to report about a bus shelter on The Sands.

Appleby New Fair Joint Committee: the media group now consisted of Cllr Mrs Patterson and Ian Campbell. All the groups were looking for central management, as well as ways of dealing with funding. District Council representatives on the Town Council are dealing with provision of toilets on The Sands for the duration of Fair Week. Concern was expressed about whether the Town Council would accept responsibility for temporary toilets. Concern was also expressed about reports from the Other Matters Working Group that construction of the ramp on The Sands was being seriously reconsidered.

Shire Hall: letter to be sent to Bob Mather, Cumbria County Council acting Chief Executive, seeking clarification of current position.

Cemetery Chapel: details given of amount raised from quiz and car boot/table top sale. Together with a contribution from the Town Council, the proceeds will be used to arrange a structural survey. But there are several practical questions requiring answers and discussions needed of more definite plans before any funding applications can be made.

Constitution and questionnaire: A meeting will be held to discuss results of the questionnaire, Committee members being given a copy of the collation of the responses.

Future Programme Speakers/Visits: Chris Briggs, Cumbria County Council's Emergency Planning Officer, will be invited to give a talk. Consideration will be given to organising a visit to Eden Community Outdoors. Another suggestion was an evening of short talks by Society members. Details of forthcoming group visits were discussed.

Committee changes: Nothing to report. Committee vacancies to be filled at A.G.M. Suggestions for Treasurer requested.

Publications: Consideration to be given to topics to be included. Graham to be asked if he would be willing to undertake an indexing project towards making the Newsletter more accessible.

Website: Further work to be done on the letterhead.

Correspondence received: CLHF bulletin; FOCAS newsletter; letter from Frank Harland re Appleby in Bloom competition; Town Council agendas and minutes; invitation from Cumbria Police Authority Eden Area Community Liaison Forum to attend the next meeting at Melmerby Village Hall.

Flood Precautions meeting: Cllr Mrs Clowes and Cllr Harland had arranged a meeting at which emergency planning was discussed. This followed a very interesting and useful meeting held at the Environment Agency office at Penrith, attended by both Councillors.

Any Other Business:

T.I.C.: Concern was expressed that the T.I.C. was closed on Easter Sunday. The matter will be raised at the Town Meeting.

Heavy Vehicle Count: had revealed this was not as big a problem as had been envisaged.

Coffee Morning: a reminder was given that the coffee morning will take place on 16 June.

From the Secretary

Appleby in Bloom

We would like to draw members' attention to this year's competition. The judges spend some days during the preceding months looking at the town to see if it is generally well-kept, so any tidying-up or planting would be welcomed. Help is specially requested for the following 10 localities: 'Wishing' Well outside The White Hart; Martin Holmes' Garden; Bongate Cross; Jubilee Bridge Wild Garden area; Boundary markers on Brough, Orton and Long Marton Roads; Flower Box at Long Marton Road turn-off; Battlebarrow Flower beds (west side). If anyone would like further information or would like to volunteer to assist, between now until Judging Day (July/August) please contact Frank Harland. You can leave a message at the Moot Hall or contact him at 50 Barrowmoor Road, CA16 6SB on 08451 592 795. E-mail: frank@frankharland.wanadoo.co.uk

Next Meeting

Thursday 31 May 2007

7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall

“FROM MUSICAL STONES TO DEAD CAT’S BONES”

Speaker - Jamie Barnes

Jamie will give a brief history of Keswick Museum and tell the fascinating story of the Musical Stones of Skiddaw. He will also give a demonstration of this unique local instrument.
Dead Cat's Bones? – You will have to come to the meeting.

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.

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.