



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

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**Newsletter November 2006**

**No 68**

**Public Meeting 28 September 2006**

Another treat awaited members and visitors as they gathered to listen to Dr Rob David talk about “The Yellow Earl’s Big Adventure: The Arctic Journey of 1888-89” As well as details of the journey, Rob told us about the background of the Earl, the reasons why he might have undertaken the adventure, including the influence of local men involved in Arctic exploration, the stories about the journey and the Earl that were reported in newspapers. A lot of detail was gleaned from original letters and diaries held in the Lowther archive which is looked after by the Carlisle Record Office. Several tons of artefacts were brought back, many of which are currently in the British Museum. More locally, some are also held at Kendal Museum, obtained when the Lowther Estate was sold in 1947. A stuffed polar bear is a popular exhibit there. The enthralling and entertaining talk was illustrated with slides throughout and the audience greatly appreciated Rob’s knowledgeable and amusing telling of the tale.

A full report appeared in *The Herald* of 11 November.

**From the Chairman (R Ian Campbell)**

**Brought Home to Appleby**

It is not very often that we in our quiet little township get embroiled in national controversies but, through no fault of mine, it has happened to me. The question is of transparency versus confidentiality in the proceedings of representative bodies and the declaration of interests. I think that the so-called safeguards have gone much too far.

**How I am involved:**

An official complaint has been made. The complaint concerns Cllr Mrs Clowes of Appleby Town Council, who has been accused of communicating confidential information from secret sessions of the Council to her partner (me), who is Chairman of the Appleby-in-Westmorland Society (me again). The Chairman of the Society (presumably me, else there is no link at all) is accused of then contacting a journalist who, subsequently, queried the closed proceedings with members of the Council.

I think this casts a slur on your Chairman in that it is implied that I would seek to use my intimate relationship with a Councillor to obtain privileged information, which I then use for some (unspecified) nefarious purpose. To make matters worse, this affair was “leaked” to the public within a day of our receiving notification of the complaint, **and not by us**. But, we can be assured, it is round the town by now! Since it is probably general knowledge, I feel that I must defend myself, at least in your eyes.

Let’s be clear about things and get my reputation unbesmirched:

- 1 Maggie is meticulous about preserving the confidentiality of the secret proceedings of the Council; even were I the slightest bit interested in the internecine blatherings, I'd get nothing from her.
- 2 I have contacted **no** journalist. My media contacts while I have lived in Cumbria are: I won a competition set by Martin Plenderleith on Radio Cumbria some 1½ years ago; I was interviewed as a member of the public when we celebrated the completion of the enhancement in August; I've written about three letters of the "Indignant, Appleby" variety to *The Herald* within the last five years.
- 3 There are no dates given on the complaint but, if I have got the right incident, the journalist asked questions about the rules governing procedures for secret meetings of Councils. These rules are published in a booklet called "Chairman's Procedures and Standing Orders", which is available to the general public, inter alia, from ABE Books price £1.67 + p&p. **So what is so all-fired secret about it?**

#### The General Situation:

What is worrying about this is that the matter could have been settled amicably with a five-minute chat. But Councillors have the **duty** laid on them to report what they imagine to be breaches of the "Code of Conduct" (which they all sign on assuming office) by their colleagues. They are instructed **not to tell those colleagues that they are being reported on!** They are **themselves deemed to be in breach of this dreadful Code** if they do **not** report on their fellow Councillors for contravention of it! That creates a cosy atmosphere in the Council Chamber! And they are supposed to treat one another with courtesy and respect (according to "Chairman's Procedures and Standing Orders")! **There is no provision for assuring that the complaint is reasonable or even true, nor any sanction to be levied for mischievous or untrue complaints** – the complaint is fireproof. It seems that any trivia or distortion of facts will suffice to start an investigation. It is like the old "witch-finder" trials, or the Inquisition, without even their excuse that "it is being done for your own good". What a charter for irresponsible trouble-making!

Who governs all this? It is a non-judicial body in London, set up by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, called The Standards Board. It employs, at a vast cost, what are called "Ethical Standards Officers", who have extensive powers to investigate complaints, interview witnesses and take action against councillors found guilty of breaches of the Code of Conduct, **with an extension of these powers to local (appointed, not elected) Monitoring Officers** (very dodgy).

This Code of Conduct is being interpreted with such fanatical vigour that anyone who has any knowledge or interest at all in a subject has to "declare an interest" and in sheer terror of being "done" behind their back they sometimes prefer not to take part in the debate. Or they leave the Council. Very often they are the people who have knowledge of the subjects and an independence of mind and expression and can contribute greatly to the discussion.

Even crazier, if **all** the councillors declare an interest (e.g. all using a shop whose construction or something is under discussion), they have to refer the matter to a Monitoring Officer to resolve whether or not they can discuss it! What lunacy! (See *The Herald*, 14 October.)

What a denial of justice, democracy and plain common sense! Of course councillors need to state where they have interests, particularly financial ones, even then surely having declared that interest, they could take part in the discussion, maybe not voting under specific circumstances. It is time that councils all over the country rebelled against this hole-in-the-wall practice. We suggest that you might like to consider whether you want to support people who do not wish to slavishly follow this "Charter for Sneaks" when the next election comes up. Oh, really? In May, you say?

### The Secret Sixteen

When I started to write this column, I vowed to leave all the Council-bashing to Graham and get on with other things, but it is very difficult. What has got to me is that there is such unprecedented secrecy about in the Moot Hall that we ought to rename it Djerzhinsky Square (HQ of the KGB)! Or Spooks Hill (“Puck of .....” Oh well, never mind!) Appleby Town Council has had some ten secret sessions since March and has only twice published decisions. This has given rise to a riot of rumour through the town, which I am not going to perpetuate. But, in some cases, it is REALLY scandalous, thoroughly intriguing and doubtless much more interesting than the truth. Secrecy breeds rumour, which feeds on distortion and falsehood and seriously damages credibility. I cannot imagine why so much secrecy is required without telling us anything (and Maggie has told me NOTHING – see above), so, please ATC, come clean, let us know the decisions and become the **Famous Fifteen plus One** rather than the **Secret Sixteen**!

### A Chance to Help

We have become rather concerned at the apparent increase of heavy vehicles using Bridge Street and Boroughgate. This area is actually protected by a 17-ton/18-tonne prohibition which is not being observed, we think, though it appears that some firms have a dispensation. We need to assemble evidence of this traffic, to see if it really is excessive and breaking the rules. To this end we have agreed to co-operate with Appleby Town Council (yes, CO-OPERATE) by logging transits of that area by heavy vehicles. We have not yet worked out details, but it would probably mean volunteers listing transiting heavy vehicles over a 1 to 1½ hour period, at a day/time to suit (but that will have to be co-ordinated). We will work out what details are needed, etc. and design a form to be completed so that findings will be consistent. We don’t want people catching their death of cold or getting sopping wet, so we might try to fix it for good weather only!

I would be grateful if those of you who would, in principle, be willing to take part in this work would let me or Vivienne know, or you can put your name on a list I shall prepare for the Nov 30<sup>th</sup> meeting.

### Regionalisation – a series of 1,000+

Don’t say I do not do my best to make you aware of the regionalisation of the government of the country – yes, that means even **you** in little old Appleby. Here’s another bit, as reported in *The Herald*:

Dr Ruth Hussey (is the) newly-appointed North West regional director for public health. “The new North West regional director for public health is a joint appointment for the NHS and the Department of Health, working with the Government Office and therefore providing new opportunities to influence change.” No salary is given – but I bet it’s more than £5.30 an hour! And there is no mention of extra staff for the good doctor. There is the usual vague accompanying claptrap which sounds marvellous and “is as a sounding brass”, to use a good Biblical quote!

R.I.C.

### Current Affairs (Graham Coles)

#### Phew

Two long term projects have drawn to a successful conclusion in recent months. The refurbished town centre, with which the Society has been very much involved, was formally re-opened by our local MP David Maclean on 31 August. During a nine year campaign Appleby showed the world that it could work together. When I reflect on some of the more interesting ideas put forward by so-called experts after a preferred scheme had been agreed by the Town Council in 2001 and look at the town centre today I am reassured. There were some local difficulties – such as the last minute attempt by some town councillors to see Appleby paved with red sandstone – but the major battles were with those who wanted to transform Appleby before moving on to some other unsuspecting town. Appleby 1 – Experts 0. Not a bad final score.

Thanks are due to our Mayor, Stan Rooke, who, despite reservations of some Councillors, persuaded the 'Townscape' contractor to reinstate the Bullring. This was done, without ceremony, on 26 October. The Society had offered to pay towards its reinstatement but the Deputy Mayor suggested there was no point in repairing it until the parking problems had been resolved. We welcome its return. If we had waited until Appleby's parking was sorted out, we might have waited for ever.

The other project also took years to bring to fruition. Full marks to Appleby Alliance which was not deterred by Eden District Council's refusal to back the original idea to put a community sports hall at the Primary School. The Alliance stuck to its guns and we now have a fine building at the Grammar School which we can all see and use. The Alliance was supported by many who actively campaigned for funding. The residents of Appleby did their bit by contributing £40,000 over 4 years – a sound investment. Very few were against paying the additional £10,000 a year via the Town Council's precept. I'm not so sure about how the town will view the decision to continue the extra tax after the £40,000 had been collected. Last December councillors agreed that they needed the money more than we did. Let us hope that our forced generosity will bear fruit and that we will soon see our public buildings restored to their former glory as a result.

A few years ago the Society suggested that Appleby Town Council should enter into a partnership arrangement with Kirkby Stephen. Kirkby Stephen pressed ahead with a scheme which involves all the Upper Eden parish councils. I confess I did not foresee a partnership between Appleby Alliance and Kirkby Stephen's Town Forum. Good luck to them. I hope it works.

#### Appleby Town Council

Funny lot. I mean it. They are a source of constant amusement. You may recall my report about the 11 July meeting in the previous Newsletter. Senior Councillors rambled on and on about the need to ensure that Appleby's traditions and customs were retained at all costs. They even bent the rules by allowing the Deputy Mayor to cast two votes after she had declared a result. The minutes of the meeting tell us that everything was done properly – they always do – but, in order to clarify any misunderstanding about why the Councillors voted as they did, the minutes tell us that the long standing practice of recording names in order of seniority should be continued "as one of the many traditions and customs kept alive by this Council". Odd, then, that the minutes of that meeting failed to record Councillors names in order of seniority! So, the long-standing tradition which can be traced right back to November 2005 was ended in July 2006 by a resolution intended to have the opposite effect.

I missed the meeting on 13 September – walking in Spain – but the minutes, when read in conjunction with the Parish Newsletter (sorry, but I cannot get used to calling it the Midden News), suggest that it might have been a good 'un. The minutes record that there were members of the public present, that they asked questions and that Councillors replied. We have to refer to the Parish Newsletter to find out who they were, what they asked and what they were told. Remember, Council minutes are a public record of proceedings. Our two District Councillors "updated Councillors and answered questions". That's helpful. We read that public toilets were discussed twice but it was the Parish Newsletter which explained that Cllr Morgan "vigorously defended" Eden District Council's actions (to close the Shire Hall toilets) and that he presented a copy of a District Council report to the Mayor in a "somewhat unorthodox manner". That same meeting received a report which "confirmed" that the Council owns the Moot Hall (a gift to the town about 530 years ago); the public hall (purchased in 1882); the Cloisters (a gift to the town about 180 years ago); Top and Bottom crosses (a gift to the town in about 1974); Fair Hill (purchased in 1911); Dowpitts Wood (purchased 1977); a playground off Margaret's Way (purchased 1999) and 0.663 acres of land at Jubilee Bridge (purchased 1995). Interesting stuff. Some of it makes you wish that the town had a history society to advise on such matters. However, there is food for thought and scope for more research. For example, if the Moot Hall was there in 1476 it is more than 100 years older than historians have suggested. I feel another 'History Slot' coming on!

I also missed the meeting on 11 October – Anne and I were showing some of your old Appleby slides to Kirkby Thore W.I., for which we received a contribution to Society funds. Interestingly, the W.I., along with all other organisations in Kirkby Thore, have been invited to meetings of the parish council. The idea is that each organisation will be allocated an evening so that Councillors can better understand local concerns. Appleby Town Council PLEASE note. *The Herald* reporter summed up the meeting best. The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment wanted to continue the privilege conferred on its predecessor by marching through Appleby with bayonets fixed. Councillors said, "Yes". A District Councillor said a few words about Eden District Council. Cllr Patterson told Councillors what Appleby Alliance was doing. Cllr Potts told Councillors about what the New Fair Joint Committee was up to. Cllr Connell talked about the library and the Grammar School. Then came the hard bit – Councillors were asked to do something by writing to Eden District Council about the travel voucher scheme. Er ..... do something? ..... er ..... Councillors agreed to "look into the matter".

I did sit in on an extraordinary meeting on 16 October to which I had been alerted by an item in *The Herald*. Next year's budget was to be discussed. It wasn't. Councillors, the few who were there, went through a nationally recommended set of Standing Orders to see if they could be allowed in Appleby. In the event, if my notes of the discussion mean anything, the new Standing Orders will be much the same as those we have now. I'll have to get a copy to see. One or two – actually four – Councillors had a nasty shock when they read that the recommended rules provided for Councillors to remain seated when speaking. All four Senior Councillors insisted that this has never been the case in Appleby, so stand they will. It was suggested that the rule which requires decisions taken in closed meetings to be notified to the press should be formally incorporated into the revised Orders. "Not necessary", explained Cllr Morgan, father of the house. Rules were rules and it was very clear that all such decisions had to be notified to the press and to the public. That last bit was new. Let's see if it becomes a new tradition. Councillors went on to discuss a report into the condition of our public buildings. I could see that it was fairly long. I was impressed, as the suggestion that Councillors should have a survey done was only made in September! Sadly, it soon became clear that this was not a new report but a ten year old one. Copies were not available to press or public so I cannot say for sure that it was the report prepared by Chris Binney in December 1996, but it may well have been. Cllr Budding, the Council's Finance Officer, said that the report had been given to him but, being new to the Council, he could not know what action had been taken and, from enquiries he had made, nor did anyone else. Should a new survey be undertaken? "No need," said the acting Town Clerk (Cllr Patterson), "I think we should ask someone to go through the list and see what has not been done rather than commission a new report." A sub committee was needed. "Are there no invoices?" asked one brave Councillor who, perhaps, did not see the number of black bin bags which left the Moot Hall a couple of years ago. The Mayor asked if anyone was prepared to look for the invoices. There was no rush of volunteers but Cllr Budding said he would have a go. A sub committee was formed: Cllrs Langan, Pape, Patterson and Potts H – in alphabetical order. Cllr Budding had the last word – whatever the sub committee found, remember there was no money for repairs.

#### Appleby Secret Society

The A.S.S. has now held seven or eight meetings to resolve 'staffing difficulties'. I make that more than one meeting per member of staff. Just what are the ASSES, as members of this society are now known throughout the town, doing on our behalf? I have tried to find out – so far unsuccessfully. It should not be up to residents. As our Chairman points out earlier in this Newsletter, the Town Council (sorry, I meant to keep the secret) has a duty to notify the press of any decisions it takes behind closed doors. A report in *The Herald* on 7 October tells us that Ousby Parish Council held a closed meeting. It also tells us what decision was reached. Appleby Town Council has a problem with openness. Either the Council claims that no decisions were reached (known to be false) or a councillor claims that a colleague must have acted improperly by leaking secrets to the Society.

For the record, the only decision taken at a closed meeting which I know about was disclosed at a public meeting of the Council in July. I mentioned it in the previous Newsletter. I learned about other closed meetings which had taken place or were about to take place from the Council's public notice board. I contacted *The Herald* about them. I was not Chairman of the Appleby-in-Westmorland Society at the time. I did it in a private capacity and did not link the Society to my suggestion that the media might like to ascertain what (if anything) had been agreed behind closed doors. I did it because I doubted whether *The Herald* even knew about the meetings, never mind what was being decided by a publicly accountable body.

Readers anxious to know what will happen next will have to be patient. Our Council is at a crossroads. It will either explode in an incandescent ball of hot gasses or implode and quietly splutter out like a tired candle flame. Until we know the final outcome, we should not intrude on private grief.

#### Eden District Council

I had prepared a rather long piece entitled *Democracy in Action* – all about the machinations of Eden District Council but Vivienne took pity on you and used her Head Hitter's veto. It was about the way in which local democracy had been abolished and replaced by a cabinet system, which enables four 'senior councillors' to work with Eden's directors of this or that to such an extent that 34 out of our 38 representatives are disenfranchised. I would have pointed out that the District Council has lost its way and that the only beneficiaries of its expenditure are contractors.

Things had got so bad by early 2005 that a 'junior councillor' was prompted to ask the four members of the cabinet to outline their ambitions so that the performance of their empires could be assessed. One said that the leaders did not have personal portfolios as Eden was governed by "different arrangements"; a second said that setting targets against which he might be judged "was not in the style of Eden"; a third said that the "leadership was moving in the right direction"; whilst a fourth did not even bother to answer. In the months that followed, our newspapers were full of articles pointing to Eden District Council's failings. Matters have now come to a head (we hope) as the Chairman of the Council's Scrutiny Committee (not one of the cabal) has suggested that the leaders should produce forward plans so that members can judge their effectiveness as well as the efficiency of their departments. As he pointed out, the Scrutiny Committee usually gets involved when it's too late. His proposal will be considered by the full Council in December. It will be interesting to see how the joint leadership responds.

G.C.

#### The Fight for Appleby's Toilets – A Roller Coaster Ride (Maggie Clowes)

Four years ago Eden District Council embarked on a review of toilet provision aimed at making, in their words, substantial savings by taking advantage of the fact that the provision of toilets is a discretionary service (i.e. they don't have to do it!). I think it is fair to say that resistance to this was spearheaded by Appleby. Two reviews and a great deal of Councillor time later, Eden decided to keep all the toilets in its care. Wonderful – no toilets would be closed, no toilets would be handed over to local councils to run with minimum funding. Last December it looked as though we could relax in the sure knowledge that Eden had pledged to keep the Market Hall toilets (including the disabled toilet in the T.I.C.), the Broad Close toilets and the Shire Hall toilets. With a new director at Task Force Eden committed to maintaining high standards of cleaning the future looked rosy.

Or it did until 3 October, when notices appeared on the Shire Hall toilets saying they would be temporarily closed on 17 October 2006, "pending future refurbishment". No warning from our District Councillor that this had been agreed, no discussion with Appleby Town Council about the implications of this decision, not even the courtesy of a letter to the Mayor telling him what was proposed. My dictionary defines temporary as "for a limited period". No date has been set to do this work; there is no funding in the current year to pay for it. Because all the toilets in Eden's care received nothing but the most basic maintenance for the 2/3 years of the review the bill for putting them all to rights over a three year period comes to a whacking £406,517. There is no guarantee

that this money will be forthcoming: “Public conveniences are not a stated Council priority”. (This ominous warning appears in the Review of Public Toilets in Eden, September 2006. Odd to read a bit further on in the same document, “Public toilet provision is a high profile council service.”!)

Eden District Council gave three reasons for closing the Shire Hall toilets – their poor condition (the result of years of neglect by E.D.C.); lack of a proper lease (although Cumbria County Council, who own the building, says they don’t need one because they (E.D.C.) have “User rights”); and because we have made too many complaints (although most of these have been about the standard of cleaning).

Requests to Eden District Council to postpone the closure until refurbishment can start have fallen on deaf ears but Appleby can be proud of its Mayor and Mayoress (supported by the Deputy Mayor), who protested publicly on the town’s behalf

### **TO PRESERVE YOUR RIGHTS**

M.C.

#### History Slot

##### Its Not Always Eden’s Fault

Appleby’s first known Royal Charter was granted in 1179. Appleby is a County Town. Appleby assumed the role of Royal Borough for centuries and became a ‘proper’ municipal borough in 1885. In 1972 Appleby was told that it would soon lose its status and be reduced to a parish for local government purposes. The shock waves were real and we can sympathise with the town councillors who had to make the best of what many saw as a bad job. Councillors decided that they would fight to retain our ancient customs and privileges – a mayor, sword bearer and mace bearer were first on the list of priorities. Next came to right to hold markets and to have an annual fair. Councillors also resolved to retain Fair Hill, Broad Close, the Cloisters, Moot Hall and shops, both crosses, the river banks, public hall, church organ and the site of the swimming pool. Not every town councillor agreed. Some, including Cllr Burns, were worried about the cost. He suggested that the Moot Hall might be handed to the new Cumbria County Council for use as a town museum. If Appleby kept the Moot Hall, who would pay for its upkeep, he asked.

The ‘new’ Eden District Council claimed that Appleby did not have the legal power to retain anything following reorganisation. A letter to the mayor from E.D.C.’s chief executive pointing this out was described as ‘dictatorial’ by the town council. Arrangements were made for E.D.C.’s solicitor to examine the title deeds of the properties concerned.

In January 1975 E.D.C. agreed to most of Appleby’s requests but Appleby was warned. The district council chairman, Tim Featherstonhaugh, told Appleby that it was taking on a considerable financial obligation which it would have to fund from a parish rate. Cllr Day (Kirkby Stephen) raised the spectre of Appleby coming to Eden with a begging bowl if things got too much for its town council. This ‘History Slot’ will concentrate on just one of the buildings Appleby fought to keep in 1974 – the Public Hall.

Prior to 1867, Appleby’s covered market was The Cloisters (first built in 1695 and rebuilt in 1811). In 1867, the Corporation provided a butter market on Boroughgate. It occupied a site now part covered by the Public Hall. Access to it was somewhat restricted as other buildings, owned by the Lonsdale estate, fronted the road and there was only a narrow gap by which to reach it.

The ‘1867’ Butter Market was, according to evidence given to a Government Commission by the Borough Clerk in 1877, “built by a member of the Corporation and handed over to the Corporation afterwards”. The record of evidence continues, “By any formal deed?”, “Yes, there is a deed of conveyance”. “Did he give it to the Corporation?” “The Corporation borrowed £300 towards the expense of it and gave £50.” “At all events, it belongs to the Corporation?” “It does.” An appendix to the Commissioner’s report shows that Lord Lonsdale conveyed the site of the market to

the Corporation and gave £50 towards the cost of building it. Alderman Bell paid for the building then sold it to the Corporation. The Corporation raised £300 by way of a mortgage taken out with James Wemyss Esq. at 5% per annum.

In 1878, the Corporation resolved to negotiate with Lord Lonsdale with a view to purchasing more of his property, thus enabling a covered market to be built on the site. By January 1879 the land was in the possession of the Corporation, having been purchased for £250 and a small committee had been formed.

In July 1879, the Borough Clerk reported that the new building would cost about £750, which the Corporation hoped to raise by public subscription. (It must be noted that the Corporation had very limited access to income at this time. Appleby did not become a municipal borough with the ability to levy rates until 1885. The town's income came from tolls and rents, often amounting to less than £200 a year.) A circular was sent to individuals and organisations thought likely to contribute. In summary, it said that the Corporation and residents were agreed on the need to provide a covered market, to remove the butchers' shambles from Boroughgate and to end the corn toll which had been the cause of much friction in the town. The building would be managed by a committee of seven – three from the Corporation and three from the town plus the mayor. The Corporation subscribed £100 to the fund, which would be administered by trustees.

By December 1880, the new building was 'almost complete'. A report to the Corporation tells us that the Market Hall would contain twelve commodious and fitted butchers' shops, together with ample space for fruit and poultry. Access to the butter market would be greatly improved. In January 1881, the market stalls were let by auction.

Not everyone was happy – it is Appleby, after all. Some councillors were opposed to the very idea of residents being part of the management structure and Mr Bell (of town water supply fame) presented a petition to the Corporation from a number of traders who thought their livelihood would be adversely affected. The editor of the *Penrith Observer* pointed out that the Corporation only 'exists for the good of the town' and that the new market would be a great asset.

The accounts were complete by May 1881 but not the trust deed which, according to the Borough Clerk, would take a 'considerable time to ingross'. Income from subscriptions had been £619 10s 2d, whilst the total costs were £708 8s 3d – a shortfall of £88 18s 1d. The shortfall was covered by mortgaging the new building for £400 at 5%. (A lot of detail has been condensed into these paragraphs – Graham will happily expand.)

It took only eleven years to decide that the original (1867) market was inadequate. The 1880 version lasted a little longer, as it was not until 1910 that the Corporation determined on a third version. Whereas we have only tantalising glimpses of the 1867 building, we are fortunate to have a fairly full description of that of 1911. (It was formally opened as the Public Hall on 9 December 1911.) The total cost was £1580, of which £640 had been donated by Lady Hothfield and those family and friends who had supported her appeal. The balance of £940 was raised from the rates. The new building occupied the same site but was 'minus the two ugly and inconvenient iron pillars in the centre'. The roof was a single span with four half circle roof timbers of pitch pine springing from pilasters of white Barnard Castle stone. The entrance remained where it had been and was fitted with emergency exit apparatus. There were five windows along the north side and two on each of the remaining three sides. Ten roof-mounted chandeliers, each with four gas lights, provided artificial lighting. The stage was 34 feet long by 10 feet wide. There were extractors in the roof and vents in the walls (not powered, of course). There was a double floor of maple, which 'will be a pleasure to dancers'. Heating was by gas radiator. Cloakrooms were provided for the audience (one for each sex) and well-appointed changing rooms were provided 'in connection with theatricals and other entertainments'. There were 110 tip-up seats, twenty collapsible forms and a supply of benches. It was opened by the architect, J Hartley of Skipton. Lady Hothfield was



presented with an inscribed silver gilt key to mark the occasion (does anyone know where it is now?)

In 1970 Appleby Borough Council approved plans for an extensive rebuild. Tenants of the existing stalls were given one month's notice to quit. Only then did Appleby realise that it did not have the estimated £30,000 it would cost.

Early in 1972, the then mayor, Cllr Dixon, told *The Herald* that the scheme would go ahead. The stalls in the entrance hall would be replaced by shops. There would be a hall capable of housing 500 people, a new kitchen and a bar. A new extension would be built to the rear. Things did not go entirely to plan. Westmorland County Council did not want to include public toilets in its new health centre on Low Wiend. This was a set back as the Borough Council wanted to close the gents toilets in the Moot Hall and had just discovered that the Bridge Street toilets could not be extended. (In fact, the Borough solicitor had found out that the deeds to the Bridge Street site forbade any building and the existing toilets should not be there!) In addition, the "82 year old frontage" to the Public Hall was found to be in a state of collapse and this would have to be rebuilt. Public toilets were to be incorporated into the rebuilt Public Hall Arcade, despite the opposition of the Public Health Inspector who was worried that they would be alongside food outlets. The bill went up. The rebuilt Public Hall was opened in the autumn of 1972. It had cost £50,000, most of it raised as a loan. The rents proposed for the four new shops were so high that no-one wanted them. To put the £50,000 into perspective, we need only recall that Appleby Castle was sold for £100,000 in 1973.

Just why Eden District Council later agreed to subsidise the Public Hall after all that had happened is difficult to understand. The most likely answer seems to be that Cllr Day was right and Appleby very quickly realised that it could not fund the building and went, 'cap in hand', to Eden asking it to accept responsibility for the building and its £50,000 albatross.

The Hall, still owned by Appleby Town Council, was running at an annual loss of over £8,000 due, mainly, to the loan charges. In 1975, Eden District Council agreed to pay half of each year's deficit, provided Appleby understood that the capital debt remained its responsibility. In addition, Eden District Council would pay the running costs of the public toilets. Eden District Council and Appleby Town Council agreed to appoint four councillors each to form a Public Hall Management Committee. Having re-opened in late 1972, the Public Hall already required modification to meet Fire Regulations.

When Appleby Town Council considered the Public Hall in May 1975, councillors complained that the Management Committee was spending too much money on staff. Cllr Wappett claimed that the committee structure would never work and the hall should be under the direct control of the Town Council. Councillors were told that the Town Clerk, who was also the Public Hall manager, had resigned from both posts. In June, the Town Clerk, Mr Flynn, told the Management Committee that he had only resigned from the Town Clerk's position. Eden District Council was informed that his salary was £900 per annum whilst the caretaker's was £1,000 per annum. Cllr Hall (Castle Sowerby) called for a 'real' decision in the immediate future as the Public Hall would never be anything other than a public liability. The hall's capacity had been reduced from 400 to 250,, bookings were declining and the estimated deficit for 1975/76 was £11,400. Income from shop rentals and lettings was just £2,500.

In January 1976, Appleby Town Council discussed the hall. Cllr Folder argued that, when Eden District Council took over the assets and liabilities of the hall, it also accepted moral responsibility for it. (The fact that Eden District Council had done nothing of the sort seemed not to diminish his attack.) Cllr Wappett told councillors that the problems of the Public Hall were the responsibility of its manager. In March, Eden District Council's chairman said that the arrangement entered into, whereby Eden District Council paid half the annual deficit, should be ended as soon as possible. Eden District Council had accepted an open-ended financial liability and this must stop. When the

Appleby Ratepayers' Association heard that, it, too, expressed concern. The Association's chairman pointed out that some Appleby councillors would be pleased to see the Public Hall in their hands and 'to hell with the cost'. In May 1976, Appleby Town Council held a closed meeting to discuss the situation. By June, things had reached a new low. Eden District Council would no longer accept the minutes of the Management Committee which, it claimed, had become a sub-committee of Appleby Town Council. The District Council Treasurer reminded councillors that the original agreement was for Appleby Town Council to retain ownership of the building whilst Eden District Council would pay 50% of any annual deficit. He expressed concern at the lack of any Standing Orders or financial regulations relating to how the hall was managed. The Treasurer's words resulted in a revised management structure. Eden District Council and Appleby Town Council would continue to nominate four councillors each to a management committee. They would be joined by a representative from Cumbria Tourist Board. The committee would have power 'to undertake such functions as might be delegated by the Town Council' and would be responsible for the management and letting of the hall. It would submit annual estimates for approval by both councils and the Town Council would not authorise expenditure of over £500 without first consulting Eden District Council.

In January 1979, Appleby Town Council was told that the deficit would be over £10,000, of which Eden District Council would contribute £4,500. The Cumbria Tourist Board representative resigned. The increased deficit was partly due to the need for a new heating boiler (in a building only 6 years old).

The next few years saw the Public Hall problem getting worse. In 1983, the then Chairman of the Management Committee, Cllr M Langan, called a special meeting to discuss finances. The hall was being used less and less – the secretary/treasurer of the committee, Mrs Pat Cannon, even ran a coffee morning to raise funds. Both Appleby and Eden District Council were concerned about ever rising costs. Matters came to an end in early 1987 when Eden District Council decided to pull the plug on a never ending open commitment. Eden's Treasurer, Mr Ellison, told Appleby that Eden wanted to buy itself out for a one-off lump sum payment of £60,000. That would enable Appleby to pay its outstanding loan of £35,000, leaving it with £25,000 'surplus'. Appleby's councillors thought this a fair offer and accepted it unanimously. Deputy Mayor, Cllr Morgan, suggested that there should be an in-depth survey before acceptance. Eden District Council said it did not have the staff to do that. As it was Appleby's building, it seems odd that anyone would have even suggested that Eden District Council should pay for a survey. Since the beginning of the 1987/8 financial year, Appleby has been 'on its own'.

The Public Hall has been a good servant. In Newsletter No 63 (January 2006) we told of its use as a cinema between 1935 and 1960. We know that it was in regular use as a playhouse and concert venue and a subsequent Newsletter will try to record the many and varied uses to which it was put during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Public Hall is still losing money but that could change if it was publicised and marketed. At present, it seems to be run as a private fiefdom. Councillors discuss its cost but seldom do we read about its potential. Almost 100 years ago it was renamed the PUBLIC HALL. If it was managed and operated like most public hall in this area, as a charity run by trustees, fresh ideas and, perhaps, new funding would be forthcoming. Sadly, our Council is more likely to sell it than use it. It would not be easy – it is a complicated building to split. The shops, toilets and Supper Room form one unit; the hall another, whilst the 1970s extension is a third. But it could be done. The idea that it might be sold is not pie in the sky. At their September meeting, Councillors were warned that selling any of our buildings would not be easy. In the absence of open government, we are entitled to presume that 'selling off' has at least been discussed at one of the many secret meetings of recent months. Appleby beware!

There remains a fascinating matter to follow. If the Local Government Act 1972 required all Appleby's properties to transfer to Eden District Council, by what legal means were they transferred back? Was it by Deed of Gift? More research is underway.

### **Committee Meeting 24 October 2006**

#### Matters Arising from Minutes of 5 September

Suggestions for outside visits were made and an update was given on Shire Hall. The Society's role with regard to the Cemetery Chapel, i.e. having it put on the Town Council's agenda, had been successful. It was stressed that the Society does not have a collective view and the formation of a Working Party on which the public is represented was welcomed. We learned that Eden District Council had sent a list of Appleby material held at Penrith Museum. Further discussion took place about the 'memorial' trees on the Playing Field. Details of two projects involving Society members and Town Councillors were given: monitoring of heavy vehicles coming through the town and the disintegration of the river bank.

#### Membership/Treasurer

As at 30 September 2006, the balance in the account was £5010.56. Membership renewals continue and several donations had been received.

#### Oral History

Davina gave a report on progress. Concern continues about the lack of interviewers and Ian will ask for volunteers at the next meeting. Vivienne will arrange for the website to be updated so that contact details are correct.

#### Planning/Townscape

John had written a report advising that the application for alterations to the Police Station had been passed; no action had been taken on the applications for houses on Station Road, alterations to Church View or the application by the Heritage Centre. Eden District Council had been urged to pass the application for the installation of sympathetic windows at Bridge End Café.

#### Appleby New Fair Joint Committee

Graham gave a brief report of the meeting 15 August. Concern was expressed that nothing had been said about which organisation is legally responsible for the Fair but the Society had been invited to join the Committee. Ian attended the next meeting, held 19 September. He reported that the Society's representative was to join the Infrastructure and the Media Working Groups.

#### Society Archive

The possibility of creating a catalogue of Society holdings was discussed.

#### Living Churchyards

A representative of the Cumbria Wildlife Trust is willing to come to Appleby to give more information.

#### Ian's Problem

Please see pages 2-3, "From the Chairman", Brought Home to Appleby to The General Situation.

#### Arrangements for 30 November meeting

These were finalised.

#### Any Other Business

It was agreed to invite the new Chairman of Cumbria Local History Federation, Mr Richard Brockington, to a public meeting so that he can meet members.

**From the Secretary**

**“John Metcalfe Carleton - Georgian Rake of the Eden Valley”**

Please note that this newly-published book, by John Sharpe, is now available from Appleby T.I.C., priced £4.50.

**Next Meeting**

**Thursday 30 November 2006  
7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall  
Graham Coles – “The Best of Old Appleby”**

Our Special Christmas Evening, when Graham will show slides. There will be a raffle and refreshments will be available, provided by Committee members.

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

**Please Note**

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

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

Application forms are available at the Library.

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