



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

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**Newsletter January 2009**

**No 81**

**Public Meeting 27 November 2008: “Cumbria Woodlands”**

It was with interest and anticipation that we awaited the illustrated talk by Edward Mills, Director of Cumbria Woodlands and we were treated to an informative and entertaining evening.

In the early 1990's, with concerns that woodlands were not being looked after, a group was set up to do something positive about the situation. By 1996, Cumbria Woodlands had given help and advice to 500 land owners with 6,000 acres of woodland and, in that year, Edward began working for the organisation as its second project officer. The organisation offers woodland management and tree-planting advice, helps local groups with grant applications, provides training and practical skills and many other services to help secure the future of native woodlands in Cumbria. The work of the organisation is supported by the Lake District National Park Authority, Forestry Commission, Rural Regeneration Cumbria, European Union, Defra and Voluntary Action Cumbria.

We saw slides of several areas of woodlands, showing the 'before and after' condition of the landscape. With expert advice, areas of neglected, dark and overgrown woodlands can be transformed into vibrant and colourful places, with healthy trees and wild flowers growing well and wildlife thriving. Hazards to woodlands include rhododendrons, which are extremely toxic to soil, and deer, rabbits and sheep eating everything. Other issues affecting woodlands were detailed, including lack of trained foresters and encouragement for young people to take up forestry as a career, lack of affordable housing for workers in a not-very-well-paid career and too much bureaucracy.

As well as providing trees for building all kinds of structures, woodlands were a source of ingredients vital for industrial processes such as oak bark being required for tanning leather and coppiced wood being turned into charcoal. Edward showed several slides of evidence of the charcoal industry and of the families working in this industry who lived in the woods.

There followed positive stories of people enjoying various woodland crafts and learning new skills. We saw slides of the work of Phil Bradley, an artist in willow and of a swill-basket maker. Courses are available for anyone wishing to learn how to do this. Woodlands can also provide a change of career, e.g. from redundant insurance worker to successful businessman. With the help of the Development Agency, 'Play Days' take place in the woods, giving an opportunity to try various activities. We also learned about the Bill Hogarth Memorial Apprenticeship Trust, whereby young people interested in learning forestry skills are encouraged.

The work of the organisation has been concentrated largely in the Lake District but, having been involved with the woodlands at the Center Parc complex at Whinfell, it is hoped Cumbria Woodlands can undertake more work in the Eden Valley.

A lively question and answer session drew this informative and enjoyable evening to a close.

**Christmas Evening 10 December 2008**

The event was started with the drawing of the raffle. Prize-winners were Mrs P Kelly, Mr R I Campbell, Mr D Furniss and Mr P Whiting.

There followed a lovely evening of nostalgia as Graham Coles and Brian Holmes gave a wonderful slide show. It began with several slides which were new to the Society's collection, including pictures of Castle Bank, Market Place, Grammar School, Express Dairy staff, Burnes' Garage and Dixon's Hotel.

The rest of the show was arranged to illustrate a series of events. The first event shown was the celebration of the start of the construction of the Eden Valley Railway, which opened in 1862. Other events included Appleby celebrating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, opening of Garth Heads Road, Volunteers going to the Boer War, elections, opening of the Liberal Club, consecration of Cemetery Chapel, opening of Appleby primary School, Conservative Club Fete at The Castle, proclamation of George V, Band of Hope and other parades and presentations, Church parades with civic dignitaries, the Assizes - with the Judge and his entourage at various locations, return to Appleby of Westmorland Militia flags, Appleby Girl Guide Company, soldiers on parade and leaving from Appleby Station, opening of the first British Legion Club, floods on the Sands, Jubilee pageants, 1937 Coronation celebrations, preparation for Second World War, Midland Railway signal box destroyed by fire, Appleby Show, 1953 Coronation celebrations, visits to Appleby by the Queen and Princess Margaret, original swimming pool, commemoration of last day of the county of Westmorland, Festival marking European Heritage year, Queens' Silver Jubilee, demolition of old Vicarage in 1989, planting of Dorothy's tree by Society Committee members 1997, presentation to King's Own Border regiment, parade of Royal Irish Rangers, 1999 carnival, first Farmers' market, Mayor-making day 2000, Mystery Plays 2000, Brian Render prior to going to London to represent Cumbria at the British Legion Festival of Remembrance, 'River of Light' and Church, visit of Time Team, 2004 start of work to build new medical centre, 2006 Townscape opening and the discovery of the Appleby United Band of Hope banner. After pictures of fireworks, the show ended with pictures of Christingle. The pictures covered a period from 1865 to 2008 and throughout the show there was audience participation as members recognised and identified people in the pictures and reminisced about events.

The evening ended with refreshments provided by Committee members and a big thank you is extended to all who helped make the evening another success.

### **From the Chairman**

#### **Archive Room - AT LAST!!!**

We now have a home for the Appleby Archive. All our difficulties having been resolved, I signed the lease on the Public Hall room so that we can start to use it from 1 Jan 2009. In due course I will be in touch with those of you who volunteered to help, when the sub-committee has developed a plan for immediate progress.

You may have heard that, when discussing our (separate) application for a grant from the charities attached to the Council, which are mostly devoted to the benefit of Appleby as a whole, one senior Councillor, echoing some colleagues, stated as his considered view that the Society ". . . should not get a penny until they had signed the lease," which is more a comment on his warped thinking than on his concern for the good of Appleby, don't you think? The charities are administered by Trustees, anyway, not by the Council directly, and in my opinion the one should not have an influence on the other. However, I should like to assure all members that, quelling the desire to tell the Council what they could do with the whole proposal, calm common sense prevailed and we signed the lease when our objections had been met, with great courtesy and aplomb, by the Public Hall Manager, and we were good and ready to sign; we did **NOT** submit to the blackmail exerted upon us by the Council!

#### **Graham's Evening**

I know it has been mentioned elsewhere, but I must say what an enjoyable evening Graham's slide show proved to be, and it worked, not only through the work of the star of the show, but also through the efforts of Anne "Caterer" Crosby and her many helpers and contributors, while not forgetting Brian's great projection machinery - a real team effort!

#### **The Council again, I'm afraid**

I am reluctant to bang on about the Council, as Graham does that so pertinently and, in the end, WHO CARES? The press doesn't care and gets most of its material second-hand. The people of Appleby don't care - Graham and Anne, sometimes me and Maggie, are the only citizens who show enough interest to attend Council and Committee meetings, with one honourable exception. I sympathise, because I cannot get excited about the majority of Council business, as I think they have little or no power to influence the price of bread (just as well), so why do we "happy few" bother to go and sit in an uncomfortable, ill-lit, noisy, wooden mausoleum to hear boring people rabbit on? Because I feel strongly that the price of democracy and fairness is constant vigilance, and in the foreseeable future we might find more powers delegated to parish councils than they have at present, so let us try to get things right **before** that happens. **Without YOUR participation, there is no sanction against the Council**, - no voting Councillors out, no unpopularity in the community, nothing! So take part!

At the very least, the procedures governing the Council's conduct are so frequently flouted as to render the whole mess a farce; they need to be got right, and one or two of the issues are important. Such as:

#### **(a) Secrecy**

The first is that I am concerned about the increasing tendency of the Council towards **obfuscation**. Lovely word, meaning "To deprive of clearness of perception. . . .to darken, obscure (the understanding, judgement, etc); to darken the understanding of (a person), stupefy, bewilder" – OED. In summary:

- Secret sessions are routine now , and their scope is widening, with no report as to their result.
- Whole meetings are held from time to time that are inadequately publicised.
- Minutes are uninformative and produced as a format, to save work.

If anyone did care, they might ask, "What are councillors trying to hide?", but they don't. I am sure all is straight and above-board, but it is not SEEN to be straight. I would like to return to this in an article another time, as the credibility of the Council is seriously threatened by the doubts thrown up by these practices.

#### **(b) The precept**

The next is about the precept - the one important item that actually affects us all, in the pocket, and that the Council has direct control over (and it is not capped). Now, in 2007/8 and in 2008/9 there was included in the budget the sum of £25,000 to build up a fund with which to repair the Council-owned buildings. We have the Town Clerk's written assurance that this £50,000 is separately identified in the accounts, and that all expenditure from it will be clearly accounted for, in a form of ring-fencing. (There is considerable expenditure due from that fund in the New Year.) Therefore it would seem that for the year 2009/10, where we assume that we have no provision of £25,000 for this purpose, we should see a reduction in the precept of £25,000, before any other increases are added. Hmmm. I wonder. Part of these increases concern the Council wage bill since it is proposed to pay back-pay and to increase wage rates. If you refer to my little article in Newsletter No 76, May 2008, titled "Value for Money" , you will see that the Council wage bill for 2008/9 was budgetted to reach approximately £63,600 p.a. - it exceeded the precept! As I asked then, I ask you again "Are we getting value for money?"

ONCE MORE, I ASK YOU, IN YOUR OWN INTEREST, please get involved WITH YOUR LOCAL AFFAIRS or at least show some interest! DON'T LEAVE IT TO THE "FAMOUS FIVE" (OR "INFAMOUS" IN SOME CIRCLES) - It's YOUR town, your money, your life here!

#### Appleby Accolade

We think that the Accolade for this post-festive issue must go to all those who were involved with the Appleby "Sparkle" Day. The town was enlivened by the strenuous efforts of the organisers, and even if the reindeer were a bit quick off the mark, at least they were THERE! And I wish we could entice the provision merchants in the marquee to come more regularly!

**On behalf of the Committee, may I wish you all as prosperous a New Year as possible in these parlous times!**

R Ian Campbell

**The Song of the Junior Councillor** (after "Christopher Robin is saying his Prayers" - a long way after!)

1) We mount the steps to the old Moot Hall  
And there we ensconce ourselves, Councillors all  
We sit and we nod and vote when we're asked  
But don't really say much in case we get tasked!

Chorus

Councillors sit in the old wooden room  
Loving the bit that is shortly to come  
Hush, hush, listen who dares,  
Appleby Council's discussing affairs

2) A County Councillor should always be there  
But she tries quite hard to stay out of our hair  
We've Eden Councillors, not one but two  
Who, after their changes, don't know what to do.

3) We've senior people whose robes are red  
Who are wise and old and longing for bed.  
I like dressing up in traditional gear  
That's not quite so old (or that's what I hear).

4) We read things out , (not really allowed),  
And delegate jobs to one of the crowd,  
And report on meetings I cannot recall;  
And no-one decides anything at all.

5) With growing excitement, quite near the end,  
The climax arrives when **out** we can send  
All of the public and press, 'cos you see  
Someone might be there from the Societeeeee!

Chorus

Councillors sit in the old wooden room  
Now we enjoy ourselves, being alone.  
Alone, alone, where nobody hears  
Appleby Council discussing affairs

BARDRIC

## **History Slot**

### Appleby's Town Bridges

In 1887, Mr Joseph Bintley, the County Surveyor, reported to the Court of Quarter Sessions (the local authority at the time) that Appleby's town bridge was dilapidated and dangerous. References to his report were included in the Society's brief history of the bridges in our May 2003 Newsletter. He told the Court that the original bridge would have been about 13 feet wide but had been widened to about 15 feet at some time. Despite being strengthened by metal straps, most of which had rotted, the bridge was in a state of decay and a danger to the public. Subsequent to our publication, present day members of the Temple Sowerby Trust expressed surprise that the Trust had ever been associated with the town's bridge and the late John Heelis kindly gave the Society a copy of an 1814 sketch of the original bridge. A facsimile of this sketch was included in our September 2003 Newsletter.

Five years later, thanks to the good offices of another member of the Society, we are pleased to reproduce a report written in March 1845, by George Robinson, which shows that the Temple Sowerby Trust was, indeed, closely involved with bridge repairs. Not only does the report confirm the relationship, it also confirms a detail only supposed by Mr Bintley. We now know that the original bridge was 13 feet 4 inches wide – so he wasn't far out. (Five ribs each measuring 32 inches wide). For our part, we have to surmise that the bridge was widened to 15 feet when the iron work was added in accordance with Mr Robinson's recommendations.

Unfortunately we do not have the map to which Mr Robinson refers. The following is a transcript of the original report, retaining the original spelling, re-typed because the ink on the original is faded:

“At a meeting of the Trustees of the Temple Sowerby Lands held at Appleby on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of March 1845

It was resolved

That Mr George Robinson, Bridge Master, be requested to return specific answers in writing to the following questions respecting the present state of Appleby Bridge to the Trustees at their next meeting to be held on the 29<sup>th</sup> March instant.

First. Is the bridge in its present condition capable of being repaired so as to be made safe to the public. If not state your reasons.

Answer. The bridge in its present condition may be made safe to the public.

Second. If repairable what would you recommend should be done and give an estimate of the cost of same.

Answer. I should recommend the repairs to be similar and agreeable to the Plan Elevations and Sections given, that is, the Parapetts, Piers and Spandrells to be taken down to a horizontal line agreeing with the underside of keystone of each arch and this part built up again with new materials. The part coloured red shows the portion to be taken down and rebuilt. As each arch is composed of five Ribs I would recommend a heavy bar of iron say four inches in width by one inch in thickness placed at right angles to the face of each arch and firmly fixed to the key stone of each rib with screwed lewisses and heavy nuts. This bar when so fixed will keep each rib in its present position and will also act as a permanent tension rod for the future. To ensure more stability to the bridge I have placed a heading stone of four feet in length reaching inwardly from the face line the whole width of each arch, the face of this stone forming a part of the exterior Ashlar, the interior end resting on the centre line of the second rib, the whole of the string course to the Parapett and Coping is shown to be of new materials and if built and finished according to the drawings I can insure their safety and stability for a great many years. The Pier and Western land breast are the only parts from whence any danger can be apprehended in the time of floods washing out some portion of the Masonry but even if this be so, a large portion must be displaced before endangering the bridge as it can only fall by perpendicular pressure.

My Estimate for the above repairs in detail amounts to £272 11s 10d”

Finally, when we first recorded our history of the bridge. we could find no reference to a formal opening. We still cannot but members may like to know that the intention was to have the new bridge opened by the High Sheriff and the Judge of Assize on 14 February 1889. However, John Hunter, the coachman at the Kings Head, drove over it a few days earlier with his carriage and pair and thus became the last person to use the old bridge and the first to use the new.

Graham Coles

#### Chariots of Fire: Part 9

Part 8 was somewhat shorter than originally intended but so much was going on in the town that it was considered necessary to clip its wings. Members will recall that Part 8 ended with some boys discovering a fire in the basement of Sands Church and we start where we left off.

In January 1923, the Fire Brigade’s problems with horsepower (literally) continued and it was children who discovered the fire. This time it was a barn fire at Brackenber Farm and it happened during the absence of the farmer, Mr A E Barker, at Appleby Market. The fire bell was rung at 1.20 p.m. and Captain Ewbank (no record of when he replaced Captain Steadman) arranged for his men and equipment to be taken to the scene in Mr Sowerby’s lorry. Unfortunately, the barn was destroyed before the brigade arrived.

In April 1923, there were two outbreaks within three days at Gale House – one on Friday evening, the other on Sunday. The premises were owned by Miss Heelis, Battlebarrow and farmed by Thomas Ewbank. At 8.00 p.m. on the Friday, a Miss Bowman, a servant girl, saw a barn, which contained cattle, hay, straw and a milk float, on fire. The brigade attended, commanded by Capt J Ewbank, and the cattle were saved. A plentiful supply of water was available from a tank at Mr Ormerod’s house, ‘Garbridge’, and the fire was contained. Some difficulty was experienced in getting the engine to the blaze as the requisitioned horses would not pull. The second outbreak, on the Sunday evening, was discovered shortly before 8.00 p.m. by W S Blake and A H Parkin, who raised the alarm. The brigade was quickly on the scene but, once again, was in trouble, not with the horses this time but with the water – the engine would not pump!

1923 was a busy year and there was yet another fire in September, this time at Catherine Holme, a farm owned by the Castle Estate and farmed by Mr W Alderson. A large barn, which adjoined the dwelling house and which shared a common wall with one containing the house chimney, caught fire. It was well

alight when discovered at 9.30 p.m. by a Mr Gasgarth, who went to Appleby to call the brigade. This time the engine was hauled to the scene by Mr Sowerby's lorry and water was taken from a nearby stream.

In October 1923, East Westmorland Rural District Council, no doubt exasperated by now, authorised the purchase of a motor and trailer pump! However, this initiative was not progressed, partly because the rural Council did not operate a fire brigade and partly because no discussions had taken place with Appleby. The good news is that a dialogue with Appleby Corporation was opened. Meanwhile, the fire brigade struggled on.

In September 1924, both Appleby and Penrith brigades were called to a fire at Low Barn, a farm owned by the Castle Estate and operated by R G and W Atkinson. The problem there was that a number of highly inflammable buildings were clustered together. At 5.00 p.m. some farm hands smelled burning but no fire could be found. By 8.00 p.m. things were very different when a large haystack burst into flame. George Atkinson went to Appleby, 1½ miles away, and sounded the fire bell whilst someone else (his brother perhaps) contacted the Penrith brigade. This may well have been a vote of no confidence in the Appleby brigade, given several years of poor performance. Appleby's fire engine was, once again, taken to the scene by motor lorry, where it arrived 40 minutes after the alarm was raised. By contrast, Penrith's engine arrived at 9.10 p.m., just 20 minutes after it was called. Water was taken from a stream at Flakebridge 1,000 yards away. Both brigades were on scene until 7.00 a.m. Their good work resulted in every farm building being saved. Only produce was destroyed.

In May 1925, *The Penrith Observer* reported, "Early Morning Excitement" in Appleby. During the early hours of a Sunday morning, the town was "lit up" by a huge fire which could be seen for miles. The fire, in a warehouse to the rear of the Hare and Hounds, Boroughgate, was discovered at about 4.00 a.m. by Mr Nicholson, the chemist, who had premises next door. He ran to the fire bell and a number of firemen and neighbours, including the Mayor, Mr Williamson, who lived nearby were quickly on the scene. A good supply of water was obtained from a hydrant and, whilst the warehouse and contents were destroyed, neighbouring buildings were saved. The only casualty was Mr W Brunskill, the landlord, who was burned about the hands and face whilst trying to rescue some of his property. (The large green wooden building used by Cannon's was probably built on the site of this warehouse and confirmation would be welcome.)

February 1926 was an important date in the affairs of the fire brigade. Meetings between the Rural District Council and Appleby Corporation led to proposals for a joint fire brigade. Two schemes were considered at a meeting of the R.D.C. in Kirkby Stephen. Appleby Corporation was satisfied that it could provide and maintain an efficient brigade but expressed concern at some of the distances involved. The scheme, which was approved by 15 votes to 6, was the more expensive option but still excluded the parishes of Crackenthorpe, Dufton, Kirkby Thore, Long Marton, Milburn, Newbiggin and Temple Sowerby which, despite being in Westmorland, were included in an existing Penrith fire brigade scheme. These parishes were to be given the option of joining the new joint scheme. The scheme, which would cost £1,465 to set up, plus an annual ongoing cost of about £90, would be funded by the parishes involved. Its committee would comprise 3 councillors from Appleby and 5 representing the Westmorland parishes which were included. The Clerk advised that the R.D.C. had legal powers to require the parishes within its jurisdiction to join the new scheme. (N.B. it was not until 1938 that local authorities were required to provide a fire service so the Clerk's opinion may be suspect.)

Matters were not rushed and it was not until January 1927 that Appleby Corporation agreed to apply to the Ministry of Health for permission to borrow £1,500 over ten years which would be used to establish the new brigade – a request which was denied. Both parties agreed that the scheme would go ahead anyway. On 30 April 1927, *The Herald* reported "a little mild excitement on Wednesday morning when the new Merryweather trailer engine – a Hatfield fire pump with a capacity of 250 gallons – arrived and was hauled from the railway station by Mr Sowerby's motor lorry". The motor tender had not yet arrived but the new Appleby and East Westmorland Fire Brigade would be able to reach any place in the district with or without it as the trailer could be hauled by any motor lorry. The new brigade comprised twelve men – still all volunteers: Captain G S Evans; Lt F T Balmer; Foreman J Bird; engineer D Macrae; and Firemen J A Newsome, F Potts (Jnr), T Satterthwaite, J Graham, A Lowthian, R Sowerby, J Richardson and T Bowman.

The old brigade was disbanded and each man received a letter of appreciation from the Corporation. In addition, the Corporation gave the men a total of £15 in final settlement of any claims they might have. In order to underline its magnanimity, the Corporation allowed the men the free use of the Public Hall for a dance.

In contrast to its arrival almost 50 years earlier, when it was accompanied by the town band, church bells and a cheering crowd, The Tufton was sent to Darlington for scrap without any ceremony. Appleby's fire extinguishment budget for 1927/8 was £90 – up from £55 in 1925/6 – not every Councillor and by no means every resident was best pleased.

Early in 2007, one of our members was having a tidy-up when she came across a small hand-written notebook which, on examination, proved to be a detailed account of the fire brigade's comings and goings between 1927 and 1934 – a priceless example of serendipity and of why nothing must ever be thrown away. We hope to reproduce extracts from this record from time to time.

To be continued .....

Maggie Clowes and Graham Coles

## **Current Affairs**

### **Lots of Thanks**

Thanks to everyone who helped with the pre-Christmas evening: to those who keep me regularly supplied with new material; to the many who put together such a fine spread; to the many who washed up afterwards; to Brian who projects the images with consummate skill; to all who turned up to help the evening along. THANKS. Thanks also to Anne and Maggie who went to the 'alternative' pre-Christmas show in the Moot Hall so that we could keep abreast of our Town Council's machinations. Finally, thanks to those who PROMISED to dig out photos that they know must be somewhere, especially some of the Gas Works. You find 'em, I'll show 'em.

### **Our Mayoral Consort**

Like many of you, I was somewhat taken aback by the photograph of our Mayor and her husband which appeared in the *Herald* on 15 November. When Cllr Mrs Patterson was elected Mayor, she chose her mother to be our Mayoress. Nothing wrong with that but, in accordance with Appleby's long and proud tradition, the Mayoress' chain of office has been reserved to the Mayoress and has not, to my knowledge, been worn by a third party since it was presented to the Council in 1927. The caption to the photograph refers to the Mayor's "consort", her husband, William Patterson, who is shown wearing the Mayoress' chain. The word 'consort' has several dictionary meanings but, in the context of civic dignity, 'consort' can only refer to the husband of a reigning monarch. Essex Girl ..... reigning monarch?

### **The Saga of the Bus Stop**

I enjoyed Bardric's light-hearted pop at our Council's excursion to fairyland – sorry, I mean, discussions of a serious nature concerning a matter of importance to Appleby's residents (see November 2008 Newsletter). It is more than three years since Cumbria County Council gave Appleby £3,400 towards the cost of a bus stop on the Sands. Bus stops are a County Council responsibility and, in all probability, Appleby could have had its shelter long ago had it not been for our Council's determination to provide a miniature castle rather than a functional shelter. Kirkby Stephen was provided with bus shelters over two years ago. Now, after rejecting two designs, the Council has agreed to have a shelter just like those in Kirkby Stephen. Unfortunately, it will not arrive until the weather gets warmer. Unlike Cumbria County Council, our Town Council has to get planning permission! We are told that the new shelter can be provided within the £3,400 budget and that none of this money has been spent. If true, this is very good news indeed as it means that none of the bodies which submitted 'failed' designs have charged for their services. You might wonder how Appleby's architects keep going but there it is – they work for the Council, free, apparently.

It was only fifteen months ago that the Town Clerk was instructed to provide a new notice board but she has been far too busy to do much about it apart, that is, from regularly telling the Council that she is too busy. Given that it has taken over three years for a bus stop, we may have to wait a while longer for a new notice board.

### The Clerk's Problem

There is no doubting that our Clerk has difficulty fitting her work into her working week. When appointed, four years ago, her working week was 24 hours. When a Councillor took over the financial aspects of the job (at no cost to the town) her hours were cut to 20. Her salary did not appear to reduce but, as it is almost impossible to work out details like that from the Council's financial information, I am not able to prove it. What I do know is that the Councillor who did the books for nothing has been replaced by two paid Finance Officers so it is small wonder that the Council's wages bill continues to spiral upwards. When the Clerk circulated the minutes of a recent Council meeting she sent a note apologising for their lateness – she had been “rather short of time recently trying only to work my core (paid) hours”. My slight twinge of sympathy didn't last. After all, Brian Row and his predecessor, Charles Hirst, did both jobs (administration and finance); both were paid for a 16 hour week and both worked for nothing like the salary being paid to our Clerk and two finance officers. I thought no more about the Clerk's plight until the December meeting of the Finance Committee which was presented with optional budgets for next year. One increased the Clerk's working week from 20 to 22 hours, with no compensating reduction in the time worked by the Finance Officers and paid her over £1,500 in back pay; the other kept her working week at 20 hours but still provided for 120 hours of overtime payment at a cost of £1,536. I make that £12.80 per hour and, I am told, that is good money in the Eden Valley.

The final decision about whether or not to increase the Clerk's hours took place behind closed doors so we simply don't know what her working week is or whether she will get overtime.

I'm simply not sure the town can go on like this for much longer.

### It is Getting Sillier

Over recent months it has become quite apparent that our Council will not discuss anything remotely interesting whilst the public is present. For example, we know that contracts have been awarded for about £30,000 worth of repairs to the Moot Hall, Public Hall, Cloisters and Crosses but we do not know to whom the contracts have been given. By law, we should. We don't even know how the Council went about getting contractors to tender for the work. Nothing was advertised so it must have been by invitation. But, whilst Cumbria County Council and Eden District Council have published lists of approved contractors upon whom they call, Appleby Town Council does not. So, who approved the 'short list' from which the Council made its choices? We don't know. Everything seems to have been left to just one Councillor. I do hope this was not the case as delegation to a single Councillor is illegal, as we know. But there is no escaping what the Town Clerk put in her report to the Council on 12 November. Among a long list of 'thank yous' to various Councillors who, between them seem to be doing most of her work, she paid special tribute to Cllr Mrs Anderton, “for all her ongoing work in obtaining quotations, etc. for our much needed building repairs”. I, too, wish to record my thanks to Cllr Mrs Anderton for, it seems, without her we might still be waiting for something to be done about building repairs. But why her? In August, the Council published a list of which Councillors were on the Building Repairs Working Party. Cllr Mrs Anderton was not on that list. By November she was its Chairman! Was this another 'behind closed doors' decision? It is all a bit of a mystery but, as our Chairman points out, it seems as though our Council thrives on mystery.

Fortunately 1 January 2009 brings with it a present from none other than Hazel Blears in the form of a Freedom of Information Scheme which requires town councils to make a wide range of information publicly available. The idea is to avoid the need for the public to fight tooth and nail for scraps of information. Details of contracts will need to be displayed. The penalties for non-compliance are severe. On 10 December 2008, our Councillors VOTED 7-4 in favour of complying with the law. How kind. (Remember that our Council also VOTED in favour of complying with the Equal Pay Act.)

### Declarations of Interest

If you thought the way in which our Council goes about awarding contracts is a bit strange – read on. The rules governing what amounts to a personal interest and a prejudicial interest are set out, in detail, in a Code of Conduct which is, or should be, issued to each Councillor on taking office. No excuse, then for not knowing the rules. Councillors must declare interests as soon as they become apparent and the Clerk must record them in the minutes as a matter of public (not private) record. The problem is that the rules seem not to apply in Appleby. There are occasions on which declarations are not made and, according to our latest

information, occasions on which they are made and not recorded in the minutes. But none of this matters, it seems, just so long as the Clerk can remember what happened. Of course, it goes without saying that, once Councillors are in secret session, everything is dealt with in conformity to the rules. We know they are because the Council tells us so. Behind closed doors declarations are made, Councillors with prejudicial interests leave the room during discussions and everything is recorded in glorious technicolour by the Clerk. It is a pity that the public cannot see the minutes of these closed sessions. But we can't and that's all there is to it. My problem is that, if they can't get it right when they KNOW the minutes will be in the public domain, why should we take their word for it when they KNOW the secret minutes will not see the light of day?

The Mayor knows there is a problem. She said as much on 1 December 2008, when she told Councillors that there was still a degree of uncertainty in the minds of some Councillors about just what amounts to a personal interest and when it should be declared. She intends to give all councillors a copy of the Code of Conduct – which would be nice, said some of our newest Councillors who reported that they had not been given a copy on appointment and couldn't understand what all the fuss was about.

I fully support the proposal to give all Councillors a copy of the Code of Conduct. When the Finance Committee discussed an application from the Society for a contribution towards the cost of establishing an historical archive FOR THE TOWN, Councillors found it difficult to separate the application from the lease of a room in the Public Hall. Within no time, the wording of the lease became more important than the money. It was then that a Councillor dropped a bombshell and admitted to having read the draft lease and could see the problem from both sides, understanding the Council's position and seeing why the Society was concerned by some of the terms. Following this admission, a long-standing Councillor went a funny colour and asked, in a very loud voice, "Should you not declare an interest then?" So, there you have it. It seems that Councillors who take the time and trouble to prepare for meetings must declare an interest if they know what they are talking about and thus take no part in decision-making. Surely it is not that bad, I hear you cry. Come and join me on the public benches and judge for yourself.

Note: At the meeting of the Finance Committee held 5 January 2009 the Committee recommended that a grant of £500 from the Hannah Kennington Charity be approved. The Trustees subsequently approved the grant. This took place after the lease had been signed and the rent paid. (Item F12/01/09 in minutes of that Finance Committee meeting refers.)

#### Talking of Public Benches

The seating arrangement in the Moot Hall has changed again – the third change in as many months. No longer are reporters and members of the public forced to huddle for warmth in the dark recess by the door. The space between the serried ranks of Councillors is now filled with chairs – as for the Annual Town Meeting. I think I know why. When I went to a Finance Meeting in November, the Finance Officer outlined her draft proposals for next year's precept. Having discussed the future spending plans with the Town Clerk, she suggested a 15% hike from £56,722 to £65,800. When some Councillors saw that figure in our November Newsletter there was a demand to know who had "leaked". The hounds were only called off when someone remembered I had been at the meeting. Hence the revised seating. Members of the public are now in full view of the assembled Councillors and woe betide anyone who says anything interesting.

The good news is that, in her rush to rebut what was in the Newsletter, the Mayor told the *Herald* that there would be no increase next year. She said that more than three weeks before the Council met to decide its budget. A Councillor pointed out that there could not be a rise as the Mayor had already said so. That prompted an interesting exchange of views. "You cannot believe what you read in the papers," said the Mayor. "A bit like our minutes, then," quipped a Councillor.

#### The Charitable Trust

I can only confirm what most of you already know – the Council has decided against putting our public buildings into a trust for the very reasons we pointed out in our September Newsletter. Fortunately the Council agreed to put our concerns to the test by asking an independent solicitor for advice. Like us, he advised against. Of course, the Society cannot and does not claim any credit for, as the Mayor told the

*Herald* on 22 November, the solicitor only confirmed the Council's fears. I could ask why, then, did she and the majority of Councillors vote in favour of the idea. But, of course, I won't.

### Who Manages The Fair?

At the time of writing I still don't know. I wrote to Eden District Council's Chief Executive on 13 November (see Stop Press) to ask how Applebians could get their concerns about the Fair to E.D.C. now that the Town Council has scrapped its New Fair Community Forum before anyone outside the Council chamber was aware of it. No reply. I wrote again on 6 December and, to date, have received only an acknowledgement.

### STOP PRESS

In response to my letter of 13 November, Kevin Douglas replied on 22 December to let me know that he was disappointed by our Town Council's decision not to set up a Community Forum for the residents, having previously agreed that it would. Our concerns will now be handled by Cumbria County Council's Upper Eden Neighbourhood Forum – which seems a bit odd, given that Cumbria County Council has no responsibility for fairs or markets. The 'good' news is that Eden District Council will "continue to liaise with Appleby Town Council as the elected body for the Town." Much good will that do. Your Committee will consider the implications at its next meeting.

### Shire Hall Toilets

Question. Why did Eden District Council offer our Town Council £50,000 if it would take on the lease of the Shire Hall toilets before the Shire Hall was sold in December 2008? One possible answer goes like this. In October 2006 E.D.C. closed the Shire Hall toilets claiming they were unfit for purpose. In August 2007 E.D.C. took a new 25 year lease on the toilets which had a break clause allowing the District Council to surrender the lease with six months notice. That lease was a full repairing and insuring lease, which meant that E.D.C. is obliged to keep the toilets in good working order. E.D.C. estimated that it would cost £70,840 to make them operational and, at that time, fully intended that work would begin in 2008. E.D.C. then changed its mind and decided not to re-open them and must have been very relieved when Cumbria County Council decided to sell the Shire Hall and toilets in December 2008. At first, E.D.C. claimed to have surrendered the lease on hearing that news. Later it denied it. E.D.C. was in a cleft stick. If it surrendered the lease it would have to hand the toilets back to Cumbria County Council in working order and fit for purpose. The cop-out was to persuade Appleby Town Council to take on the lease. Fortunately, Appleby was given about a month in which to make up its mind which, in view of the three years needed for a decision on a bus shelter, was a ridiculous timescale. The Shire Hall toilets now have a new owner. That new owner is in a position to require E.D.C. to put the toilets in working order, as required by the terms of the lease. If and when that is done, and not a minute before, Appleby Town Council could enter into negotiations with whoever owns the toilets, provided, of course, that the Council asks the residents if they are prepared to add another £10,000 per annum to the Town precept – the estimated cost of keeping the toilets operational once they are refurbished.

### Quote of the Year

As most of you know, I run a Quote of the Year competition when I attend Council meetings. This year's 1<sup>st</sup> prize goes to our Mayor. Following a long discussion about next year's town precept at a Committee meeting in December which failed to reach a conclusion, Councillors went on to discuss a grant application from Eden Community Outdoors. Cllr Mrs Patterson's contribution to the discussion was, "Perhaps this Council could give E.C.O. advice on how to manage its finances".

### Who Cares for the Lost Little 'Uns'?

Twice, in recent years, I have written letters to the *Herald* which have been printed minus a vital 'un'. It happened last month, when I claimed that being asked to let our Mayor know what we thought about the Shire Hall toilets saga before we were given the facts was unrealistic. The newspaper lost the all-important 'un'. Hence my question. Given the *Herald's* circulation there must be lots of lost little 'uns' out there. So who is looking after them?

Graham Coles

## Committee Meeting

**Matters Arising from Minutes for 7 October 2008:** Trees - the situation on the riverbank continues to be monitored; Society Archive - report given as to the current position with regard to the lease. Report also given about the grant application. Enquiries being made about obtaining furniture for the room. Meeting of sub-committee to be arranged. 2009 Exhibition - booking of TIC Exhibition space for March 2009 to be withdrawn. If the Moot Hall is re-wired/re-decorated as planned, it is unlikely that the space will be available. We have expressed our wish to be involved in discussions with the Town Council about the future use of the Exhibition centre. Christmas Evening - arrangements reported as all in hand. President – we await a decision from the person approached. Newsletter - contributions requested by 31 December.

**Reports:** Membership/Treasurer – balance as at 30 September £6657.14. £766 received from subscriptions plus £79 in donations and expenditure of £155.70. Planning/Townscape - no objections to planning applications viewed. Appleby New Fair - discussion took place about the Community Forum and the means by which Appleby residents can express concerns. Chamber of Trade and Community Association - a change of name is proposed.

**Correspondence received:** e-mail from English Heritage inviting the Society to send a representative to a consultation event to explore the provision of online access to the National Monument Record's collection of aerial photographs; Windermere and Bowness Civic Society News, No 97; letter from Elizabeth Davy wishing to change the subject of her talk planned for May from *The Pilgrim and the Quaker to Soldiers, Travellers and a Hand in Glory* – the story of the 12 miles of the A66 between Brough and Bowes.

**Any Other Business:** continuing concerns regarding Shire Hall toilets discussed.

**Next meeting:** Tuesday 3 February 2009, 7.30 p.m.

## From the Secretary

### HELP

A Society member has a china mug – 'Bongate School 1872'. Does anyone know the significance of that date? Please pass any information to Graham or Vivienne.

### 'Hidden' Lady Anne

A Society member wrote following Alice's talk on Lady Anne was advertised in the July newsletter to pass on a snippet of information. During a visit to Wilton, the home of the Earl of Pembroke, he found a portrait of Lady Anne hidden away at the bottom of a stair-well. This portrait is not labelled and so could easily be missed. It did not look too much like his image of Lady Anne, but he was assured that it is authenticated. It would be interesting to know if any other reader has seen the portrait or is going to Wilton and would like to search out the portrait, reporting their opinion.

### John Metcalfe Carleton

Just to let members know, John Sharpe is re-launching his book about this "Georgian Rake of the Eden Valley".

### Next Meeting

**Thursday 29 January 2009  
7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall  
"The Red Wyvern Society"**

**Adrian Waite, Secretary and Captain of this historical re-enactment society, will take us into the world of the Clifford household in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.**

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

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

An £8 individual subscription also entitles you to attend six bi-monthly meetings free. These are usually held in the Supper Room of the Market Hall on the last Thursday of January, March, May, July (our A.G.M. meeting), September and November at 7.30 in the evening.

Application forms are available at the Library.

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