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Newsletter July 2005

No 60

Public Meeting

It was at our May 2004 meeting that we first met Mike Mapleton and the event was such a success that we issued an invitation to return. So it was that a good audience of members and visitors were treated to *Cumbrian Postal History – Part II*. In another enthusiastic, knowledgeable and humorous presentation, we learned about some of the characters who worked for the Post Office and their exploits, as well as the important relationship between rail and mail delivery systems. We also enjoyed a tour of Post Offices throughout Cumbria, which included several Westmorland premises. Each of the three parts of the evening was illustrated by a wonderful collection of photographs, postcards and philatelic examples. Mike had been on the platform at Carlisle when the Travelling Post Office made its last trip in 2004 and he had brought with him a souvenir from the Sorting Office.

A report of the evening appeared in the Herald on 9 July 2005.

From the Chairman

Thank you for the ‘get well’ cards and kind wishes – teach me to sneak off for two holidays in quick succession! Thanks also for your support at the annual Coffee Morning on 11 June. Several ‘little helpers’ stepped in at the eleventh hour when they learned that one or two ‘regulars’ were indisposed. The result was more volunteers than ever on duty. No one can ask for more. Coffee morning devotees told me that we had a better than average attendance and that the coffee was “excellent”. Praise like that from Applebians is hard won – so double thanks.

And I have a special ‘thank you’ for Mr Hoon, Leader of the House of Commons, who says that it is perfectly permissible for the public to scrutinise, question and satirise politicians provided we don’t damage respect for our institutions.

Its good to know that as, just occasionally, politicians are inclined to think that I go ‘over the top’ in the Newsletter. So, subject to members views, the Society will continue to scrutinise, question and satirise. We will, however, leave it to the politicians to damage public respect for our institutions. After all, some of them are very good at it.

Eden District Council has a new Chairman in Cllr Mrs Langan – the first time that an Appleby Town Councillor has also become Chairman of the District Council – congratulations to her. During her inaugural speech Cllr Langan recalled that very few people wanted the District Council to succeed when it was formed 31 years ago. She then went on to ask who could now deny that Eden District Council is one of the most respected and admired District Councils in the country. Who, indeed?

When I read that, my initial reaction was to compile a list of those who seemed less than enthusiastic about Eden District Council, such as the Ombudsman and the Audit Commission. But that would have been too easy and those organisations are free to make their own comments. I then contemplated the recent ‘innovations’, such as refuse collection, public toilets, the rush to contract out pretty well everything the District Council is paid to do and parking. Let’s stick to parking.

Three years ago, Eden District Council accepted responsibility for ‘on street’ parking. It didn’t have to. The overall responsibility rests with Cumbria County Council. However, a politically-astute County Council clearly saw that there were no votes in enforcing parking regulations! No sooner had Eden District Council accepted responsibility than it contracted Carlisle City Council to do the job.

During the first year of the contract (2003/04) Eden District Council made a ‘profit’ of £23,000 and promptly spent £17,000 on a clerk to deal with the paperwork; paperwork that most people might think should have been dealt with in Carlisle, since it had the contract.

In June 2004, District Councillors were warned that there would be less ‘profit’ in 2004/05. As it turned out, the sum was £14,000. Also in June 2004, Councillors were told that the cost of the contract would be £173,000 but, in June this year, the cost was reported to be £160,000. How convenient!

When a group of Applebians went to Eden District Council to discuss the original proposals for public toilets, we queried the figures on which the Council had based its financial analysis. No less an authority than the Council’s Director of Technical Services told us that figures provided by local authorities are “notoriously unreliable”. In Eden’s case, we knew that already. In July 2004, the Council’s Scrutiny Committee was alerted to “major weaknesses” in the Council’s information technology system. In particular, an audit had exposed a problem with the Council’s ability to monitor contract administration. Una Harrison wrote a letter to the *Herald*, urging Councillors to resolve the problem quickly and then announce the outcome on the front page of the newspaper. Una, I haven’t seen it, have you?

This year (2005/06) we are warned that there will be no profit and that losses of up to £34,000 might be incurred on the deal with Carlisle City Council. How come? Well, we know that Eden District Council has neither the staff nor the expertise to write contracts – the very same Director of Technical Services (whose salary and expenses are classified information, by the way) told Councillors that as recently as January this year. Instead of raising the roof, Councillors tamely agreed to spend £55,000 on a contractor to write contracts which the Council will be unable to monitor. BUT someone in the District Council agreed the parking contract with Carlisle City Council – that someone either knew or should have known that the Council staff did not have the expertise to manage a contract.

But the ‘shortfall’ might not be that big if the Councillor from Langwathby gets his way. According to the *Messenger* (8 June), his answer is simple – the enforcers get out there and issue more tickets. If that had been said by a Councillor from Penrith, Kirkby Stephen or Appleby, where shops are closing and visitors are refusing to come back, there would be a need for more lamp posts and a lot more string.

Now close your eyes and remind yourself just why it is that Eden District Council enforces parking regulations. According to a report accepted by Councillors, it helps the Council to progress one of its policy objectives – to “promote the vitality and viability of town centres”! Who could deny that Eden District Council is to be admired and respected?

Our part of the world is well off for local newspapers as at least four circulate in the area. I find it interesting to compare accounts of the same event. For example, the *Herald* (30 April) carried a report of the annual town meeting. I understand that the *Herald* had sent a reporter along to ensure that its version had the strength of “someone who was there”. I wasn’t. The report stated that Mrs Davina Osman had thanked the Town and District Councillors for “going out of their way” to help residents by contacting either the District Council or the County Council on various matters of concern to Applebians, “but nothing was ever done”. The Mayor added his support and reportedly said, “Trying to get a response from the principal authorities was like beating your head against a jelly, as they absorbed what was said” but did nothing. As someone who was not at the meeting, I read that to suggest that, whilst local Councillors were doing their best, local authorities simply ignored them.

I was, therefore, surprised to read another account of the same meeting in the *Cumberland News* – which did not have a reporter present. This account said, “The annual town meeting of Appleby council saw only two members of the public join fourteen councillors. One of these, Davina Osman, attacked the council and in particular the town’s district councillors, saying they were totally ignored by both district and county councils.”

Two papers – entirely different emphasis. No matter how I read the *Herald* report, I cannot see how anyone could suggest that Mrs Osman had “attacked” local Councillors – quite the reverse, in fact. How on earth did the *Cumberland News* get its version?

Appleby New Fair

The traditional, annual, horse fair does not get a mention in these pages very often. There was a potted history in the May 2003 Newsletter and we have referred to some of the more ‘exotic’ proposals emanating from the New Fair Joint Committee from time to time. Most of us probably think its not worth all the hassle but we accept that it happens every year and will probably go on happening, come what may. But that is on the assumption that it will affect the town on just one week each year.

This year’s fair was different! The local newspapers were full of references to dirty toilets, uncleared roads and paths and uncollected litter. There were calls for a referendum. Those calls were picked up by regional and national television companies. Appleby was ‘on the map’ again but for all the wrong reasons. Something that Appleby has been proud to claim as its own for hundreds of years has, almost overnight it seems, been made the subject of public disapproval.

As the May 2003 item pointed out, the charter of 1685, which is often cited as authorising the Fair, was never enrolled and, in any case the place where the Fair is held is not in Appleby. The charter has nothing to do with the Fair. When the Corporation of Appleby decided that it would authorise a fair on Gallows Hill in 1750, the landowners concerned placed an advertisement in national papers pointing out that Gallows Hill was not in Appleby and that the Corporation had no right to authorise a fair on land which was not in the town. The Fair is an historic gathering. It has no legal status.

But nothing in the above paragraph has prevented ‘spokesmen’ continuing to claim the Fair has ‘official’ authorisation.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, the Fair has a high profile at the moment. It began in May when the Town Council had one of its ‘off the cuff’ discussions and decided that it had nothing to do with the Fair. Then, there was the matter of the proposed new ramp – of which more later. Then came the infamous claim that the event generated a turnover of some three million pounds. To cap it all, Appleby seemed to have been abandoned by local authorities which have a duty to keep it clean, tidy and safe. We thought each of these topics worthy of consideration.

Responsibility for the Fair

At the May Council meeting, Cllr Morgan pointed out that, whilst the Council was assumed to be responsible for the Fair, the ‘real organiser’ was the New Fair Joint Committee. The Council’s only role was to rent a piece of land at Fair Hill. Councillors then discussed the position of the Town Clerk, who is also secretary to the ‘real organisers’ and who circulates correspondence relating to the New Fair Joint Committee on Council notepaper and who handles the finances of both the Council and the ‘real organisers’ and who transfers monies from the fair account to the Council account. Then there is the little matter of there being four Councillors on the New Fair Joint Committee, one of whom is its Chairman.

Not so very long ago – in fact in March 2001 – the then Mayor had to make a decision about the Fair because of the foot and mouth epidemic. He is quoted as saying that the Fair is held at the discretion of the Mayor. He, rightly, looked for a recommendation from the New Fair Joint Committee, which ‘reluctantly’ suggested that the Fair should be cancelled for 2001. But, if the Council is not responsible for the Fair and the New Fair Joint Committee has nothing to do with the Council, how could that be?

Horses are wonderful animals and so much a part of English lore that many expressions relating to horses have found their way into common parlance. So, “if it looks like a horse, sweats like a horse and smells like a horse, chances are it is a horse”. The New Fair Joint Committee is a horse and the horse is part of the Council.

Some Councillors had worked that out for themselves by the time they next met in June. They had another discussion in which they ‘clarified’ their position. We know it is ‘clarified’ because Councillors said so. It is not the Appleby New Fair Joint Committee from which they wished to disassociate themselves (just as well) but they want nothing to do with a completely separate organisation known as ‘Appleby Fair Joint Committee’, to which the Council has also nominated representatives for many years. Would someone please define ‘clarify’?

The *Herald* press report that alerted me to all this opened with the words, “Appleby Town Councillors want to ‘distance’ themselves from the annual horse fair because of fears that the Council could be held liable for the event financially”. I would like to ‘distance’ myself from the liability to pay income tax – if only it were that easy.

If, as Cllr Morgan claimed, the Town Council’s only involvement is to rent out a field for caravans – don’t do it. But, if the field is to be let, we are entitled to think that there will be contractual clause indemnifying the Council and its precept payers from liability. It is customary in such cases for a letting or leasing contract to specify that the lessee/tenant obtains and maintains the necessary insurances to indemnify the Council against any claims. Surely we don’t have to ask if that is the case for Appleby? Or do we?

Both as a Town Council precept payer and as your Chairman, I, too, am worried if the Town Council thinks it might be financially liable. I thought that particular issue had been resolved some time ago. When the Town Council met on 12 February 2003 it received the minutes of a New Fair Joint Committee meeting held on 4 February. (Written on Town Council letterheaded paper.) I quote – “The minutes of the (New Fair Joint Committee) held on 4 February 2003 together with the chairman’s report were noted. It was moved by Cllr Elliot, seconded by Cllr Potts and RESOLVED that sufficient funds be transferred from the Fair Hill account to the Council’s account on placement of any order for improvement works and it was further moved by Cllr Milsom, seconded by Cllr Potts and RESOLVED that firstly the Council’s insurers be approached on the question of the Council’s public liability in respect of the fair and then to seek the advice of Eden District’s legal

services.” Once again, the dates on which these discussions took place at Appleby Town Council are revealing.

In December 2002, Cumbria Constabulary produced a report on the role of the ‘New Fair Committee’ on which the police are represented. Given that we are now told that there are two committees dealing with the fair, the police report should, perhaps, have referred to the New Fair Joint Committee. Another, very comprehensive, 24-page report was considered by Eden District Council’s Environment Committee on 9 January 2003. This report referred to the District Council’s determination to have no responsibility for the Fair. The report referred to ‘New Fair Joint Committee’ and ‘New Fair Committee’ interchangeably. Poor drafting perhaps?

The Town Council met to discuss both reports on 22 January 2003. It was a well supported meeting which was attended by visitors from outlying parishes as well as by representatives of Appleby organisations, including this Society. At no time did anyone seek to clarify the correct titles of the committees involved with the Fair. Given their apparently distinct roles, someone should have made the position clear. As it was, the meeting agreed that the management of the Fair was “shambolic” and that a new structure was required.

It was at that meeting that Councillors resolved to form a limited company to manage the Fair. During the year, Appleby New Fair Company Ltd was formed but its present role is difficult to identify. Now we have three groups with a close involvement with the Fair – but neither the Town Council nor the District Council has anything to do with it! ‘Shambolic’ is hardly the correct word in the circumstances.

So, to recap, both the police and Eden District Council produced reports on the management of the Fair. Those reports were considered by the Town Council in January 2003. In February 2003, the Town Council expressed concern and resolved to seek its insurers’ advice on the question of public liability and then to ask Eden District Council’s legal services department for an opinion.

I can well understand the first part – the need to contact the Council’s insurers. But why the second bit? The report considered by Eden District Council on 9 January and by the Town Council on 22 January that year states – “Other than some limited insurance cover provided for the representative organisations on the New Fair Joint Committee via Appleby Town Council and some individual land owners who have public liability insurance, the Fair operates without any insurance cover. Given the lack of formal organisation of the Fair and the fact that no identifiable body controls it, it is likely that insurance cover would either be unobtainable or very expensive”. (The underlining is mine.) Appleby Town Council knew what Eden District Council’s opinion was, so why resolve to ask for it?

The Proposed Ramp

When the townscape revision was being discussed on 25 May, a representative of Eden District Council mentioned a new ramp which would enable horses to better access the river. Appleby Councillors and other Appleby residents at the meeting were surprised.

Urgent enquiries revealed that the Chairman of Appleby New Fair Joint Committee had written to Eden District Council on 22 April with a proposal for a new access ramp for horses. The matter was considered at a meeting of Eden District Council’s Community and Environment Committee on 2 June and the committee agreed to the proposal in principle. The Chairman of the New Fair Joint Committee is a member of the District Council.

It is claimed that the existing ramp is too wide and too steep. It is too wide (8 feet 6 inches) as it enables horse-drawn sulkies to reach the river and this is said to be dangerous. Has any member

ever seen a horse-drawn sulky in the river? It is too steep (1 in 5 gradient) for horses. How on earth do horses get into and out of horse boxes?

The proposed ramp cuts across the river bank at a 20 degree angle. It will be almost 3 and a half times the length of the existing ramp. It will be 5 feet 9 inches wide. The river bank is about 10 feet high on the Sands. The required concrete retaining walls will have to be quite high and, in my opinion, it may be necessary to increase their height to prevent people, especially children, from falling into the cutting. (The proposal is for posts and chains to be extended along either side of the ramp top. Wiser counsels will have to determine whether that would be sufficient to stop onlookers from reaching the top of the concrete cutting.) The cutting would be there all year round and would only be used for a week. It would serve no other purpose.

A copy of the drawing which was seen by District Councillors is enclosed with the Newsletter. It is not particularly easy to follow and some of the wording is unreadable – it is, however, a fair copy of the plan that went to Councillors so they might have found it hard to read as well!

It is worth recalling that the original ramp was not provided for travellers. Photographs in the archive clearly shows that it was there to enable horse-drawn vehicles to access the river to remove gravel – a nice little ‘earner’ for the Borough Council. More recently, it has been used to enable motor vehicles to get to the bridge abutments so that essential repairs could be carried out. The ramp may well be used by the travelling community during Fair week but that is not why it was provided. If the existing ramp is filled in as proposed, emergency access to the bridge would be denied to motorised vehicles.

The River Eden is a European Area of Conservation. One of the problems which is constantly being addressed by Eden Rivers Trust is the ‘erosion of banks and margins’. The proposed new ramp goes beyond ‘erosion’.

Eden District Council has not reopened the children’s paddling pool in Penrith – too slippery for the kiddiwinks. But, instead of banning horses from entering the river on the grounds of safety, Appleby will have a gash across one of its river banks which will be open all year round. If a ban is not an option, why not use the ford at Bongate Mill?

The Fair generates a turnover of some three million pounds

One writer to the *Herald* suggested that statement was “rubbish” – seems a good enough word to me. But the figure must be correct as, according to Cllr Morgan, it came from a report produced by a firm of Edinburgh-based consultants who carried out a survey last year.

In the May 2003 Newsletter we made the point that it would be sensible for someone to ask Applebians how we feel about the Fair and whether we want it turned into a mega business opportunity.

In October 2004, Jura Consultants did produce a report on the Fair. They called it ‘Appleby New Fair Economic Impact Study and Development Plan’. It listed the previous studies it had considered as:-

- The 1997 Appleby Town Study;
- The 2002 Cumbria Constabulary Horse Fair survey;
- A 2003 Lancaster University ‘learning tourism’ report;
- The Shire Hall feasibility study.

Not included was the detailed Eden District Council report and our historic overview. In fact, the Town's civic society was ignored. RGA, the consultants who undertook the Shire Hall study interviewed Society representatives twice. They also held a public meeting in the town. Not so Jura.

The report listed a number of organisations who are or should be strategically involved with the Fair. They pointed out that Appleby Town Council does not have a strategy or policy on economic regeneration or development. (Whatever happened to the Council's 'commitment' to the Vital Villages initiatives?) They also pointed out that Eden District Council should be involved and supportive as the Fair provides a possibility of significant economic gain and provides an event for the socially excluded. (Another glimpse of the blindingly obvious.)

The Lancaster University report turned out to be an analysis of a number of questionnaires handed out by a post graduate student in 2003. Fifteen local traders were interviewed by Jura Consultants in 2004.

Their proposals include the reconstitution of New Fair Appleby Limited from a trading company to a company limited by guarantee and a charity (much as Appleby Alliance did recently); bringing a number of organisations into the management structure and the employment of a full-time project officer.

One can only hope that, before any detailed work is done on all or any of this, Applebians do, indeed, get the referendum discussed in the media despite the quote from the *Herald* (18 June), "However, organisers of the event dismissed the idea of a referendum as there was nothing anyone could do to prevent the Fair happening." Whether or not that is true is debateable but surely we are entitled to a view as to whether we want the Fair to become a mega business opportunity until we can be sure that the various authorities involved can look after the town and its residents properly.

Neither as an individual, nor as your Chairman, do I claim that converting the Fair from a gathering to a business opportunity is wrong for Appleby. None of us knows what is being proposed nor even by whom it is being proposed. What we do know is that Eden District Council, which is responsible for fairs and markets, turned its back on the Fair in 2003. We also know that Appleby Town Council wants nothing to do with it. So, who or what is 'in charge' and why can't we have the referendum?

As to the three million pounds generated by the Fair, that turns out to be another red herring. Even if the consultants guesstimates of how many visitors come to the Fair and how much they spend are anywhere near correct, the £3 million turns out to include over £2 million generated by horse sales. Very few tourists go home with a horse in the boot of their car and very little, if any, of that £2 million finds its way into Appleby's economy.

Looking after the Town properly

It is clear from the number of comments and complaints made by members and visitors that something went badly wrong this year and that most complaints were not directed at the travellers but at local authorities. Public toilets, never things of beauty in Appleby, were "disgusting" – to quote many of you; the footpaths and streets were not cleared of filth and litter bins appeared not to have been emptied at all. I know that some members were verbally abused when they tried to persuade visitors to take their litter home and to have some regard for residents – I do not doubt that it has happened in the past – but this year was different somehow.

When we asked why there had been no patrolling street cleaning vehicle as in previous years, we were told that "it had broken down". That seemed so unlikely that I contacted the firm concerned,

to be told that Eden District Council and/or its contractor Task Force Eden had decided only to call a cleaning vehicle out 'as required'. Vehicles and crews were available but not 'required'. We know the amount of time T.F.E. is supposed to allocate to cleaning Appleby's toilets, thanks to a lot of very hard work by Maggie Clowes. It is not sufficient at the best of times. It seems that no extra cleaning was done during the Fair. As to litter collection, all I saw was two men from T.F.E., armed with a black sack and a litter picker. I have no idea how long they spent in Appleby picking up litter, one piece at a time but it wasn't long enough. There seemed to plenty of police on duty but that didn't prevent a huge amount of broken glass and general clutter on the streets. As to vehicle parking, abandoning might be a better word.

It became very difficult to get straight answers from anyone with responsibility so we have written to Appleby Town Council, Eden District Council, Cumbria County Council and Cumbria Constabulary to ascertain how much each of these authorities spends as a consequence of the Fair. We know that policing alone cost £400,000 in 2000. Heaven only knows how much our local authorities spend. The only income from private funds seems to be the £1,000 that the Town Council gets from the travellers. There are other monies available. For example, we know that some of Eden's crime and disorder funding finds its way to the Fair and that Eden claims this is not from its budget. True – it comes from central government – but somehow I recall reading that central government gets its money from us. We shall do our best, invoking the Freedom of Information Act if necessary, to find out how much the Fair costs us. Then, and only then, can we have a realistic debate about how much rent the Council should charge for the hill and just what economic impact the Fair really has.

History Slot

More Important 'Finds'

It was long thought that all of Martin Holmes' slide collection was destroyed in the fire which swept through Castle Bank several years ago but, fortunately, a number were found when the stable block was cleared recently. They are not Martin's best and were probably spares. Nevertheless, there are some real gems among them and Helen Holmes has kindly placed them on loan to the Society archive. Members will be able to see some of them at the November meeting.

Thanks to the relatives of Ivy Dagnall, who wanted to know how best to secure the future of Madge Lawson's Red Cross uniform and a number of family albums and to Pam Kelly, who knew the answer, we have added another bit of Appleby's history to our collection.

Thanks also to Dorothy Wood for finding some of her late husband's photographs of the gas works before it was finally demolished. They will help to illustrate our history of the site.

Request for information

One of our members, now resident in London, would like to know about police sergeant Atkinson, Kirkby Thore, who was stationed there in the 1930s. He would have been aged 24-30 in 1930. News of any descendants will be appreciated, too.

'My Red House Years'

Les Dowson's long-awaited memoirs have now been published by Hayloft and is available from Dent's, Pause for Thought and from the Tourist Information Centre in Appleby, priced £8. It is well worth the money and fills yet another gap in our knowledge of Appleby and Applebians.

Acknowledgement

Most members will have guessed but, in order to complete the record, please note that the histories of Appleby Cadet Cycle Corps and of the Appleby Library Club, published in the previous Newsletter, were contributed by our member Charles Topaz, now resident in Ponteland. This month's recollections are by Margaret Lewis.

Committee Meeting 14 June

Outside Visits

Arrangements in hand for our visit to Reagill on 23 June and for the visit of members of Shap Local History Group to Appleby on 27 June.

Secretary's Note: see "From the Secretary" item for brief reports of both visits.

Coronation Park

Six trees have been marked for removal. One was actually felled by a contractor but he was 'called off' before he could continue. Perhaps a problem with nesting birds? The area continues to be strimmed once per month but there are signs that some of the woodland flowers are being left alone. Again, we do not know whether this is by accident or design – we will monitor the situation. None of the problems relating to damaged railings, litter and dog mess have been resolved by E.D.C.

Public Toilets

The Town Council's working party, on which we are represented, met with Eden District Council's Scrutiny sub-committee on 18 May. We were joined by representatives of Dufton Parish Council. There was an informed exchange of views during which Appleby put its now well rehearsed argument. We want Eden District Council to retain ownership of all four toilets. Eden District Council would look after the fabric, insurance, etc. and Appleby is prepared to manage the maintenance of them, subject to Eden District Council reimbursing the Town Council on agreed terms. Under such an arrangement there could be no suggestion of 'double taxation' and compliance with the rules governing relationships between Councils would be achieved. The Chairman of the Scrutiny sub-committee appeared to be conversant with the rules (unlike anyone from Eden District Council we had previously encountered). Sadly, Cllr Saunders left the Council a few weeks later.

The meeting was provided with the most recent costs of providing, cleaning and maintaining Appleby's toilets. The cost of Broad Close has risen from £16,639 per annum to £18,666.26. Included in the latest breakdown was £1,493.42 for cleaning the windows. That's almost £30 per week.

Annual Exhibition

The Committee would like to thank everyone who contributed to the success of this year's display, which came down on 28 May. Not only did members respond but also a number of residents, pleased with what they had seen, offered material and stories which would have remained 'hidden' but for the exhibition.

We were, and continue to be, disappointed by the lack of publicity given to the event by Appleby Town council. We also noted that, during the final weeks of the exhibition, many of the exhibits had been difficult to see due to the expansion of the 'sales' department of the Tourist Information Office. We understand that the Town Council has plans to utilise the exhibition space as a saleroom. If that happens, then there might be nowhere for an exhibition.

Your Committee hopes that there will be a period of consultation with interested parties before the Council finalises its plans. Whilst we despair at the lack of interest shown by the Council and, despite the fact that the annual exhibition began with a request from the Council, we continue to remind ourselves that we mount the exhibition for the benefit of Appleby's residents and visitors.

Townscape

The Appleby 'task force', as it has been dubbed by Cumbria County Council, met with representatives of the County Council and Eden District Council on 25 May. We are pleased to report that most of the points raised by the Society found their way into this round of discussions and the wild excesses that would have converted Appleby from market town to toy town have been discarded.

There is still an issue with where the traffic ramps/pedestrian crossing points will be located and there is no clear indication of just where the proposed 20 mph zone will begin and end.

The one outstanding problem is that of pavement finishes. Whereas the use of 'sandstone' was first mentioned on the day the scheme was approved by Cumbria County Council and had not so much as been suggested during seven long years of discussion and consultation in Appleby, the planners seem set on making Appleby's pavements look like Penrith's.

Your Committee has agreed that, whilst we will continue to argue against the use of sandstone, we will not do anything that might delay implementation of the scheme. Everyone has waited too long.

We will continue to be vigilant. We are mindful of what Councillor Nicholls said when Eden District Council accepted our Town Council's proposals way back in August 2001, "Be careful about what you eventually get. It probably bears no resemblance to what you have been consulted upon." And he should know, coming, as he does, from Penrith.

Shire Hall

Ian Campbell kindly came to our meeting to update us on the work of the sub-committee considering the Shire Hall. A summary of Ian's input follows:-

*I have precisised the first part of the Shire Hall Options Report by RGA, done in 2003. After laying out the then status of the Shire Hall and the tourist situation around Appleby, the company, tasked with coming up with a proposal to best use the Hall, recommends a four-part museum complex,; but it sets out some essential pre-requisites. One is dedicated and long-term action by local authorities. Then they state that the community is going to have to **WANT** the facility and positively support it. Another is obtaining at least co-operation from Eden Museum service. Then there is the **essential** element of the town providing good catering facilities, good toilets and **excellent parking**. They costed the redevelopment at £2,389,000 (2003 prices). Their recommendations for staffing and organising the attraction are very complex (and likely to be expensive).*

(This is desperately abbreviated – for the reasonings behind it all (usually quite sound), see the original report.)

*On reflection, I concluded that there was neither the structure needed in Appleby nor the will to support such a massive expenditure for a tourist attraction. If we want to go ahead, as a last chance to preserve the Hall for the town, I favour a modified plan – to use one courtroom for a **well-appointed** meeting room/performance room for the town, the other as a **Railway and town museum** run by local enthusiasts, and to convert the rest of the building into low-medium rent accommodation for **local** people.*

*I suggest that we proceed by calling a meeting of the Sub-committee, to see if we can settle on a sensible and definite plan for the Hall, if necessary calling on other expertise. Then I think we should put this plan to Appleby Alliance, who seem the only other organisation interested in the Hall, and modify it accordingly and see how we can co-operate. When the aim is **firmly set**, we should inform the tenants of what is afoot, and circularise the Town Council and the population to see what they want. If there is deadly apathy, or definite opposition, we give up, and we tell CCC to go ahead and sell the building for development. If there is support, the next stages will be to get a drawn survey of the Hall (CCC doesn't have one, apparently), and a dilapidations survey, negotiate with CCC, get an architect's design for our plan and a builder's estimate for the repairs and design. **THEN** we can start trying to raise the necessary funds.*

In my opinion, everything should be done as openly as possible, so everyone is aware of what goes on, but we should impose on the time and energy of the Town Council and Eden District Council as little as possible.

Chairman's Note: On 8 June Appleby Town Council resolved to discuss the future of the Shire Hall with Appleby Alliance!! We await the outcome with interest.

Oral History

No developments to report.

Membership/Treasurer

Olive reported a successful coffee morning, achieving a profit of £102.45. Although this is less than in previous years, nonetheless it had been the best attended coffee morning this year. Members continue to join.

Appleby Smarter

For a number of reasons there has been no meeting for some time. The Town Council seems to be awaiting the outcome of a public meeting (due on 20 June) at which the future of the chamber of Trade will be considered. We agreed that we would not get caught up in that. We have two 'volunteers' who are anxious to make a start on litter collection. Vivienne will call a meeting of our volunteers and a representative from the District Council to see if we cannot make progress.

Planning

The Planning Inspector has dismissed an appeal by Barclays Bank against the decision to refuse permission for a ramp on Boroughgate. The Society had objected to the proposal. Eden District Council has approved a metal balcony as an extension to the cafe at 1 Bridge Street. The Society had objected to the proposal.

Appleby New Fair

We are concerned at the proposal for a new ramp across the river bank on the Sands. Our discussion covered the points raised earlier in the Newsletter under 'From the Chairman'. Your Committee has written to Eden District Council to point out errors of fact in the report considered by its Community and Environment Committee. We also want to know whether the proposal will be subject to a full planning application.

Chairman's Note: Eden District Council has confirmed the need for a planning application.

'Chamber of Trade' meeting 20 June

This meeting has 'advertised' in the Parish Newsletter and in the *Herald*. The Society was contacted and invited along – not to discuss the Chamber of Trade – but to discuss the formation of a new group which would co-ordinate the activities of a number of bodies in Appleby. The

information provided seemed to suggest that another ‘Appleby Alliance’ was being proposed. We took the view that the Society would watch with interest.

Annual General Meeting

All Committee members agreed to stand for re-election. Revd Cannon Dr Peter Norton has written resigning as one of our vice-presidents, now that he is no longer resident. This will formally be reported at the Annual General Meeting. Olive reported that the accounts were being audited.

Castle Bank Open Garden 19 June

The Society accepted a kind invitation extended by Mrs Helen Holmes for us to put up a little ‘publicity’ display during the event. As there is no shelter this year, our contribution will be weather dependent but we will be prepared!

Chairman’s Note: Weather fine and much interest shown in our little display. The garden will be open again on Tuesday 6th September, 2.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m. Tea will be available.

From the Secretary

Outside Visits

As promised earlier, here is a brief report on the two events. Our evening visit to Reagill took place on a lovely warm and sunny June evening. We enjoyed splendid views on the journey to and from the village and this same view was on display throughout our walk. As promised, Mr Ted Relph met us at the Old School and began the walk with a tour of this interesting building. Taking us to the route of the roman road, Mr Relph also pointed out medieval features of the village arrangement and field patterns. At Yew Tree Farm, we arrived at the home of the Image Garden. This garden and its sculptures are the work of Thomas Bland [1798-1865]. Saved from sale and dispersal by neighbours and the Parish Council, the farm and garden now belong the Mr S Hindley, who has done much by way of preservation and restoration. After spending some time exploring this magical place, we continued the tour and discovered that there had been bell-pits from which coal was extracted in the late 18th century and that the village had had two blacksmiths and a couple of inns. But farming has always been the main ‘industry’ in the village. The tour ended where it had begun, at the Old School, where Graham thanked Mr Relph for an interesting and enjoyable evening.

Just a few days later members of the Society welcomed members of the Shap Local History Group to Appleby on another warm and sunny evening. Alice Palmer led the walk round Boroughgate, making several stops to explain about buildings of interest and to give some details of the history of Appleby. The group was able to visit Lady Anne’s and were enthralled by the cottages, chapel and orchard. The final stop on the tour was the Moot Hall, where the Mayor had put on display the chains of office, together with the sword and the mace, some of the measures and a copy of the earliest charter. He gave a short talk on the purpose and history of the Moot Hall. Refreshments were provided here to round off the evening. Jean Scott-Smith, from Shap, thanked Cllr Harland, Alice Palmer and the Society.

Next Meeting

Thursday 28 July 2005
7.30 p.m. Supper Room, Market Hall

Ms Sarah Hale – “Community Safety”

As Eden District Council’s Community Safety Officer, Sarah Hale explains something of her role, in Eden in general and in Appleby in particular

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; from our Secretary – tel: 017683 51597; from our Chairman – tel: 017683 53063.

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