



## CONSERVING AND ENHANCING OUR HISTORIC COMMUNITIES

Hello everyone,  
Usually at this time of year we'd have rounded off the winter season with the AGM and a look back at what we'd been doing. Because of the rules on meeting indoors and in groups we've postponed it till later in the year as we'd prefer not to use Zoom. We were very pleased however that Margaret Bunch rescued three of the winter talks by persuading the speakers to move to Zoom. Thank you to everyone who joined in; a steep, but enjoyable and useful, learning curve for all of us. We do hope to be together off-Zoom in the autumn, but meanwhile we wish you a sunny summer with family and friends.

*Anne and all the Committee.*

### PLANNING APPLICATIONS

At the AGM we would also have been updating you on the number of planning applications that we had reviewed over the previous year. Lynne Seignot has provided us with the following information:

Despite the lockdown, a steady stream of about fifty applications



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have been made to SLDC and YDNP planning departments since March 2020. Of these we have expressed our concerns on only five.

A common thread was that the owners were seeking to develop their buildings in ways that were

excessive for the limited plots. Please visit our website to see the full lists month by month and see more detail on our objections to these applications:

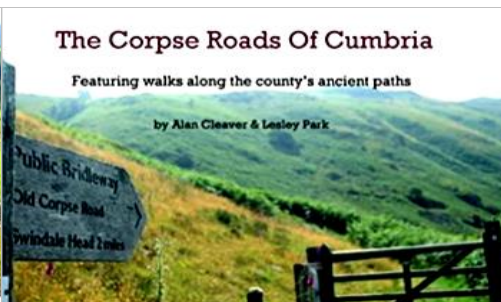
[www.kirkbylonsdalecivicsociety.org/planning.html](http://www.kirkbylonsdalecivicsociety.org/planning.html)

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REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER: 502315



## Zoom Talks: Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership-The Corpse Roads-Thorns Abandoned Settlement

### ZOOM TALKS

#### Cultural Heritage Officer Hannah Kingsbury's talk in November

explained the role of the Westmorland Dales Landscape Partnership's four year scheme, supported by the National Lottery Fund. The scheme aims to reveal the hidden heritage of the Dales. [Read more.](#)

#### During February we welcomed Alan Cleaver into our homes via Zoom for a talk about The Corpse Roads of Cumbria

Alan described how over recent years he has been researching and walking the Corpse Roads of Cumbria. Corpse roads were those paths which led from remote areas to the mother church and along which pall bearers would carry the coffin to a funeral.

There are probably around thirty such roads in the county, including at least one coming into Kirkby Lonsdale. But it's no easy task to locate where they are. No medieval map exists showing the roads and they didn't always follow the logical straight route. But we can get information from early newspapers where you can read reports of right-of-way disputes. There are also the petitions to the bishop from various parishes asking to have their own graveyards, so avoiding having to follow the long funeral processions.

At intervals along the corpse roads, you can see coffin rests, usually large stones. These were not, as you might think, where the coffins were put down to give the pall bearers a rest (in fact, the bodies were usually only put in the coffins at the lychgate). Rather the coffin rests mark the spot where the funeral procession would stop to sing a hymn or say a prayer. Researching the corpse roads has drawn attention to a number of legends and traditions relating to



death and funerals. These range from the ringing of the church bell when somebody was dying, to the existence of a special death chair which was 'loaned' out so the dying person would be comfortable sitting in this, to the tradition of telling the bees when somebody dies. The expectation was that the bees would spread the message across the countryside and, if you didn't tell them, they'd stop producing honey.

After an entertaining and informative talk, Alan summed up the appeal of the Corpse Roads: while you may not be quite sure where the Corpse

Road goes, you can be sure of a very enjoyable walk and a chance to keep our history alive. Alan's book, written with Lesley Park, is called 'The Corpse Roads of Cumbria - walks along the county's ancient paths'. He recommends ordering it from your local bookshop, where you can get a colour edition. The Amazon edition is print-on-demand and therefore in black and white.

[Click here for the recording of Alan's talk.](#)

#### On Monday 8th March, the Civic Society hosted an engaging talk by Dr David Johnson, a landscape archaeologist and author of six books on the heritage of Northern England.

In his presentation, Dr Johnson charted the history of Thorns, an abandoned settlement near the Ribbleshead Viaduct into which he has recently finished leading a four-year archaeological investigation for the organisation Stories in Stone, sponsored by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Extant records of the site date back as far as 1189 when Furness Abbey purchased the Thorns estate for the princely sum of



£600. Dr Johnson showed, however, that its vast network of boundary ditches most likely predates the monastic occupation. Although the site was not one of the Abbey's biggest earners, it was nevertheless a stable community that successfully weathered the tumultuous Dissolution of the Monasteries, far outlasting the disestablishment of its monastic owner in 1537. By the 18th century, Thorns occupied an important location on a North-South packhorse route and its farmers could find eager buyers for their livestock at weekly markets held near-by the local Gearstones Inn. Despite this, stewardship of the farms became increasingly untenable over the course of the following century due to a collapse in livestock prices and the community fell into terminal decline, eventually being abandoned by 1891.

To this day, Thorns has been largely forgotten, its buildings left to collapse and its heritage consigned to distant memory. Thanks to the work of

Dr Johnson, however, the site has been given a new lease of life; not only has his team of volunteers made the first-ever archaeological survey of the settlement but its surviving monuments, most notably the old packhorse bridge at Thorns Gill, have also been conserved for future generations. During this process, many features of interest have come to light, not least a series of apotropaic symbols in a barn (symbols intended to ward off evil spirits such as 'daisy wheels': do Google them!); a kitchen fireplace with its fire-basket buried intact; and most excitingly, a unique 'forenoon' bottle, for taking refreshment to the fields, in the characteristic yellow on brown glaze of pottery made in Burton-in-Lonsdale, dating to between 1780 and 1820 which can now be viewed at The Folly in Settle. Possibly the most comprehensive project of its kind in the Yorkshire Dales National Park, the findings at Thorns far exceeded expectations and you can read all about them in a book available from the

### [Yorkshire Dales Millennium Trust.](#)

Also, to celebrate the release of the revised edition of his book, 'Ingleborough': Landscape and History, Dr Johnson has recorded a series of short videos for Stories in Stone, each providing an overview of a different aspect of the area's history. These, and many more, can be found at [www.storiesinstone.org.uk/](http://www.storiesinstone.org.uk/)

**Please note:** Thorns is on private land and cannot be visited.

## CIVIC SOCIETY SPRING COURSE 2022

'The English  
Country House'  
by Roger Mitchell  
MA Oxon

The postponed Spring Course will be held at Barbon Village Hall starting on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

The following two sessions will take place on 26<sup>th</sup> March and 2<sup>nd</sup> April.

The courses over previous years have been very popular with members and a great success. After each talk there will be time for discussion over refreshments.

Roger will help us to study the English Country House from early Tudor times to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Each study day will have approximately 3 hours of teaching time, split into the Middle Ages through to 1620, 1620-1830 and 1830-2020.

We do hope you will join us. More details to follow.

[Read more](#)

**MEMBERSHIP** If you know anyone who would like to join us, please direct them to our website, where they will be able to download an application form. [Click here.](#)

Alternatively, contact Mr Paul Smith our Membership Secretary: [kldcsmemsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:kldcsmemsecretary@gmail.com)

