

Kirkby Lonsdale & District Civic Society

Newsletter - Spring 2015

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Report of the 43rd AGM held on March 9th 2015

The Chairman welcomed 40 members to the meeting and reported on the year's activities. The autumn course on "Aspects of Ingleborough", presented by Dr David Johnson, had been a great success. Membership and attendance at winter talks were both slightly down, but the Society is still attracting high calibre speakers on a variety of topics. Completing an external assessment and photographic record, on behalf of SLDC, of all the buildings (listed and unlisted) in Kirkby's Conservation Area kept committee members busy during the year. Commenting on planning applications, and enforcement issues remain an important activity, and submissions were also made on both the phases of the 'North of Kendal Road' development.

The urgent need for more members to help the committee was emphasized, as a number of experienced members have retired recently and more plan to do so in the near-term.

The chairman ended by thanking the committee for all their hard work and the members for their continued support, and made a presentation to Mike Kingsbury who is finally standing down.

The Treasurer reported another satisfactory year, with a modest surplus from both the course and the Winter Talks. Overall, expenses exceeded income due to the Ruskin's View plaque replacement and purchase of a digital projector, but there remains a healthy balance of funds. He thanked the external examiner Mr Terry Simpkin for his help and advice, and he was elected to continue in that role for a further year. The draft Trustees Annual Report to the Charity Commission was approved by a vote of the membership.

The Chairman explained that the committee had decided that for operational matters the chairmanship would rotate on a monthly basis between the other members of the committee, but that he was willing to continue as the chairman for 'statutory' purposes. This experimental arrangement was supported by a vote of the membership. The existing officers and committee members were re-elected with the exception of Mike Kingsbury, and a new member, Lynne Seignot, was elected and welcomed to the committee.

After the business was concluded, Jamie Quartermaine of Oxford Archaeology North gave a vivid account of the recent excavations at Sizergh, and the evening ended convivially with wine and nibbles.



Roadside Curiosity

The first 'Local Board' was set up in Kirkby Lonsdale in 1869, after complaints to the Kendal Board of Guardians under the Sanitary Act of 1866 that the sewage arrangements of the town were extremely ineffective, and the water supply polluted by sewage.

After considerable delays, the first water and sewerage scheme was said to have been carried out in 1876, but this manhole cover, on the corner of Back Lane and Jingling Lane, has a date two years earlier.

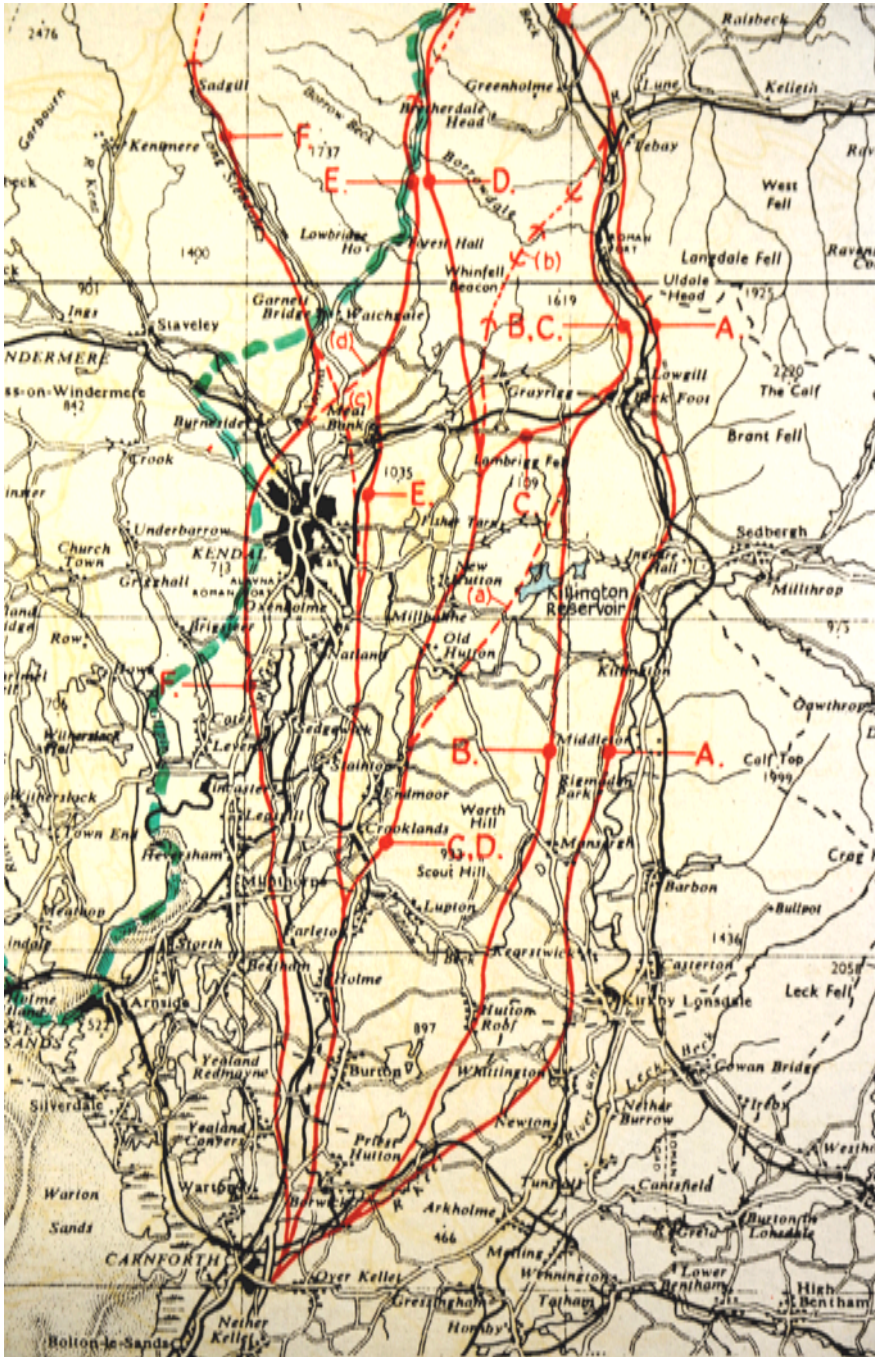
The M6 Motorway in Westmorland

The building of the M6 from Lancaster to Penrith was a considerable feat of engineering. Its route was originally proposed to come very close indeed to Kirkby Lonsdale, follow the western side of the Lune Valley to Sedbergh, and then along the Lune gorge to Tebay.

It would have changed the character of the town and the area forever and we are fortunate indeed that an alternative route was eventually chosen.

The western route for motor vehicles from England to Scotland was a perennial problem, due to the inclement weather often encountered over the A6 at Shap Saddle, which climbs to an altitude of 425 meters (1390 ft). After the war the Ministry of Transport sponsored a study by the Divisional Road Engineer, Manchester, who suggested the route via the Lune Valley and Tebay; this was reported in the Westmorland Gazette in April 1959

and started a fierce debate, especially amongst farmers and local landowners. In May of that year the NFU called for a Public Enquiry as it claimed that 110 farms were threatened by such a development. A public meeting in Kirkby Lonsdale opposed the route on environmental grounds and seemed to have much popular support. In June questions were asked in Parliament about the proposal and an alternative of a widening of the A6 to motorway standard was suggested. An assurance was subsequently given that all the various possibilities, including relative costs and the effect on amenities, would be taken into account. Following the re-election of the MacMillan government in October 1959, true to their word, on December 23rd of that year, the government appointed consulting engineers Scott, Wilson, Kirkpatrick and Partners to examine all possible alternative routes, and thus began a painstaking programme of investigation which included the first ever detailed meteorological observations to be used in a motorway study. Snow, wind, and reduced visibility were all problems which made Shap a hazard during the winter months, and comprehensive recording of these right across the area produced



valuable data to aid in the route selection. Aerial photographs were viewed stereoscopically, and maps prepared using new techniques to predict depths of rock and various soil formations. The consultants' report (Lancaster-Penrith Motorway Report on Alternative Routes, Vol 1, March 1962, Ministry of Transport/Scott Wilson Kirkpatrick and Partners, available in Kendal Record Office) considered more than thirty alternative routes.

Apart from the height of the land, the topography was also difficult. Any route had to cross the east-west mountain barrier at some point, and west of the Lune gorge the land is penetrated by a series of river valleys, which present their own difficulties. Unless the Lune gorge was followed, then the alternatives required either tunnelling or the use of viaducts, or both. For example if the route followed Longsledale a tunnel would be required from its most northern point, Sadgill, northwards.

The final choice was between three routes, which were called the Lune Valley Route, the Direct Route and the Killington Route, and these are shown in the diagram.

The Lune Valley Route, shown as "A" on the map:

- From Over Kellet, went through Docker then close to the centre of Whittington
- Bisected High and Low Biggins, passing through Kearswick and

Old Town

- Passed just to the east (front) of Rigmaden Park, which was semi-derelict at the time
- Went east of Killington, passed close to Ingmire Hall and traversed Beckfoot and Lowgill
- Then followed the east side of the Lune Gorge to Tebay

Clearly this route would have been disastrous for the beauty and tranquillity of the middle Lune Valley, although its construction would have been relatively straightforward.

The Direct Route, shown as “E” on the map, more or less followed the route of the A6, passing close to Oxenholme and the east side of Kendal, and passed to the west of Tebay.

The Killington Route was two other routes joined by a link:

- Began by following the Direct Route, ‘E’, as far as Farleton,
- Then passed through Crooklands, to the east of Endmoor,
- Turned North East on the dotted route (a) just beyond Stainton
- Just touched the Western end of Killington Lake
- Passed to the West of Beckfoot and Lowgill and traversed the west side of the Lune Gorge

The alternatives were compared after taking into account weather, cost, landscaping, the agricultural value of the land used, likely vehicle numbers, and the costs for users.

The Lune Valley route, which had strenuous objections from vested interests, the most intensive agriculture and the highest quality landscape, was ruled out first.

The Direct Route was shorter but as it required tunnels more than a mile long had a higher capital cost, but had lower recurrent costs. It was also less effective from a weather standpoint, and tunnels would have restricted the movement of dangerous goods.

Eventually the Killington Route was chosen.

For the whole section, enormous care was taken to blend the motorway into the landscape, whilst retaining acceptable gradients and minimising weather effects, and cost was certainly not the only consideration.

The chosen route, has more than 160 structures including 77 bridges or underpasses, and the West Coast main railway line is crossed three times. The A685 near Jeffrey's Mount had to be re-aligned over a distance of more than 1.5 miles before the motorway could be constructed, which necessitated the removal of vast quantities of rock, and the new rockface alongside the road is secured by bolts in many places, as well as by high strength netting. The central span of the 73 ft high Borrowbeck Bridge was designed with a reduced number of supports in order to better frame the railway viaduct when viewed from the re-aligned A685!

The motorway was opened in October 1970, and subsequently received a Civic Trust Award. The plaque by the side of the A685 overlooking the Lune Gorge says: ‘This award, for an outstanding contribution to the appearance of the Westmorland landscape, relates to the 36 miles of M6 motorway between the Lancaster and Penrith by-passes’. I believe few would disagree with this statement, and an awful lot of us are eternally grateful that the Lune Valley route was not chosen.

Timber Cladding

External timber cladding of buildings seems to be increasing. Suppliers’ brochures and architects’ visualizations understandably avoid showing the same installations after a period of weathering. Experience locally shows that the pristine appearance of new timber rapidly deteriorates due to the climate, leaving patchy discoloured woodwork that degrades the appearance of the building. Both the examples shown below are in Kirkby Lonsdale.



Whilst architects should not just slavishly follow local tradition in building design, the local vernacular is principally stone or render, which is much more weather resistant, and requires little or no maintenance. Large areas on the exterior of Queen Elizabeth Court in Kirkby Lonsdale were originally specified to be timber-clad, but were switched to render after the Civic Society (and no doubt others) objected. The use of substantial horizontal oak cladding can be seen occasionally, and this does appear to be a practical long-lasting solution.

Obituary - Ron Elston

Ron was born in London, and trained as an engineer. During World War II he joined the Royal Navy, and after the war joined Angus Fire Armour (George Angus) of Bentham, and remained with them for the rest of his career, including two periods when he was based in Canada.

He and his wife Phyl moved to Kirkby Lonsdale, and he joined the Civic Society committee, immediately becoming Secretary on 24th October 1977 which post he filled until 1st October 1984. He remained on the committee, however, and on 3rd October 1988 he became Chairman, and remained so until 4th October 1993. He served a final year on the committee, eventually resigning on 28th September 1994.

In his time with the Civic Society he was 5 years as Secretary, 5 years as Chairman, and 4 years as a committee member. He steered us, with his typical modesty and charm, through similar situations to those that test us today.

Planning Matters

SL/2015/0182 Change of Signage at Natwest Bank, Main Street, Kirkby Lonsdale.

We objected to this proposal to increase the corporate 'branding', including an illuminated sign, which would be wholly inappropriate in a Conservation Area.

Our concern about the inevitability of many barns being converted to dwellings without much opposition, following changes in the 'Permitted Development' regulations in April 2014, has not been entirely realized. Whilst about fifteen such applications have been made in the Rainbow Parish, two have subsequently been withdrawn, and three have been refused, for reasons including the following:

CU/2014/0034 Star Barn, Mansergh High Farm

.... Granting permission would detract from the attractive character of that countryside in the domestic paraphernalia surrounding the building

CU/2014/0026 Barn at Woodend Farm, Low Biggins

... as the structural framework of the barn is not substantial enough to be capable of conversion without full demolition of the building and its entire replacement...

CU/2014/0004 Land Off A683 (adjacent to Devils Bridge) Kirkby Lonsdale

... is an isolated building and it does not reuse a building that would enhance the immediate setting. The proposed use would result in the reuse of an agricultural building for domestic use in a building constructed from materials which are unsuitable to its location and the proposed use...

Volunteer in Hutton Roof

Following an appeal in the Newsletter, Phil Bull has kindly offered to help the Committee by being its eyes and ears in Hutton Roof, bringing issues to the attention of the Society, and providing invaluable local knowledge to bear when required. That means most of the Rainbow Parish is now covered, but we still need a helper in Lupton and Middleton.....

Thankyou for re-newing your membership of the Civic Society.

Your support, both financial and otherwise, is most appreciated.

Magna Carta

The 800th anniversary of this historic document will be celebrated many times over this year.. One to make note of is:

Thursday 11th June 2015

David Starkey is giving a lecture on Magna Carta to **Cumbria County History Trust** members and visitors at Rheged, near Penrith, starting at 7.30pm, and admission is £25. See <http://www.cumbriacountyhistory.org.uk> for details.

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| Editor: Dr Ken Humphris The views expressed are those of the Editor and do not necessarily reflect those of the Civic Society Committee as a whole. The Editor would be delighted to receive comments or articles from members of the Society for inclusion in the newsletter. Registered Charity No. 502315 | Committee Chairman Dr Ken Humphris Lowgill, High Casterton LA6 2SD Tel: 015242 71983 Mr Mike Marczynski Tel: 015242 73318 Mrs Audrey Phillips Tel: 015242 72514 Lynne Seignot Tel: 015242 76434 | Secretary Mrs Sue Pelter Rigmaden Farm House Mansergh LA6 2ET Tel: 015242 76216 Miss Pat France Tel: 015242 71740 Membership Secretary Mrs Judith Manifold Tel: 015242 73457 | Treasurer Mr David Dalgoutte Delph cottage Jingling Lane Kirkby Lonsdale LA6 2AW Peter Stockdale Tel: 015242 76443 Mr Mike Kingsbury Tel: 015242 76434 Mr Tom Felix Tel: 015242 72248 |
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