

Kirkby Lonsdale and District Civic Society: Chairman's report for 2019

Society membership was 222 compared to 225 in 2018. The attendance at the seven winter talks, particularly in the autumn, did not reflect this stability, averaging 50 compared to 70 in 2018. We believe the weather and the poor facilities in the Lunesdale Hall have had much to do with this, as the talks have been varied and lively. However the spring course, Andy Lowe describing the Vernacular Architecture of the Lake District and leading two field trips, to Troutbeck and Askham, was very popular with 32 attendees.

Possible improvements to the Lunesdale Hall were on hold due to the consultation on its future. But as the proposals proved too risky and costly, the Hall committee has recently been improving key areas. The sound and projection systems have been replaced and we are pleased with the improvement in quality and ease of use. The Hall has been decorated, but more importantly the unreliable heating system is next.

At the last AGM a question was asked about the high level of funds and since then we have spent a lot of time looking at ideas for reducing them, while of course keeping within the guidelines in our constitution. We have replaced the shabby sign marking Jonty's Smithy with an informative plaque matching others in the town and are creating a trail of Kirkby buildings which used to be pubs to tie in with an updated version of our town map. We have also contributed to the replacement of the sound system in the Hall and arson-damaged picnic tables in the Play Park. We are considering offering bursaries to QES to support pupils in local projects and will be looking to refurbish or replace Society-provided benches. But a key issue is always finding suitable projects and the time to manage them.

A previous project, the 'Kirkby Lonsdale Archive' website went live in May. It was set up in collaboration with the Christopher Robins Charitable Trust to preserve the stories, images and documents which form Kirkby's heritage. New material has been added since May, but technical issues need to be resolved before routine additions can resume.

A regular and key activity remains reviewing planning applications across the 'area of benefit' and the planning sub-committee considered 74, 55 for South Lakeland and 19 for Yorkshire Dales, taking only key ones forward to the full committee. We then responded to six, objecting to two new builds and two modifications on grounds of inappropriate design; partially objecting to one on grounds of inappropriate change to a listed building in a conservation area; and supporting the sixth, bar a query on a window detail. These numbers were all slightly lower than in the previous four years. We post a planning summary each month on our website.

With the election of Nick Flight to the committee this year we were four officers and seven members, just one member short of constitutional full strength. However we are saying farewell to three members.

David and Miriam Stocks have been a great team as secretary and committee member for three years, always supportive and willing to help, and entirely responsible for the Jonty's plaque project. But I do not think Audrey Phillips would thank us if I said for how many years she has been an invaluable committee member.

From a family which has lived in this area since 1500 and with 'a head bursting with stories' she has been a unique resource for our Society and the town, a fount of wisdom and knowledge about Kirkby's special history. You can read about her parting gift to the Society and the town in next month's AKL...

Looking forward, we would as ever welcome ideas for, and help with, activities and projects of any size which reflect our aims; we are still in a sound financial position to fund these. Meanwhile I would like thank you all, and especially the committee, for supporting the Society this year.

Anne Burgess
Chairman

March 2020

Appendix A

Extract from the current Constitution, approved at the AGM on 12th March 2018

The Society exists for the public benefit for the following purposes:

- a) To protect and preserve and stimulate public interest in the area comprising the civil parishes of Kirkby Lonsdale, Barbon, Casterton, Hutton Roof, Lupton, Mansergh and Middleton which area is hereinafter referred to as 'the area of benefit'.
- b) To promote high standards of town planning and architecture in or affecting the area of benefit.
- c) To inform the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area of benefit.
- d) To secure the preservation, conservation, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area of benefit.

Appendix B

Summary of talks held in 2019

Monday 14th January

James Innerdale

The Vernacular Architecture of Yorkshire Dales

Monday 11th February

Bill Shannon

Early Maps of Cumbria

Monday 11th March

Andrew Breeze

The Arthurian Legend of Cumbria

Monday 9th September

Paul Hindle

Turnpikes: The Rise and Fall in Cumbria

Monday 14th October

Diana Matthews

Windermere Lake Shore Houses

Monday 11th November

Barry McKay

The Book Trade in Cumbria in C18

Monday 9th December

Rob David

A Hotbed of Communist Activity