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FORMAL NOTIFICATION OF THE 2019 AGM

The 2019 AGM will be held at 19:30 on Monday 11th March in the Lunesdale Hall. If you would be interested in joining the committee or knowing more about what we do, please contact any current member by Monday 4th March.

We would very much like more members. We were under ‘constitutional full strength’ this year i.e. the four officers and eight others, which increased everyone’s support for routine activities and reduced time for non-routine. But twelve is not a limit: we can co-opt as many extra members as wish to join us! We would also like to hear from anyone who can offer occasional help; all skills from envelope stuffing to website support are useful.

The AGM will be followed by a talk about ‘The Arthurian Legend of Cumbria’ by Andrew Breeze. Andrew published a paper in 2015 identifying the locations of King Arthur’s battles from the 9th century Historia Brittonum, placing them all in Scotland and Northern England, with the exception of Mount Badon. Using these identifications he suggested that Arthur was a Briton from the Kingdom of Strathclyde who fought other Britons, rather than Anglo Saxons.

2019 SUBSCRIPTIONS

Just a reminder that membership is renewable in January each year and is £7 per annum per family (same address) or £5 per individual. You may pay by cash, cheque, bank transfer or standing order. Please see Paul at a winter talk or contact him:

Paul Smith, Halsteads, Low Biggins, Carnforth, LA6 2DH  
Tel: 015242 73317 Email: [kldcsmemsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:kldcsmemsecretary@gmail.com)

If you have already renewed your membership for 2019, then thank you for the support you give the Society. And if you are a tax payer, Gift Aiding your subscription has significant benefit for the Society at no extra cost to you; please contact Paul for a Gift Aid form if you would like to do this.

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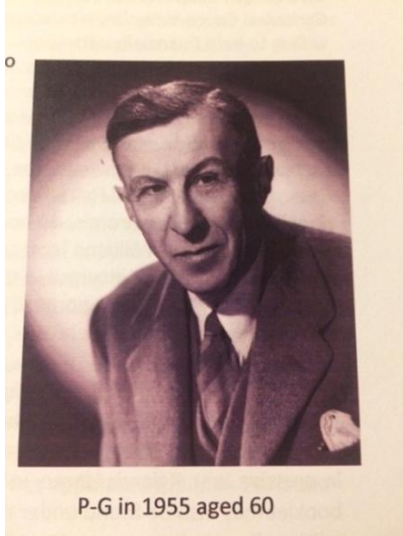


Just a reminder that if you know of any Cumbrian historical fingerposts or way-markers as dilapidated as these, Cumbria County Council would like to know about them. Report via their website: <https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/roads-transport/highways-pavements/reporting-problem-on-highway/wdm/roadmarkings.asp?cg=rmos> or phone 0300 303 2992 to speak to a highways officer.



## HUMPHREY PROCTER-GREGG, C.B.E. (1895-1980)

**Janet Atkins has been researching a notable, but so far little-known, son of Kirkby Lonsdale who as a young man was forced by family financial troubles to move away, but throughout a distinguished career in music never forgot his beloved Lune Valley and the town that ‘was certainly a profound influence on my own character and personality’.**



P-G in 1955 aged 60

I came across the name Humphrey Procter-Gregg entirely by chance. As I was leafing through Michael Kennedy’s ‘The Oxford Dictionary of Music’, my eye fell on the name ‘Kirkby Lonsdale’. I immediately gave up my initial search and discovered a fascinating entry about a notable man who had been born in Kirkby Lonsdale and gone on to develop a very multi-talented career in the world of music: as an academic, administrator (particularly in opera), conductor and biographer of his friend, Sir Thomas Beecham. He was also active in translations of operas into English. Procter-Gregg deserves recognition as a famous name in the Lune Valley area as much as do William Sturgeon or the Reverend Llewellyn Davies, and yet few people seem to have heard of him. The family history, however, is recalled and is available until sometime in the early 1900s when due to the imposition of death duties, the Procter-Greggs fell on hard times. After this the members seem to have moved away from Kirkby Lonsdale.

The fortunes of the family were not without drama. The grandfather of P-G (as Humphrey was known in his later professional life) was the Reverend Gilbert Proctor\*, priest-in-charge of Egton-cum-Newland, near Ulverston. In 1869, being severely disturbed in mind because of ‘trouble with the law’ he committed suicide in a bathroom in Cressbrook, the house in Kirkby Lonsdale where his brother-in-law, Humphrey Archer Gregg was then living. A full account of this tragedy is found in ‘The Kendal Times’ of Saturday, 6 November, 1869.

P-G’s father, Oliver Proctor, was the adopted son of Humphrey Archer Gregg. Oliver went to school in Kirkby Lonsdale and then in Sedbergh. The family always lived in substantial properties in Kirkby Lonsdale; variously in Fairbank Cottage, where P-G was born, in Brant Howe (now a nursing home) and ultimately in Cressbrook, which Oliver himself may actually have had built. He became a leading citizen in the town and is shown as a dashing figure in a checked suit and pale bowler hat as a member of the town Bowling Club in a photograph taken around 1897 and to be seen in the Kirkby Lonsdale edition of the series ‘Britain in Old Photographs’.

There is also mention of him in another photograph in this book, one of Cressbrook itself, taken before 1914. In the footnote, we learn that Cressbrook was then known as ‘Rogues’ Hall’, a name taken from the cabal of Procter-Gregg, Francis Pearson of Brant Howe and John Picard of Beck Head House, who used to meet privately before the great war to decide on the town’s affairs. Oliver is also mentioned in the list of persons present in 1880 at the laying of the foundation stone of the new church at Hutton Roof, and at some stage he became a JP. He owned land in Hutton Roof. Humphrey was the eldest of five children: two boys and three girls.

As a child, Humphrey suffered from poor health, including breathing difficulties and a speech defect: the latter dogged him all his life. However, he and his younger brother were sent to King William’s College on the Isle of Man. Subsequently he became an Organ Scholar at Peterhouse, Cambridge. I like to fantasize that he played the organ in St Mary’s church in Kirkby Lonsdale as an adolescent.

He went on to the Royal College of Music in London, where he gained an opera scholarship and showed talent in composition, a portent of things to come. In his later days at school, the family had fallen into financial difficulties partly due to heavy death duties, and they were obliged to leave Cressbrook. I can find just one reference in Francis Pearson's 'The Annals of Kirkby Lonsdale' to Cressbrook's having changed hands: its 'having previously belonged to the Proctor-Gregg family': that is when it became a preparatory school. In 1919 Oliver had had to sell nearly all his land at Hutton Roof.

In an auto-biographical note written in the 1970s, P-G speaks of his grief at having to leave Kirkby Lonsdale and his beloved Lune Valley, where the beauty of the area left such an impression on him. The town, he writes, 'was certainly a profound influence on my own character and personality'. He avers that Kirkby Lonsdale did not have any effect on his compositions, though the 'Englishness' of many of them would lead us to believe differently. In the memoir he speaks of the coming of the car and telephone to Kirkby Lonsdale, and also of the arrival of electricity and gas. Furthermore, he describes a 'Kirkby Lonsdale, still preserving a fair amount of its beauty and a small amount of its character'. I wonder what he would have made of the car-ridden and sometimes over-crowded town of today!

At the Royal College, P-G supervised many opera productions and gained a studentship to La Scala, Milan. In his early career he therefore turned to the operatic world and worked variously in different companies in England and in Italy. Among many of the positions he held was that of stage manager and producer for the British National Opera Company, for the Carl Rosa Opera and for the Covent Garden touring companies. Ultimately he was responsible for the British Studio Opera and in 1957-58 he was again with the Carl Rosa. Finally in 1962 he became the first director of the new London Opera Centre. His interest in opera led to his long friendship with Sir Thomas Beecham; this resulted in the publication in the early 1970s, after the death of Sir Thomas, of his biography; a voluntary tribute to the life and work of P-G's friend.

In 1936, P-G turned to Academia and founded the Music Department at Manchester University, where he stayed for some 30 years, becoming its first Professor of Music in 1954. In his time in Manchester, he not only pursued teaching but became active in the musical life of the city, promoting concerts and designing the University's first concert hall. He was also responsible for the formation of the Ad Solem Ensemble, taking a particular interest in the development of chamber music.

He 'retired' in 1964 to a 'gentleman's residence' with a magnificent view of the Lakeland hills on the outskirts of Windermere, one of the many large properties built in the Lake District in the late 1800s. Known as 'Oakland', it has been transformed in recent years into luxury holiday flats. It is set in a beautiful rolling garden, which occupied P-G as one of his hobbies together with painting.



More significantly, he began again to compose, re-working earlier pieces and writing many new works: for oboe, clarinet, horn, viola and violin; also songs, and solos for piano, including a sonata known as 'The Sea'. In these compositions is a deep feeling for the beauty of nature so obvious in the surroundings he chose for his long retirement. He was particularly empathetic with the works of Delius, an aspect which is reflected in his own music.

Bob Ashworth, principal horn player of Opera North, as well as his pursuing a wide musical career, runs a publishing company which lists many of P-G's instrumental and vocal works as well as a number of cds. As with other English composers of the period, performances of Procter-Gregg's compositions are undeservedly infrequent, however in September 2018 his sonata No. 1 in A minor for violin was performed in Ripon Cathedral: this had been dedicated to Albert Sammons, who gave the first performance and was also a devotee of Delius.

According to his obituary, P-G died in a nursing home in Grange-over-Sands on 13 April 1980. He had been awarded the CBE for services to music in 1972. So far I have not discovered the whereabouts of his last resting place, nor in which nursing home he was staying. He left no close family, but 'a host of indebted colleagues, former students and friends'.

I must thank Audrey Phillips, Barbara Gent and Bob Ashworth for their help with many of the facts in this short article. Inevitably, much of the information has been downloaded from that modern repository of all knowledge, the Internet. *I should be grateful to know of any first-hand reminiscences of this multi-faceted and devoted musician.* It would be splendid to hear some of his music played in a recital locally – not easy to achieve! Furthermore, Bob Ashworth is anxious make recordings particularly of three of his violin sonatas when funds allow.

Lastly, what about a plaque, either at Oakland or in Kirkby Lonsdale? An idea perhaps for the Civic Society to explore.

Meanwhile, I hope to find answers to some of the questions still outstanding. Humphrey Procter-Gregg was a reticent man and certainly did not wish to promote his own career. In his writing about his life he very modestly outlines his achievements. He rather sadly reflects on the family's early disappointments and his continuing health problems. He ends thankful for his many friends, but even then he regrets 'Time taketh all away'. It would be very satisfying indeed to keep his name alive in his birthplace of Kirkby Lonsdale.

*\*The spelling of the name 'Proctor' seems to change to 'Procter' after Oliver's marriage. I have to confess that I am not clear about the actual reason for this.*

**If anyone can tell Janet more about P-G please contact her on 015242 71140 or [janet.atkins33@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.atkins33@btinternet.com)**

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We don't think this is a 'Fake or Fortune' moment, but can anyone tell us anything about this picture? We were recently asked if it's 'the Devil's Bridge on the Lune River in South Lakeland, district of Cumbria, England'. It clearly is, but not one we've seen before; unfortunately the lady who asked – we think she may be in America – hasn't told us anything more about it. However the squiggle at the bottom centre says 'John Constable RA'...

## CAPTURING THE PAST: PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

Those who were at the January talk heard David Pelter describe an exciting local project which is reaching the end of its initial phase. Here's how David and John Short from The Christopher Robins Trust describe 'Capturing the Past' in February's AKL:

*For the past year The Christopher Robins Trust (John Short) and The Civic Society (David Pelter) have been beavering away creating an historic website for Kirkby Lonsdale. You may remember we asked a year ago if anyone had photos or documents from the past that we could borrow and scan and put on the site. Although we initially had a poor response, with a great deal of time, effort and money we have now assembled sufficient information and have a site nearly ready for viewing. It has photos on it that many of you will never have seen, together with audio stories, reminiscences, archives etc.*

### Kirkby Lonsdale Archive

CHRISTOPHER ROBINS COMMUNITY ARCHIVE



Buildings & Monuments

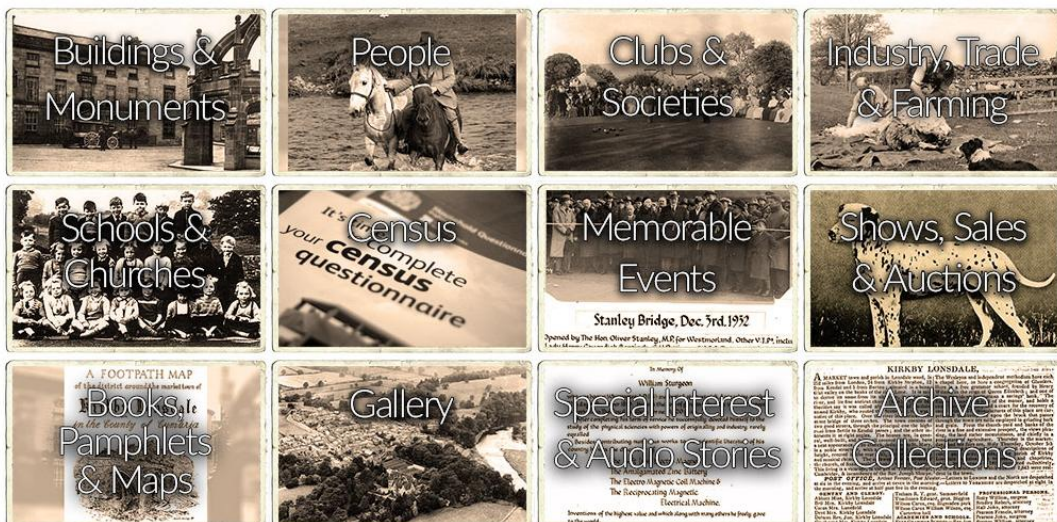
People

Clubs & Societies

*There is loads more to do and we could do with help from computer-savvy volunteers to follow a format and put extra material onto the website. We would also love even more pictures etc that we know are in your cupboards and attics. Let's get this material online before it's lost forever!*

*Come Easter we will announce the site name and hope you will use it and enjoy it. It not only captures forever a history of our town and the people who lived in it, but also provides the opportunity to have stories and photos of interest from today for future generations to see and hear.*

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The Society would very much like to form a group of volunteers to take the project into its next phase. This will involve recording more photographs, documents and publications; converting them into digital formats; and uploading these to the new website. We visualise the group meeting regularly, somewhere in Kirkby, to do this; how often and for how long will depend on how many volunteers we have and how much time they can offer, but every little will help.

As John says, volunteers will need to be comfortable with basic computer skills such as moving between programs and managing files, but training in handling the material will be given, with continuing support from group leaders.

Please get in touch with David [dpelter@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dpelter@hotmail.co.uk) or Anne [klcs@cantsfield.com](mailto:klcs@cantsfield.com) if you'd like to help, or just to know more. And do share this with any family and friends who may be interested!



Headmaster's family, c1891

Headmaster's family, c1891



Wedding of James Thompson, 1931



James Thompson, auctioneer



Harling Bank, winter 1947



And it's not just pictures and documents...

The Vicar Who Cursed Kirkby  
George Harrison retelling story of Rev John Hutton Fisher



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This edition was edited by Anne Burgess with thanks to all our contributors. The views expressed are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Civic Society Committee and its members as a whole.

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