

# Kirkby Lonsdale & District Civic Society Newsletter - Spring 2017

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## Report of the AGM

The well-attended 45<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting of the Society took place on March 13<sup>th</sup>. A change to the Constitution, to remove the necessity of committee members being resident in the Rainbow Parish, was passed unanimously.

The Chairman summarized the achievements of the past year, and a glimpse into the next, and the Treasurer presented the accounts which showed a healthy surplus for the year.

The election of officers brought some changes with Anne Burgess being elected the new Chairman, and Mike Butcher the new Treasurer, both unopposed. The remainder of the committee members were re-elected. The Chairman and Treasurer were thanked and presented with farewell gifts in recognition of their long service to the Society.

After a short break John Sharpe spoke about 'The Workman Brothers, Pioneers of the Wild

West' who emigrated from a small village in Westmorland to north America in the early nineteenth century. They were amongst the earliest settlers to reach the pacific coast, where they became successful and very rich businessmen. The evening ended convivially with drinks and nibbles.

**Chairman** Anne Burgess writes: I first saw Kirkby Lonsdale as a very small person with a very large ice cream on a sunny Sunday trip from Dolphinholme, where I was brought up, before leaving for university and many years working in retail IT in London. So it was always a special place of happy memories, and when my husband and I decided to move north again it was a joy to be so close. I was delighted to be able to work from home too:

how wonderful to be able to look up from a computer screen and see Ingleborough. Having for some years enjoyed the Society's events that opened so many windows on local life, I decided that when I retired I'd get involved. Last Spring I was co-opted onto the committee, and I've become involved in planning issues, driven by a strong belief in the importance of good planning in our special area. And this spring I find I have the honour of being your Chairman. I've lots to learn, but I hope it will be usually interesting; often fun; and only occasionally challenging! I have an experienced and hard-working committee to support me, and perhaps some of you have skills and knowledge I can call on too; I look forward to getting to know you all.



**Now, a request for help.** Can you - or someone you know - help your society continue its work in and around Kirkby Lonsdale?

We're looking for a **secretary** and a **membership secretary**.

The **secretary** mainly supports committee meetings: requests agenda items; creates and sends out the agenda; attends to take the minutes; and writes up and sends those out. There's also a small amount of filing.

The **membership secretary** keeps our list of members up-to-date and manages subscriptions, working with the treasurer. They too attend committee meetings; we cover when either is away.

There are ten meetings a year, usually held in the evening of the third Monday in Kirkby Lonsdale; transport can be arranged.

You'll need access to a computer, so you can create and E-mail simple documents. We'll show you how to do all this and then support you for as long as you want us to.

Please phone me on 015242 72463 or E-mail [klcs@cantsfield.com](mailto:klcs@cantsfield.com) to find out more or to offer any other help.

Thank you. Anne Burgess (Chairman)

## Spring Course - Follow Up

As a follow up to the course, on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017 Bruce Bennison is leading a field trip to some of the archaeological sites mentioned in the lectures, including include Long Meg, Mayburgh Henge, the Roman Fort, Brougham Castle, and Shap Abbey. Transport will be car-sharing from Barbon, and the cost is £7 including notes for the field trip. Contact Margaret Bunch on 015242 76494, or via the website.

## Planning Matters

There have been few new planning applications; we didn't comment on the 'North of Kendal Road' one, since the project was already in the SLDC Local Plan, and we were happy with the detailed design and layout. The inclusion of employment land on the site remains a bone of contention.

## SL/2017/0128 - Former HSBC bank, Main St, Kirkby Lonsdale

We supported this proposal to make internal alterations with essentially no external changes, particularly as it puts an empty building to good use, including a new home for the Tourist Information Centre.

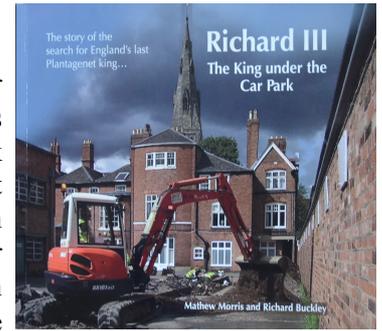
### Book Review

#### **'The King Under the Car Park'** by Mathew Morris and Richard Buckley

Even if you came to the Winter Talk on February 13<sup>th</sup>, this book will add to your knowledge of the discovery of Richard III's remains in Leicester. The authors were two of the archaeologists involved in the dig and their approachable book reads like a first rate detective story. There is plenty of background material but planning the search in a very limited area, the discovery of human remains within a few days of starting the project, and the detailed scientific analysis, all make for a wonderful story. Two living descendants of the king were traced and the match of their DNA with that of the skeleton was the final proof that the remains were

indeed those of the last Plantagenet king.

Published by University of Leicester Archaeological Services, ISBN 978-0-9574792-2-7. Available on-line, including from [www.wordery.com](http://www.wordery.com), price £6.84 including postage.



### Cumbria Local History Federation

For those of you who are not already aware of this organization, it is a great source of information for anyone interested in local history. The Federation provides:

- a website ([www.clhf.org.uk](http://www.clhf.org.uk))
- a diary of forthcoming talks and other events such as guided walks from around the county
- a list of member societies with contact details
- an annual Convention
- a thrice-yearly Bulletin (archived since 2010 in the members' area of the website). This is choc full of
- information including details of current research activities around the region.
- Membership is £8 per year for individuals

### Interpretation Panel in St Mary's Churchyard

On February 21<sup>st</sup>, the official 'unveiling' took place of the Margaret Llewelyn Davies interpretation panel. The idea for the panel was Dr Tim Burnett's winning entry for the Civic Society Heritage competition, and came about because of his friendship with the great niece of the lady in question. How appropriate then that Jane Wynne-Wilson (the great niece) should perform the small ceremony in the churchyard and speak so eloquently about the person she knew so well.

She was accompanied by her daughters Ruth Wilson and Emma Dogliani, and Ruth Cohen who is currently writing a biography of Margaret. Also in attendance were Dr Tim and Mrs Jane Burnett, Rev and Mrs Snow (in whose front garden the



plaque stands!), together with representatives of the Civic Society, Friends of St Mary's, and the Christopher Robin Trust (who helped fund the panel)

### Future Newsletters

Due to changes in personnel this is likely to be the last Civic Society Newsletter in the current format. There will be a Newsletter in the future, but the committee is currently considering just what form this might take. I have enjoyed being the 'Editor' for the past 13 years, and I hope that members have had as much enjoyment from reading it as I have had creating it. It would not have been possible without contributions from other members, in particular from Audrey Phillips and Mike Kingsbury, and the devoted band of 'newspaper boys and girls who deliver to (some of) your doors.

### Winter Talks

This season's talks have been the best attended for many years. Over 100 members and guests heard Ivan Day's talk entitled '*Dining in the Great Houses of Cumbria 1673-1911*' on January 9<sup>th</sup>. After comparing the diets of the gentry (plentiful and exotic) with those of the typical farm labourers (subsistence, and largely cereal-based) he showed with many examples the amazing range of culinary expertise employed by the well-off, and the

wide range of ingredients available to them. After the talk, tea and coffee was accompanied by a fruitcake made by Ivan to an ancient recipe, which must have been a unique taste for most of those present.

*'The Excavation of King Richard 3<sup>rd</sup>'* on February 15<sup>th</sup> attracted an audience of more than 80, when Dr Carol Allen-Glaister gave an enthralling account of the doings in a Leicester car park. Although not personally involved in the dig, Carol knew those who were, and as a retired archaeologist herself brought a great deal of insight into the event which attracted international attention in 2014. (See Book Review on previous page)

### **Winter Talks 2017/18**

Your committee is already planning the next series of talks. If any member has ideas for a talk topic, or has heard a speaker elsewhere that they feel might be of interest, then please get in touch with any committee member, or email via the website [www.kirkbylonsdalecivicsociety.org](http://www.kirkbylonsdalecivicsociety.org).

### **Lost Country Houses by Peter Yorke**

An outstanding feature of these islands over the years, particularly England, has been the range of country houses. This is no less so in this part of the Lune valley. They are interesting for a variety of reasons: they reflect changes in architectural style and many of these houses were altered or added on to, usually in the fashion of the day; they are a reminder of the periods of affluence; and they have their place in the changing social structure of their time.

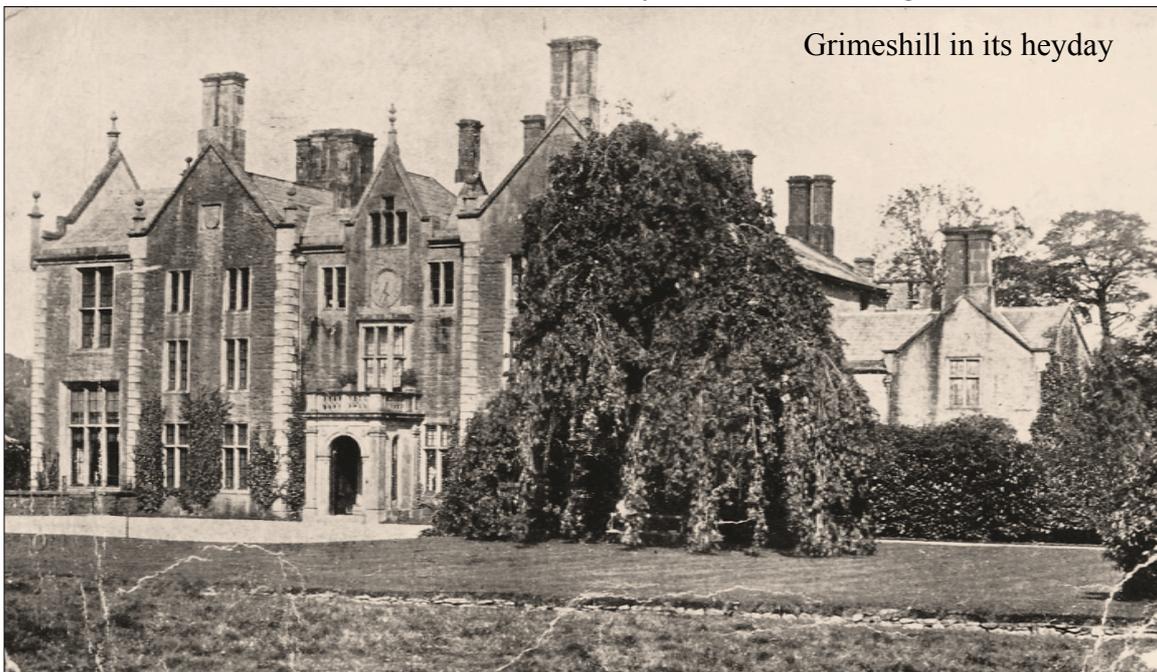
Many of these houses have been lost over the past two centuries, in England alone about two thousand. As an essential part of our heritage they feature in our literature. Some were neglected like Miss Haversham's house in "Great Expectations" or poorly built. Nor was it uncommon for them to catch fire like Manderley in "Rebecca". Just as they featured in such literature in the past, so Highclere Castle provided a relevant setting for modern historical dramas like "Downton Abbey" and "Jeeves and Wooster" on television.

During the last century various factors played their part in bringing about the loss of so many. The beginning of a social revolution led to staff becoming less available. Changes in the tax system made a difference to the traditional owners of such houses. Both World Wars saw many occupied by the armed forces or used as hospitals and consequently poorly maintained. The 1939-1945 War in particular also led to some being used as boarding schools. Between the wars in particular economic pressures took their toll: the increasing expense of repairs and maintenance often proving too much and the prospect of finding a buyer becoming more difficult. A particular common scourge of such houses was dry rot which also played its part in this part of the country.

In the Rainbow Parish during the last century three such houses were lost: Grimeshill in Middleton, Lunefields in Kirkby Lonsdale and Biggins Hall in High Biggins. Dry rot affected the first two of these and also played a part in the problems of other houses that have survived.

This first article relates the story of Grimeshill and provides a brief reminder of the part the house played in the life of the Middleton community until within living memory.

In pre-Tudor times Middleton Hall under the Middleton family had held the most significant role and the remains



Grimeshill in its heyday



Demolition of Grimeshill in 1938

of the fortifications provide a visible reminder of the threats that had to be guarded against at that time. Nor were the turbulent days of the English Civil War without their problems. In spite of these problems, however, at some time in the Seventeenth Century the Moore family built Grimeshill, a substantial house. The Moores had assumed a significant position in Middleton and with the family line of the Middletons ending at that time the head of the Moore family came to assume the role of Lord of the Manor.

In the Nineteenth Century the Moore family flourished. Middleton Hall was added to the Moores' estate. Later in the century they were to see to the building of a new church. At about this time too the family under William Moore and his son, William Middleton-Moore, by then having added the Middleton to the family name, made considerable changes to Grimeshill. The word "rebuilt" is sometimes used in describing the alterations to the house. However, prior to its demolition an official report highlights many of what were the original features: the overmantel in the Drawing Room incorporating a panel showing the death

of Absalom was shown to and remembered by the Middleton children on the tour of the house during the annual party given by Mrs Moore; the 18th-century staircase incorporating a 16th-century panel and many other examples of earlier panelling.

The flourishing days of Grimeshill ended with the death of William Middleton-Moore in 1909. By then the Middleton estate was extensive and, although there were some properties that were privately owned, the majority were occupied by those who worked for the estate. While his widow was to continue to live there until her death in 1937, to some extent in the style to which she was accustomed, the ownership of the Grimeshill estate was bought by Mr G M Beck Senior in 1919, subsequently passing to his son Mr G M Beck Jnr. Inevitably the

maintaining of such a house proved a major commitment and, following Mrs Moore's death, the owners not needing the house and having failed to sell it, made the decision to demolish it.

The Westmorland Gazette included some of the details for sale: 112 oak and pine doors, 60 sash and casement windows, 6,200 square feet of oak and pine flooring. Practically nothing was left to show of the old house and the gardens where it had been.

The 1930s were difficult times for such houses and like so many others the demands of overcoming the likes of dry rot proved too much for Grimeshill.

*Access to archive material held by Mr Christopher Harrison-Beck was most appreciated.*



Some of the resident staff enjoying tea with the best silver in Mrs Moore's absence

For further information about the Civic Society visit our website at: [www.kirkbylonsdalecivicsociety.org](http://www.kirkbylonsdalecivicsociety.org)

**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 letters, comments or articles from members of the Society for inclusion in the newsletter.

Registered Charity No. 502315

