



**Ambleside
Civic Trust
Newsletter
Autumn 2016**



AMBLESIDE CIVIC TRUST
OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE 2015-2016

Registered Charity Number 503092

Chairman

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Committee Members

Jane Beenstock

Paul Cookson

Rose Lord

Luke Steer

Maureen Watson

Committee meetings are held in the Library on the third Tuesday of each month at 7.15 p.m. All members are welcome to attend and may speak on any relevant matter. All suggestions are welcome and are carefully considered by the Committee. Once approved, Minutes of previous meetings are available on the website and in a folder in the Library entrance.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

May we remind you that subscriptions are due on 1st October.

Membership is £5.00 (single); £8.00 (double) and £10.00 for Corporate

Membership.

Thank you.

Many thanks to Rupert Cookson for creating this Newsletter

Chairman's Report

Jonathan Moffett

This will be my first and, probably, my last report as I am pleased to say that a younger and more vigorous person is likely to accept nomination, following my co-option as an interim Chairman earlier this year. I have enjoyed my brief tenure and hope that this signals the start of a new era in which we will be able to make a full contribution to the life of Ambleside. We will build on the foundations of work by previous Chairmen, without whom we would have collapsed long ago. Member numbers have held up well over the last year, but we always need new members, particularly active ones.

My personal opinion is that the most important way in which the Civic Trust can help the community is by positive actions to create a better Ambleside environment and I am pleasantly surprised to find out how much has been achieved, even during this difficult period. But we have also continued to play our role in reviewing planning proposals and applications.

Environment

The state of the footpath from Waterhead to Skelghyll Woods has been vastly improved by Cumbria CC, thanks to the initiative of Bob Rhodes, who has sadly died recently. Bob made many contributions to the work of the Civic Trust and many other causes, over many years. Our contribution of £500 also helped to spur the Council on.

There is at last a Waterhead panorama in place, as part of the general improvements. Harry Manning did the prolonged spade work to get this agreed and we paid for the panorama itself, while Windermere Lake Cruises contributed the plinth.

Following last winter's floods, the Armit Museum is in urgent need of protection, and we have given £1,000 towards further defences. Hopefully, next time, it will survive without needing to be closed.

Other activities include: drawing the attention of the Highways Department to the state of cobbles in the Conservation Area, which are being replaced by tarmac whenever damage occurs; surveying the provision of benches (with the Parish Council); looking at the possibility of Blue Plaques to commemorate previous residents; tidying the 55 steps up from Lake Road to The Gale and the steps between Nook Lane and Belle Vue Lane; and controlling the invasive Japanese Knotweed in Clappersgate.

Planning

We have continued to consider planning applications, using a rota system so that each committee member is able to make informed comments. We then send our opinions to the Lake District Planning Authority, which makes the decisions. The main concerns have been the erosion of standards in the Conservation Area and the inconsistent application of planning policies. We think that it would be easier for good standards to be maintained in the Conservation Area if the Authority made an Article 4 directive, enabling control over details such as paint work. However, there is no sign that it is about to do so.

The proposal to develop the old Kelsick Grammar School has not yet become a formal application, but Springbourne Properties gave an informative presentation of their proposal for a hotel on the site. One salient concern is that of access: both the anticipated volume of traffic and the quality of the access routes. We gave them feedback on this issue. We are, at the time of writing, waiting to see their formal application.

Nothing has been heard, since the floods, of the Premier Inn proposal to build on the flood plain on Borrans Road. We are also awaiting information on a Waterhead Marine proposal to develop their under-used site south of Waterhead.

Membership Secretary's Report

Steve Dickinson

Rose Lord and I had a really wet day representing the Trust at Ambleside Sports on July 28th. Although we only sold a few Heritage Trail leaflets, we spent lots of useful time explaining the history and work of the Trust to visitors and members of the local community, and have made some useful contacts for the future. My thanks to Made in Cumbria for the loan of a gazebo and for help with equipment transportation on this damp occasion! We also trialled a new display of photographs of local heritage assets which will be at the AGM. If anyone has some photographs of Trust activities that they would like to lend for this please contact me on 07342 965238.

We need to recruit new members prior to the AGM so, if anyone would like to help with this membership drive, please contact via the number above. My particular plan is to approach local businesses with a new Trust membership leaflet, which is currently under assessment for printing with a view to boosting the Trust locally.

Many thanks to area representatives Tim Brown, Jonathan Moffett, Harry Manning, Maureen Watson, Peter Edmonds, Janet Hutley and Frances Green for your great help with newsletter distribution.

Environmental Audit

In 1999, Civic Trust members surveyed the streets of Ambleside in order to assess their state and appearance, and suggest improvements that could be made. The survey covered items as diverse as road surface drains, seats, trees, signage, overhead cables and the state of buildings (17 categories in all).

Our new committee is keen to carry out a similar task, and it could be based on the same format as the original audit. With objective evidence available, we will be able to press for improvements where they are needed. It will be a very big task if only a few people attempt it, but a much easier one if we can find enough people to help. Can you help? Your commitment will be as big or as small as you want. Please get in touch with a committee member if you are interested.

Treasurer's Report

Michael Green

At the time of writing the accounts for 2015/6 are not final and only the principal items of income and expenditure for the year are mentioned. Full details will be presented to the Annual General Meeting after the accounts have been examined.

Our regular income (mainly subscriptions, gifts and Gift Aid refunds) shows a small surplus over our regular expenditure (hire of venues and expense for meetings, cost of newsletters and web site, regular subscriptions, etc). Both income and expenditure decreased slightly.

In line with the committee's policy to avoid building up our balance but rather to use our funds for the benefit of Ambleside, we have made three large discretionary payments: £912 for the slate panorama now in place after the improvements at Waterhead; a contribution of £500 towards improvement of the path from Waterhead to Skelghyll Woods; and a grant of £1,000 to the Armit Museum towards increased resilience to floods.

The net effect has been to reduce our funds by about £2,200 and at the end of the financial year our total funds stand at about £3,400.

Ambleside Conservation Area

Rose Lord

Background

The concept of the conservation area was introduced in the Civic Amenities Act 1967; a pioneering measure which was the first piece of legislation to acknowledge the value of whole groups of buildings and to recognise the importance of conserving the character of entire areas. By the end of 1967 four conservation areas had been designated and today there are over 8,000 across England. The first conservation areas were established at a time when large parts of our historic towns and cities were being demolished to make way for residential estates, shopping estates and ring roads and when comprehensive development was common place. As a reaction against the loss of historic urban areas, conservation areas were an effective mechanism for enabling local authorities to manage change on an area-wide basis. Conservation Areas are defined as 'areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.' Ambleside conservation area was designated in 1980 with amendments to the boundary in 2010. The conservation area covers the three main phases of Ambleside's historic development; the medieval settlement at How Head, the industrial developments along Stock Ghyll and the associated market area and the 19th century expansion of the town to the South and West.

Value

Although most conservation areas will contain listed buildings, the value of a conservation area is less about these individual buildings, but more about the quality of the external spaces that are shaped by buildings, some of which will be designated assets in their own right, but many of which are quite ordinary. Often, we barely notice the individual buildings themselves as they merge into the rich townscape, where the sum of the whole is far greater than the individual parts.

Our pleasure in towns and villages is shaped by the physical sensations of vista, enclosure and variety; sensations which are provided by the placement of buildings, the presence of green space and, most importantly in Ambleside, the views of the surrounding fells. Within Ambleside there are remarkably contrasting physical sensations in different parts of the conservation area; the organic arrangement of buildings and spaces at How Head has a very different feel to the Victorian streets and formal green space of Rothay Road and White Platts Field.

50 Years On

Next year will see the 50th anniversary of the Civic Amenities Act; a great opportunity for us to share and celebrate the fascinating built heritage of Ambleside, but also a chance to evaluate the current condition of Ambleside conservation area and ensure that its significance is retained for future generations to enjoy. There are threats to all conservation areas, Ambleside included, which are undermining the original aspirations behind the legislation. Permitted development rights, street clutter, traffic management and advertising can all cause harm to the character of the conservation area and undermine local distinctiveness.

A far more insidious threat to all conservation areas is the increasing upgrading of buildings for environmental and energy conservation reasons. Increasingly it is a requirement that all buildings, including old and historic ones must be made more thermally efficient. The proliferation of PVCu windows in conservation areas is a contentious issue, but the impact of non-traditional replacement windows can have devastating effects on historic areas, not to mention the environmental impacts of the manufacture of PVCu and their relatively short life span in the life of many historic buildings. In simple, traditional Lake District buildings where the detailed architecture might only be defined by the design of their windows and doors the effect of PVCu replacements completely destroys the authenticity of these buildings. The cumulative effect of these changes can destroy the character of an area as readily as any single 'iconic' intrusion.

Measures are now urgently needed to assist with meeting the necessary targets of preventing excess heat loss, but with the retention of historic windows to maintain the appearance of traditional buildings in conservation areas.

2017 also marks 140 years since the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings was founded by William Morris as a response to the conservation problems of the 19th century. It is fitting to remember his words here "It has been most truly said at our meetings that these old buildings do not belong to us only; that they have belonged to our forefathers, and they will belong to our descendants unless we play them false. They are not in any sense our property, to do as we like with. We are only trustees for those that come after us."



Ambleside – A “Visitor’s” Impressions

Rupert Cookson

Many of my family members live in Ambleside, and while I attended school in Hampshire, I have spent the past summer working in the village prior to attending University.

Ambleside is a much smaller town than Winchester, where I went to school. As such, it feels like Ambleside emphasizes the importance of community more than Winchester. The importance of the community in Ambleside makes for a friendly atmosphere, and is noticeable with regards to local events, including the Ambleside Sports and the recent Festival of the Fells, both of which highlight the togetherness of the village. I have also seen the vast reconstruction of areas throughout the Lake District following last year’s devastating floods, an effort that is hugely impressive given the scale of damage.

However, it is also apparent that Ambleside faces somewhat of a choice between commercial growth on the one hand, and a desire to maintain a community-focused, village feel on the other. I sense that Ambleside is located both geographically and economically in-between the busier centres of Windermere/Bowness, and the quieter village of Grasmere. The reopening and growth of the University of Cumbria in Ambleside has brought a number of additional people into the village, although job vacancies for graduates who wish to stay in the village seem somewhat limited. Decisions taken now as regards, for example, levels of policing, commercial development, and provision of housing for locals will have ongoing impacts for years to come, and hence community and local government engagement in the decision-making process is critical.

There are many reasons why those living in Ambleside would want it to stay the same. That of course is an option. However, there are other potential routes that the village could take, and those that have differing opinions need to feel that they have a forum where their opinions can be expressed. Organizations such as the Civic Trust can provide a vehicle to facilitate this dialogue, and ensure that everyone’s voice is heard, and that the community as a whole feels like it is engaged in the important discussions that need to take place about the past, present and future of Ambleside.

The Armit Museum

Ambleside Civic Trust strongly supports the Armit Museum and Library, for example during the last year we made a donation of £1,000 towards recovery costs from flood damage in December 2015. We are also corporate members of the Armit via an annual subscription of £25. In return the Armit offers free entry for Civic Trust members by showing your membership card.



**AMBLESIDE CIVIC TRUST
FORTY-THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN THAT THE FORTY-THIRD ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING OF THE
AMBLESIDE CIVIC TRUST
WILL BE HELD ON FRIDAY 4TH NOVEMBER 2016 AT 7.30 pm AT THE
KELSICK CENTRE
ST MARY'S LANE
AMBLESIDE**

Nominations for the post of Chairman, other Officers and Members of the Executive Committee must be made in writing and submitted to the Secretary at, or before, the Annual General Meeting. All nominations must be supported by a Secunder and the consent of the Nominee must first have been obtained.

**The guest speaker will be Steve Ratcliffe
Director of Sustainable Development at the Lake District National Park Authority.**

His subject will be "The bid for World heritage status for the Lake District".