

Cockermouth & District Civic Trust Newsletter

President: The Lord Egremont, Chairman: Phil Campbell
Secretary: John Dent, Treasurer: Elizabeth Silman
Issue no 137, January 2018.



A Happy New Year to everyone as we enter our 51st year. We successfully completed our 50th anniversary celebrations at the October Lecture Meeting. Katie Gentry opened proceedings with a lovely folk concert. We then enjoyed a buffet & Tom Hughes, a past Chairman, and Ian Dodsworth, our retiring Treasurer, cut the Anniversary Cake. We concluded the evening with Brian Coley comparing 2017 Cockermouth with 1967 through photographs taken then & now. His conclusions were that Cockermouth has improved tremendously and there are now more trees!



Cockermouth 1967 & 2017

After the Civic Trust was first formed, some members undertook a photographic survey of Cockermouth buildings. These photographs had subsequently been passed to the Museum Group, now Cockermouth Heritage Group. Brian Coley obtained copies of these photos from the Heritage Group & then spent a good deal of time during the year, identifying where each of the photos was taken, then taking a modern day photo from the same spot. This parallel set of photos which Brian presented at the lecture evening, now represent an important archive of information on how Cockermouth has changed over the last 50 years. We intend using this archive in the future & already have plans for an exhibition based on them for Heritage Open Days 2018. It would be nice to think that a repeat set of photos will be taken sometime in the future to continue the story, ideally by future members of Cockermouth Civic Trust!

AGM, December 2017

Our AGM was held on December 6th, one month later than usual due to the Chairman being on holiday in November. The Chairman and Secretary were both re-elected unopposed. Following Ian Dodsworth's resignation as treasurer, Elizabeth Silman was elected as

Treasurer. Apart from Ian, all Committee Members were re-elected to serve another term. There were no other nominations. There is now at least one vacancy on committee and it would be good to see this filled.

The officers each presented a report on the year and the financial report was formally accepted. Copies of any of the reports or the AGM Minutes are available from the Secretary. The Minutes are also on our website.

Lecture Programme

A reminder of the remaining 3 lectures of this season, all at 7.30pm at the Friends Meeting House.

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| Feb 7 th | Steve Brailey | Past & modern techniques in (Cockermouth) mountain rescue |
| Mar 7 th | Leigh Stamper | Wellington Farm – have we diversified? |
| Apr 18 th | Joe Broomfield | The Role of the (Cockermouth) Town Manager |

NOTE that the last lecture is delayed by 2 weeks to 18th April due to Easter.

Member of Civic Voice. Registered charity number 254362

Ian Dodsworth

Ian retired as Treasurer and Committee Member at this year's AGM. He has been a long term supporter of the Civic Trust. In recent years he has been Treasurer and Committee member and managed our books. In previous years he has served as Secretary and helped organise the Cockermouth Festival. In recognition of this, we presented him with a glass paperweight inscribed with his name & the Civic Trust logo, immediately after the AGM.



Christmas Message from the Mayor

We received a Christmas Card from the Mayor of Cockermouth, Alan Tyson. In his Christmas Message in the Times & Star he said 'The Civic Trust has done a lot for Cockermouth, particularly in supporting the shop fronts initiative after the 2009 floods, and in their vigilance over planning issues and conservation areas. The town council fully appreciates this'.

NWACTS

The Committee are minded to discontinue our membership of NWACTS at the end of the current membership year. In the years prior to Civic Voice, we felt that NWACTS had a worthwhile leadership and coordination role for civic societies in our area, in the absence of any such role at national level. Since the

creation of Civic Voice, we feel that NWACTS has struggled to identify an effective role for itself. We attended the most recent meeting of NWACTS when the future role of NWACTS was an agenda item, but found that other members had no interest in discussing this.

We are intending to write to the other Civic Societies within Cumbria to determine if there is any interest in a Cumbrian liaison group.

Out of Town Development

We understand that B&M are interested in a retail development on land beyond the Lakes Centre on Low Road, although we believe no planning application has been made yet.

We objected to a previous planning application for retail development on this site on the grounds that it will be prejudicial to the future of the town centre and this brown field site is better suited to industrial development with long term employment opportunities. We anticipate objecting again on the same basis.

We believe that the wealth of independent shops in Cockermouth is a major element in the attractiveness of our town. The viability of some of these shops is already under economic pressure and the community and the councils need to support them or we may lose the heart of our town, just as has happened in many places elsewhere. For this reason, we are surprised at comments made by some Town Councillors in favour of such development. It also again emphasises the 'would be' benefit of an established Neighbourhood Plan.

Himalayan Balsam

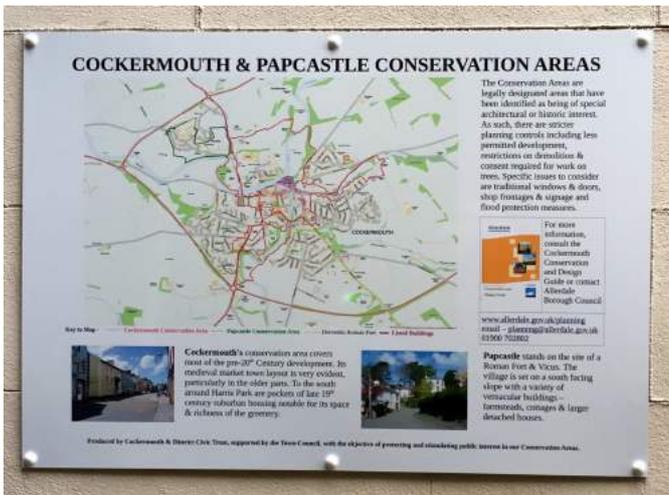


Although Himalayan balsam is an attractive plant, it has rapidly become one of the UK's most widespread invasive weed species, colonising river banks, waste land, damp woodlands, roadways and railways. It reaches well over head height, and is a major weed problem. Introduced as a garden ornamental in the mid-19th century, it now successfully competes with native plant species for space, light, nutrients and pollinators, and excludes other plant growth, thereby reducing native biodiversity. As an annual, Himalayan balsam

dies back in the winter, and where the plant grows on riverbanks, it can leave the banks bare of vegetation and liable to erosion. Dead plant material can also enter the river, increasing the risk of flooding. However, it can be controlled by pulling it up before the seeds develop., for example by the removal of plants by hand, as the plant is easy and safe to pull up.

Sporadic attempts have been made over the last few years to tackle this problem on our rivers, but the balsam does seem to be winning the war. With this in mind, we have approached Allerdale BC with the idea of co-ordinating a big 'balsam bash' involving a number of local groups during the best time in 2018, usually during June & July. Allerdale BC are willing to support us in this initiative, but not to lead due to health & Safety Policy constraints. We therefore intend to approach other groups & organisations in the new year with the idea that we allocate patches to each of the willing organisations.

Conservation Areas, 50th Anniversary.



We have now erected the two information boards on the Cockermouth & Papcastle Conservation Areas, one in Old Kings Arms Lane & one in the Library. We are disappointed in the level of publicity that we have received for this so if you can let friends, neighbours & other organisations know about them, it will be very helpful.

This now completes our Conservation Area Project for 2017, which comprised:

- the issue of the explanatory booklet to each building occupier within the Conservation Areas. Additional copies are now available from the TIC.
- the production of walking tour leaflets for both of the Conservation Areas. Copies are available from the TIC.
- the holding of an exhibition on our Conservation Areas as part of Heritage Open Days.
- the erection of the 2 information boards in the Library & Old Kings Arms Lane

Local Heritage Listing

As reported in the last newsletter, the impasse on progress with Allerdale BC on the Local Heritage List has now been removed. Allerdale BC are now establishing their own review panel to consider the nominations. Duncan Keeler will be our representative on the panel and Alan Kennon will represent the Town Council. We hope to be able to report on progress in the next newsletter. Currently we have 18 nominations on the table with 3 new ones pending. If anyone has any other nominations in mind, now is the time to let us know.

'Cockermouth Vision'

You will know from the last newsletter that the concept of a Neighbourhood Plan for Cockermouth has been put on ice due to the failure of the Town Council to support it. Agreement has subsequently been reached with Allerdale BC that if a 'Vision Document' is produced for Cockermouth, the contents will be considered in the next review of the Allerdale Local Plan. A 'Cockermouth Vision Group' has therefore been formed in place of the Neighbourhood Plan Group, which the Civic Trust has agreed to support.

The Vision Group has been working away and has already produced its first draft document. If you have ideas for 'the vision' and/or would like to support the group, please contact Ros Earthy who is co-chairing, email biblinros@yahoo.co.uk.

Cockermouth Mountain Rescue

Katie Gentry agreed to give us the 50th anniversary concert free of charge if we made a donation to Cockermouth Mountain Rescue. I'm pleased to say that we were able to donate £60, comprising £35 from member's donations on the evening and £25 from our own funds.

Other News

1. The Town Council has agreed to fund spring planting in the town planters. You may remember that Spring planting did not occur in 2017 due to Allerdale BC austerity cuts. We wrote to the Town Council suggesting that it should be reinstated.
2. We have been working with Allerdale BC & Cockermouth Travel to enable some tree planting along the east end of St Helens St. This should happen in 2018.
3. If you haven't yet renewed your membership, please do so. Otherwise, this may be your last newsletter!
4. Finally, the Committee would like to convey their best wishes to all members for 2018.

Phil Campbell, Chairman