

PATHS AND PONGS

A Meander through the Minutes of
Muncaster Parish Council

1894-1994

INTRODUCTION

Muncaster Parish Council is like all Parish Councils, has been in existence for 100 years, its inaugural meeting being held on 13 December 1894 under the Chairmanship of Lord Muncaster. A photostat of the Minutes for the meeting appear at the commencement of this booklet. Unusually the Minute Books for the whole of the past century survive so that we have a year by year account of the history, trials and tribulations of the parish.

Many of the problems that face the Council at the end of the 20th Century were taxing the people of a century ago, footpaths and sewers being two themes that occur throughout the history of the Parish. Indeed both occur in the minutes of the second meeting of the Council held on the 16 March 1895.

In producing this leaflet we have tried to bring together extracts from the minutes over the years under a subject heading so that the evolving history of the Parish might be appreciated.

Because of the very fundamental changes which took place in the Parish in 1944 the first fifty years are treated as one section and the second fifty as a further section.

It is hoped that the reader will enjoy this meander through history and hopefully obtain some enjoyment from reading these extracts from decades ago.

**D Pickup
Clerk**

**P R Conroy (Mrs)
Chairman**



Minutes of the first meeting of
the Parish Council for the Parish
of Newcastle held on the 13th day
of December 1894.

Present -

The Rt Hon Lord Manchester,
Messrs. Benson, Reynolds, Hodgson,
Gambles, Wilson, Barber and Crave.

Mr. A. Watt as Chairman of the
Parish meeting read the notice
convening this meeting, and laid
on the table instructions issued by
the Local Government Board.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Manchester was
unanimously elected as Chairman
of the Council.

Mr. John Benson was unanimously
elected as Vice-Chairman of the
Council.

Agreed that future meetings of
the Council be held at the High
School at 7 P.M.

Adjourned -

John Benson

Chairman

PRIOR TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

Prior to the Local Government Act of 1894 the administration of the area was carried out by the Bootle Union. This was a Union of Parishes in the area and it had two main responsibilities, the maintaining of the roads in the area and the relief of the poor and destitute.

In L A Williams "Road Transport in Cumbria in the 19th Century" we find the road, now known as the A595, was not put on its present alignment and the river bridges built until 1829. Under the 1835 Highways Act, which until then had laid dormant in Cumberland and Westmorland, in 1862 the Bootle Union of Parishes assumed responsibility for maintaining the highway. In 1870 George Bell, the County Highways Inspector, reported "the road was the worst kept and of least importance of any that I have inspected".

The relief of the poor and destitute in a rural area did not always mean that incarceration in a workhouse was the only answer. We find that in many cases it was more economical to leave the poor in their own homes where they could grow vegetables and keep livestock and so assist in their own maintenance. The Workhouse tended to be inhabited by those who were incapable through either age or infirmity to maintain themselves in their own homes, or as temporary places of respite by poor travellers passing through the area. The Union was able to raise funds by making a charge on the parishioners in its area. Not only was there considerable pressure to keep these charges as low as possible there was also a great resistance to paying them. One major cause of complaint was the keeping of the poor who did not originate in or belong to the Parish. Such people were kept in the Workhouse only for a short period before being passed onto the next Union nearer to their originating parish.

Being Overseer for the Parish was a thankless task as it involved regular visits to the Ratepayers to extract from them the moneys due for rates, and often being subjected to abuse. Even after the formation of Local Government in 1894 this task continued to be needed to be done until 1927 when the District Council took over the task of collecting rates directly.

Two documents survive which relate to the period prior to 1894 although they are dated 1897.

The first is a memorandum from the Clerk to the Union, John Clark, to Mr R Davidson, Clerk to the Muncaster Parish Council and the second is a list of documents that he held that relate to Muncaster Parish. Regrettably none of the books survive as on 24 March 1917 it is minuted that:

The Clerk be granted permission to burn the old and used Rate Receipt and Cheque Books, Collectors Monthly Statements, General Receipt and Deposit Books and Balance Sheets for the former Bootle Union.

Although the list managed to survive sandwiched between two pages of the Minute Book.

It is minuted on 17 April 1895 that:

Mr R Davidson be reappointed Assistant Overseer at a salary of Fifteen Pounds a year payable half yearly.

Later, on 21 November 1895 it is minuted:

The Assistant Overseer be allowed £2 for making and collecting the Special Sanitary Rate.

The last reference to the Overseers is in the minutes of 9 June 1926 when:

The Assistant Overseer for the Parish has a salary of £23 per annum and the work of Clerk to the Parish Council is done honorarily by him.

Then on 23 April 1927

...that is should be necessary to appoint another member of the Rating Authority on Bootle District Council that Mr Benson is appointed herewith..

PART 1

1894-1943

THE ESTABLISHMENT ERA

It is notable that during the first decade of the life of the Council it was continuously chaired by either Lord Muncaster or Canon Bell in his absence. From the names of the councillors it would appear that the Council was made up of people from the "establishment" and that the working people of the village had little or no representation. Indeed as late as 1919 the words "homes for the Working Classes" appear.

The Council appear to have spent many hours at the Parish Meeting in May each year proposing and seconding nominations for various committees, and appointing each other onto the: Technical Education Committee, Footpath Committee, and then appointing of the Overseer and Assistant Overseer and Clerk to the Council and finally Charity Trustees, ultimately setting the annual rate precept to be collected from all ratepayers by the Overseers. There were generally three other meetings in each year, late August/September, December and February. The August and February meetings were rarely attended by Lord Muncaster after the turn of the century.

A second matter which attracted a great deal of attention was Education. It would appear that the Councillors saw it as part of their duty to arrange Improvement Classes for the parishioners. Some seem to-day to be almost elementary, cooking and laundry for the girls, veterinary for the boys. It is an open question as to whether it was a desire by the "Establishment" to have a local supply of trained labour to serve in their homes and on their farms, rather than a desire to enhance the prospects of "the lower orders"? The Victorian Social Structure was still in its heyday.

The meetings were not held in the Village, but at the High School, later St Michael's Primary School and now the Country Guest House. This was more convenient for both Lord Muncaster from the Castle and Canon Bell from The Chase than in the Parish Hall in the village. Meetings were held here until 1943 when they were transferred to the Muncaster Estate Office of Mr Walter Marchant at The Grove.

In 1907 it is recorded:

Mr Benson accorded Lord Muncaster a Hearty Vote of Thanks for his services in the chair.

which in some small way perhaps serves to illustrate the relationships that existed at that date.

Lord Muncaster remained the nominal Chairman of the Council until his death in 1917. The last meeting that he had attended being on 22 March 1916. As Lord Muncaster's attendance's after 1907 were spasmodic Alexander Watt, Muncaster Estate Agent had effectively become the Chairman. Canon Bell attended meetings regularly until 1904, his last recorded attendance is on 5 September 1907.

These changes also signalled a falling off in the regularity of the meetings. The ten years 1894 to 1904 required 64 pages in the Minute Book, from 1904 to 1914, 40 pages; from 1914 to 1924, 32 pages; 1924 to 1934, 25 pages; 1934 to 1944, 19 pages; then a renaissance took place and between 1944 and 1954 43 pages were used as the Council again began to take a more active role in local affairs.

However, whilst the 1900 to 1911 period was a quiet one, after 1911 matters again come to the boil on several issues. Roads and sanitation became, yet again, the most contentious items on the Agenda.

It is also worthy of note that after World War I the members of the Council ceased to be drawn entirely from the "Establishment" but began to include a minority from the normal residents of the village, especially tradesmen, amongst them the plumber and the garage owner. The democratisation that the war had engendered had worked its way through to rural Cumberland quickly, although the "establishment" hung on tenaciously.

Sir John Ramsden enters the scene in April 1919, not as a member of the Council but in proposing the erection of the War Memorial and, in the same breath, proposing a Recreation Ground. Perhaps he was a little heavy handed for he was rebuffed and he does not reappear in the Minutes until late 1925.

However, in 1922 Sir Joseph Hutchinson, a farmer, and the Revd Partridge were elected to the Council and there was for a short time a semblance of the old order on the Council again. Sir Joseph died in April 1924, without making any significant impact.

On 19 November 1925 Sir John F Ramsden, who had yet to hyphenate his name, became an ordinary member of the Council, he only attended meetings irregularly, probably when he was in residence in the Castle and he fades from the record in 1927 having achieved little or nothing. John Caddy Nicholson was the elected Chairman in November 1925 and he held this post until 1934 when he was succeeded by Walter Marchant, the Muncaster Estate Agent who remained in the Chair for the next decade.

Revd Partridge attended meetings with reasonable regularity until 1941 and took an active part in the village life. During the recent renovations of the Parish Hall a large box containing a cinematographic screen was discovered. It had been donated to the Village by the Revd Partridge and had probably lain unused since shortly after the end of the last war.

From 1928 until 1944 there were generally two meetings a year, the Annual Village Meeting in May and another at the onset of winter. This period was the nadir in the activities of the Council. As it coincided with the depression period it is interesting to speculate as to whether or not the local people were fearful of raising contentious matters with the "establishment" lest there be repercussions in, say, their employment, prospects of employment or their housing.

In 1940 the Government of the day suspended elections for Parish Councils as part of the wartime emergency. Councillors remained in office unless they either resigned or died. The Muncaster Parish Council effectively became moribund and a quorum was unable to be mustered for Meetings in 1943 and 1944. However dissatisfaction must have been mounting.

The renaissance was dramatic and occurred on 12 December 1944. One is compelled to ask whether or not those attending realised the significance of the date, exactly fifty years to the day from the formation of the Council. If they did not then it was an amazing coincidence as they were still using the original Minute Book.

There had been a somewhat stormy Parish Meeting earlier in the year when a number of problems were highlighted by those living in the Village and resolutions demanded. The remaining rump of members of the Council tried to sort things out as best they could in the prevailing conditions and finally were convened on the 12 December to report they had tried but had not got anywhere and indeed it is minuted that:

....they had met officials of the Millom Rural District Council who did nothing and practically told us to mind our own business.

Despondent at their inadequacy they retreated. The 1945 Annual Meeting went by default, no doubt in the euphoria of the aftermath of VE Day but with the war with Japan still raging.

The public remained dissatisfied and frustrated so banded together to try to get something done, as on the 21 June 1945 the rump Council again met and discussed a letter from the "Ravenglass Discussion Group" who had submitted a list of names to fill the vacancies available on the Council, as a result Mrs T Irwin, Mr H Hilton and Dr E Lloyd were co-opted as members of the Council and jointed Messrs E Baker, D Lewthwaite, T Nicholson, E Todd and J A Pharaoh under the Chairmanship of Walter Marchant, the Agent for Muncaster Estates.

The old mould which had already been cracked on that fateful night in 1944 was finally broken at the Parish Meeting held on 17 April 1946 which was the last at which Walter Marchant was the Chairman.

At the Meeting held on 12 May 1946, Harry Hilton, the Manager of the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, was elected Chairman, thus breaking the 52 years hold over the Council by the Muncaster interests. From then on meetings were held regularly and the membership of the Council began to reflect villagers interests to a greater extent.

WHO WERE THE ESTABLISHMENT WHO WERE ON THE COUNCIL?

Muncaster Estate:	Lord Muncaster	1894 to 1917
	Sir John Ramsden	1919 to 1922
Agents for Muncaster Estate	Alexander Watt	1905 to 1922
	Walter Marchant	1925 to 1944
The Church	Cannon Henry Bell	1894 to 1907
	Revd Partridge	1922 to 1941
Local Doctor	Dr Cass until circa 1905	
Clerks to the Council	R Davidson	1895 to 1902
	W Birkett	1902 to 1920
	J Myers	1920 to 1923
	J D MacGregor	1923 to 1925
	C Southward	1925 to 1927
	C S Robertson	1927 to 1944
	D A Lewthwaite	1944 to 1946

BOOTLE RDC

It becomes manifest as you read the various extracts that there was a long standing animosity between the Muncaster Parish Council and the Bootle RDC. Everything proposed by one body was opposed by the other.

Take housing, in 1919 the Bootle RDC proposed Council Houses and were haughtily told that they were not needed. Perfectly reasonable suggestions concerning sanitation were dismissed as being unnecessary on account of their costs. Roads were allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. Before tarmac had been introduced the roads of compacted chippings and sand needed constant repair if they were to remain usable. The road across the Marsh to Raven Villa is constructed in this manner to this day. Bootle RDC seem not have been interested in the northern portion of their area. When the RDC proposed a fire service Muncaster declined to take part. In 1939 the Muncaster water supply was considered adequate and the Parish Council did not approve of a scheme to tap Devoke Water.

ALLOTMENTS AND SMALL HOLDINGS

The first mention of land being used otherwise than under the direction of the Estate occurs on 19 March 1908.

It was resolved that consideration of the Rules and Regulations concerning Small Holdings be deferred.

It was, never to surface again.

BIRKBY

Birkby does not get a mention at all until on 3 May 1937.

It was decided that a letter be sent to the Millom Rural District Council asking that some relief be granted to ratepayers of Birkby Parish for special rate, and pointing out that none of the ratepayers get any benefit from the special rate.

However on 3 March 1938 a letter was reported which stated

...that Millom RDC were unable to accede to the request.

Birkby however remained on the agenda for on 19 April 1939:

A letter was read from Eskdale Parish Council suggesting a meeting between Eskdale, Muncaster and Waberthwaite Parish Councils to discuss the improvement of the Birkby road. It was decided to send a letter to the Eskdale Council asking them to call a meeting in a central place, such as Ravenglass.

But war intervened shortly afterwards and the matter has yet to be followed up.

MIGRATORY DAIRY VAN

At the meeting held on 12 March 1895 the following rather curious minute was recorded:

The attention of the meeting was drawn to a circular from the Cumberland County Council asking whether or not the Migratory Dairy Van was required in the Parish during the ensuing season, it was agreed it was not ..

However, on 6 July 1908

Arrangements were made for a visit of the Dairy Van.

Today you are left wondering exactly what this van contained. Probably a pedigree bull to try to improve the stock bred in the area.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

On 12 March 1896 it is minuted:

A circular from the County Council referring to the custody of Parochial Documents was taken into consideration. The documents etc., are all kept in a chest of drawers and a small tin box in the Clerks house and there being nothing of special account, except the Minute Book, the Council did not think it necessary at present to secure a safe to keep them in.

DRAMA

Happenings in November 1925 proved to be dramatic in a small community.

It started on 16 April 1923 when Mr J D MacGregor was appointed Clerk. Then on Friday 20 November 1925 it is minuted:

..it was unanimously agreed that the Clerk to the Council and Assistant Overseer attended a meeting to be fixed and of which notice will be given and explain his absence tonight, producing also at that meeting:-

- i ALL books connected with the rate for the half year ending 30 September 1925.*
- ii A complete account of the Overseers Financial Business for the said half year and to date.*
- iii Receipt for Assistant Overseers Guarantee for the year 1925.*
- iv Reason why there are outstanding rate accounts.*
- v Reason why a rate has not been levied for the current half year.*

On 27 November:

Sir John Ramsden proposed and Mr Nicholson seconded that as the Clerk had failed to attend this meeting of which he had notice, his services be dispensed with. Carried: Mr Birkett was requested to obtain all books belonging to the Council.

and no more is heard about Mr McGregor. He was succeeded on 4 December by Mr C Southward on a salary of £23 per annum.

EDUCATION

Involvement in Education took two parallel paths throughout the first half of the century. The Council has been instrumental in the appointment of a School Manager or Governor as they are now known, first at St Michael's School and later, together with Waberthwaite PC, each currently appoints half a governor at Waberthwaite School.

Around the turn of the century "Technical Education" was the vogue and on 25 June 1895 it was minuted:

The Circular from the Technical Education Department of the Cumberland County Council was considered and the responsibility for organising and superintending Technical Education was requested. The Council elected a Local Committee. Mr W N Birkett was appointed the Local Correspondent and the Revd Canon Bell elected to serve on the District Committee.

In the meetings of 5 May and 27 July 1896 local requests were being made for classes to be held for Laundry and Cooking Instruction and for Veterinary Instruction.

Throughout the first fifty years of the life of the Council, indeed until the passing of the 1947 Education Act, the Council annually appointed a Technical Education Committee.

On 12 May 1903 it is recorded

The Chairman, Lord Muncaster, explained that according to the Education Act 1902 it was necessary for the Parish Council to elect a Manager for the Muncaster and Ravenglass schools and proposed Mr Caddy and this was unanimously agreed to.

Two interesting points arise from this minute. Firstly what appears to be patronage by Lord Muncaster for the Overseer and Clerk to the Council. Also the fact that the school at Muncaster was termed the High School and which the older pupils attended, whilst the primary and infants were taught in Ravenglass, in a room to the right of the door which leads to the Church Room. This later became the Bank and is now incorporated in "Old School House".

In 1925 it is minuted that Ambulance Classes were being held and also in Dressmaking and Cookery. However, things did not go smoothly as it is later minuted:

..the Clerk ascertain why an exam has not been held and to make arrangements for the same.

FIRE BRIGADE

On 9 July 1926 it is minuted:

..that Bootle Council be informed that the Muncaster Parish Council were not prepared to pay any money for the use of the Millom Fire Brigade.

You are left wondering why. Was it the ongoing animosity with Bootle RDC or was it considered a waste of money given the time it would take for the fire engine to get from Millom allowing for the mechanical reliability of motor vehicles generally and the condition of the roads at that time?

FOOTPATHS

One can understand that in 1894 footpaths were of great importance to the local populace as they would be the shortest routes between two places that they needed to traverse on a regular basis. Only after the 1930's did walking for leisure become popular and the less well known paths enter into the minutes.

The first entry occurred at the first business meeting on 20 March 1895:

Mr Reynolds drew the Councils attention to the bad state of the footpath at the south end of the Village to Clemlands Gate.

On 15 May 1895:

Mr Reynolds proposed that 20 cart loads of gravel be placed on the path to Clemlands Gate and that the Clerk exhibit notices for tenders for the same.

On 21 December 1895

Mr Graves enquired as upon whom the responsibility for repairing the footpath from Muncaster to Rougholm lay as it was being washed away by the river.

On 15 April 1896

It was agreed that the footpath (Clemlands) be kept in repair by the Parish Council as heretofore.

Thereafter footpaths receive little individual attention as there was appointed each year a Footpaths Committee to attend to these matters. Two places that do appear with some regularity in the main Minutes are Clemlands and the Ford across the River Mite. Paths in the vicinity of Muncaster Bridge appear to have been washed away with some regularity.

The first evidence of any formalisation of Footpaths and Rights of Way comes on 29 March 1935 when:

A letter was received from Millom District Council asking for a map to be furnished showing the footpaths marked in red ink and it was resolved that this be prepared.

Mr Burlington was later paid 18/- (eighteen shillings, 90 pence) for the purchase of Ordinance Maps.

HIGHWAYS

The first mention of a Highway appears on 20 April 1896 when a copy of the Local Government Highways Bill was received and signatures on a petition sought. On 5 May Mr Wilson took charge of the Petition. In view of the short time that elapsed between these two meetings the matter of the petition would seem to have been an urgent one. The Act was to transfer from the Parishes the responsibility for maintaining the roads in the Parish to the Rural District Council.

Thus at the meeting held on 15 April 1897

Mr Cameron drew the Councils attention to an open stream that crosses the road near Irton Road Station; as it had often flooded recently, thus making it difficult to cross, he thought it high time that something was done to rectify the situation.

On 20 March 1899

Lord Muncaster stated that it was not the responsibility of the Parish Council to rectify the situation and that the matter had been referred to the District Council.

On 5 September 1898

The Clerk reported that the pipes for the water course across the road had not yet been laid.

On 13 November 1899

The pipes to carry the water away were on the spot but had not yet been laid. The parties who had offered to cart the gravel needed were now no longer interested in the matter.

On 23 March 1900

The Clerk was instructed to inform the Bootle RDC that the work had not been carried out to the Council's satisfaction.

Thereafter the matter is not mentioned again in the Minutes mainly because a more pressing problem arose. The Main Street in Ravenglass.

On 15 April 1900

Considerable discussion took place about the bad state of the road through the Village as water was standing thereon during wet weather and the Clerk was asked to write to the District Council .. etc.,

On 5 February 1901

It was noted that Bootle Council had not replied to the Clerk's letter of April 22nd last.

On 11 August 1907 the only record of the Village Cross appears:

Mr Wilson drew attention to the unsatisfactory state of the road near "The Old Cross" and Mr Watt was asked to see the Surveyor.

However matters were stirring in the world, the Kaiser was getting ambitious, and this made Vickers feel the need for a Testing Station for their guns and they chose Eskmeals. This manifests itself in the Minutes for on 14 March 1911.

Mr Wilson drew attention to the bad state of the road along the shore.

and on 24 March, only ten days later, which emphasises the urgency of the situation:

The Surveyor had agreed to repair the road along the shore so far as the Rural District Council were liable.

On 27 March, only three days later, a Special Meeting was held to discuss the situation and it was minuted.

In view of the serious inconvenience to the inhabitants of the Parish of Muncaster and District in crossing the rivers from Eskmeals and Saltcoats, more particularly now that the Furness Railway Company had discontinued granting permission to walk along the railway, and having regard to the large number of men employed at the new works at Eskmeals who have been staying in Ravenglass, the District Council be requested to consider the advisability of building a bridge across the river or such other means of crossing as the Council may think necessary to improve the present unsatisfactory conditions. The Clerk was instructed to forward this resolution to the District Council.

Apart from the fact that the resolution is a single sentence, it illustrates the problems associated then with large construction works. One can have some sympathy with the Furness Railway Company in their not allowing large numbers of people to walk across the Esk Viaduct, especially in bad weather and darkness. What had been a local perk until then was being exploited.

However the Resolution had little effect on the stony hearted Bootle RDC for on 17 March 1913, almost a year later it is minuted:

The Clerk be asked to write (to the RDC) asking for a reply to his letter of March last.

At the same meeting another minute reads:

Mr Wilson drew attention to the shocking state of the roads during the recent snow and proposed that the Clerk ask why the District Council did not attend to them, and to ask why the Main Street in Ravenglass was not properly drained in order to deal with the surface water.

On 15 April 1913 a letter from the Bootle RDC was read:

..the District Council proposed to remedy the bad state of the Street in Ravenglassand acknowledge receipt of the resolution.

Matters didn't rest there as on 22 September 1913:

..the attention of the District Council again be drawn to the bad state of the road in Ravenglass and the road along the shore to Eskmeals.

What happened subsequently is not recorded.

Things then lay dormant until 2 July 1925 when:

A letter from the Clerk of Bootle RDC was read re a a road scheme from Bootle to Muncaster Mill. However as the accompanying map only showed improvements for 100 yards within the Parish the matter be deferred until a map showing the full improvements in the Parish be obtained.

Things moved rapidly and on 16 July 1925:

The plan of the road alterations was examined ..Mr Turner proposed that as we have no alternatives the plan be agreed to.

And in 1994 we still await their implementation.

Matters outside the Parish are mentioned on 24 June 1927:

A letter from Seascale Parish Council was read re the question of improving the road over Hardknott and Wrynose Passes....it was agreed that the Council support the scheme.

HOUSING

War had still another 7½ bloody months to drag on when Bootle RDC wrote and it is minuted on 27 March 1918:

A letter from the Rural District Council Clerk was read requesting the Parish Council's opinion as to:-

- a Number of houses (new) thought to be necessary now.*
- b Number of which should be built at the close of the war to accommodate the Working classes.*

The Clerk was instructed to forward the following replies:

- a To consider that altho' at present, on account of the proximity of the Munitions Works there is a demand for more houses there is as yet sufficient accommodation for those persons.*
- b The Council think it premature to consider this, but would be willing to co-operate towards the betterment of housing - if found necessary.*

FOOTBRIDGE OVER THE RIVER MITE

A conundrum is set in the minutes of 5 September 1898, the story however starts at the preceding meeting of 15 April 1898 it was noted:

After considerable discussion as to any advantages which might be derived from the use of the Right of Way leading from Barrow Quarry to the Common, it was agreed that the path was not required.

This is followed on 5 September by:

A letter from Mr Thompson of Bell Hill, Drigg referring to the footbridge across the River Mite at Ravenglass, which for many years had been broken down and impassable, was laid before the meeting. After considerable discussion as to who was liable for repairing it no satisfactory conclusions was arrived at, and it was resolved that the Clerk represent to the District Council to State of the Bridge and wish the same to be repaired.

Nothing occurred then until rather surprisingly on 5 February 1929 when during a discussion on the foreshore.

Mr Marchant said that he had made enquiries about the Old Footbridge which used to cross over the River Mite and he had been told by Mr Wm Wilson of Ravenglass, one of the oldest inhabitants, that he well remembered the bridge foot passengers used to go over when they went either to Mitehouses or Saltcoats.

Crossing over the narrow gauge railway line in this area is Black Bridge, which leads from a field over the railway and onto what was then described as Manorial Waste and seems to

be an extravagant structure merely to enable sheep and cattle to cross the line when elsewhere a gate in the fence on each side of the track suffices. Nearby is the site of the Roman Ford over the River Mite. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that near the site of the Ford a wooden footbridge had been constructed to replace the ford and this led to the lane from Bell Hill, past Thornflats Farm, across the river and then over the railway at Black Bridge and on to what is now the A595.

MUNCASTER POOR CHARITY

With the winding down of the Bootle Poor Union some of the funds held by it and that belonged to the Parish became available.

On the 16 March 1895 it is minuted:-

Charities. The Revd Canon Bell stated that there was about £24 in the Bank of Whitehaven and proposed a Committee be appointed to enquire into the matter and act as Trustees. The following gentlemen were elected to the Committee. Messrs F Reynolds, R Graves and J Gambles.

It appears that the Churchwardens of Muncaster had also been trying to get their hands on the money for it is minuted on 17 April 1895:

Mr Reynolds proposed that the Clerk write to the Joint Stock Bank, Whitehaven to make enquiries whether any money from Charities had been deposited with them by the Churchwardens of Muncaster.

That a satisfactory answer had not been received is noted in the minutes of 15 May 1895:

It was agreed that Revd Canon Bell make further enquiries at the Banks in Whitehaven respecting any deposits relating to charities:

That he was successful is noted in a minute of 25 June 1895:-

Cannon Bell reported that he had made enquiries respecting the above (sic Charities) and found that £20 being the Poor Stock Charity deposited in the Bank of Whitehaven with £3.1s.1d interest thereon making £23.1s.1d.

Lord Muncaster proposed that two trustees be elected for the above, Mr J Benson and Mr Benj Sim being duly elected.

Mysterious matters were raised at the 7 March 1901 meeting:

Mr Sim report that there was a larger amount of Charity Money than that which the Council had at present under its control and that if someone could see Mr Edward Bibby of Newbiggin he could perhaps let them know something as to its whereabouts.

On 20 April it was reported:

...that it was thought that Mr Bibby knew something but the information they received had not been sufficient. After discussion the matter was dropped.

In 1908 it was reported that 8/3d (42p) had been distributed, one lady received 4/- (20p) and the other 4/3d (21)p.

This Charity remains in existence and is administered by the Vicar for the time being of the Parish and the Clerk of the Council, it now has some £55 at the bank, the original money having been invested in 2½% Consolidated Stock, at that time probably a wise investment.

POSTAL SERVICES

The first mention of problems with the Postal Services comes on 29 October 1901 when:

Mr Stockdale said that as there was no despatch of letters from the Post Office on Sunday nights, people in and around the village had made it a practice to take their letters to the station and post them on the mail train at 6.24pm, but during the last few Sundays none had been allowed on the platform unless going by train, and it made things very awkward. It was therefore proposed that the Postmaster General be approached with a view to having a Pillar Box placed somewhere near the station to be emptied on Sunday Evenings just before the arrival of the train.

On 11 February it was recorded:

Letter from the Postmaster General regarding the erection of a Pillar Box at the Railway Station was read and considered most satisfactory, the arrangements for erecting the box having been sanctioned:

The box remained in the station wall until 1976 when the Ratty Arms was constructed at which time the box was moved to outside the Tourist Information Centre on the Ratty Car Park where it still is:

However an additional service was requested on 19 April 1909:

The desirability of a continued morning despatch of letters was discussed and it was proposed that the Postmaster General be requested to arrange such despatch by the 11.19am train from the station.

However on 16 September 1909:

A letter from the GPO Surveyor was read regretting that he was unable to accede to the request as the amount of correspondence did not justify the expenses which would be involved.

At the next meeting that Lord Muncaster chaired on 18 April 1910:

Lord Muncaster complained that it was no longer possible to send a letter by the morning post to either a merchant or correspondent in Whitehaven and receive either the goods or a reply the same day. The Clerk was instructed to again write to the GPO and stress the necessity for a morning despatch of letters from Ravenglass and giving the reason why.

The matter closed on 18 November when:

Mr Watt reported that Mr Grant, the member for the Division, had secured a morning despatch of letters from Ravenglass.

No doubt Lord Muncaster had dropped a note to the MP. It also shows an MP had clout in those days.

Matters remained in abeyance until 6 July 1917 when:

An application from the Post Mistress at Ravenglass for the Council's approval to closing the Post Office on Wednesday afternoons at 1pm. It was agreed that this Council has no objection to the proposed closing of Ravenglass Post Office from 1pm on Wednesday afternoons it being understood that in respect of telegrams the district would be served from Eskmeals and that there would be the usual despatch of letters etc., in the evening. The Council further suggests that it would be a public convenience if on other days the Post Office were closed from 1pm to 2pm instead of from 12 noon to 1pm as at present.

On 5 August 1922:

The Council had no objection to half day closing of the Post Office being transferred to Tuesdays nor to it being closed on New Years Day and the Tuesday following Easter and Whit Mondays.

On 16 April 1923:

...that application for a pre war Service be applied for.

On 3 May 1937 it is minuted

A letter was read from the Head Postmaster at Whitehaven asking the Councils permission to grant the Ravenglass postman a half day on a Saturday and stating that the delivery of letters which at present commences at 4.30pm on Saturdays would commence at 12.30pm. Collections from Muncaster and Ravenglass Station letter boxes would be made at 11.00am and 11.55am instead of 5pm and 4pm respectively. It would still be possible to post letters on the 6.41pm train south bound.

PARISH PRECEPT

Throughout its existence the Parish Council has been able to precept on initially the Overseers of the Parish, after 1927 the Bootle Rural District Council, then the Millom Rural District Council and latterly Copeland Borough Council.

At its meeting on 16 March 1895 it was minuted:-

A precept for £9.4s.11d (£9.25) being a rate of 1/2d (on fifth of a modern penny) in the pound on a £4,438 Rateable Value of the Parish was issued to the Overseers. To be paid to the Parish Council on 20 March.

This shows that the Rateable Value system was already well established and was the basis of the calculation used by the Overseer when he collected his dues.

In 1896 there was a balance of £6.3s.4d. and the precept was lowered to one farthing in the pound to yield £4.10s.0d.

For the rest of next fifty years the precept remained around this level, it does not appear to have exceed £7 nor fallen below £5. However, it has to be remembered that Parish ratepayers were also required to pay a Parish Rate and that this was collected by the Overseer and his Assistant and passed over to the District Council. Given that their wages came to some £50 per annum it is obvious that the rate collected was of the order of £3 or more per annum per dwelling.

RECREATION FIELD

Immediately following the War Memorial Proposed in 1919 it is minuted

Sir John explained his Recreation Ground Scheme. He said that he had no wish to associate this in any way with the proposed War Memorial. He thought that the Parish lacked a ground where young could play and the older people could meet, and in order to meet this want he was willing to give land in Walls Field, to lay it out, level it and build a pavilion, and in fact make it ready for Football, Cricket, Tennis and Bowls and lease it at a nominal rent to the Parish Council or Trustees as thought best.

This is meet with a stony silence as far as the minutes are concerned. In view of the pressure that had been applied over the War Memorial one wonders if the villagers, now that the war was over and they were seeking the freedom that they believed it had brought, cold shouldered the idea as it came from The Castle and they saw it, Sir John an outsider, trying to curry favour in the village. No doubt also they saw the ongoing costs of maintenance would fall on their shoulders. Bearing in mind the six day working week current at that time, as exemplified under Postal Services, one wonders when they could have used the facilities, given that as agricultural workers they would have had longer working hours in the summer months.

Matters lay dormant until 1935 when on 2 August there was a special meeting at which:

A letter was read from Mr Lawrence asking that the Council consider recommendations of the Public Meeting held recently into the question of Playing Grounds etc for Ravenglass.

It was resolved that the Parish Council do not feel justified in asking the Ratepayers to pay for such improvements.

ROYAL CELEBRATIONS

QUEEN VICTORIA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE

It was minuted on 30 July 1897 as follows:

Canon Bell proposed a Vote of Thanks to Lord Muncaster for his kindness in presenting to the Church a Silver Arms Dish and in purchasing on behalf of the Jubilee Committee two Burnished Copper Candlesticks which are to be placed in the Church as a permanent memorial of the 60th year of the Queens reign, for providing the children of the Parish with a substantial tea and for giving the grand

display of fireworks and bonfire on the day fixed for the celebrations. It was also agreed that the candlesticks be exhibited in Mr Walker's shop window for public inspection.

Queen Victoria's death is not recorded.

CORONATION OF KING EDWARD VII

On 21 March 1902 it is recorded:

There was a short discussion as to the celebration of the Kings Coronation. The Clerk was instructed to write to the Millom St George's Brass Band for the first refusal of their services for the occasion.

Nothing further is minuted.

CORONATION OF KING GEORGE V

On 21 April 1911 it is minuted:

The Chairman to convene a Public Meeting to be held in the High School on Tuesday May 2nd 1911.

and that was that.

VISIT BY THE PRINCE OF WALES, 1927

On 24 June 1927 it is minuted:

..that matters be left in the hands of Mr Marchant and Mr Birkett to arrange, if possible, for the Prince to lay a wreath at the War Memorial.

KING GEORGE V SILVER JUBILEE

On 29 March 1935 it is minuted:

A letter was read from Millom District Council enclosing a cheques for £6 (being the product of a 1d rate) for Jubilee Celebrations. It was resolved to return the cheque stating that this was not required as a public subscription was being raised.

The Coronation of King George VI passed the village by, not, surprisingly, without comment by the Parish Council, although we do know that there was a celebration.

RUBBISH

Rubbish has been on and off the agenda of the Council since 1898. Today it is about recycling, then it was garbage.

On 2 February 1898 it is recorded:

Lord Muncaster stated that the broken bottles which were strewn on the road behind the village on the beach had become a nuisance inasmuch as it had become very dangerous to anyone driving a horse along it.

On 20 March 1898:

Mr Stockdale reported that the refuse had been gathered up and cleared, Lord Muncaster having gone to the expense of doing so. It was agreed to consider at the next meeting what course would be best to have the refuse cleared away in future.

On 15 April 1898

As regards the clearing away of refuse from the Village etc., it was stated that the Rural District Council had taken the matter in hand and have the same cleared away every month or so.

all went well until 18 July 1901 when:

A complaint had been received ... about the state of the Foreshore which is strewn with broken bottles. The Clerk was asked to write to the Rural District Council at Bootle about the same.

Then on 25 October 1901 it was reported that

As regards the rubbish on the beach Mr Stockdale said he had an order from Lord Muncaster to have them all gathered up and buried. In addition Lord Muncaster would have a place erected behind the Reading Room into which anyone who chose could empty their rubbish.

Things must have gone reasonable well for nothing is reported for more than a decade until a Special Meeting was held on 19 June 1914:

A letter was read from the Rural District Council with a copy of a report by the County Medical Officer on Scavenging and Removal of House Refuse in Ravenglass.

'Ravenglass:- The scavenging and removal of house refuse in this village does not appear to be quite satisfactory. A considerable amount of refuse and a good deal of vegetable matter appear to be thrown onto the foreshore, which of course on decomposition must give rise to considerable nuisance especially in warm weather. In view of the number of visitors who visit the village each summer steps ought to be taken to prevent this about which complaints were received from several inhabitants.'

Mr Watt said that twice a year Lord Muncaster caused the refuse to be collected and buried and this had been done six weeks ago.

Lord Muncaster proposed that the Clerk write to Bootle RDC asking them to take the matter in hand with a view to abating the nuisance complained of in the Report.

SEWERS

Sewers, sewage and their related problems seem to have been aired at many meetings of the Council in one form or another. The initial entry is in the first business meeting held on 16 March 1895:

Mr Reynolds drew the Councils attention to the unwholesome state of some of the sewers carrying away refuse from the village. Messrs Reynolds, Hodgson and Gambles were appointed a committee to examine and report on the same.

At the next meeting on 17 April 1895 it was minuted

The sub committee be reappointed to wait upon the owners of the properties.

(Only modern English gives those two entries unintentional humour).

On 15 May it is recorded that:

Mr Reynolds proposed that Application be made to the District Council to have the outlets extended. The resolution was carried unanimously.

On 25 June Lord Muncaster directed the Clerk.

to request the District Council to support the scheme for simply extending the sewers and that the more ambitious scheme that had been proposed be modified.

All went well until 18 July 1901 when:

A complaint had been received about the offensive smell which arose from the sewers which emptied onto the beach.

Then on 25 October 1901 it was reported that:

The Sanitary Inspectors report on the Sewers was not considered satisfactory. Mr Wilson said that Dr Cass had given to the person who clears out the mouths of the sewers bottles of disinfectant to take away the offensive smell arising therefrom. After discussion it was agreed that Canon Bell wait upon Dr Cass to get his opinion about them.

On 11 February 1902

Canon Bell reported that he had waited on Dr Cass and that they had looked over the sewers. The doctor thought that there was no need to lengthen them if they were regularly and properly flushed. Dr Cass said that the Slaughter House was the greatest nuisance. He had report it to the District Council several times but they had taken no notice of it and he would next report it to the Local Government Board. The Clerk was to write as follows "That the present state of the drains in Ravenglass is unsatisfactory and that Muncaster Parish Council beg to call the serious attention of the Bootle Rural District Council to the matter".

On 21 August 1914 a meeting was held at the request of the Surveyor for the Bootle RDC when:

Mr Jones (The RDC Surveyor) thought that as a considerable amount of refuse from cottage property in Ravenglass was deposited on the shore he thought that it ought to be regularly collected from house to house and destroyed and he also recommends that the night soil be regularly collected and disposed of, - the greatest obstacle appeared to be the finding of a suitable place for the disposal of the refuse - he did not expect any difficulty in finding a person willing to collect the night soil on account of its manurial properties. He considered it impracticable to insert WC's into the cottage property in the village on account of the difficulty of treating the excrete - the village being at the lowest point in the Parish. He agreed to find a means for the disposal of refuse and night soil and the probable cost.

However, on 4 November 1914 he reported

that he was having difficult finding someone to collect the night soil.

He reported and on 15 January 1915 it was minuted

The Parish Council having carefully considered the question think that the tender is altogether exorbitant and also that the scheme proposed is at present quite unnecessary. The Parish Council further consider that if there are any inhabitants who do not conform with the Bye Laws of the District Council the Sanitary Inspector might be instructed to report on the matter and that householders be made aware of their duties in this respect:

Matters were not to rest for on 22 March 1915:

A letter was read from the RDC re sanitation at Ravenglass. The RDC considered the matter and favoured the employment of a full time man, part of whose duty would be the emptying of the Ravenglass pails and this portion of his work would be charged to the Parish of Muncaster. The Surveyor had been instructed to make a further report on the matter. The Clerk was instructed to write to say that the Council would consider the matter after they had received a copy of the Report.

What the report contained is not now known but after 1915 there is no mention in the minutes of sewage, night soil or the offensive smells. It would seem from other evidence that given the pressures applied from outside on the then ageing Lord Muncaster he took the advice of Dr Cass and others and installed a supply of drinking water in the village and also laid in a basic sewage system.

The water supply lasted until 1963 when the South Cumberland Water Board laid in a supply to the village connected to their Wastwater main which fed villages to the north. The original Muncaster pipes still exist and contain sweet water as there are odd taps dotted about the village which still run when the North West Water pipes are dry due to a burst main or broken pump. The sewers remained in use until the present sewage system with its treatment plant was brought into use in 1979.

TELEPHONES

Bearing in mind the universality of telephones in 1994 the Village was somewhat late in being able to get onto the network.

On 30 August 1912 it is minuted:

The Clerk reported a letter from the Postmaster General. "With reference to your letter of the 15 April last I am directed by the Postmaster General to say that the cost of providing a service would be greater than the prospective receipts would justify. In the circumstances the Postmaster General regrets that he is unable to entertain the proposal at present.

The reason for this proposal would appear to have been the building of the Eskmeals Gun Range by Vickers and the probability that it would have had a telephone as it would have needed to be connected to the outside world. Other minutes at this period, especially about the roads, would support this supposition.

Certainly by 1923 the village did have a telephone service, but on what date it was installed is not mentioned in the Minutes. It is of interest to note the influence that needs of Eskmeals had on the local telephone system. Bootle and points south were connected to the main Barrow exchange whilst points north were connected to Whitehaven. This became more apparent when STD codes were introduced and Ravenglass had a prefix of 065. The reason was that it was connected to a non public exchange in Manchester called Manchester Guardian. In the days prior to Ravenglass being connected to the direct dialling network, if the operator left the switchboard key open you could hear her ask the operator for Guardian 65 xxx. It is a matter of note that the local dialling came to Ravenglass prior to the second world war partly because of this connection to Manchester and it was one of the prototypes for small Strowger equipped exchanges.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The first mention of Public Toilets came on 15 April 1926.

..a Meeting of Ratepayers in Ravenglass he held in the Hall, Ravenglass on 26 April to discuss the erecting of Public Conveniences.

But as an expense would have been incurred from which the ratepayers would not have benefited the matter passed into oblivion.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Rather surprising Public Transport does not feature in the Minutes to any great extent, no doubt the 'establishment' found the service sufficient for their needs and the other villagers had little need to travel apart from going to Whitehaven Market on either a Thursday or a Saturday. In fact the frequency of the train service has varied very little throughout the life of the Council, apart from late evening trains which were discontinued within the past decade. Until the 1950's many of the trains that ran to destinations beyond Barrow; Leeds, Liverpool, London and Manchester had either through trains or through carriages.

There was also a sleeper service from Euston to Corkickle which did not stop at Ravenglass but did stop at Seascale. The reason it stopped at Corkickle was that the coaches were too big to go through the tunnel to Bransty.

Apart from the entries under Postal Services the first mention of transport comes in 1925 when on 2 July.

..The Clerk write to LM&S Railways enquiring if the evening train from Whitehaven to Seascale could not come as far as Ravenglass - if not every evening - on Thursday and Saturday evenings.

On 16 July a letter from the LM&S Railway Company was read. From an examination of the timetables for that period it would appear that some short time later this request was acceded to.

VILLAGE GREEN

45 years elapsed before any mention is made of either the Village Green or the marshes running alongside the rivers. On 5 February 1929 a very long minute appears:

A letter was read from Bootle Council re the ford over the River Mite at Ravenglass, asking for the Council's observations. After a discussion it was resolved that.....about the Old Footbridge which used to cross over the River Mite and he had been told by Mr Wm Wilson of Ravenglass, one of the oldest inhabitants, that he well remembered the bridge foot passengers used to go over the bridge when they went either to Mitehouses of Saltcoats, Mr Wilson also said that under the Drigg Award Mr Jackson or Saltcoats was debarred from fencing off the piece of ground as he had recently suggested doing. By the Award all the unfenced ground had to remain unfenced. Mr Marchant had not had the opportunity to look at the Award, but Mr Wilson was positive as to the facts. Mr Benson and Mr Hodgson both agreed with this statement. As the other side of the river is in Drigg Parish the Council suggested that Drigg Parish Council should enquire into matters and if they are of the same opinion it would probably be as well for them to make an entry in their Minute Book. The Council also suggested that steps be taken to repair the road across the bed of the river which is in a very bad state of repair, nothing having been done for a number of years and they suggested that four (4) stones be placed on the Ravenglass side and two (2) on the Drigg side to act as a guide to people using the Ford, the stones to be of such a height that when covered it was unsafe to cross and a notice to this effect be placed near the crossing.

WAR MEMORIAL

Despite a meeting on 17 March and 15 April 1919, due to small attendance no progress was made on this matter. Somewhat surprising when you consider that there are 11 names on the memorial for those lost in the Great War. Finally on 25 April enough support was drummed up at it was minuted.

Sir John Ramsden thought the War Memorial ought to take the form of a cross, symbolic of the sacrifice which had been made by the boys who had laid down their lives, that it ought to be the best that could be procured and erected on a site

which was considered most suitable in the Parish. After some discussion Sir John proposed that the memorial be erected at the Whitehaven Road End and that members of the Parish Council pledge their support to this scheme at the Public Meeting.

The War Memorial Cross, made from Cree Granite, was purchased, installed and dedicated without further mention in the Minutes.

Does one perhaps detect the establishment being a little heavy handed? But read about the Recreation Ground proposition made immediately after this minute. This opinion is somewhat supported by the minute on 16 July 1925, a mere six years after the Memorial was erected.

Mr Turner brought up the matter of the War Memorial, it was at present in a disgraceful state and thought that something ought to be done about it that Mr Turner interview Mr Marchant (Agent for Sir John Ramsden) and put all the facts respecting the Memorial before him.

On 15 April 1925 it is minuted

Messrs Capel, Currie & Ball, Solicitors for Sir John Ramsden be notified that the Parish Council were quite willing to take over the War Memorial site on the conditions contained in the Draft Deeds.

Finally on 9 June 1926.

...tenders be invited for Cleaning the War Memorial.

The War Memorial was subsequently cleaned by Mr Hornby for 2½ gns. £2.12s.6d (£2.60) and a grant from the County Council be claimed to cover the cost.

On 18 March 1930.

...a letter be sent to the Women's Institute saying that the Council have no funds to purchase seats, but they would have no objection to seats being placed at the War Memorial should the WI be willing to pay for them.

WATER SUPPLY

There is no mention in the minutes as to when Muncaster Estates laid on a supply of piped drinking water to the village. What is known is that in the late 1880 period it was still necessary for each house to have its own pump. In 1993 during the renovation of the house 'Springfield' the pump in the back yard has been exposed. The plumbing in many houses would indicate that it was in the 1910-20 period that water and sewers were installed. Evidence for this comes from the fact that after 1915 there is no further reference to sewage fouling the beach nor any reference to the removal of night soil. It would appear that Lord Muncaster acted on the recommendations of the various sanitary and medical representations which had been made.

The next sign of improvement came on 19 April 1939.

The Engineers report on the proposed Devoke Water Scheme was considered and after some discussion it was resolved that a letter be sent to Millom RDC stating that the Council did not approve of the scheme and that the present supply was quite satisfactory

PART 2

1944-1994

A595

During the December 1974 high tides the A595 at Muncaster Bridge had been flooded and car traffic held up for about an hour and a half although commercial vehicles had been unable to go though for about half an hour. The Council wrote to the County Council recommending that the bridge be rebuilt and the road laid on an improved alignment and asking that this work be carried out forthwith.

At the same time it was considered that improvements between the War Memorial and Barrow Brow which had recently been completed were a waste of time and had created a hazard at Barrow Brow and virtually instructed the County Council to continue the improvement past Barrow Brow

BATHING

On 30 September 1947 it is noted

Following the recent tragic bathing fatality it was agreed to place a notice board warning of the dangerous currents.

BIRKBY ROAD

The Birkby Road was causing concern and on 22 May 1946 representations were made to both the County Council and Millom RDC about its condition. A Mr Ogilvie wrote and explained the controversy, but it is not minuted what that controversy was, and the meeting decided to consult Captain Llewellyn (the County Councillor for the area at that time and who lived in the village) about the matter. Then on 1 July it was agreed to write to Sir John Ramsden, as landlord of the farms along the road. But matters took a more serious turn on 30 September 1947:

To make further search for the Parish Award by instructing the Clerk to write to the Agent of Holmrook Hall Estate asking for permission to search in the garage - believed to contain records - to establish with the aid of the award whether this road is a Highway or is held in Ratione Tenurade.

Grateful to accept Lord Rea's offer of assistance and to inform him that his help will be welcomed as soon as the facts are known.

(No reply was received until March 1948 when Mr F H Walker, the Holmrook Agent replied that nothing could be found).

Matters moved on and upward for on 6 January 1948

to write direct to the Minister of Agriculture, laying the facts before him, and sending a copy of the letter to Eskdale PC.

then on 22 March 1948

.....the Ministers reply of March 8th was read...ask the County Council to take the matter up with the Minister of Transport pointing out that the improvement of the

Birkby Road is essential in order to improve food production in Eskdale. A letter of thanks be sent to the Minister of Agriculture for his assistance in this matter.

As late as December 1951 the Award was still being sought, but had not been found.

CARAVAN PARK

In December 1969 proposals were made for a Caravan Park at the entrance to Walls Drive for 75 Caravans and it was agreed to object to the proposal. It was understood that The Ministry of Works as custodians of the Roman Bath House had also objected.

A major reason for objection was the strong possibility of the site being used by contractors who were soon to come to the area to build the THORP Plant at Sellafield. Memories of the original contractors camps of the 1950's were still present in many peoples minds.

Coincidentally at the same time the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway applied for six caravans on the grassed area adjacent to their car park. These were refused as they would have overlooked houses opposite and would have seriously detracted from the appearance at the entrance to the village.

Modified proposals for a reduced number of caravans on the Walls site were submitted twice and on each occasion the proposals were considered still to be unsatisfactory. Indeed the Council were against any caravans being sited anywhere in the Parish.

On 13 October 1970 a special meeting was called to discuss the proposals which had been recommended for approval to the Planning Board by the Millom RDC. Concern was expressed that the Councils views had been over ridden, that the RDC Councillors had not consulted anyone in Ravenglass before deciding to approve the application, sewage was a major problem in the village and this development would exacerbate the problem, the caravan site would not benefit the village, it was surprising that approval had been given ahead of that for either houses or conveniences (the relevance of that comment might have been obvious then, but is not now) and that a meeting with the Planning Board be arranged so that the proposals could be shown to be objectionable.

However the Planning Board had given their consent and they pointed out that whilst a revocation order could be made compensation would have to be paid to the applicant. The Planning Board were unable to send a representative to the proposed Public Meeting. Sir William Pennington Ramdsen was also unable to attend.

Finally a private meeting was held between the Parish Councillors and Sir William Pennington Ramdsen on 8 December 1970 at which, on the instructions of the Chairman Mr R W Gallantry, no minutes were taken.

In August 1973 an amended Planning Application was submitted concerning the Walls Caravan Site. The Council remained adamantly opposed to the development.

On 24 January 1974 it was reported that the Planning Board had given their consent to the amended plan with stringent conditions attached, the principle one being that the site could not be used between November and March and there could only be a very limited number of static caravans during the open season.

Millom RDC had disapproved as had the Council. There was a howl of protest that local peoples views had been over ridden and letters were sent hither and thither voicing objections to the consent. However matters suddenly quietened down when the Council were informed that they could enter an objection to the decision, but if they did they would become liable for the costs of the hearing and also any loss which the applicants might suffer as a result of a revocation of the permission.

During 1977 a further application was submitted to amend the numbers of vans allowed on the site at various times and also to allow over winter parking, but not usage of, caravans on the site. This reopened old wounds and again objections were submitted.

Sewage was still a major obstacle as the new plant was still two years away from commissioning. However, chastened by their earlier rebuff, the Council decided to accept the grant of permission, reluctantly.

In 1979 signs appeared on the A595 and at the entrance to Walls Drive which indicated that camping in tents on the site was permitted. Again the balloon went up and all and sundry were written to. However, the Planning Board noted that camping on any land was permissible for 28 days in any year and permission was not specifically required. Secondly the County Highways authority had reported that the signs, paid for by Muncaster Estates, were correct.

CAR PARK

In February 1972 we find references to the protracted negotiations between the land owners and the National Park Authority over the purchase of the land needed for the Car Park. The major obstacle was that the road to Croftlands Drive/Townfield Close did not exist and the proposal was to enter the site from Station Hill near the Ratty Arms. This would have created a major traffic hazard when cars leaving would have joined the roadway at the blind junction by the Railway Bridge.

The proposal to build the new houses and their associated approach roads followed shortly afterwards and this of course resolved the problem. By September 1973 proposals were being made for the existing arrangements to be built.

By March 1974 complaints about the contractors building the Car Park dumping spoil were being made.

A year later the Council was proposing to the Planning Board that two attendants be employed to collect parking fees. There was some disquiet that parking was to be free and the consequential result that the cost of the car park would have to come from the public purse. However the Board replied that to create a charge would hinder the resolution of the problem of cars parking on the Main Street which the Council had protested about so vociferously in their support for the provision of a car park. Secondly the income would not cover the costs of the attendants wages, thus adding an annual cost to running the car park. Responses from the Countryside Commission and the Department of the Environment supported the Planning Board.

Despite this weight of opinion two councillors however continued to insist that all car owners should pay whenever they parked their cars anywhere and tried to get the Council to object to the Boards decision.

They also objected to a path which had been created by people pushing through the hedge between the Car Park and The Ratty Arms and wished to see this area sealed. The basis for this was that the Ratty Arms had not contributed to the cost of the Car Park and, by virtue of the gap, were at an advantage compared with other establishments in the Village.

CLOSURE OF CHURCHYARDS

When a Churchyard becomes full the Church Council can transfer the yard to the local Council who will then become responsible for its maintenance. The Parish Council can then transfer this duty to the District Council.

In 1977 Rev Gurney applied to close the Old and New yards at St Micheals, Muncaster. This resulted in a protest from one Councillor who maintain the five spaces remained in the New Yard and that the Closure Order could therefore not be made. Indeed the same councillor purchased one of the spaces. An acrimonious debate took place which ended in the Parish Council agreeing to the closure.

It was during the debate that the Councillor concerned made the now infamous remark:- 'We may not have achieved much but, we've stopped a lot'. This lead to another councillor offering to pay for their tombstone on condition that the words just uttered would be the epitaph.

COASTAL PROTECTION

Sea Protection Works were commenced during the winter of 1972/73 and this lead to a problem in that as there was no Car Park in sight yet and visitors cars would no longer be able to park on the Green there would be parking problems in the village. The works consisted of gabions filled with stones being placed in front of the Green to prevent further erosion by the sea and then being back filled to the level of the Green. At the same time large boulders were placed along the road side to prevent access by cars onto the Greer.

During the Autumn of 1978 the equinotial high tides, coupled with both a high wind from the South West and swollen becks from three days of heavy rain caused a massive flood in the village. Houses were flooded to a depth of six feet and a boat was washed through the railway bridge and was finally moored in the entrance to Ratty Car Park. The damage was enormous. Fed up with the procrastination of both Copeland Council and North West Water appeals for help were made to Dr J Cunningham MP and a site meeting between the parties held in November. Dr Cunningham was both direct and forceful in his comments and there was a rapid change of position by both Copeland Borough Council and North West Water.

The North West Water returned to the village in August 1979 to present detailed plans of their proposals to alleviate flooding. The work of building the bund, or hump as it is known, commenced almost immediately and the large steel floodgates were installed by November. Since when the village has escaped any further serious flooding.

At 01-00 in 1 February 1981 there was again a very high tide. The water reached the top of the bund, but did not come over in any quantity. The Clerk reported that the waves hitting the flood gate were breaking at eaves level of the adjacent properties but only splashing small amounts of water onto the street side of the gate.

CONSERVATION AREA

The first suggestion that the Village should become a Conservation Area came in the Settlement Policy Statement issued in 1979 by the Planning Board.

In December 1980 the Planning Board were asking for a Public Meeting to be held to discuss the proposals. The proposals were wide reaching and met with some approval. So far, 1994, the only physical improvement has been the laying of cobbles in the area of the weint between Main Street and Townfield Close and the planting of some shrubs near the car park. High hopes have faded in the wake of cash shortages.

CONTAMINATION

During 1983 and 1984 there was considerable publicity being given to the contamination of the beaches by radioactive discharges from BNFL at Sellafield. How much of the many statements made were true is open to debate. The Council was forced into the spotlight by the transmission of a TV programme compiled by Yorkshire Television and which featured a household in the village. Throughout the two years there was intense media interest and each time a TV programme was transmitted it used Ravenglass as an example. The Council tried to counter the adverse publicity but the opponents of nuclear energy had immense publicity networks which the Council found it hard to make itself heard against.

The householders mentioned left the village as the furore was at its height and later instituted legal proceedings against BNFL for damages, a case which they lost.

CORONATION 1953

There is little mention in the minutes of 1953 Coronations but in 1958 the Council acknowledge the receipt of two seats paid for by the Coronation Committee.

COUNCIL HOUSES

The Council must have wondered what was happening when on 4 February 1947 they were told by the County Council that:

Twenty Four Houses would be built in Ravenglass.

On 22 March 1948 the Council noted that they were unable to obtain from the County Council any details of where or when the houses were to be built.

On 9 March 1950 it was reported that:

Millom RDC confirmed that they had not forgotten about the proposals. Mr Ogilvie explained that he had had approaches from about half a dozen people

about housing and they had not been put off by the proposed rent of 22/6d per week.

Things lay dormant until on 30 March 1953:

...progress was being made towards the erection of Council Houses at Ravenglass, the land was being valued by the District Valuer and money had been set aside for the actual purchase.

then on 30 April:

A letter signed by three property owners was read objecting to the roadway needed to reach the proposed housing. The Clerk was asked to write to the RDC to see if the slight amendment to the proposed line could be accommodated.

(The roadway ran through the then gap in the houses between Sherbert House and 1 Clifton Terrace now occupied by 47/48 Main Street).

followed on 5 October by:

...the RDC would have to enforce compulsory purchase of the garden land concerned ...

In early 1954 it was noted that no apparent progress was being made and the Chairman commented on 27 March

...he was not able to commit himself to any statement as yet.

Still nothing had happened on 23 January 1963 when:

... ask if the Millom RDC still had an option to buy the field behind the Slaughter House (this was part of what was the Butchers' Shop and now Ravenglass Crafts Shop).

Followed on 23 March by:-

... as many people as possible be asked to re-apply.

then on 1 May:

The Rev Hodges stated that there was little hope at present of any Council Houses being erected in Ravenglass.

On 28 July 1964 an extended meeting was devoted to Housing.

Rev Hodges said 8 or 9 people had applied for Council Houses.

there then followed a long discussion as to whether bungalows or houses were needed and where, Signal Box Field, Wells Cottages Allotments and Butchers Field were all suggested as possible sites. The Estate proposed to build houses for weekly rent of 40/- (£2.00), for a

bungalow, 50/- (£2.50) plus rates. Sir William Pennington-Ramsden proposed building 8 bungalows for retired workmen and renting out the houses that they had previously occupied on small rents at a commercial rent. Mr McWilliam stated that he had received permission to build 8 bungalows on the Butchers Field and that it was his job to run the estate at a profit.

By 8 March 1965 matters had progressed but little except for the cost of providing roads and services having been estimated at £15,000. Then on the 5 August it is noted that Mr McWilliam had not been quite correct in stating he had Planning Permission in July 1964, as the proposed development had been refused by the Planning Authority at their July 1965 Meeting.

A visit by the Millom RDC Surveyor to inspect the site took place during January 1965.

In October 1967 as part of a discussion on housing it was stated that an official at Millom RDC had stated that 'there never will be Council Houses at Ravenglass as long as Muncaster Estates have empty houses to let'. This led to a letter of protest being sent to both the Millom RDC and the Lake District Planning Board.

But it was then the end of the matter until 1979.

DOWN YOUR WAY

The long running radio programme Down Your Way visited the village on 13 May 1977 and recorded interviews with various residents which formed the basis of a later broadcast.

Jack Pharaoh, the Garage Owner, was interviewed and was not over impressed by the Roman Remains in the Parish and expressed the view that the best thing the Romans left behind was Ice Cream.

EDUCATION

In May 1958 the Rev Hodges proposed that children over the age of 11 be educated at the new Millom Comprehensive School. (Until then they had attended at St Micheals' Muncaster).

On 8 March 1965 it was reported, through Captain Llewellyn, that consideration was being given to building a new school for infants on Butchers Field. Rev Hodges said that the school managers had no knowledge of such a proposal.

Until the mid 1960's there had been a Further Education Sub Committee but it is not recorded what they achieved. The fact that they had falling attendances at classes is noted and as almost a final fling they held a public meeting in August 1966 at which four people attended. Nevertheless they persevered and proposed classes in Art and Painting and Ladies Keep Fit.

ELECTRICITY SUPPLY

There is no record of when electricity first came to the Village, but the entries about street lighting indicate that it was well before the start of World War II. Breaks in the supply of

electricity to the Village are nothing new for in 1957 it is minuted that there had been numerous failures in the supply.

We do know that in 1959 the pole route over the fell from Miteside was installed as there are complaints about the contractors damaging footpaths during its erection and not reinstating them.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Women's Institute wrote in April 1960 and suggested Environmental Improvements to the Village, kerbing and improved drainage of the Main Street. In this they were supported by the County Planning Officer. Their letter was noted but no further action ensued.

FOOD PARCELS

On 10 July 1946 it was noted:

that food parcels had been received from Australia and that Mrs Llewellyn and Mrs Irwin would distribute them to aged and needy persons over 75 years of age.

In September 1946 more parcels were received and

... that the previous minute be amended to read 'needy' without an age bar.

In both 1947 and 1948 larger batches of parcels were received for distribution and it is assumed that as the numbers increased so the distribution widened.

FOOTPATHS

It took until the 30 January 1946 before the matter of footpaths was raised.

*Dr Lloyd enquired if there were a map showing the footpaths in the village....
Dr Lloyd undertook to purchase a map and to visit Millom RDC and copy onto it and details they might have.*

In July 1946 there was a problem with the path between Wells Cottages and the Pennington Arms and it was resolved:

... and that the Clerk be instructed to write to the Estate Agent to see if any improvements were possible.

A Public Meeting was held in early 1951 when members of the public were to be invited to mark on a six inch Ordnance Map routes of footpaths that they knew about. This was followed by public hearing held on 14 December 1953, The Footpath Survey of Muncaster Parish, when the Council was represented. On 19 January it was minuted that the hearing had taken place.

The map was duly produced and examined, then at a meeting on 25 August 1955 pandemonium broke out.

Correspondence was read concerning footpath 102001 being added to the map as a footpath and not a bridleway. As the Chairman had a personal interest in the matter he resigned and Mr R Steele was appointed as Chairman for the motion. A long and at times heated discussion took place and the matter was thoroughly discussed and ventilated. During the discussion Mr McWilliam objected to the Clerk of the Council not addressing his remarks through the Chair. The Clerks' apologies were accepted. Arising from the discussion Mr McWilliam proposed that this Council disassociates itself with any appeals or claims to carriageways within the Parish in so far as they are related to the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 Survey of Rights of Way. Voting was three in favour of the proposition and four against the proposition. The proposition was not carried. The Clerk to the Parish Council immediately handed in his resignation, but agreed to carry on his duties until a new Clerk be appointed.

In 1958 the Main A595 road did not have a footpath down its length and schoolchildren had to walk in the roadway. Action was started to try to get a footpath installed. At the same time a piece of land between Home Farm and the school was enclosed and the Council decided to fight this as it was held to be part of the Highway. The reply from the County Council was not considered acceptable and the Ministry of Transport was to be contacted. Having higher authority looking over their shoulder the County recognised the danger to children and the path was installed in 1960.

On 14 January 1959 it was minuted:

The Footpath Committee reported that they had studied the large scale maps and marked footpaths that could be walked at the present time and also noted that the majority of these paths had been walked recently.

On 20 May 1959 it is minuted

A letter from Mr McWilliam the Agent was read pointing out that the Clemlands Gate was in need of repair and that the gate used to be a stile. It was decided that the Clerk should reply to the letter stating that it has been installed by Muncaster Estates and also pointing out that Mr McWilliam was a Parish Councillor at the time the new gate was erected and had raised no objection at the time.

In 1960 it is noted that Footpath 10201 (Chase Corner to Muncaster Fell) was obstructed by a Sheep Pass and on 102008 (Clemlands to Home Farm Corner) passed through a field which had a bull in it.

Then on 23 July 1964 a thorny problem raised its head. The East Gate of the Church Walk had been locked and a 'private' notice put on it. After protestations by a Churchwarden through the Parochial Church Council and by the Council the gate was finally unlocked.

Then in July 1968 the County Council published the first draft of the Definitive Footpath Map. The Council held a special meeting to discuss this and for two hours cogitated on the footpaths in the Parish in great detail and then submitted their recommendations.

However, one path, down Rougholme Lane met with objections from local land owners and residents. Eventually a public hearing was held in the Parish Hall on the 14 February 1969 and the objections were over ruled.

During 1970 signs had been placed at the end of the Church Lanning reading 'To the Nurseries Only' and again at the East Gate to the Churchyard saying 'Private'. The County Surveyor had inspected them and agreed that these were misleading and they were removed.

During the winter of 1971 to 1972 the Council was in receipt of complaints about both ponies and bicycles using the footbridge and path to Saltcoats. The erection of a notice it was thought would solve the problem. But it did not and the complaints finally dwindled away in 1973.

In February 1973 the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway Company proposed that the Bridleway between Muncaster and Murthwaite be extinguished because of lack of usage and those that did use it were now walking alongside the railway track at great danger to themselves. However, they were rebuffed in a curt note which told them to clear the path of obstructions and to mark its route correctly.

The Footpaths Review carried out in 1973 brought forth a plethora of suggestions from the Ramblers Association, some of which were acted upon and others still remain the dream of some.

A meeting with Lord Carlisle, Sir William Pennington-Ramsden and the Council on 24 May 1973 cleared the air and the Estate agreed to drop its objections to the various suggestions made in the submission to the Commissioners except for one important path. It continued to claim exclusive rights to the Church Walk and would vigorously oppose any suggestions to the contrary.

In 1983 Mrs S Johnson was seeking to have a footpath made alongside the A595 from Muncaster Mill to the War Memorial. Persistence pays off for in 1994 a proposal is being investigated for a path to follow the line of the railway between Muncaster Mill and Raven Villa.

During 1989 the Cumbria County Council proposed the creation of the Cumbria Coastal Way and this was implemented in 1992.

FORESHORE

The area covered by the Village Green registration submission went as far down the foreshore as the mid point in the channel. However, this drew from the Crown Commissioners an objection.

The resolution of the objection was that the Village Green could extend as far as the Mean High Water Mark, from there to the low water mark was under the aegis of Muncaster Estates and below that was Crown Property. If the Council wished to extend their jurisdiction then a legally constituted body, Harbour Commissioners, would have to be set up.

The Council in May 1974 wrote asking about how to set up such a body, the complexities and cost of obtaining an Act of Parliament were however beyond their resources.

GAS

On 17 May 1992 British Gas held a public meeting to discuss with villagers the supply of gas to their homes. This was final stage of the extension of the supply pipeline southwards from Egremont.

GULLERIES

The first mention of the Gulleries comes on 30 March 1953:

Reference was made to the future of the Ravenglass Gulleries and the Chairman pointed out that as the approach had been made to the Parish Council from a person outside the Parish and furthermore as the Gulleries were not in Muncaster Parish no action be taken.

But on 30 April:

A letter from the County Clerk was read, and in view of the forthcoming Public Meeting on 21 May, with regard to the future of the gulleries it was agreed that the Parish Council should be represented at the Meeting.

The on 30 March 1954:

Correspondence from Mr Swift (CCC Legal Department) was read with regard to the local response for Voluntary Wardens for the Gulleries. It was considered that in view of the wide publicity already given in declaring the Gulleries a Nature Reserve they would, more or less, be self protecting, but the Parish Council would welcome information with regard to details of the Wardens duties etc., together with official information as to the issue of permits, both for local inhabitants as well as visitors.

following by on 27 May 1954:

Correspondence relating to Gullery Protection and a first draft of the Bye-Laws were read.

These proposed Bye-Laws were being interpreted by the Gulleries staff as if they had been passed and in a way which not everyone agreed with as in July 1967 a complaint was received from a resident who had been stopped from walking between the high and low water marks. This led to an enquiry to the County Council Legal Department as to the rights of the wardens and the extent of the land where they could exercise their powers.

In June 1958 the draft Bye-Laws submitted for approval were published and in view of the all encompassing nature it was agreed to object to them. The laws proposed to prevent access to the foreshore and sand dunes throughout the year, restrict boating, fishing and access to the estuary. A Public Meeting was arranged with Drigg and Carleton Parish Council to co-ordinate public opposition to the proposed Bye-Laws. From this sprang a

proposal for a Society for the Preservation of Public Rights in Drigg and Neighbouring Areas. The opposition to the draft Bye-Laws had its effect and much of the all embracing nature of them was removed.

It was also noted that the proposed Management Committee for the Nature Reserve did not have any local representatives on it and it was proposed that a joint representative for Drigg and Carleton PC and Muncaster PC be appointed.

Finally Mr T Bleasdale a resident of Drigg Parish and a local solicitor was appointed to the Management Committee. The Bye-Laws as they stand to-day were adopted.

During 1972 The County Council continued to try to impose sanctions on the Gulleries and the Council maintained that they were unnecessary and joined Drigg PC in continued protestations.

These had some effect for when the first Annual Report was received the arrangements for restricted access were found to have been amended and were now more satisfactory. However, the question of access to the inter tidal zone still had not been satisfactorily resolved.

GUN RANGE

On 22 March 1948 it is noted:-

... The Council wished to make representations to Parliament..wished to be represented at the Public Enquiry.....appointed Captain Llewellyn to act on their behalf.....any increase in usage of the range would be detrimental to the amenities of the Parish.....Curtailement of Rights on the foreshore, in the harbour and in its approaches which had been held by every citizen of the United Kingdom since time immemorial.....Damage would be caused to houses by concussion.....a bar to the development of tourism.....loss caused to those who derived all or part of their living from providing accommodation to visitors.....curtailing the rights of fishermen..

Matters remained quiet, as far as the minutes were concerned, until 1957 when there are a number of Minutes complaining about the testing of rockets causing problems in the village because of the noise created when they were fired and exploded. On more than one occasion physical damage was caused, once all the stock was knocked off the shelves in the Post Office by the concussion of an explosion.

Eskmeals Gun Range submitted a draft set of Bye-Laws covering their range area in April 1978. There was an immediate protest, in part based on the argument that they had existed for 80 years without Bye-Laws why should they need them now.

The main cause for the Bye-Laws appeared to have been a number of fishermen who had insisted on their right to fish within the range area during the hours in which firing took place. Under the proposed Bye-Laws boats were able to pass through the area at any time to gain access to Ravenglass harbour or to pass down the coast, but not to remain in the Range Are fishing and thus stopping firing.. The Council decided to resist the Bye-Laws being made.

It was November 1980 before the various objections had been dealt with and in that month the Council received the final draft of the proposals to which it did not raise any further objections.

The Clerk reported on 9 July 1980 that there had been a large explosion on the Gun Range which had resulted in damage to property in the village. The Range Operators had hastily repaired the damage caused, but had refused to confirm that it had been a sympathetic detonation of a series of small quantities of explosives.

HIGH ESKHOLME

In August 1973 proposals were received from Mr Jacobs to develop this site, ostensibly for agricultural workers cottages. The Council were however highly suspicious of the motives behind this and in their objection to the proposal pointed out to the Planning Board that they considered the development to be for tourist purposes despite the statement made by the applicant.

In 1992 there was a application for a Golf House with residential accommodation attached. This drew the Planning Boards attention to the fact that in the intervening years a golf course had been laid out on farm land without permission being received for a change of use of the land. This in turn led to an application for a golf course being made and subsequently being turned down, but the development was allowed to remain for private use only.

INSURANCE

In 1954 the Council decided that they ought to take out Third Party Insurance. Mr J Pharaoh undertook to make some enquiries on the premiums that might be asked through his Insurance Agency. In May of the same year Mr McWilliam undertook to make enquiries on behalf of the Council. But nothing came of either suggestion so the Council decided to approach the National Association of Local Councils for advice.

They then suggested the current Insurers, Cornhill, who have a country wide policy for Parish Councils.

During 1973 with the potential ownership of the Village Green looming it was felt that Public Liability Insurance might well be a good idea so arrangements were entered into with the Cornhill Insurance Company for a liability of £100,000 which was considered to more than adequate at that time, it is now £2M..

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

The Council does not seem to have concerned itself much with the affairs of the next tier of Local Government. It having progressed from Bootle RDC to Millom RDC without any comment, its passage into Copeland Borough Council passed by with the comment that the Council was in favour of its area being incorporated into a northern second tier district.

1971 saw the first public consultations about what was to become the 1974 Local Government reorganisation, Millom RDC favoured an amalgamation with North Lonsdale RDC, Ulverston UDC and Grange UDC.

However, this was not to be and the present arrangements were instituted. However, there was strong objection to the use of 'Copeland' as the new authorities title on the basis that nobody would know where it was and the suggestion that it should be known as South Cumberland was pushed.

Later objection was taken to the local ward called Melthwaite. Miterdale was considered a better name.

MINUTES

A revolution took place in 1982 when the Council resolved that in accordance with Section 12 of the Local Government Act of 1972 the minutes would forthwith be on consecutively numbered loose leaf sheets and be of typed format.

Gone forever were the dip and later fountain pens.

FOOTBRIDGE OVER THE RIVER MITE

In earlier years both the Furness Railway and the LM&S Railway had issued walking passes to enable residents from Saltcoats to walk across the railway bridge in order to gain access to Ravenglass. However, around 1960 British Rail were introducing Diesel Railcar services and as these were much quieter than the steam trains the passes were withdrawn. Pressure was brought to bear on the Council Council to construct a footbridge.

On 11 May 1962 it is noted:

... that we write to the CC and ask if this is going to be put off year after year.

On 28 October 1964 the completion of the present bridge is noted, but with a complaint that the wire fencing would allow children to slip through and its replacement with link netting demanded. The wire fencing remains to this day.

MUSSELS

In 1947 an enquiry had been made to the Millom RDC to see if they could ascertain if the mussels were fit for human consumption.

On 28 November 1955:

The question of mussels was raised and Mr McWilliam enlarged on the matter and it appears that the mussels may be made fit for human consumption.

THE NEW COUNCIL

The events of early 1945 and the reformation of the Council took place under the somewhat reluctant chairmanship of Walter Marchant. Whilst a number of issues were aired in the early part of 1946 most matters were placed in abeyance until after the elections on 28 March. The accounts were drawn up, signed and prepared for passing over. Indeed on 27 February they minuted that:

...the last meeting of this Council to be held on Wednesday 27 March

they paid their debts, one of which was for ½d for postage to Mr D Lewthwaite which rounded up the total to £7.13s.9d. then:

This concluded the business of this Council and the meeting ended.

With the appointment of the new Council matters took on a more practical turn for at the first meeting the bad state of the Birkbey Road, Refuse Collection, the Bus Service, Gas Masks and Mussels formed the agenda. A far cry from the appointment of Committees which had hitherto been the first matters to be attended to.

Probably the most telling sign of change is at the end of writing the Minutes the Clerks' pen created a blot. This was subsequently embellished to become a ghost.

Also at this meeting the name of the Rev Hodges appears for the first time, as subsequent meeting he appears not by name amongst those attending, but as 'The Vicar', a name he is still honoured to carry.

The name of the then County Councillor, Captain Llewellyn, appears for the first time on 1 July 1947 and he is to be invited to attend all meetings. However, at the next meeting the Clerk is taken to task for not inviting him.

The elections of 1954 brought back onto the scene the Muncaster Estate Agent, Mr Ian McWilliam, at the same meeting a new Clerk, Mr D Robinson was appointed after a ballot from four volunteers. Only the second time a Clerk had been appointed in this way.

NEW HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

In December 1969 as well as the proposal for a Caravan Park there was a proposal to build 49 houses in what is now the Croftlands/Townfield Close development. Objections were raised that this development, by Willall, which was not in accordance with the Village Plan which showed houses to be built between what is now the Ratty Arms and rear of properties on the main street, Muncaster Estates proposal. Also, that the development was unneeded and unsuitable and covered land which had been designated for a Car Park. In addition planning approval for development on this land had been refused.

By November 1970 the Council was seeking clarification of the situation as Millom RDC had given consent for a much modified Willall Development whilst the Planning Board Village Plan gave precedence to the Muncaster Estates proposal.

During February 1974 Willall Developments Ltd submitted a draft plan to build what has now become Townfield Close and Croftlands Drive.

The final planning application was not made until October 1977 as considerable difficulties had been experienced by the developers and Copeland Borough Council over ownership of various parcels of land. Copeland were unable to proceed unless they had clear and indisputable ownership of the land. They could only achieve this for a limited area. The original plan to have the entrance to the development where 47/48 Main Street now stand had to be dropped and the entrance to the site moved to its present location. In this they were aided by the Planning Board purchasing the land between Holly House and the footpath to the Railway Bridge for a Car Park.

Sewage disposal was a major consideration as the new sewage works, although in the planning stage, were still two years away from construction, after discussions a number of amendments were made. The density of the housing was reduced to 30 units, then later 29 when a bungalow was substituted for two houses so as to protect the interest of the adjacent existing householder, and the styling was amended to become more in line with 'Lakeland Vernacular' than Wimpey Box. Attempts were made to ensure that they were only sold on a 'beneficial residency' basis, that is for year round occupation, but this proved to be unenforceable.

As a result of these changes further amendments were made to the plans and it was not until October 1978 that detailed plans were approved.

It was July 1979 before the Copeland Council, was in a position to submit outline plans for the Murryfield Terrace and Main Street development. North Housing submitted the detailed plans in December 1980.

When this development came to be built it revealed that the earlier Willall development had not been correctly aligned due to one house being built 10 feet away from its agreed position. In order to correct the problem one house end would have to protrude into the development.

OFFICERS

CHAIRMAN	Mr W Marchant	1944-46
	Mr H Hilton	1946-47
	Mr G Ogilvie	1947-49
	Mr H Hilton	1949-55
	Miss C Wilson	1955-59
	Mr A Farrer	1959-65
	Mr L Barton	1965-67
	Mr R W Gallantry	1967-76
	Mr J M Farran	1967-81
	Mr C Robinson	1981-87
	Mrs P R Conroy	1987-

CLERK	Mr C S Robinson	1944-46
	Mr D A Lewthwaite	1946
	Mrs F Hilton	1946-47
	Mr T T Renney	1947-54
	Mr D Robinson	1954-60
	Mr M Farren	1960-65
	Mr H Longley	1965-86
	Mr D Pickup	1986-

MUNCASTER PAGEANT

The Festival of Britain was organised in 1951 as a way of trying to enliven the unmitigated depression that followed the ending of World War II, most items of food were still rationed, petrol was still on points and life was drab and austere.

The Council decided that whatever celebration took place it had to be self financing. The result was the Muncaster Pageant.

The Council on 10 December: 1951.

... thanked and congratulated the organisers of the Muncaster Pageant which had proved to be a wonderful success and attracted a crowd of 10,000 to the grounds of the Castle where the pageant had been held.

Somewhat belatedly, on 9 June 1955, but on a more tangible vein, the Council asked the organisers of the event if they had set aside any money for the purchase of a commemorative seat.

Mr Hilton, the Chairman of the Coronation Committee was not forthcoming despite four letters being sent. Eventually the Vicar was asked to go and see him and get the matter of finances sorted out.

RESIDENTS CAR PARKING

By 1962 enough residents on Main Street had cars parked outside their property as to cause a problem and a petition was organised asking the County Council to acquire land on which cars could be parked and garages built. At the same time proposals were made for the kerbing of Main Street.

KEEPING OF PIGS

In 1971 complaints were made about a villager who had started to keep pigs. However, as all the regulations were being complied with there was little people could do except hold their noses and complain about the smells. It was minuted that any nuisance could be dealt with under Common Law.

LAKE DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK PLANNING BOARD

By 1957 The Lake District Planning Board was getting to grips with matters throughout the National Park. In May 1957 Mr McWilliam proposed a letter be sent to the County Council protesting against the Powers of the Planning Board who were overriding

recommendations made by the Rural District Council. However, the proposal was defeated.

PLAYING FIELD

In October 1959 Muncaster Estates offered a field to be used as a Children's Playing Field. However, the Council felt unable to accept the offer in view of

its distance from the village and its inaccessability at high tide. If, however, a field nearer the village or school could be offered it could be put to good use.

Matters rested until in July 1964 the Estate offered half an acre of Signal Box Field as a Playing Field. Assistance was sought from a number of bodies with a view to raising the finance needed. Mr Gallantry looked into the cost of erecting a 8ft high fence, with the posts set in concrete around the area and found that it would cost £350 or more. It was decided to put alternative proposals to a Public Meeting,

- a an 8d rate.
- b Money raising efforts through a Playing Fields Committee, or
- c Voluntary Subscription

It being important to establish what real support there was in the Parish before proceeding further. As nothing happened it is assumed that there was no interest in proceeding.

The first minute which refers to the present playing field is on 2 May 1977 when Mr T States, a resident in the village, after informal discussions with Sir William Pennington-Ramsden, who supported the proposition to build a playing field, proposed that an agreement be drawn up between the Council and Muncaster Estates to lease Signal Box Field.

The initial agreement submitted for discussion did not find approval. The problems centred around the maintenance of the fencing of the area, its present condition and the requirement that it would be in good order when the lease expired.

Finally on 25 September 1978 it was agreed to lease the field and in November 1978 a sub committee was formed to manage the field.

This committee initially raised the money and later purchased and installed the playing field equipment and continued to maintain the field. It was a slog and the people involved worked long and hard. However, by 1991 interest had waned and the Committee was no longer able to function so the Parish Council resumed responsibility for the maintenance of the field.

MUNCASTER POOR STOCK

The Council first mentioned the Poor Stock on 1 July 1947 when it had the sum of £18.8s.7d to its credit.

PARISH HALL

On 22 May 1958 it was proposed by the Rev Hodges that the Council accept the offer of Muncaster Estates to sell to the Council the Hall for the sum of £1,200.

On the 24 July 1958 it was decided that:

... the Council would act as Trustees for the Hall but that a bona-fide and properly constituted Committee should run the Hall and the Estate be notified accordingly.

However during the latter part of 1958 doubts about the ability of the Council to find the purchase price were being sounded and the Council had to back peddle on the proposed deal. The Hall Committee had been set up and they were considering the matter.

In July 1960 the Council and Hall Committee sought the opinion of the Planning Board and the RDC concerning possible funding and a potential location for a completely new building.

On 3 May 1961 it is minuted

The lease of the Village Hall was read and discussed for 49 minutes. Proposed Rev Hodges, seconded Mrs Hartley that the Lease and Trust Deed be signed and Muncaster Parish Council become the Lessors and Trustees. For the motion 5, against the motion 3.

PREPARATIONS FOR WAR

Given the situation in Europe at the time it is not too surprising to find that on 30 March 1953.

A letter from the RDC was read asking the Council to appoint a Committee to deal with evacuees in the event of war being declared. The Council decided to take no action for the time being, but would give full consideration to the request in the event of a war becoming imminent.

PUBLIC TOILETS

The first mention of the construction of Public Toilets comes on 26 January 1965 when:

... noted with interest the Public Conveniences are to be built but would like a say to where they are to be built.

By Spring Bank Holiday in 1967 things were getting desperate and the Council was being petitioned to provide as quickly as possible both Public Conveniences and a Car Park. One councillor was adamant at this and other meetings that there was no need for toilets as they existed on the Railway Station and that these were adequate for the needs of visitors. He even went so far as to propose that the British Rail station buildings be purchased solely so that they could be used as toilets. This even caused the Planning Board to enquire from British Rail if the buildings were available for this purpose and if so at what cost.

Shades of the 1910 period were raised when the County Medical Officer was invited to visit the village to inspect and comment on the provision of Public Toilets. He reaffirmed the view that provision of toilets was most desirable and he intended to press the County Health Committee to press the Millom RDC to press the National Park Authority to fulfil their plans for provision of Public Conveniences in the village and to reverse their previous decision to downgrade Ravenglass in order of priority.

POST BOX

Since 1901 there had been a post box on the north end of the Station building. This had been the last to be emptied, just before the arrival of the Mail Train, and had been used as a late posting point by business people of the village. However, in 1976 with the conversion of the building into the Ratty Arms and the building of the toilet block extension, the box had been moved into the Ratty Car Park. The Councils permission had not been sought and this resulted in a howl of protest. The box was on private land, not convenient for people living in the village, would not be used between October and April when trains were not running. A vitriolic letter was sent to the Postmaster protesting about the move, but it is still there..

POSTAL DELIVERIES

Postal deliveries from the Ravenglass Post Office ceased at the end of October 1974 and thereafter were made from Seascale. The Mail Train also ceased stopping at Ravenglass from the same date.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The new Council took an immediate interest in Public Transport, after all most people needed it if they were to move around, car ownership being far from universal and petrol was still on ration.

On 17 April 1946

that CMS be asked to run at least two of their buses each day through from Millom to Whitehaven to obviate the changing and waiting at present involved.

(The reason for this minute was that CMS regularly used double deck vehicles on the service and this meant that passengers had to dismount and walk through the railway arch at Seascale and up the slope to the bus stop by the church. When CMS did finally introduce single deckers due to falling passenger numbers, around 1955, some older buses of a shorter length than new ones being introduced at that time had to be rebodied to enable them to go under the arch. This requirement for special vehicles continued until the regular bus service between Bootle and Seascale was withdrawn).

then on 12 September 1946:

A petition from the villagers was received requesting a cheap Market Day Ticket to Whitehaven.

Cumberland Motor Services were asked in January 1948 to operate their evening services between Whitehaven and Holmrook and Bootle and Millom throughout. Again in March 1948 they were asked to introduce an augmented service during the forthcoming summer months.

In 1957 there is a rather curious series of events minuted. A complaint was made to British Railways about trains not stopping at Ravenglass on a Sunday. Booking Clerks were apparently not aware of this and regularly booked passengers to Ravenglass, the train did not stop and they were carried on to the next stopping place, Seascale or Millom. (We need to bear in mind that at that time the steam trains used compartment stock and therefore the tickets were not examined during the journey by the Guard).

On 14 July 1958 an effort to get the Bus Service between Millom and Seascale to come down into the village, to prevent people having to walk up to the War Memorial, was commenced. Cumberland Motor Services replied that they could not do this at present but that they would keep the suggestion in mind, especially when the Millom Comprehensive School opened and schoolchildren would need transport.

On 20 May 1959 it was minuted:

As the Broad Oak, Rough Holme, Birkby and Muncaster children were expected to walk to Ravenglass Station when the new Comprehensive School opened at Millom, it was proposed to press for a bus service for these children.

In May 1963 came the first proposal to close the railway line to passenger traffic. Local bodies rose in unison in protest and nothing more came of the proposal, mainly because of the passenger traffic to and from Sellafield for the employees living on the southern side of the plant.

During the middle 60's Dr Beeching was in control at British Rail and the Coast line was being rumoured as considered for closure or at least all the passenger services withdrawn except those serving Sellafield. A Group was formed to try and prevent this happening. The proposed withdrawal did not seem to attract a great deal of interest locally. Indeed in July 1967 Mr R W Gallantry reported a marked lack of interest in the closure of the railway.

In 1966 the summer timetable introduced several changes, most notable of which was the withdrawal of the 17.08 from Workington which arrived at 18.21. Letters to the Divisional Manager brought no response other than a stereotyped circular style letter about a re-modelling of the service for the general benefit of travellers on the line. At the same time Drigg and Carleton PC wrote seeking support for a petition about the problems that the retimed trains caused apprentices going to and from college in Workington who did not now arrive home after a days schooling until 21.00.

The normal Millom to Whitehaven bus service did not enter the village but picked up and set down at the War Memorial. During 1967 strenuous efforts were made for the service to be re-routed through the village especially if the train service were to be withdrawn. This eventually took place in 1969.

However, in 1970 there became a possibility that the service would be withdrawn and the County Council were petitioned to provide a subsidy for the service under the 1968 Transport Act. This they decided to do to the extent of the County paying 65% and RDC 25% of the costs involved.

In June 1985 Cumberland Motor Services withdrew the Seascale to Millom service between Seascale and Bootle.

PUBLIC HOUSES

Despite there being a number of Public Houses and Inns in the village during the life of the Council the first mention in the minutes comes on 16 March 1956 when Mr H Tonge applied for a transfer of Justices Licence for the Pennington Arms.

RAILWAY ACCIDENT

On Friday 21 November 1969 the regular Marchon Oil train from Heysham to Whitehaven became derailed between the viaduct over the River Esk and Clemlands underpass. 16 wagons laden with heavy fuel oil were scattered along the trackside and many were leaking. Emergency services were on the spot in a matter of two hours and the Council Council spent all of the weekend trying to keep the oil from polluting the beach. The weather was appalling and hampered clearing up operations. The oil penetrated the ballast and this proved to be a major problem as there was no pump capable of lifting the black sticky porridge and it was not stable enough to permit a bulldozer to move it. Eventually it was dug away by an excavator and loaded into rail wagons which removed it to a disposal site. The line to Barrow was reopened the following Wednesday and the line to Whitehaven on the Thursday with a strict speed restriction applied. It was late the following January before men working on the clearance finally left the site.

However, in the following May, the County Surveyor visited the site at the behest of the Parish Council. It was pointed out that some attempts had been made to reduce the oil pollution, but despite being asked twice British Rail had made no further attempts to prevent oil seeping from the site.

By June the County Council had prevailed upon British Rail and they returned to the site to try to reduce the seepage, and the County Council did their best to reduce the problems created by the residual oil in the area.

RATTY

The first mention of the Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway as an entity comes on the 18 September 1958 when the Council minuted:-

... (they) would support any scheme to ensure the future of the miniature railway.

Then on 21 July 1960:

Due to the impending auction of the miniature railway the matter was again discussed to make sure that the Council had done all in its power to preserve this local industry and amenity to the area. Proposed Rev Hodges, seconded

Mr D Robinson, that the former interested parties be again contacted with a view to forming a limited company to buy the railway.

Douglas Robinson the Clerk progressed the matter further with 'the interested parties' and jointly they formed the embryo Preservation Society under the aegis of the Council. At the auction in Gosforth on 14 September 1960 it was Douglas Robinson, acting as Secretary for the Preservation Society, who made the successful bid of £12,000. However, the Society had only collected £5,000. The Railway Company was formed by the late Colin Gilbert, a Birmingham stockbroker, and the Society has a £5,000 Loan Note in the Company. The Rev Hodges joined the Preservation Society Council and remained an active member of the Council until 1975 when he stepped down to make way for a younger person.

On 14 November it was minuted:

A report was made on the efforts up to date. Rev Hodges proposed that a hearty vote of thanks be given to Mr Robinson for his work. Carried unanimously.

Regrettably Douglas Robinson died a short time later.

The next mention of the Ratty comes in February 1971 when the Company submitted a planning application to build a line from Ravenglass to Muncaster Castle on a route up Walls Drive and across Newtown Knott. It was agreed not to object to the proposal as it did not interfere with any public footpaths.

READING ROOM

The sale of the Reading Room to a developer caused a rumpus in 1969 and 1970 as various proposals were put forward for its development. One was for a Coffee Room which would have had outside tables and would have served evening meals. Worries were expressed about the noise from a juke box which might emanate from such a development, also about the noise in an evening disturbing nearby residents. This proposal dropped into limbo. However, one to convert the room into a Ships Chandlers and build a boathouse and jetty at the rear went to Public Inquiry on the 10 February 1970 which resulted in the proposed development being refused..

RUBBISH

In March 1983 it was first noted that the rubbish which was being washed ashore each year was increasing in volume and a great deal of it emanated from the Liverpool area. It transpired that a number of contractors were dumping rubbish at sea as being a cheaper option than landfill sites.

Each year since there has been a Beach Clean Up operation by local residents each spring after the neap tides. Many tons of rubbish have been collected and disposed of either by burning if it were vegetable matter or by skip if it were less flammable.

REFUSE

During 1958 and 1959 there are quite a number of minutes complaining about the collection of household refuse. This was apparently collected fortnightly, but there was considerable confusion about the days. It was supposed to be on the same day in the first and third weeks, but when there were five potential collection days in a month confusion reigned.

By May 1960 matters had not improved and a letter was sent to Mr Kitchen of the Millom RDC Health Committee asking that the matter be discussed at their next meeting.

RAILWAY FOOTBRIDGE

On 2 October 1957 there is the first mention of the foot bridge over the main line railway.

The Clerk communicate with the LM&SR over the dangerous state of the approach to the footbridge which had been rough metalled but never dressed. Mrs Jenkinson of Wells Cottages had slipped and broken her leg a claim for compensation would be justified in the Councils opinion.

From then on the matter of state of the approach to the bridge forms the basis for many minutes. The top dressing of tarmacadam seems to have been in need of constant renewal.

SALVAGE

No sooner had the war ended, as minuted on 11 September 1945, than the Refuse Collectors refused to collect Waste Paper.

On 2 October it was minuted:

Mr Marchant had brought the matter to the attention of Millom RDC and all was now in order.

CLOSURE OF ST MICHAELS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Colin Robinson a School Manager, reported at the December 1980 meeting that the numbers attending the school had fallen to 7 and that by September 1982 it would have to close as there was no possibility of numbers rising due to a fall in the birth rate in the Parish. If the parents of the children agreed, closure could take place earlier and the children would be transferred to Waberthwaite School, which itself had falling numbers, now 33.

Concern was expressed over the proposed closure, however it was seen to be inevitable.

The parent consented to the closure, which took place at the end of the academic year in 1981, after which pupils were transported to Waberthwaite School.

SEWAGE

Faithful as ever, sewage was dealt with by the first business meeting of the reactivated Council. On 3 July 1945

Mr J Pharaoh drew attention to the drain near the disused refuse dump.

Then on 2 October

Mr Pharaoh raised the question of the much shelved new sewage scheme and it was resolved that the Clerk write to the RDC for the latest available information on the same.

Post war euphoria must have overtaken the County Council for they wrote to the Council on 4 February 1947:

Work on the Sewage scheme would start very shortly.

However 18 years later nothing had been done and on 6 October 1965:

Mrs A Preston reported a foul smell along the shore from the Sewage outfall.

Likewise Muncaster School was having problems with the proposed extension which would require a new sewage system to ensure a pure effluent, and this would prove to be costly.

After 80 years, on 2 February 1974, the problem of sewage disposal was at last in sight of resolution. Bob Gallantry, the Chairman, had met that afternoon with the County Surveyor and the North West Water representatives and they had put forward the plans that would lead, five years later, to the present system being installed.

Matters dragged on and it was not until the 1978/79 financial year that provision was made for the scheme to be started in January 1979.

Finally in April 1979 the village got its long awaited sewage system.

HM THE QUEENS SILVER JUBILEE

Unusually for the Council in January 1977 they set up a small sub committee to decide how the Jubilee should be celebrated.

One of the proposals was to build a large bonfire on Eskholme Park. In the event a party was held for the children and the older folk, followed by a bonfire and fireworks.

SITE OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST

In July 1986 without any prior notification the Nature Conservancy Council declared the Drigg Coast a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and this included all of the estuaries discharging to sea at Ravenglass. This caused then, and still causes today, some degree of wonderment. The only practical thing achieved, after a great deal of exchange of

correspondence was the prevention of tipping on what had been a traditional site at the eastern side of the Railway embankment and the building of a fence to prevent access by road vehicles.

This annoyed the conservationists who tried to claim it was enclosure of the Village Green and demanded the removal of the fence. However, even they were unwilling to tackle the Nature Conservancy Council.

STREET LIGHTING

The lights may have gone up in Trafalgar Square in 1945, but here in Ravenglass things took a little longer. Attempts were made in 1947 and 1948 but came to nothing. Then on 9 March 1950:

The Clerk was instructed to take the matter up with the RDC with the hope that street lighting would again be available in the village, hopefully before the next winter.

That they were eventually successful is noted on 10 December 1951.

... the six lights now in operation was mentioned and was considered satisfactory.

STREET NAMES

The Council was asked for suggestions for the names of the streets in the new development. After the public had been asked to submit their suggestion it was decided that Croftlands and Townfield, the names the fields the houses had been built on were the most suitable, by a large majority. It was also agreed that suburban style suffixes such as Avenue, Grove, Crescent were totally unsuitable.

Later Murrayfield Terrace was chosen as a name for the Council development to mark the Rev Murray Hodges long involvement in pressing for such housing to be built and also to acknowledge his interest in Rugby. The pun was lost on some people who registered disapproval so strongly about the name that they refused to attend the opening ceremony of the development.

SURGERY

On 1 February 1960 there is a rather ambiguous minute but it boils down to a proposal by Dr Pratt Yule to withdraw the residential Doctor in the village, Dr Wilson, and concentrate the service at the then new Health Centre in Seascale. Incidentally this was one of the first to be established anywhere in the country. Letters of protest were sent to the Cumberland Medical Executive Council

The closure of the branch surgery in Ravenglass in December 1968 was noted with regret and problems were envisaged for elderly people wishing to visit the doctor in Seascale due to the paucity of public transport.

The local medical authorities had stated that unless there were genuine causes for complaint because of neglect or inattention there was little that could be done.

TELEPHONES

There was always a problem in Ravenglass as long as the telephones were routed through a manual exchange. Whitehaven was a trunk call and charged accordingly. Holmrook on the other hand was within the local call range of Whitehaven. As there was a greater need to call Whitehaven than either Millom or Barrow this gave rise to a feeling of injustice and many attempts were made to try to rectify the situation. The local Telephone Superintendent explained at length the basis on which calls were charged, and that his hands were tied in this matter as the basis for charging was fixed by the Central Office in London who were inflexible.

The first signs of modernisation of the telephone network in the village came in 1971 when it was agreed that a modern automatic exchange should be placed on Walls Drive connected to the Barrow exchange. Subsequently the old cable line was replaced with a fibre optic line and the exchange became digitised and offered extra services to those who wish to take advantage of them.

TELEVISION RECEPTION

In July 1973 came the first warnings that the 405 lines UHF system of television was about to be replaced by the VHF system of 625 lines. Gosforth Parish Council had been warned by the BBC that the old system had a limited life expectancy and that they were seeking a location for a TV Relay Station in their area.

TELEVISION RELAY TRANSMITTER

The 405 lines transmissions finally ceased in 1982 and Eskdale Parish Council set up a TV relay system to deal with their problems. Similar problems were being experienced by the residents of Birkby and they negotiated with the Eskdale Parish Council for an extension to their system to cover their area. This cost each household £690. In order that VAT could be recovered on the equipment and installation charges the Council took over the ownership of the Birkby position of the system in 1983.

VE DAY

VE Day was actually the 8 May 1945 but it was not until Wednesday 23 July that a Public Holiday was declared to celebrate the Victory in Europe. Millom RDC sent to the Council the sum of £20 to pay for the provision of a treat for children and Old Age Pensioners. On 6 July a public meeting was held to discuss the form the celebrations should take. Committees were formed, under the Chairmanship of Mr H Hilton, to undertake the provision of Sports and a tea. Eventually the celebration consisted of a trip on the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway to Dalegarth, Children's Sports, Tea in the hall followed by an evenings entertainment.

On 11 September it was reported that the junketing had cost £15.4s.10d and that a balance of £4.15s.2d was returned to the RDC.

Old ways died hard.

Strangely VJ Day does not get a mention.

VILLAGE GREEN

The first shot in a battle that was to last for more than two decades was fired on 19 January 1954:

Correspondence was received from the County Surveyor in which he stated that he had received objections to the state of the green due to vehicles parking on it. The Council resolved that as the ownership of the property was in doubt they should take no action.

In the meantime on 9 June 1955

The Clerk was to ask Millom RDC to replace the litter baskets on the Green, which being at least 25 years old were now in a dilapidated condition.

In 1956 after Millom RDC had declined to replace them the Council found that they cost £7 each and therefore limited their purchase to three baskets.

But back to the ownership problems, on 28 November 1955:

Mr McWilliam, on behalf of Muncaster Estates suggested that the Parish Council rent for a nominal sum the Village Green. In view of the proposed Royal Commission on Common Land this offer was not accepted and the Clerk was instructed to write to the Parish Council Association for information on this matter.

On 15 April 1956:

A circular from the National Association of Parish Councils was read. Discussions took place and Mr McWilliam on behalf of Muncaster Estates offered verbally the piece of land known as the Village Green to the Parish Council at a nominal rent of 1/- per year on a 99 year lease. Mr McWilliam also said that if the Parish Council did not accept the offer Muncaster Estates would probably fence the land off and that may in the end cost the Parish Council much more than a 1/- per year. An invitation was offered to Major Pennington to attend the Parish Council Meeting when the matter could be discussed to give all parties a fair hearing and to prevent any ill feeling on either side. It was formally decided that the question of Common Land be put to the Parish Meeting giving details of the offer by Muncaster Estates in order to give everyone an opportunity to register any claims they may have to any of the land in question, also to keep the parishioners informed of the interest the Parish Council were taking in this matter.

At the next meeting the following was appended to the minutes before they were approved.

Mr McWilliam wished to make it quite clear that he is here as a Parish Councillor and not as Agent for Muncaster Estates and that the above mentioned offer was merely a report that Major Pennington had offered

At the Village Meeting held on 29 May 1956 acrimony continued in a very long minute:

... It was suggested that as Mr McWilliam had a pecuniary interest in the matters being discussed that he should take no part in the discussion, however he was allowed to take part. It was agreed to seek the advice and help of Cumberland County Council, Friends of the Lake District, Commons and Open Spaces Society, Parish Council Association ... and the working of the long letter then follows.

At its next meeting on 14 October 1956, the Parish Council made the following resolution:-

That this Parish Council hereby makes a Standing Order by which it takes power under Sect 76 of the Local Government Act of 1933 to exclude from any of its meetings a member or members who have any direct or indirect pecuniary interest, as defined in that Section, in a motion under consideration or discussion at a meeting of the Council. Votes for 4, Against 1, Abstentions 2. Motion Carried.

At the same meeting it was minuted:

Discussion took place on the replies to the letter sent to various bodies. It was agreed to take no further action in the matter until the need arises. Votes for the motion 3, Against 1.

The kettle boiled on for on 14 July 1958 the Council excluded members of the public from its meeting and discussed the parking of Caravans on the Green after permission to do so had been given by Muncaster Estates, who it was implied charged for the privilege. Further and all manner of bodies were contacted, including the Planning Board. A further meeting, again with the public excluded, was held on the 24 July and a solicitors opinion was sought. Then on 19 August the District Auditor was asked how much the Council could spend on pursuing such a matter. What transpired from all this is not minuted in detail, merely that letters were read without noting their contents. However on 18 September it is minuted that the Council would accept Muncaster Estates legal costs in drawing up a lease. However there was considerable dissent about this proposal and it was passed with only a margin of 1 vote.

On 14 January 1959 it is minuted.

The Clerk to write to the Millom RDC to state that no agreement had been signed yet and advising them not to pay an easement at this stage.

Penultimately on 20 May 1959:

The agreement for the Village Green had been circulated previously and was then fully discussed in all its aspects including what might be expected if the agreement were not signed. Proposed D Robinson, seconded Miss C Wilson that the agreement be not signed as it was unacceptable and the Parish Council had nothing whatsoever to gain by signing the agreement. Carried Nem Con.

And finally on 1 February 1960:-

Miss Wilson proposed and Rev Hodges seconded that the Clerk write again to the Estate solicitors stating 'that the Parish Council have never accepted the fact that the Village Green belongs to the Lord of the Manor'. Also the District Auditor had

agreed that the Solicitors Fees were an acceptable charge against the Parish Precept.

But matters did not rest there as on 21 July 1960.

It was stated that a parishioner had been stopped from fishing for bass in the river mouth or harbour. The Chairman stated that the Agent for Muncaster Estates had no intention of stopping the fishing as reported in the press. It appeared that the intention was to make a charge for the fishing not to stop it. This was a matter which could only be settled in the Civil Court and so the matter rested.

Throughout the 50's and 60's litter left by motorists who parked on the Green presented a problem. Various remedies were tried. Open top bins allowed the birds to scatter the litter, one with paper sacks inside looked unsightly and the bags disintegrated in the rain, those with lids on the hinges soon broke off. A satisfactory type has yet to be found.

But on 15 December 1965 a resolution to the problem of the ownership of The Green hove into view. The Commons Registration Act required evidence to support any application and a great deal of time was spent researching in old records for evidence of public usage. These investigations and discussion carried on for a further three years.

Then on Monday 24 June 1966 it was noted that the County Surveyor had not received any registrations for Muncaster Parish by the closing date of 21 June. It was therefore resolved to sign declarations for the Registration of the Village Green and Saltings on behalf of the Parish Council.

Things remained dormant for a while as the County Council was inundated with applications and was dealing with them on a first in first considered basis. Final Registration Claims had to be in by 1970 and during 1969 a proposal was made to register Muncaster Fell, Forest Moss and Newton Knott as Common Land and a piece of land near the castle entrance as Manorial Waste.

On 27 October 1971 a meeting at which no minutes were taken was held with Sir William Pennington-Ramsden. In December 1971 there is a somewhat ambiguous minute in which some Councillors claimed that the Village Green had never been owned by Muncaster Estates, but by a relative of Lord Muncaster. It was noted that Sir William was considering whether or not to relinquish his claim to the land and dedicate it to the Parish Council.

Throughout 1972 there are references to Muncaster Estates being willing to relinquish their rights to the Green and in June the ambiguity is resolved when they propose that this would be done if the Council withdrew its provisional registration of ownership. The Council was evenly divided between following this suggestion and allowing the Commissioner to make the decision. In January 1973 a meeting was held with the Planning Board and this was an item on the agenda.

The Council sensing a victory ahead over the battle for ownership of the Village Green began in 1977 to look at providing a set of Bye-Laws to cover it.

A little flurry of excitement was caused in 1980 when HTV used a helicopter to film the Three Peaks Race and landed it on the Village Green and parked it there overnight. The

greatest problem was caused by noise and the proximity of the rotors to the public road. They did however donate £10 per night as a parking fee.

In 1982 there was a flurry of correspondence about ownership of the Green and Common Lands.

Matters came very quietly to a head on 20 September 1983 when

the Clerk reported that the Commons Commissioner had vested ownership of the Village Green in the Parish Council

Sadly, of those who had fought so long and so hard to achieve this goal none were present at the meeting having either died, left the area or not been re-elected in the elections held earlier in the year.

At first Copeland Council continued to cut the grass as part of their 'Civic Duties'. However with the tightening of the Public Expenditure they decided that the cost of £1,400 per annum should be borne by the Parish Council. Initially the Council purchased a sit on lawn mower from BNFL and had it overhauled. However, there were problems and more recently a contractor has been employed. By 1994 the cost had risen to £1,000 pa.

During 1992 the Northern Rivers Authority carried out extensive works to replace the gabbions on the front of the Green with a substantial stone wall.

VILLAGE PLAN

On 1 September 1966 it is minuted

... the Council was greatly pleased that the Lake District Special Planning Board have given attention to this matter with imagination and understanding... it was considered that there should be a ramp to the shore and that they may be difficulties in arranging a satisfactory turning area... that the street should be kept mainly as a pedestrian precinct... an esplanade on the beach towards the boat house was not desirable... an alternative driveway for cars on the seaward side of the house in Main Street should be provided...it was noted that provision of housing remained in the plan despite the tardiness of Millom RDC. However there was some dissent about the proposals for the Main Street.

On 28 February 1968 officers of the Planning Board met with Parish Councillors in a private meeting. The Planning Board regretted the necessity for this 'but negotiations are currently taking place with private land owners in connection with some of the proposals and it might prejudice the negotiations if details were to be disclosed to the press.'

The Plan was devised to meet the needs of the village for Housing, Car Parking and the future of the village as a tourism attraction. It also took into account some of the special nature of some of the problems being faced by the village. The Council accepted that the plan was far from ideal, but also accepted that some compromises would have to be accepted, some solutions to problems conflicted with other interests and some details needed further detailed discussion. The Council however accepted the Plan unanimously.

Finally on 26 February 1969 it was reported that the draft plan had been approved.

WAITING RESTRICTIONS

In January 1975 it was agreed to accept the proposals of the Highway Department that now that the Car Park was open that it was a suitable time for waiting restrictions to be applied to Main Street during the period between Good Friday and October during the day time. As a consequence the Order was approved.

However there were the usual dissenting Councillors, one wanted the restrictions to apply 24 hours a day 365 days a year and others wanted them extending to the War Memorial and to include the foreshore.

It was decided to wait until the Easter Weekend and see the effects of the restrictions before making any requests for amendments before they had been tested.

However the objectors complained at the next meeting about a coach which had each day discharged its passengers outside the Pennington Arms where they were staying and then turning in the Main Street before going to park on the Car Park, and cars continuing to park behind the yellow lines. The basis of the last objection was that yellow lines should not be crossed where the intention was to park behind them if you were a visitor, but, it was acceptable if you were a resident.

WAR MEMORIAL

The first mention of the Memorial concerns litter being left near to it and Mrs Marchant offering to purchase a wire litter receptacle, the offer being gratefully received. It must have been made of stout material as it lasted into the 1980's.

On 13 December 1946 it was proposed that a Public Meeting be held with a view to rearranging the present lettering and adding the names of those lost in the 1939-45 war.

This meeting was held on 24 October 1947 and a public subscription collected which amounted to £20.9s.6d. This more than covered the cost of Walker Bros work which amounted to £19.10s.0d, and the small balance was absorbed to cover maintenance and repairs in the future.

In 1951 the area round the Memorial was becoming litter strewn and the Clerk was asked if the Police and the Boy Scouts could keep an eye on it.

In 1954 the County Council was asked to remove their road sign from the dedicated land surrounding the War Memorial.

As late as 1957 the Council were petitioning Cumberland Motor Services to assist with the cost of repair of the seats at the War Memorial and to install kerbs at the Bus Stop.

Throughout the 1950's and 60's there are a series of minutes about cleaning and maintaining the area round the War Memorial. The rate for the job was £4 per annum and it seemed that the people appointed to the job either left the district or declined to carry on after one season.

WINTER OF DISCONTENT

The Winter of 1974 has subsequently become known as the Winter of Discontent. Political problems caused many strikes by public sector workers including the power workers and this resulted in electricity being rationed. Emergency regulations were introduced and as a result whole areas would have their electricity cut off for periods of up to four hours at a time on a rota basis. The problem was that if there was enough electricity available the cuts would be postponed until demand again exceeded supply when the next area on the rota would be disconnected. This random cutting off of the supply made planning anything almost impossible and cooking had to be carried out immediately the power was restored lest another cut should happen.

The Council meeting on 16 January 1974 was scheduled for 7.30pm but at 7.00pm the power was cut. The meeting was transferred to the Chairman's home at Rose Cottage so that it could be held by the light of a gas lamp. However, one Councillor objected at this and forced a vote as to whether the meeting should continue or not. The meeting continued.

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