

EARLY DAYS OF CARTMEL PENINSULA LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

In 1995 I enquired at Grange library if there was a local history society. The librarian said there were none at present although people had from time to time talked about establishing one. A few months later the librarian gave me Stewart Allen's phone number and said that he was trying to organise a local history society if there were enough people interested.

A number of people were interested and the first committee meeting took place on 13 January 1996 at Fairfield, Cartmel, Stewart Allen's home. Stewart had already organised a programme of lectures for 1996 with the help of John Slater from Grange. The original committee were as follows:

Officers: Chair – Stewart Allen, Vice-chair- Dr. Malcolm Arthurton, Treasurer/Membership secretary – John Slater.

Committee: Barbara Copeland, Janet Niepokjzyoka, Peter Wain, Tom Sweeney volunteered to look after the projection.

The venue was to be Cartmel Institute but deciding on a date was fraught with difficulties – as Fridays were already booked, Wednesday was too noisy (bell practice), Thursday was not popular with the committee, Tuesday there were lots of other events so Monday it had to be. Summer field events were to be organised. Refreshments were served at the end of each lecture.

The name of the society was originally Grange and District LHS, then Cartmel and District LHS and then Peter Wain suggested Cartmel Peninsula LHS which has proved successful. Stewart suggested putting the society on the internet as it "might turn up something interesting". The membership annual subscription was £5 per year with non-members paying £1.50 for each meeting. The society was hoping to attract 50 definite members for a healthy society.

20 years on and the society could be said to be in excellent health with over 100 members. Over those years the committee has had a number of enthusiastic, hard-working and informative members who have supported the society and moved it forward into the thriving society it is today.

The lectures and field trips continue as originally envisaged, and the internet has proved to be an informative tool with the society's website attracting global enquiries. Communication to members is done mainly now through email. Financially the society is doing well and has been able to purchase equipment such as the new projector.

As the society grew, Cartmel Institute proved to be too small and not easily accessible for some members. The lectures were held in different venues including the United Reformed church building in Grange until Cartmel village hall proved to be the most convenient venue. Monday evenings changed to Thursday evenings but the refreshments are now provided only at the AGM.

New initiatives include a newsletter, published 3 times a year and growing with each edition. The society is also building an accessible archive of old photographs, recent photographs and historical manuscripts to support local history research. Oral history is also starting to support our knowledge of local history. Working alongside and with the support of other groups such as Cartmel Village Society and Morecambe Bay Partnership local people are throwing a light on our more recent past.

In 1996 Stewart Allen envisaged the society would pursue local history research, hoping that "Once we have a research programme underway others might join." One or two members did pursue their

own local research but probably the most exciting development in recent years has been the undertaking of a growing number of research projects for the local villages. More members are now undertaking diverse research projects and the society, with an expanding knowledge and archive, is able to support these projects.

The original committee would have been and are delighted to see the society thriving and growing and learning so much about the local history in the Cartmel peninsula.

Barbara Copeland