

THE WAY WE WERE:

True stories from the minutes of Melling-With-Wrayton parish meetings 1894 - 1944

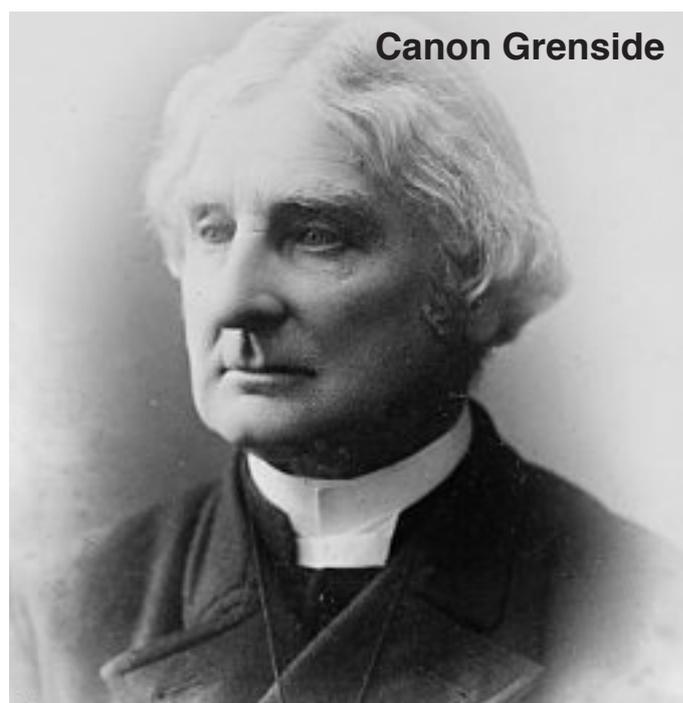
“The problem with social history is that if you want people to understand, you have to tell stories and anecdotes. But how can an anecdote prove anything?”

Only if it is backed up by statistical knowledge. Social history is like a cream slice, with layers of statistics and anecdotes” - Antoine Prost, social historian, author of *Les Français de la Belle Époque* (‘The French in the good old days’), interviewed in *Le Monde*, 15 November 2019.

M. Prost, who was born in 1933, declared: *“I’m fed up with the way people today hark back to the past. Nostalgia for the days when you ate eggs from your own hen-house and drank milk from your own cow is fine in literature, but in reality, things were hard, really tough.”*

As residents of Melling-with-Wrayton, we take for granted that we should all pay for and benefit from a number of services and amenities - street lighting, refuse collection, mains water, gas and electricity, highway repairs and maintenance, and so on. It is easy to forget that there was a time, not so long ago, when none of these services and amenities were available to residents of Melling-with-Wrayton.

As for housing, until well into the 19th century, many of the dwellings in the parish were in a sorry state: cold, cramped and unhealthy. (Canon W. B. Greside, vicar of Melling from 1855 to 1913, was instrumental



It was said of Canon Greside that he was never happier than when demolishing or rebuilding Melling!

in demolishing some of these and building or rebuilding several cottages into something more closely resembling their appearance today.)

The story that unfolds in the Minutes of the Melling-with-Wrayton Parish Meetings from **1894** to **1944** is one of the process, sometimes agonisingly slow and tortuous, whereby our parish became aware of itself as a civil parish, and of the need to respond collectively to new challenges - and indeed of the need to respond to longstanding challenges in a new way.

WHY BEGIN IN 1894?

The Local Government Act of 1894 transferred the civil functions of parishes to parish councils and parish meetings. Parishes of 100-300 inhabitants had the option to constitute a parish council, or to hold an annual parish meeting. Melling-with-Wrayton, with a population of 186 in 1891, and 170 in 1901, chose not to set up a parish council.

WHY END IN 1944?

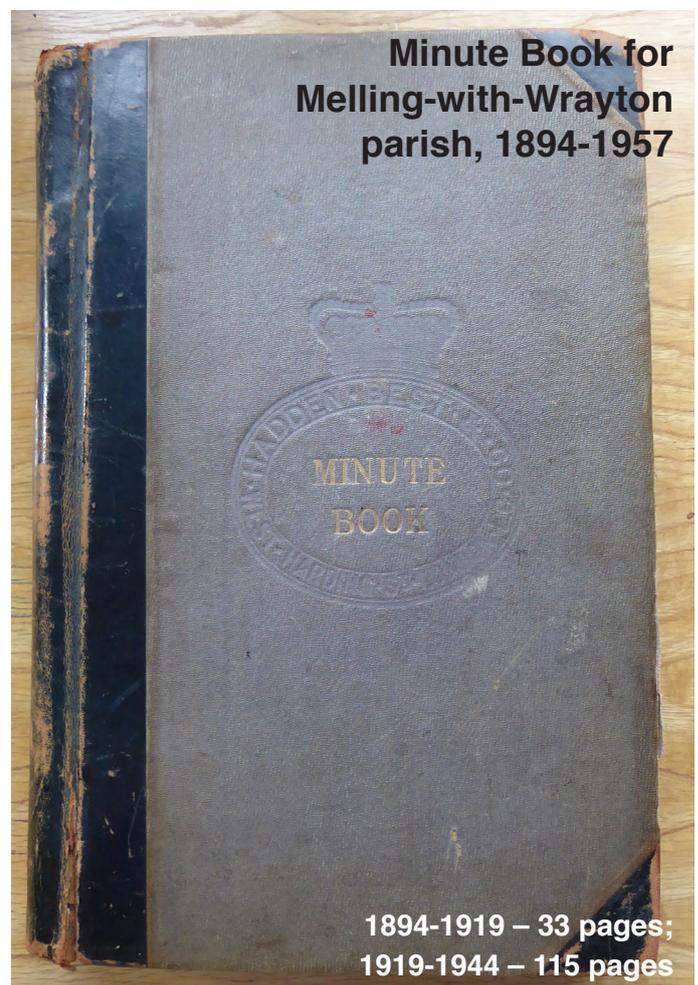
It was not until fifty years later, in 1944, that the Melling-with-Wrayton Parish Meeting applied for its status to be raised to that of Parish Council.

PARISH MEETINGS

Under the 1894 Act, the first annual parish meetings had to be held on 4 December 1894. The requirement for every civil parish to hold a Parish Meeting annually, and to elect a chairman for the coming year, is still in force today.

As recorded on page 1 of the Minute Book, 'The First Parish Meeting of the Parochial Electors of the Township of Melling with Wrayton' was duly held on 4 December 1894, 'in the National School, Melling'.

The eleven men recorded as being present unanimously elected Reverend W. B. Grenside 'Chairman of this Parish Meeting until the 15th day of April 1895.'



Page 1 of the Minute Book

At the First Parish Meeting of the
Parochial Glebe of the Township of
Melling with Wrayton held in the
National School, Melling, on Tuesday
the Fourth day of December, 1894, at
Seven o'clock in the evening, for the purpose of
electing a Chairman.

Present Rev. W. B. Grenside Mr. J. Farrow
Mr. R. Burrow John Bell
J. Leece J. Sedgwick
J. Birkett J. Lewis
J. Strickland J. Parkinson
Mr. J. Farrow

Moved by Mr. Leece

Seconded by Mr. Farrow and

Resolved.

That Mr. J. Parkinson be appointed Provisional
Chairman of this meeting

Moved by Mr. Leece

Seconded by Mr. Burrow and

Resolved, unanimously.

That Rev. W. B. Grenside
do and he is hereby elected Chairman of this Parish
Meeting until the 15th day of April, 1895.

W. B. Grenside, Chairman

John Parkinson
James Birkett
John Bell

This was the sole recorded purpose of the meeting, which explains why the Minutes are rather short...

The Reverend Grenside was re-elected Chairman each year until 1912. In 1913, the new Vicar of Melling, the Reverend Henry Remington, was requested to preside, and he continued as Chairman until 1929. The Chairman appointed for 1930, and reappointed annually until 1942, was Mr John William Leece, who had moved in 1901 from his parents' farm at Summersgill, Botton to live at Crow Trees Farm, Melling.

This continuity 'at the top' provided stability in changing times, but as we shall see, it put a brake on the adoption of measures aimed at improving the wellbeing of all residents.

For several years after 1894, numbers present at the annual meeting varied from 5 to 8 men. The first time a woman is recorded as being present at a parish meeting was in 1913, when it was proposed that the Vicar 'report upon the various [Melling] Charities at a subsequent Meeting.' This meeting, held in August 1913, was attended by 22 persons, including Miss Rome of Church Gates, daughter of William Rome, the owner of Melling Hall from 1871-1887. (Lilla Rome was the Chair of the Melling Women's Institute from its foundation in 1929 to 1933, and again from 1936 to 1941.)

Additional parish meetings for specific purposes were held in 1903, 1905 and 1911, but the main business of each Annual Meeting until 1912 was to (re)elect a Chairman and to (re)appoint two **Overseers of the Poor**.

OVERSEERS OF THE POOR

At the second Annual Parish Meeting, held on 25 March 1895, the seven men present appointed Mr James Birkett and Mr Robert Burrow 'Overseer[s] of the Poor for Melling with Wrayton for the ensuing year'. Thanks were given to Mr Isaac Leece, the retiring Overseer, 'for his continuous services in that office for the period of 39 years.' (Isaac Leece, who lived at Melling Farm and died in 1901, was the uncle of John William Leece.)

Who were these Overseers, and what did they do? Until after the Great War, the only providers of social and public services were the church (caring for bodies as well as souls), the school, the 'Melling Charities', and Poor Relief (paid for through a local rate), also known as 'outdoor relief'. Outdoor relief was administered by two Overseers of the Poor, appointed annually by the ratepayers of the parish to supervise the work of an Assistant Overseer, who was paid to collect the local Poor Law rate on behalf of the rating authority (from 1894 onwards, this was the Lunesdale Rural District Council).

Often, the Assistant Overseer acted as Clerk to a parish council. For example, in Melling-with-Wrayton, Mr John Battye, who was Assistant Overseer from 1919 to 1926, also acted as clerk (secretary and treasurer) to the Parish Meeting from 1920 until 1931. (John Battye, who was born in Manchester, moved to Melling at some time between 1911 and 1919.)

'INDOOR RELIEF': THE LUNESDALE UNION WORKHOUSE

During the 19th century, 'indoor relief' for destitution and infirmity was increasingly provided by a nationwide system of workhouses, with the intention of reducing the numbers of people receiving 'outdoor relief'.

In 1869, the Lunesdale Poor Law Union was established, covering 22 parishes, including Melling-with-Wrayton, and in 1872 the Lunesdale Union Workhouse, near Farleton, received its first inmates. It closed in 1935, following the [Local Government Act 1929](#), which abolished [workhouses](#). (See www.workhouses.org.uk/Lunesdale/)

THE RATING AND VALUATION ACT 1925

The [Rating and Valuation Act 1925](#) transferred the role of parishes and guardians in the setting and collection of rates to districts and boroughs.

In Melling-with-Wrayton, the Annual Parish Meeting for 1926 reappointed as Overseers John William Leece and Robert Whitaker for the last time. In 1927, the same two men were appointed representatives for Melling-with-Wrayton on the Rating Committee of the Lunesdale Rural District Council. They remained in this post until 1941.

As so often in public affairs, upheaval in structures and functions is tempered, for better or for worse, by continuity of personnel.

1894-1944:

TOPICS DISCUSSED AT MELLING-WITH-WRAYTON PARISH MEETINGS

Many issues which make their first appearance in the Minutes before 1914 will still be familiar to Melling-with-Wrayton residents today.

Gradually, during the 1930s, the Minutes begin to give a sense of greater continuity between meetings: important issues raised at the Annual Meeting are followed up, whether at a special meeting or at the following year's annual meeting.

ROADS AND TRAFFIC

The condition of roads and watercourses was first raised in **1899**, when the parish meeting resolved to report to the Surveyor of Highways the condition of Vicar Lane ('from the Highway to the Railway Arch and rejoining the Highway at Gillison Beck') and of the 'Ancient Road from the Highway to Wrayton Village'. It was also resolved to report 'the Condition of the Water Courses commonly called "Old Lune", in many parts entirely blocked up, causing in rainy seasons the flooding of the adjacent Lands, and rendering the Roads impassable.'

In 1921, the meeting resolved 'to draw the attention of the District Council to the shocking state of the following roads, viz. the old road from Melling to the ford across the Lune leading to Arkholme, the road over the Moor to Hill Top and the lane leading to Wrayton from the Kirkby Lonsdale Road, and a strong request be made for some repairs to these roads to be done immediately.'

By 1927, Melling Brow had evidently become a well-known accident black-spot: it was agreed 'that the attention of the County Council be again drawn to the dangerous state of Melling Brow'.

In 1932, it was agreed to ask the County Council 'to take immediate steps to improve The Melling Brow', 'nothing less than a death trap, particularly to pedestrians'.

In 1936, it was agreed to ask that the road be lowered from Melling Nursing Home (now The Homestead) to the top of the Brow, 'as it is very dangerous to pedestrians owing to the sloping condition of same.' At the 1937 meeting, it was decided to write urging the County Surveyor to make an early start 'so that it can be completed before the Summer rush of traffic.' This request 'for the road to be widened opposite Butts Farm [now Stephenson's Motor Cycles], Melling Brow' was repeated in 1939.

Work at another 'black spot' - Bell's Corner, 1956



With ever-increasing road traffic, Bell's Corner, on the A683 at the SW of Melling, became a bottle-neck and an accident black spot in the late 1940s. The main road at this point was eventually widened in 1956.

SPEED LIMITS

The first mention of speed limits is in **1908**; the meeting wanted the County Council to reduce the speed of Motor Cars and Motor Cycles passing through Villages 'at a Rate dangerous to the Inhabitants – children especially.' In 1912, 1913, 1914 and 1915, there is more discussion about the danger to villagers, especially children, from 'reckless driving' through the Village. The Rural District Council was asked 'to erect Danger Notices at each end of Melling, and especially on the Moor above the School, for the safety of the children attending Melling School'. It was stated that during 1914-15, several children when leaving School, had narrowly escaped being run over by motors coming down the Moor.

There is nothing more on this issue until 1930, when there is a request to the County Council for a speed limit of 15 miles per hour. In March 1935, 'it was decided to try and get the 30 miles restrictions on through the village of Melling' and at a long meeting in May Mr Richard Culpin (Parish Clerk) reported that the District Council had forwarded a resolution to the County Council on the question. The meeting agreed to apply for 'the imposition of

Melling Moor Arch



This arch used to stand across Lodge Lane, between Melling and Wennington. The 'road over the Moor to Hill Top' referred to in the 1921 Minute is now an unadopted track.

a 25 miles an hour speed limit in the village, where there is no Street Lighting'. In 1939, it was decided to ask the County Council for a Speed limit of 30 miles per hour 'owing to increased Motor traffic.'

Between 1940 and 1944, what with the War Effort and drastic petrol rationing, such concerns take a back seat.

RICHARD CULPIN

It is worth pausing for a moment to focus on the man who became Parish Clerk and who, as we shall see, played a leading role in calling for improved provision of public services in the parish.

Richard Culpin was an 'incomer' to Melling. His life-line is an interesting example of the opportunities for personal advancement brought by universal elementary education, and for steady employment provided by the extensive railway network.

Richard and Ruth Culpin at Lune Cottage



Richard Culpin was Parish Clerk from 1932 to 1943, and Ruth Culpin was chair of the Melling Women's Institute in 1934 and 1935.

Lady Darlington presenting the Darlington Challenge Cup for billiards to Henry Newton in 1935



He was born in Leicestershire; his father John Culpin was a farm labourer. By the age of 20, Richard was a railway porter, joining the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants in 1895. From 1901 he was a signalman. In 1896, in Keighley, he married Ruth Ellen Graham who had worked in a worsted factory since the age of 14.

In 1902 or 1903, the family moved from Low Bentham to Melling, renting Lune Cottage (formerly and subsequently known as Todds House), which they bought in 1925. After Ruth Culpin's death in 1949, Richard sold Lune Cottage and moved to Nottinghamshire.

Richard soon took an interest in Melling affairs, attending 33 of the 43 Annual Parish Meetings between 1907 and 1949. He also found time to audit the accounts of the Melling Women's Institute until 1949.

From 1919-1949, Richard served as the elected councillor for Melling-with-Wrayton on Lunesdale Rural District Council. For some years, he was Chairman (many LRDC records were destroyed in the 1946 fire at the council offices in Hornby). In this capacity, he would have participated in discussions on the local implications of national and regional programmes for post-

Richard was a keen and competitive billiards player. He is standing at the far right, holding the smallest of the three cups on view. The others in the photo are (from L to R) Mr Bell, Rev Burrow, Sir Henry Darlington, Mr L Gibson and Mr F Rosier.

war reconstruction: the Electricity Supply Act 1919, the Housing, Town Planning &c. Act 1919, and the Manchester Corporation Water Act 1919.

TIPPING OF RUBBISH AND REFUSE COLLECTION; 'THE TIP'

1902: 'The tipping of rubbish on Melling Moor which has latterly become a great nuisance was discussed and a resolution passed that the offenders be asked to discontinue the practice.'

1903: same problem, different place: with reference to 'the practice of casting rubbish including bottles & tins into the Ghyll on the North side of Melling Green to the serious injury of Cattle, as well as obstruction of the Water Course', it was resolved 'that notice be given to the offenders to discontinue the dangerous practice.'

At the **1920** meeting, the Assistant Overseer (acting as de facto parish Clerk) was instructed to write a notice requesting the inhabitants to refrain from 'the dangerous practise [sic] of throwing broken pots & glass on the village green.'

It was also resolved to erect a notice near to the Tip requesting each person taking refuse to the Tip to spread and level the material tipped.' This request was repeated in 1922, and in 1929 it was agreed 'that a board be fixed on the Green displaying a notice that rubbish must not be tipped on the Green.'

Melling Green



Melling Green was registered as a Village Green (VG 54) in 1970.

Not before time, the 1924 meeting passed a proposal that 'some arrangements should be made for scavenging in the Village, and that they canvass the householders to find how the proposal is received. They are also to endeavour to get a price for doing the work.' There is no record in the Minutes of any follow-up to this proposal.

Time for the women of Melling to step in! At the 1935 annual meeting, the following letter from the Secretary of the Women's Institute was read out: 'A Resolution was passed at our meeting, asking me to write to the Parish meeting, to ask if anything could be done by collecting the rubbish of the village, the present conditions are very unsatisfactory.' The Chairman promised to look into the matter, and a committee of four was appointed, 'to look into the question of the disposal of Rubbish from the houses in the Village'.

A year later, the 1936 parish meeting agreed to send a letter to the Women's Institute informing them 'that Mr R Lawson was willing to collect the unburnable rubbish from the houses at sixpence per house, per quarter, providing same was put ready in boxes, or some other receptacle'; the W.I. would be responsible for collecting the money and paying Mr Lawson. It is not apparent from the Minutes for subsequent years whether this suggestion was taken up.

At the 1943 meeting, it was reported that 'ashes from Melling could go to Hornby for the present, so the matter of a Tip for Melling was left in abeyance'; when a parishioner wanted to know the correct procedure to get her bin emptied, she was advised to notify the R.D.C. at Hornby.

WATER SUPPLY

Of all the issues discussed by the parish meeting during these 50 years, that of the provision of a piped water supply to the village was the one that gave rise to the most discussion and passing (or rejecting) of resolutions.

In February 1905, a meeting of landowners was held 'to take into consideration the Water supply for the Village'. A committee was set up, but there is no further mention of a water supply until August 1919; Lunesdale R.D.C. had asked for the opinion of the Ratepayers with regard to a scheme of water supply which the R.D.C. was considering, 'for the Township of Melling-with-Wrayton'. The Chairman thought that there were certain important points to be considered before coming to any decision: the source; purity and sufficiency; whether Wrayton was to be included; the likely cost; who would pay: consumers, or all ratepayers?

The R.D.C.'s surveyor said that the only scheme that would prove satisfactory was the one from the Deer Park in Hornby. The cost would require an increase of the rates by 3s/6d in the pound annually. The meeting closed without coming to any decision, but the R.D.C. did not give up: it sent a follow-up letter asking for some definite expression of opinion. A further parish meeting was held in December 1919. Mr Culpin (newly-elected councillor for Melling-with-Wrayton on the R.D.C.) proposed 'That this meeting is of opinion that the present water supply is inadequate and that a better and more efficient supply is urgently needed for the whole of the inhabitants'. Mr Walter Spencer Peel and Mr John Burrow put forward an amendment: 'That in the opinion of the meeting it is not advisable at the present time to saddle the Township with the cost of a water supply.' The amendment was carried, with 28 votes in favour; when the original resolution was put, only 4 votes were recorded in favour.

At a special meeting called in April 1925, a similar fate befell further moves to secure a piped water supply to Melling. The Clerk to the R.D.C. stated that the R.D.C. was the body to decide whether Melling needed a supply or not, and that costs had fallen considerably. A motion from Mr George Whitaker and Mr William Dodgson 'That the matter be allowed to drop' was eventually passed with 22 votes in favour; an amendment, moved by Mr Culpin and Miss Rome, that 'the R.D.C. get a guarantee for the quantity to be supplied and to ascertain the lowest charges for the supply' received only 5 votes in favour.

THE HAWESWATER TO HEATON PARK AQUEDUCT

In 1930, the Annual Parish meeting considered a letter from the R.D.C. concerning a supply of water for the Township from the Manchester Corporation water main from Haweswater.

For the history of the aqueduct, see <http://www.tathamhistory.org.uk/aqueduct.php>.

Would this new development prove to be the catalyst for change? The Minutes for 1930 record that after 'considerable discussion', Sir Henry Darlington (of Melling Hall) and Mr Culpin proposed 'That a supply for the Parish be obtained from

The Haweswater aqueduct tunnel (from the Manchester Evening News, 10 October 2013)



The 72-mile aqueduct from Haweswater to Heaton Park reservoir in Manchester was constructed between 1935 and 1955. Melling-wth-Wrayton was connected to this system in the early 1950s.

Sir Henry Darlington



Sir Henry Darlington lived with his family at Melling Hall from 1928 to 1946. He took a keen interest in the life of the village, and the wellbeing of residents

Station House reported that his water supply was unfit for human consumption; Mr Culpin promised to see the Sanitary Inspector... (We do not know what Mr Culpin thought or said on that occasion.)

ELECTRIC LIGHTING

In October 1932, a public meeting was held to consider the question of 'Electricity to the Village'. A 'moderate attendance' heard the chairman of the Lancaster Corporation Electricity Committee and the Borough Engineer explain 'very fully the terms of bringing electricity to the district, and the benefits to be derived.' Mr. Culpin promised to canvas the village; he reported to the March 1933 meeting that the canvas of the village was 'very satisfactory'.

At the annual meeting in 1935, Mr Culpin outlined the costs for supply, erection and commissioning of 6 lighting points for Melling and 3 for Wrayton: this would mean a Rate of fourpence or fivepence in the £. Col Paget Tomlinson said he did not think Wrayton wanted the Light, and after a brief discussion, it was resolved 'That it be left in abeyance for the present.'

the Manchester Corporation, subject to satisfactory arrangements being made in reference to the cost'.

Voting was 11 in favour and 11 against. It was agreed to hold a further meeting a fortnight later. The subsequent meeting was attended by Mr Bickerstaff from the R.D.C., and a further 'lengthy discussion' led to a proposal from Mr Culpin and Col. Paget Tomlinson 'That this meeting of Ratepayers of Melling-with-Wrayton request the Lunesdale Rural District Council to make application to the Manchester Corporation for a supply of water from the Manchester aquaduct [sic] as prescribed in section 118 of the Act of 1919.' Voting was 31 against and 22 for the resolution.

The next mention of the water supply is not until 1943, when Mr William Spence of

Melling Post Office before WW1

In 1938, the question of the darkness at Melling Post Office was discussed, and it was decided to ask the Postal Authorities if something could be done to improve the situation, during the winter months. No comment!

LAND AND FOOTPATHS

In 1925, it was agreed that 'steps should be taken to prevent gipseys [sic] & hawkers camping in the road by Gillison Beck.' There are no further references in the Minutes to this issue, which took on greater prominence in more recent times in connection with Melling Moor.

The importance of keeping public footpaths open is first mentioned in 1932, when the Parish Meeting agreed to send a letter 'to Mr. Bainsbridge of Arkholme, requesting him to replace the present wire fence at the top of Mrs Dawson's field with a stile. It was thought that Mr. Bainsbridge might not know that this fence, erected by his predecessor, crossed a public footpath.'

In January 1934, a meeting was held 'For the purpose of marking out the Right-of-Way of all Footpaths in the Parish, as requested by the County Council.' The meeting duly marked out ('on the Ordnance sheets submitted by Mr Bickerstaffe, Clerk to the Lunesdale R.D.C.')

11 Public Footpaths within the Parish. Even though this action was undertaken in response to promptings from the R.D.C., it does show that the Parish Meeting had become aware of its responsibilities to residents and the wider public, and was prepared to take action when needed. Indeed, the 1940 meeting resolved to ask the R.D.C. 'if all the Footpaths which were marked out at their request, had been confirmed as Public Footpaths.' And at a Parish Meeting in October 1944, information was reported 'regarding ploughing up of Public footpaths & the procedure to be adopted.'



John and Annie Gibson were brought up at the Post Office. Annie was sub-postmistress when the Melling Post Office closed in 1947.

Even when the route of a footpath has been officially established and published, it is not always easy to keep it accessible: it was reported in 1938 'that the Stile at Greta Bridge on the footpath from Vicars Lane to Greta Bridge had been walled up'. The Parish Meeting resolved to ask the R.D.C. to have the stile opened. Although the request to the R.D.C. was repeated in 1939, it was reported in 1940 that the R.D.C. was unable to act on it.

In 1939, it was decided to ask the R.D.C. 'if they can see their way to widen Selby Lane, from the Nursing Home Wall end, to the bottom of the hill.' In 1940, Mr R Culpin reported that the R.D.C. could not see their way to widen Selby Lane, but the reason is not minuted. In 1943, Mrs R Gibson complained of the state of Gillison Beck Lane; the chairman would report to the Highways Committee.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

The inter-War years saw an increase in concerns about public transport provision in the Lune Valley. For example, in 1924 and again in 1925 the meeting called for a reduction in train fares and improved service. In 1931, in response to a letter about the discontinuation of certain bus services, it was reported that the Ribble Co. 'had written that they had taken off the specified buses because they could not make them pay.'

These concerns seem to have come to a head during WW2: pasted in the Minutes Book is a two-page letter dated 20th January 1941, to the Area Superintendent in Lancaster, setting out in detail a number of requests, in the interests of business people, workmen, shoppers and schoolchildren, and pointing out that 'Melling-with-Wrayton and Tunstall people are exceptionally badly handicapped in these days of petrol shortage, as at the present time they have neither suitable buses nor trains.'

HOUSING

The question of new houses in the parish was discussed for the first time in 1931. As with the issue of a piped water supply, the parish found itself in the situation of responding to national legislation and regional policy. The R.D.C. had asked the Meeting to say whether in their opinion there is any need for the erection of houses, under the Housing Act, 1930, in the Parish. The Meeting's reply was that 'no houses are required.'

However, in November 1938, a Public Meeting was held to consider a letter from the Lunesdale R.D.C. asking 'if there were any persons in the Parish, who wished to avail themselves of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act 1938, which provides financial assistance for building new houses for Agricultural Workers, etc.' Of the 6 men present at the meeting, 'Mr N Newton asked for three, and Mr Leece, two.'

The 1943 Parish Meeting was informed of 'the Ministry's 12 months' plan for rebuilding after the war'; it was for the Parish committee to suggest the number of houses required in the parish. It was agreed to ask for six houses, 'provided built of stone material to harmonise with surroundings.' A Parish Meeting in February 1944 discussed 'the merits of various sites for development as post-war housing schemes. The field behind the school seemed to be mostly favoured, and Mr Culpin was instructed to ask the visiting officials to see this.' In the event, Melling's six council houses were built in 1947, on land at Moorside, opposite the school.

1935-1944: CELEBRATIONS, WAR, SURVIVAL, AND PREPARING FOR VICTORY

In 1935, Preparation for the King's Silver Jubilee celebrations sparked a flurry of committees and activities, with representatives from Melling, Wrayton and Wennington.

In 1937, the Coronation of King George VI & Queen Elizabeth similarly galvanised the community into action, and a committee was duly set up: 10 from Melling, 2 from Wrayton and 7 from Wennington.

These two events were instrumental in stimulating a new sense of community and purpose in the parish, bringing people together to set goals and achieve them.

With hindsight, one can see this new community spirit as a dress rehearsal for the Big Event, where so much more was at stake: the Second World War.

THE WAR ON THE HOME FRONT

The Minutes of Parish Meetings between 1940 and 1944 reflect the deep and far-reaching impact of the war on the population, finances and daily life of the residents.

In March **1940**, just weeks before the Fall of France, a Circular letter from the R.D.C. was read to the Parish Meeting, 'asking the Parish to take part in the Collecting of waste material as a part of the National Effort in the present emergency. The Minister of Supply states that the salvage of the following materials are [sic] of vital importance for the successful prosecution of the War': to be kept separate are 'Waste Paper, Scrap Iron & Steel, Tins, Textiles, Bottles, Glass & Stoneware Jars, Waste Rubber, Leather & String.' Mr Leece offered a shed for a Central Dump, and Mr Halstead promised to arrange a House to House Collection; the Women's Institute would be asked 'to support this effort in place of their quarterly collection of tins.'

(Sadly, the practice of separating and sorting our waste material before it is collected fell into disuse after Peace returned, and we have had to re-learn it for the sake of all our futures.)

The impact of the War on the home front gave a new urgency to many issues: in 1941, when the question of a playing field for the children was discussed, 'it was pointed out that with the Evacuees we now had 81 scholars on the Register'. It was also mentioned that 'the appearance of the Evacuees was a credit to their Foster parents.'

Between 1941 and 1944, detailed financial analyses of a number of fund-raising events throughout the Lune Valley in support of the War Effort were pasted into the Minute Book. These records are eloquent testimony to the extent to which the national emergency ignited in each parish, and in individual residents, a fierce determination to do everything possible in the fight for survival and, eventually, for victory.

There was also a strong element of inter-parish competition, with each parish striving to appear among the leaders in funds raised per head, particularly as part of the five National Savings campaigns that were run as part of War Weapons Week (1941), Warship Week (1942), Savings Committee Tank Drive (1942), Wings for Victory Week (1943), and Salute the Soldier Week (1944).

It is worth noting that 'For the purposes of National Savings, the civil parishes of Melling-w-Wrayton & Wennington are amalgamated.'

1944: THE PARISH MEETING APPLIES TO BECOME A PARISH COUNCIL

In February **1944**, a Parish Meeting was held to consider a response to a questionnaire on Local Government. Referring to 'inadequate time to consider these questions', the meeting decided to send a general answer, 'approving the aims of the National Council, and stating our opposition to centralisation of councils, and our desire to preserve our own individuality.'

Nevertheless, a few weeks later (perhaps having had time to reflect on how best to preserve the 'individuality' of Melling-with-Wrayton and to oppose the 'centralisation of councils'...), the Annual Parish Meeting agreed to use its powers under the 1894 Act to apply to the clerk to the County Council for its status to be raised to that of Parish Council. Alas, the Act was in abeyance for the time being! Fortunately, by the time of the 1945 Annual Parish Meeting, the Act was operative again, and the clerk was instructed to reapply.

1946: THE FIRST ELECTED PARISH COUNCIL FOR MELLING-WITH-WRAYTON

In 1946, the first business of the Annual Parish Meeting was the election of seven parish councillors. In the following 12 month period, the newly elected Parish Council held a further 8 meetings: a new era had indeed begun.

Thus it was that the experience of collective effort, gained from the Jubilee and Coronation celebrations, laid the foundations for Melling-with-Wrayton's energetic response to the national emergency of 1940-43, and then, in 1943-45, to the need to face together the task of shaping the post-war world.

D O N, December 2019

