

## Tales from DalesRail

### Appleby Town Trail Aidan Turner Bishop

*DalesRail may not be operating in 2020 but that doesn't stop us sharing our many interesting experiences about our journeys. We hope you will share your interesting stories, favourite walks, fascinating anecdotes, and pictures about DalesRail. Please send them to [richard.watts.crl@gmail.com](mailto:richard.watts.crl@gmail.com) or Simon Clarke at [simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com](mailto:simon.clarke.crl@gmail.com)*

Appleby is well worth a visit. It's a delightful place, with the airs of a town but small enough to be able to stroll into the countryside of the lovely Eden valley.

It was the county town of Westmorland until 1974. Losing this status was unpopular locally so its official name includes 'Westmorland'. The Romans, Celts, Danes and Scots have all lived in Appleby. The town moved in and out of Scotland from England many times. It was burnt down at times. As you walk around look at the coat of arms on street signs. It shows two Welsh dragons, from the Celtic British days, a salamander in flames (a lizard said to survive fire like the Scottish burnings), three English lions, and some golden apples. The name comes from 'aepel' (Old English for apple) and 'by' (Danish for farmstead).



Appleby coat of arms – AT-B

Along came the Normans and they built a castle on the loop of the River Eden. You can visit the Castle but you have to pay to go in. Boroughgate is the wide and attractive tree-lined street which leads from the Castle down to St Lawrence's parish church. It's a pleasant walk for families from the Low Cross up to the High Cross and back.

One of the leading personalities of Appleby was the formidable Lady Anne Clifford (1590-1676). Her story, fighting for her properties and rights as a woman, would make a great film. She was supposed to inherit land and castles (Skipton, Appleby, Brougham, Brough, and Pendragon) but she was denied her inheritance by male relatives. Eventually, age 53, she succeeded in obtaining possession of the Clifford Estates. She set about improving her properties and land. She restored Skipton and Appleby churches. She built 'hospitals', or alms houses, for women in Appleby and Beamsley. St Anne's Hospital, Boroughgate, founded in 1653, still exists. 12 lady 'sisters' are cared for by a 'mother'. They share a small chapel next to a charming garden. Sometimes you can peep in through the arch but remember that the Hospital is private.



Two views of St Anne's Hospital - Richard Watts



Lady Anne was a grand and wealthy lady. She dressed in her favourite black. In spite of her size - less than 5 feet (1.5m) tall - she was strong willed and formidable. She died, age 86, after designing her own tomb. It's inside St Lawrence's church – in the north east corner - covered in coats of arms which show her legal claim to her estate. Her body was wrapped in lead and laid in her vault. During repair works it was discovered: “Ye dead body of ye lady Anne Clifford”. It's still there: a fitting shrine to a strong and determined woman, a true feminist heroine.

If you look inside St Lawrence's church, usually open on Sundays, children may be fascinated to examine the Frosterley 'marble' font, used for baptising babies. If you look closely you can see perfectly fossilised sea creatures in the polished grey limestone. They are about 325 million years old!

Just outside the church porch are The Cloisters, rebuilt in 1811. They were public baths: 1 shilling (5p) first class, 6 pence (2.5p) second class. Ladies only on Monday afternoons. Nearby is the Butter Market. If you look carefully, probably below parked cars, you may find the remains of the Bull Ring where bulls were 'baited' with dogs to 'improve' the quality of the meat. This cruelty stopped after 1812 when a bull escaped and ran amok. The Good Old Days, eh?

Appleby's Moot Hall has the old Town Hall in the first floor and a handy Visitor Centre on the ground floor. 'Moot' is an old word for 'meeting'. Appleby has its own flag: a golden apple tree on a blue background.

Walking up Boroughgate you can see some fine Georgian houses. Ivy House, with a chimney pot above the front door, was a boarding school for young ladies. In 1854 the organist eloped with a 13 year old girl to get married in Gretna Green, Scotland. Women could be wed at 12 years old in Scotland then. Her husband was arrested on their return and spent nine, fairly easy going, months in Appleby Gaol.



Ivy House – AT-B

The Red House (1717) and the White House (1756) are nice Georgian houses. The Gothic White House is supposed to be the original ‘house that Jack built’, supposedly by Jack Robinson, an MP said to accept bribes.

The Castle and its grounds are now open but you will be expected to pay to go in. If you’re feeling a bit more adventurous you can continue along Scattergate Green, where all the smelly trades such as leather working, were done. When you reach the Y-junction go left and stroll down to the River Eden and the Jubilee Picnic Area. In rainy weather this area can flood but there is a strong bridge across the river. Can you see the carved sandstone St Bees’ sculpture, shaped like an open primrose bud? It’s a lovely place to sit and enjoy the river.



Scattergate street name – AT-B

To return to the centre stroll up the lane, past the closed church of St Michael, now a private home. Turn left along Bongate, where the bondmen or castle servants, lived. The Royal Oak pub is named after the oak tree in which Charles II sheltered near Worcester. The road drops down to The Sands by the river. This area sometimes floods. There are small buildings, such as the Rock Chapel, carved out of the sandstone on the right. The Sands was the site of the Police Station, the Westmorland Shire Hall and the County Gaol.

You can return up to the station through an estate of Victorian terraces named after Lady Anne’s estates: Clifford, Pembroke. When you’re at the station platform have a look at the finely lettered slate plaque to

the former Bishop of Wakefield and railway photographer the Rev. Eric Treacy (1907-1978). On May 13, 1978, he died of a heart attack while waiting to see the *Evening Star* steam locomotive; almost a perfect way for a train enthusiast to go.

**Here are some useful web links:**

Appleby Visitor Centre <http://visitappleby.com/>

Appleby Heritage Trail <http://www.visiteden.co.uk/media/1061/applebyheritagetrail.pdf>

Appleby Castle <http://www.applebycastle.co.uk/AC/>

Lady Anne Clifford <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/learn/histories/women-in-history/anne-clifford/>

Frosterley marble <https://www.northpennines.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Frosterley-Marble.pdf>

**For a self-guide walk around Appleby use this link:**

[www.communityraillancashire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/appleby.pdf](http://www.communityraillancashire.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/appleby.pdf)