

**REPORT OF LAUNCH OF BITTERN COUNTRY-OUR HERITAGE VIDEO**  
**ARNSIDE WI & VILLAGE HALL**  
**FRIDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2008**

Michael and Andrew, two genuine members of local undertakers Fawcetts, who appear in the video during the film reconstruction of a pre Victorian funeral on "The Corpse Road" at Hazelslack Tower, received guests. Dressed in full Victorian costume and tall top hats, they caught everyone by surprise.

The hall was full well before the Carnforth Town Crier, Frank Barton, resplendent in full regalia, brought the room to order. The director of **Bittern Country – Our Heritage**, Chris Abram, then introduced Cedric Robinson, MBE, the Queens Guide to the Sands. Cedric spoke about Morecambe Bay and the dangers associated with it and how this film highlights the bay as never seen before. He said how impressed he had been with the production quality and the research that must have gone into producing such a detailed and beautifully filmed video. Personally recommending the film to anyone who wanted to find out more about the area he said that, "he has seen, and been part of, many films, but none as well made as this one".

Chris presented a bottle of champagne to Cedric and then introduced the Manager of the Arnside/Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Ian Henderson. He detailed how many people had worked together over a twelve-month period to compile material for the video. Many volunteers work tirelessly to preserve the natural beauty of our area and this film highlights the work of these unsung heroes. By using aerial filming techniques **Bittern Country – Our Heritage** is able to show the landscape as few people ever get the chance to see it.

Chris Abram then presented Ian Henderson with enough copies of **Bittern Country-Our Heritage** to give a dvd free of charge to every school in the area of the filming. Shortly, Ian Henderson is to retire and Chris Abram had prepared a special plaque made up of the original double dvd and cover as a thank you for his help on the programme.

During the researching and making of the film Chris Abram discovered that an Iron Age sword had been found on the top of Warton Crag. No one knew where it had gone but Chris found that it was hidden in the dark recesses of the British Museum. He arranged, at great expense, for it to be photographed for inclusion in the video and during the launch he presented the photograph for safe keeping to Mrs Jenny Agar from the Mourholme Society.

Tribute was paid to members of The Morecambe Bay Moviemakers who took part in the filming or supplied specialised footage. Members, Graeme Isherwood, Ken Russell, Peter Parker, Geoff Ducker, Dave Weatherley, Fred Dibden and ex member Peter Bagnall. Chris then began introducing selected excerpts from the 2hr 48-minute film by explaining why Friday the 13<sup>th</sup> was chosen. During the making of the film a member of staff at a local garden centre had knocked the broadcast video camera over, causing over five hundred pounds worth of damage to it. Chris had to have a new artificial knee fitted during the filming, and the day after the AONB had approved the rough cut version of the film the computer corrupted it and Chris had to start from the beginning and reedit the complete video.

Chris then paid a glowing tribute to a local computer engineer, Jon Stagg, who spent many hours debugging the computer and without whose help the programme would never have been completed.

Chris then went on to say that **Bittern Country-Our Heritage** is the next in the series following the award winning and highly successful, **the Lune valley – Our Heritage**.

Apologising that he was only going to be able to show a small section of the video due to time constraints, he paid tribute to Arnside's local historian, Dennis Bradbury and Silverdale's raconteur and local historian Barry Ayre, both of whom acted as historical consultants during production.

The scene setting introduction, with its aerial shots over Morecambe Bay, was shown and it then became obvious that this film was to be a personal conducted tour above, below and around the area by Chris Abram.

Beetham village was shown in its entire glorious heritage with special attention being paid to the church, historic Beetham Hall and the 900 year old Heron Corn Mill.

On film, Dennis Bradbury told the history of Arnside and the only section of moving film in existence of the long gone Arnside to Hincaster branch line was shown. Evocative footage of the last horse and cart shrimper on Morecambe Bay was also shown as well as poignant video taken by Chris Abram during the period of the tragic Chinese cocking disaster. The severe damage still being done by the reckless use of quad bikes, tractors and other vehicles to the basic fabric of Morecambe Bay was highlighted.

The final excerpt from the two hour forty-eight minute dvd told the history of Carnforth from its early visits by the Vikings, Romans and Bonnie Prince Charlie through to the coming of the canals and its development as one of the great railway towns during the Age of Steam.

Chris concluded by emphasising the need to preserve our British heritage and landscape, especially from influences that are originating from outside our shores. Also, that we should be proud of our heritage and should take a greater interest in it and teach it to our next generations. He said that he is prepared to visit clubs, societies and other organisations to show them the natural beauty and heritage that is all around them.

The launch in Arnside proved to be highly successful with people coming from as far as Penrith, Ulverston and Kendal. Sadly no one from the local tourist board was able to attend.

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