



A voice for our village

Video Interview with Charles Godwin M.B.E

Interviewee : Charles Godwin, ('CG'),

Interviewer : Anna Maria Ashe ('AA')

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- AA Charles, thank you very much for welcoming us into your home, Green Croft. I actually feel as though I'm possibly in the grounds of the Priory because we're facing the East window [CG : Correct, that's right] from this sitting room here. Do you feel as though you are part of the Priory, because you're so close ?
- CG Well, it's like sort of living in a cathedral close, that's all I can say, but it's such a wonderful building and we see it virtually all day long, most days.
- AA You've had a very close connection with it since you arrived in Cartmel.
- CG That's right. I've been the Treasurer, the Auditor, [1 min] one of the Guides. My wife helps out with coffees on Sunday mornings, so we've had quite a close connection, yes.
- AA So you could have been a Prior, almost ? [both laugh] We love to hear how people arrived in Cartmel, and your story is quite fascinating. Could you share some of it with us?
- CG Yes, certainly. We've been here 40 years. We used to live in South Manchester when I was working, and we just felt we'd like somewhere to escape to at weekends, and the Lake District was the obvious place. And so we started a search; we took at least a year looking at any number of houses, most turning out to be unsuitable, big houses, big gardens, which was the last thing we wanted. And then, I'd been invited ... I hadn't been to Cartmel, but I was invited to play golf by [2 mins] one of my clients, who lived in Windermere, and we played at Grange over Sands Golf Club. And during the game, I happened to say that we'd been looking around the Lake District for somewhere to have a holiday home, weekend home. And he said, well, have you had a look at Cartmel, just over the hill ? I said no. He said, well I think you'll find that's the sort of village you might find something to suit you. It's almost a medieval village, nice community. And so we came over here. We used to take the Westmorland Gazette and look at properties that were for sale, and there was one in Cartmel so we came to see that. We parked in The Square, went round the corner to look at this house that was for sale. It wasn't really suitable for us, but when we got back to the car, somebody was putting a notice [3 mins] in the window, where the car was parked, to say 'For Sale'. [AA : A gift of timing !] So I knocked on the door and asked about it. They said he was just somebody putting notices ... for round the houses that they had for sale, and suggested

that I got in touch with the agents, which I did. And within a week, we'd bought it. And so that became our sort of weekend retreat.

AA And did you say this was the only house in The Square at the time ?

CG It is, and it still is. It used to be a pub, used to be the Red Dragon the locals told me. In fact most of the properties in The Square were public houses.

AA What does that say about Cartmel at that time ?

CG Well, I suppose people came to The Square to trade. I mean that ... squares were built like they were to keep the sheep in, easier to keep them in. They would come to trade with the Priors ... with the monks, [4 mins] and I suppose they just liked to have a drink when they'd done their business. Anyway, we soon got to like the village very much, made a lot of friends, and we decided, my wife and I, that when I retired, we would come to live in Cartmel. But not in that particular house, because we like a garden, when we're full time, and we had our eye on this house, Green Croft, for several years. Indeed, a piece of land in front of it came up for sale on its own. I managed to buy that. Turned out it was part of Green Croft's estate, if you like, [AA : So in a way you were buying part of the house, the land ?] Getting back, it was something that had been sold in the 1930s. A very old lady lived in Green Croft then, and I was anxious ... [5 mins] well, I heard that she was a bit concerned about myself, having bought the field in front of her house, thinking I was a property developer, which of course I wasn't. I'm a Chartered Accountant, so nothing to do with property development. But I thought I'd just explain that to her. Indeed, I put back the little bridge that was there, so that she ... and I told her if she wanted to use the field, she was very welcome to. So we had a nice cup of tea, and that was it. But when I was there, I noticed how run down the house was, and clearly she was sitting on a valuable asset, but she wasn't ... didn't seem to have the resources to keep it up, and it is a big house. The conservatory in the garden, beautiful Victorian building, was almost collapsed. So I thought, well, [6 mins] that's a house we'd like to buy, we've got the field, and maybe the way to do it was to see if she was prepared to sell it to us, on condition that she could live here, rent free, for the rest of her life, and that I would spend some money on putting it back into sort of apple pie order. She seemed interested, but she was going to have a word with her brother, who was a solicitor I think in Liverpool. Anyway, to my horror, Miss Bateson died three days after I wrote to her brother to explain what I'd ... [AA : With your proposition] yes, with my proposition. Very embarrassing indeed. So I had to quickly write and put things right again. And he was very pleasant, and he said, no he said, I'll make sure that your name is given to the agents if we choose to sell it, but the [7 mins] family haven't decided what to do with it. It had been a very popular family home. Miss Bateson never married, had no children, but she was a great aunt with many many children. And they used to like to come and stay with their great aunt in Green Croft. And some have come back since then, just to see what the house looks like. And they're obviously a very nice family. Anyway, we managed to buy it, after a bit of a fight, with a few others wanting to buy it. I had to pay, I think it was something like 40% above the asking price, but I was determined to get it because, to us, it was going to be the last house we had. We shall stay here until we're taken out in boxes. [AA : Till someone else is coming in and putting a proposal to you for it.] It took me a year to restore it, and it cost more to restore it

than the house originally cost. But we were very happy with the bill. We had about [8 mins] eight, I think ... eight people worked here for a whole year. We used to come up every weekend to see progress, and we eventually moved in in August 1989. I'd retired just two months earlier. And we obviously sold the cottage in The Square, and we've been here ever since. [AA : And happily here] Indeed, yes, we love this house.

AA This is quite a beautiful house, and must have an amazing history. What have you discovered ?

CG Yes, it certainly does have a history, and it's a lot older than it looks from the outside. The Victorians put sort of Georgian frontages on houses, not just this one, there's a number in the village like this, but it's very much older than that. The origins of the house was that it was a Guest House for visiting monks to the Priory. We were within the [9 mins] walls of the Priory here, but the Guest House was about half of what the house is today. It was just a single story. And when the renovations were taking place, they discovered the original window openings. So you see they had rather small windows. Then at some stage, they decided to put an upstairs on it. And they had to build a staircase at the back of the house, so you could go upstairs. But it also meant doing something up in the loft, because if you go up there, you've got the original beam ... the original supports, and on top of those other massive great beams ... sort of extra support for the weight of the roof ... the slates up there. But what was interesting – the Lancaster University Archaeological (I think) Society [10 mins] came over here, and they took some scrapings of the timber to date it. And the original beams up there they dated. It was about 13 something. So that obviously was when the monastery was going strong. So that was the first indication. And then the piece of the house we're in now, this was built on later to the Guest House, the monk's Guest House if I can call it that, and what is described in Cumbria as a shippen I think, where the animals used to be kept. But one interesting thing that was discovered that the back door, the back door actually on the front of the house, which is strange, but there's also another one at the back, but the builder discovered a medieval well there. And there's also a [11 mins] pump, which brought back into use, hand pump, in the conservatory. So that's where the water would have come from for the house, after that well ceased to be used. But what's interesting about that well, is that the wall of the shippen, a great big stone wall, is built right over it. And so the builder, when he discovered it, said we're going to have to cover this quickly, because, he said, I don't think the planners would be too pleased [AA : No] if they knew that there was a well underneath a wall. But these walls are so thick that it's not likely to be any problem, and it hasn't. So that was a very interesting [AA : Lovely to know though, we had our well] yes, that's right. And then other things we found ... there's bits and pieces that must have come from the Priory at the dissolution of the Priory ... of the monasteries, heads of angels and things like that, dotted around the [12 mins] outside walls, which I can show you.

AA And they would have been part of, these walls, would they have been placed there after ...

CG Oh yes, after I would think. I mean, a lot of Cartmel was built from the stones of the parts of the monastery that were taken away, the Infirmary, the place where the monks used to eat. What you've got left there now is really the religious centre, but there were a lot of outbuildings as well, and I think people helped themselves to the stones to build their own

houses. But that would be ... the monasteries were, what ... I think it was 15, was it 15 something, 1530, something like that ... I used to know that precisely when I was a guide. I've forgotten it now. [AA : We'll get you back in there !] But no, it's a much older house [13 mins] than ... well the part where the monks used to ... well where the visiting monks used to stay, that is much older than the bit we're in now, that looks older than that because of this change in Georgian times, Victorian times.

AA So it's a bit misleading, isn't it ?

CG It is. But all sorts of things we found, old newspapers in the walls, you know, dating back.

AA Were you able to learn about other people who had lived in the building ?

CG Oh yes. When I got the deeds, it was at the time when deeds for houses were these great big long documents, and you just passed them on, and wrote a new deed. So when we got the deeds ... it's now registered just on one sheet of paper, that's the way things go now, but I managed to trace all the owners right back, [14 mins] well as far back as I could go. The first person I found that bought it, but I'm not sure from whom, I haven't got further, was an Ironmaster from Lancaster. But he didn't live here, he seemed to have bought it as an investment because he let it. And I suddenly came across lots of doctors that were renting it. And then it occurred to me that this, or part of it, where my wife has her little study, was a surgery for the village. And if you look on the outside wall, there's a big hook where the patients would come and tie their horses up. And there was a door there that's been closed. You can see, the outlines of where the door was, that they came into that. And that room, when we bought this house, had lots and lots of those little cupboards where you put drugs, and all with sort of Latin names. We tried to incorporate that into the [15 mins] house, but it just wasn't going to be possible. So I sold that to an antique dealer; he took that away. The same thing happened at the other end of the house. There was a stables for two horses, and again, it's where the kitchen is now, and we thought we'd try and incorporate that, but it proved impossible. And we had to take those ... some lovely timber where the horses' stables were, but we had to take that out if we were going to have a modern kitchen. So some of the things that were original, I'm afraid, are not here any more. [AA : No longer here] No.

AA Did you take photographs ?

CG Oh yes. I've got a photograph ...

AA Of those little drawers, and ...

CG I'm not sure we've got them of that, but my wife ... we used to come up here every weekend when the house was being restored, and it took about a year to do, and she's got two great [16 mins] big photo albums showing progress week by week. You certainly can see the stables, but I don't think we have got a picture of the ... what was in the surgery. I may be wrong, but I don't think we have.

AA And the search of deeds and owners, you would go back to what year ?

- CG About 18 ... the Ironmaster, as he was called in the deed, I think that was about 17, 1791, something like that, he bought it, but I'm not sure who he bought it from. So ... I imagine I could get back further. I don't know when sort of deeds first came in. [AA : Fascinating] Yes, but what is particularly fascinating from the deeds, I noticed that, he paid, I think he paid five or six hundred pounds for the house in [17 mins] 1790, and when it was sold at the end of 1880, it was almost exactly the same price. There was no inflation for 100 years through Victorian times.
- AA We need to publish that don't we ... lesson for the future !
- CG That's right. And even into the years before the first world war, when it changed hands, it wasn't, you know, 750 it might have been, and then the next one was sold for 900. OK, the pound was worth a lot more then than it is today, but you certainly didn't have the great jump in property values that we've seen in the last 70 years or so. And it was obvious too that a lot of people would rent their houses in those days. Maybe that's not a surprise. Whereas nowadays, I think something like 65% of the population own their own houses. It must have been much smaller then. And you have these great landlords ... in fact, the land this [18 mins] house was on must have belonged to the Cavendish Estate, because the ground rent was bought out from them for £2/15/6 I think it says in the deed.
- AA I wonder what year ... that's as far back as it goes, 17 something ?
- CG Yes. But no, the documents I've got are very interesting, and I've made a ... I've just traced right through to when we bought it ... who owned it, who was renting it. And the doctors ... under that great east window that you see from here, there's a grave stone, and it's a gravestone for Green Croft ... lived in Green Croft, and they're all surgeons, Royal College of Surgeons, and one or two died quite young unfortunately. But that was ... so they were buried within sight of where they lived.
- AA Oh question : I read [19 mins] that you had a spook in the house ! [laughs]
- CG No. In fact there are a number of properties, I think, in Cartmel that claim they've got a ghost.
- AA I saw it in writing Charles, come on, any stories ?
- CG When we bought this, we were told by somebody that there's a ghost in that house, it's a legless monk. Well, we haven't come across him yet. [laughs]
- AA How was it received when you took on the house ? Were people worried about how you might approach the building works, or was it all internal ?
- CG It was mainly internal, but we put some extra windows in, where there had been rooms that had no windows, and the stables for horses, which is now the kitchen. There were quite a lot of alterations.
- AA And it is a Grade 2 listed house.

- CG Oh yes, it is. In fact not only the house is Grade 2 listed, but the conservatory is too, the [20 mins] Victorian conservatory, and also there is a Coach House at the back of the house, and that's listed. So we have three listings on three separate buildings. When we first came .. of course we did have some friends here from our days in the cottage, so we fitted in fairly easily. But in those days, Cartmel seemed a lot sort of dour than it is now.
- AA And what do you mean by that ?
- CG Well, all the buildings seemed to be a bit sort of ... probably smoky, you know, fires and that sort of thing, and it's nothing like the village that it is today, where you've got shops, you've got a famous restaurant. Racecourse was always here, but as the years have gone by, we've noticed that others have done really what we did. They've come here to retire ... in fact that's the only unfortunate thing about the village, [21 mins] to me, there's not a lot of young families here. I think the properties ... the price of property puts them off a bit. But I do see some young families moving in. I think that's a good sign. And there's also some new houses going up, affordable houses I think they call them, which may attract more. But a lot of the people who've come here to retire have obviously spent quite a bit of money on doing the houses up. Cartmel seems to be a permanent building site, for the last few years. I suppose it will end sometime, but ...
- AA And with great attraction. [CG : Oh yes] People want to be here. [CG : That's right] What do you think that is ? What is the pull of Cartmel, for you when you first arrived here ?
- CG Well, it's a village that's got a sort of proper community. As you know, a lot of villages around the [22 mins] country have closed their pubs, their shops, post offices, but here we seem to be a sort of ... living ... we have shops, restaurants, so all the facilities that you'd want are here.
- AA And is that because the people who've arrived here, for retirement purposes probably, is that that they've brought wealth into the village ?
- CG Oh yes, I'm sure they have. I'm sure the economy is much improved by the ... I think they call us 'off-comers', I think that's word for us. [AA : Off-comers ! It's like off-cuts !] I mean, even to this day, Cartmel still has a lot of holiday homes. I think somebody told me about 20% of the houses. I find that hard to believe, but ... those people who come up, and they come up for holidays and they come up for weekends, like [23 mins] we used to, will be spending money in the local shops and pubs and so on. I mean, we have 4 pubs. There can't be many villages in the country with a population of about 400 that have got 4 pubs. [AA : Indeed] So that shows it's a ... Of course we get a lot of tourists.
- AA I know. And how does that impact you ? Are you cursing them as the coaches pull up ?
- CG No. I mean this side of the village is the place to be to avoid that. This side of the priory, we don't get so many of the tourists. They seem to stay around The Square, and obviously the racecourse. They do walk past, but certainly we don't get as many as ... When we lived in The Square, we looked out on a mass of people most every weekend.

- AA Charles, when we look at Cartmel today, we see a lot of successful businesses, a 2 Michelin star restaurant, but they're quite [24 mins] recent in terms of your history in Cartmel. You've mentioned the pubs in The Square when you first came. What was the look of the rest of the village ? How did it actually serve you in terms of shops and so forth ?
- CG Well, it was much quieter 40 years ago than it is today. Not so many tourists. The main activity seemed to be around the pubs. And there was one hotel, the Priory Hotel, that had a good restaurant. So people would ... there were no other restaurants like there are to this day, like L'Enclume and Rogan's, the Michelin starred ones. It's difficult to remember, but I do remember that the buildings looked a bit drab. That's the word I should have used earlier, I think, and in need of some sort of bulling up, which has happened [25 mins] since we came. Seems to be accelerating almost because the village now has the appearance of a building site sometimes. Different houses get bought, and people spend money on them. But there weren't so many people around, except on race days. The whole place changed on race days here, 'cos coaches came in with all the race goers. But there weren't as many race days then as there are now. I think there were just about 3 or 4; now it's doubled. People have always seemed to be friendly, they seem to welcome ourselves, and others that have retired here.
- AA So the demographic, when you arrived, there would have been, do we say Cartmelians, [CG : Yes, oh yes] people who had been born here, [CG : Yes] and where were they essentially ? Were they around the centre of the village, or on [26 mins] the outskirts ?
- CG Yes. Certainly the people that we first employed to renovate the house ... the cottage in The Square that's what we used to call it, were local. In fact this part of the world has got some of the best tradesmen, I think, because there's not a lot for work round here, there's no factories or ... I mean, there's farms and so on. But a lot ... if you want an electrician or a builder or a plumber, there's plenty, and they're all very good, and Cartmel certainly had its fair share. The person that we used, I can just remember he was a John something, but he used to ... he was a sort of regular person that repaired bits of the Priory, and he came and did some work for us, and a local plumber. So we ...
- AA And they would have actually lived in Cartmel ? [CG : Oh yes, they did] And what's the possibility of that being the case now, people [27 mins] who work in services, the likelihood of them actually living in Cartmel ?
- CG I think some of them still do. The properties in Cartmel are really ... there's not too many big houses, but there's quite a lot of cottage type houses, and that's where they live. But of course people from outside have got their eye on some of those sort of properties as well now. But no, there always seemed to be plenty of ... we didn't have to go outside the village to get somebody to come and do some work, electric work or plumbing and that sort of thing.
- AA So you could still go out into Cartmel and meet people who had been born here, in this village ?

- CG Oh yes. Yes, when we had the cottage in The Square, we had, I think his name was Cyril Gaskarth, but the Gaskarth family has been here a long time. There's a number of their names on the War Memorial in the churchyard, from the First [28 mins] World War, and the Second World War. And he looked after ... we had ... we made a little garden in the front of the cottage in The Square, with some stones, and planted some things, it's still there to this day, and we employed him to keep an eye on it, water them and that sort of thing. And sadly, he was doing that one day and had a heart attack, and died. But we knew him, and there was a Mrs Murray who would look after the house for us. She's still alive, she's in a nursing home in Grange. My wife visits her most weeks. She's about 98 now. And she was an extraordinary lady. She lived in the village, right by the Kings Arms pub, just over the river there. [AA : So she would be a holder of stories as well ?] Yes. What amazed us about her, when she came to [29 mins] clean, she came dressed as though she was going to a cocktail party. [AA laughing : Cartmel style !] I don't go to visit her in the nursing home as my wife does, but she says she's always beautifully dressed. Whether she gets dressed specially for my wife, Bunty, when she comes, I'm not sure. But she was a wonderful lady, and she lost her husband, if I remember rightly, some time before. But I do remember that. So we ... Cyril Gaskarth and Mrs Murray were the two people we had most dealing with. One looked after the house, one looked after the garden in inverted commas, it wasn't really a proper garden.
- AA Were you fascinated by the history of the place though, [CH : Oh yes] and that these people were born here, [CG : Yes] and that they would hold stories, [CG : Yes] and so were you all the time fishing, what can you tell me, [30 mins] or is this part of your nature ? I think you're a man who does research, and knowing that you were a guide [CG : Yes] in the Priory, I think you like to unearth, don't you ?
- CG Oh yes indeed. In fact when I was asked to be a guide, I think it was the first time they'd had guides in ... the vicar at the time thought it was a good idea. A number of us thought yes, we'd be happy to do that. It did require quite a bit of research, and I found some old books on the Priory, so that I was in a position to answer questions, or know where to take people. But obviously any building that's over 800 years old is fascinating, to me particularly, because I have a love of antiques, which I got from my mother. The house I was brought up in in Essex was full of antiques, and I seemed to follow her pattern, and I like to be [31 mins] with antiques, furniture, pictures, so on. So the Priory of course is the best antique of all, over 800 years. But I was a guide I think for about 4 or 5 years, maybe once a week, sometimes we had a very few. I remember children particularly interested, because on the floor of the Priory you find skull and cross bones on some of the sort of graves, because people were buried inside churches up until about the eighteenth century, when they started burying them in the graveyards outside. But these children assumed, or asked, were pirates buried there. [AA : Did you invent stories for them ?] No, I knew what the symbols represented, and there was one with an hour glass, you can see that, which means you know, time is passing, just to ... [32 mins] it's *memento mori* I think they call it in the Latin. So, it was a very interesting time, and I used to get a lot of difficult questions, particularly if visiting vicars were on the tour. [AA : They'd be more penetrating] Yes. So I gradually improved my knowledge about the Priory. But no, I enjoyed that. They used to take about an hour, and I think the people on had to pay a pound. And I remember putting on their coats just a £1 sign, to show that they'd paid. [AA : OK] But sometimes we'd get a much bigger crowd. We

had 40 or 50 off I think it was a cruise ship that had come into Barrow. They came in a coach, mainly Americans, and of course they were fascinated by the place. I was [33 mins] also the Treasurer of the Priory for quite a few years. I took over from a lady who certainly wasn't an accountant – she just copied out the bank statement into her books, and felt that that was the ... [AA : That was the job done] Yes. But I had to introduce budgets and budgetary control, and all sorts of things. It's like a small business, the Priory. It's got a turnover, it did when I was there, of about getting on for half a million pounds. So you had to do a lot of analyses, even the collections. The church, sort of, or the diocese, wanted information of where the money had come from. You know, you had collections, you had weddings, funerals ... some people paid by banker's order, all sorts, and they wanted to know exactly where our source of funds came from. So it was quite a task. [34 mins] I don't know what the lady who was Treasurer before me did. I suppose she just handed over her cash book to an accountant for him to turn it into proper accounts.

AA The Priory story has changed a lot. You know it sits in this very commercial world, here in Cartmel. [CG : Yes] And I wonder how well it can survive, coming into this 21st century. Is it as well supported as ... have you noticed great differences in the congregation there, especially on a Sunday ?

CG Yes. I've certainly noticed ... 'cos we're fairly regular church goers, and the congregations now are certainly larger than when we first came here. The most noticeable thing, and I suppose it will be the same virtually all over the country, is that the average age of those that ... of the congregation, is at the wrong end of [35 mins] the spectrum I suppose. Very few children ... although when we first came there were children in the choir, but there aren't today, so there's been a change there. It may be something to do with not so many children in the village now as there used to be, because retired people have bought most of the houses.

AA But you are saying that the congregation has increased ?

CG Yes, the total congregation. On a Sunday morning now, I mean forget Christmas and Easter when it will be packed, but there's ... I haven't got the precise numbers, but I would think that it's well over 100, would be there on a Sunday morning for Communion. There's also a Family Communion the present vicar's introduced, that does bring children in. But there's a bit of blackmail goes on ... they have little books and they get a stamp every time they come to church, and then they can win a prize, which is a bit [36 mins] unusual, but ... [AA : Not a bad idea though, moving with the times] But no, it's certainly a lively church, I mean the ... of course it all depends on the vicar, and we've had ... we had a good one until about ... well, the present one's a good one, we also had another good one up to about 4 years ago, so we've had a spell of, I don't know, about 15 years of having two very active vicars. They do things in a different way, but they certainly seem to attract people into the church. A lot of the tourists will come to church as well, and it's quite difficult, when you're in there, to know ... well I obviously know most of the locals that are going to church, but ... The first words the vicar says on a Sunday morning is to welcome those who are there for the first [37 mins] time, or any tourists. He does that every Sunday, I notice.

AA Which is very welcoming. [CG : Yes] Do you think it will survive ?

- CG Oh yes, I do. Well I certainly hope so. It's been there for 800 and something years. [AA : As a parish, I mean] We do have a problem actually, you touched upon. We've got the bishop coming next week, to talk to us all. There's been a bit of a row. The Church of England's sort of set up now as teams. Because they're short of vicars, what they've done, and I don't agree with this, to get over the problem, they will take say six churches and have four vicars to deal with those six, and they just go round and help. The Priory of course is very different from the local churches round here, it's more like a cathedral, whereas the [38 mins] local churches are much smaller. And the present vicar is having a little to-do with the bishop. The bishop doesn't like to close churches. Some dioceses in England, certainly the Bishop of London, and I remember the Bishop of Manchester, they would close any church when the congregation fell below a sort of ... you know, able to sort of maintain itself. But the bishop here doesn't seem to want to do that. So we do have some churches here that ... congregation of about 3 or 4, on a Sunday.
- AA And would that mean that the congregation here is actually supporting that church ? [CG : Yes] OK. But supporting them financially to keep them going, [CG : Yes] as well as ...
- CG Yes, well we do it through the diocese, we don't support them directly, but the amount of money we pay to the diocese, goes to the churches that can't ... not able to [39 mins] pay their bills, if you like.
- AA So that would seem quite a stretch then, [CG : Oh yes] from such a small, relatively small congregation.
- CG But I think the problem that this present vicar is trying to solve, is that he wants to grow his congregation, and he feels that having to go off to some of these other churches to preach, or take services, is a distraction. So that he feels that because of the size of the Priory, there should be a vicar who just has that to look after. I mean, that's a big church, he'd probably need an assistant if ... in better times, and ...
- AA And geographically, are these churches quite a distance ?
- CG Oh no. There's Grange ... I think there's six of them. There's Grange over Sands, which is only 3 miles away; Field Broughton, 2 or 3 miles away; Flookburgh ... but I can't think of all of them off hand. [AA : But not too far ?] No. [40 mins] Oh no, none of them are more than 5 minutes, 5 or 10 minutes in a car. But unfortunately, he won't bite the bullet. As a sort of person that was in business, if we ... if you had a client who's got a factory that was losing money, the advice to him would be to close it down. But the Church of England ... it seems to be the bishops make these decisions, and different parts of the country seem to approach it in a different way, but the present Bishop of Carlisle is not keen to close anything.
- AA It is interesting, using the business analogy, because you would look at it in a very clear way, [CG : Oh yes] this has to happen or it's not sustainable ...
- CG No, in business, they're for ever closing, or moving to somewhere else, just to get over any sort of financial problems, yes.
- AA So were the bishop to ask you, what would you advise ...

- CG Well, I would tell him, that [41 mins] if one of the churches, one of his churches in the diocese wasn't able to sort of sustain itself, and didn't attract any congregation, I would say, I think you should close that down. That's what's happened in many other ... in the big cities, where they used to have churches, far more, they've closed many down, some become private homes, some restaurants, and so on. But he just doesn't seem to want to bite that bullet. So it means all the others, the ones that are profitable ... actually I shouldn't use that word. [AA laughing : No] I remember using ... the vicar when I was Treasurer, and he said no, we don't talk about profits and losses in the church, it's surpluses or deficits. So those with surpluses, like Cartmel, will have to sort of help out these other churches, and that doesn't seem to me to be the way to grow.
- AA You used the lovely [42 mins] term 'off-comers' earlier, [CG : Yes] and I'm wondering now how you react now to people coming into the village, after being here for quite some years. Is there an antipathy, or are you quite welcoming ?
- CG No, I'm quite happy to be an off-comer, and somebody once said to me ... in fact when we first came, there weren't too many of us. It's more recently that as more and more people have come here ... hopefully, those that have bought holiday homes and so on, will eventually retire, as we did. You know, we'd always ... it was going to be a long term thing. But, there's more off-comers now than there was in those days, but it doesn't bother me. One local did say to me once, that you'll only be regarded as a local here if your grandmother's buried in the churchyard, which shows how long you've obviously got to be here. But no, I think as an off-comer ... I don't regard myself [43 mins] as an off-comer now, but I expect the old families in the village would. You know, I'm quite happy that ... I enjoy being here, it doesn't bother me that I've only been here 40 years, and not the whole of my life. But, you know, as I said earlier, we did ... we have brought some benefits to the village. You know, we've employed people. That seems to me the most important thing.
- AA How long did it take you to actually feel 'at home' here ? You made a choice for this thing.
- CG Yes. We didn't really feel 'at home' until we came *here*. When we used to come just for weekends, we didn't ... we got to know quite a few people in the village, our neighbour ... Strangely enough, I'm going to a funeral this afternoon. She was our neighbour in The Square, and she was ... we were great friends with her, and she kept her eye on the house and so on. [44 mins] But I think it was only when we were here full time, that I got much more involved with the village. Things like the Village Society, I was on the committee of that. As I said, I was Treasurer of the Priory. I became Chairman of Cartmel Trust, which was an offshoot of the Village Society, sort of trying to buy up open spaces to keep them open spaces, building a playground for the children, those sort of things. So you do feel you're part of the community.
- AA And you set up a charitable trust ?
- CG Oh yes, I did, yes. But that was a personal thing. I just felt, after I retired, I just felt ... my wife and I don't have any children, so there's always going to be a problem when we've both passed on, with things like inheritance tax. And as a former accountant, I devised a way that

my money [45 mins] could go for useful purposes, rather than go to the HM Treasury, who I think probably waste most of the money they collect in taxes.

AA So was it money to serve the local community here, or ...

CG Yes it was. I set it up, I made a donation to it, and have been continuing to make it ... we never sought money from anyone else, and we just make donations to ... mainly in this area. All sorts of people we help. Our sort of resources are still fairly limited, but we manage to do our bit. And you often find that a small amount of money to somebody can change their lives. We have one have one or two examples of that.

AA Could you share one with us ?

CG Yes. There was a young man who, I think his mother had more or less [46 mins] kicked him out of the house, and his grandmother ... he was living with his grandmother, and she found out about us, and he was desperate to join the army. This was a few years ago now. And she came to us to see if we could help. I'm not quite sure how we could, but we ended up buying him a uniform, and paying for him to go to a camp. He still hasn't joined the army, although he's now down for the Marines, because he couldn't join 2 or 3 years ago because the medical report was that he had got asthma. Well, that was a mistake, he hasn't got asthma. He's now 21, so ... I saw his grandmother only 2 days ago, who told me how things were going, Joe his name is, and he's still as keen to join the army as he was when we first met him. So hopefully, [47 mins] that will happen. But I think we just paid £500, gave him for his uniform, and the whole thing seems to have spiralled from there. Oh, I think we made a further grant for him to learn to drive, I think, something like that, because his grandmother was finding it quite difficult to support him.

AA And your faith in him, and allowing him to benefit from these funds is ... do you have great faith in him, [CG : Oh yes, I do] or do you feel, you can give the money, and then you must not be too concerned about outcomes.

CG No. That's one of the beauties of this trust that I set up that we keep paperwork to a minimum. We usually ask for a little summary of why they want the money, we send them it, and ask for a receipt, and that's about it. Many charities ... you'd have to keep reporting on how you were getting on, so we like to think we go where the big charities wouldn't go.

AA [48 mins] So it's an act of faith really, [CG : Yes] isn't it ?

CG We supported Lancashire Ladies Rugger, which ... Cartmel Baseball Club, sort of rather sort of off-key sports. And ... so many when I think about it ... I mean ... [AA : Do you look at he list sometime ?] It's been 20 years ... we had our 20th anniversary this year, oh no, last year. So over that period, there's, you know, there's a great many sort of people we've helped, mainly individuals. We wouldn't sort of give money to something like Help the Aged, or the children's charities, because, I mean, they're very wealthy compared to what we are. We like to find individuals that we can help.

AA It would be interesting to talk to some of them, [CG : Oh yes] to find out [49 mins] what it actually meant to them.

- CG I have a feeling ... you know I've recently been awarded the M.B.E. ...
- AA Well it's lovely that you should say it now, rather than me ...
- CG in the New Year's Honours, and I don't know quite how that came about, but I'm beginning to understand what's happened. One of the trustees, who happens to be a solicitor, he seems to have instigated it by putting my name forward. Of course, anybody ... any member of the public can put somebody forward, but it's, as I understand it, it's not very easy after that. He would have had to get a lot of supporters. So he will have contacted, like Joe, I believe his grandmother must have written in, and there was a few others. I think it's a bit like joining a golf club, they want about 12 people who will support you. But that seems to be what has happened, that people have said yes, we've been grateful for, you know, it has made a difference to their lives. [50 mins] And, it's whoever decides these things must have thought that, well, that was worthy of an honour.
- AA Were you chuffed ?
- CG I was. I was not only surprised, I was actually thrilled. I never dreamt, you know, something like that would happen. Slightly embarrassed, I think, too, because there's a lot of people do a lot of good things, and I don't think that's particularly worthy, you know. Fortunately, we've got the money to be able to help, and that's what I did. But it will go on after we've ... the charity will be much bigger after we've left, because all the ... my estate, mainly property and some shares, will go into the trust, and so they'll have more money that they can distribute as donations.
- AA Another great benefactor, Ann Rowbotham, who's enabled us to start this project, [51 mins] is little known to us actually. Could you tell us ..
- CG We knew her very well actually. She lived just down the road, in fact where your ... where the Chairman of the Village Society lives. That was her house. Rowbothams lived there. And I've got a number of things here. Her father was quite a good painter. We've got one or two paintings, signed Ann* Rowbotham, of this house. But the most interesting story about Ann is that she went to work at a hotel in Grange. And she had a grandfather clock where she lived, I think she'd sold her house, took the grandfather clock and probably other things with her, and she lent it to the hotel. 'Cos I was once there at the hotel, and saw this clock, and I mentioned it to the owner, 'cos I'm quite interested in grandfather clocks, I've got [52 mins] 3 here. He said, oh, that's Ann Rowbotham's clock, she's lent it to us. She was working there in the office in some capacity. Anyway, some years later, Ann got in touch with me, and she said she was giving up the work she was doing at the hotel, but she couldn't find anywhere to put this clock. And it had spent it's life ... I think it's dated about 18 ... no maybe, yea, probably 1850, about that ... it's a Scottish clock. She wondered if I knew anybody in the village who would like the clock. Well, I did ask one or two people, and they hadn't got room for it, and then I thought, well, maybe we could bring it here. I think it was Bunty who told me, said we could put it in the kitchen. And so, that's what happened. We

* Charles subsequently confirmed that he misspoke – Ann's father was the artist, not Ann

[53 mins] had it independently valued, and I bought it off Ann, and it's now in the kitchen here. So it's back in Cartmel. Well, the person who now lives in their house, she found out about this, I probably mentioned it to her, and she wants me ... she wants to buy it back. Well, I'm not going to sell it, but I might just leave it to her. So it will go back to where Ann used to live. So that's ... but I ... we knew Ann Rowbotham very well.

AA What kind of woman was she ?

CG She was ... she seemed to have a ... she had a boyfriend in America, whom we met. He used to come over about once a year to see her. It was a sort of rather strange arrangement, but ... he was very nice, but they never seemed to ... I thought they would get married but they never did. [54 mins] But she was a very ... she was quiet, and sort of got on with things. She was just a very nice person, that's really the best way of describing her.

AA And her position in the village ? Was she born here, was she ...

CG Oh yes. I think the Rowbothams ... her parents certainly lived here, I don't know anything before that. She lived with her parents most of the time, and then one died, and the other died, so she was there on her own, and that's when she obviously sold the house, moved to Grange, got a job in the hotel, and took this clock with her, and parked it in the hotel.

AA A well travelled clock.

CG It's probably too big for the flat she must have been in.

AA But it's rather lovely, because you have a constant reminder [CG : Oh yes] of her. Charles, you've [55 mins] lived here for over 40 years, I'm wondering, were you to meet somebody in the village, an off-comer if possible, and they asked you what's so good about living here, I'm thinking about moving, [CG : Yes] what might be your response ?

CG Well, I think it's the community. You have ... you just feel that if you were ... there's a lot of people here seem to be on their own. They've lost their partner, so there's a lot of single men and a lot of single women, or widows and widowers perhaps I should have described them like that. And I'm pretty sure that if one of them didn't ... wasn't too well, somebody would go and find out what ... you know, whether they could help. It just gets ... it just seems support ... people seem supportive of one another. It may change a bit because of the off-comers, [56 mins] it may be something that was much more prevalent when there were more of the older families here. But no, it's a very nice community to live in, you just feel everyone's friendly. Nothing ever seems to happen, touch wood, you know, burglaries are sort of unheard of, although there was one some years ago.

AA But essentially, you're saying it's the story of the people.

CG Yes, it is, very nice community. It may be, you know, coming from the South of England as I did, that, where people don't sort of talk so much. Here in the North, I think, everybody seems to be friendlier than where I originated, down in the South of England ...

AA So no regrets on the move ?

CG Oh no. We seem to be coming further North every ... I went to Manchester on loan from [57 mins] a London office for 2 years, and when the 2 years were up, nobody said anything, and I wasn't going to say I want to go back to London, so I stayed, and then when I retired, we came further North. So, no ... it's a bit inconvenient if you're going on holiday on the continent, or something like that, you know, you've got a little further to go. But no, it's ... and of course there's beautiful scenery around here. And we're in a lovely position, this house, looking at the Priory, right on the edge of the village. I like the facility or the ease of going to the shops, or going to the pub. We went out to dinner last night at Rogan's, it's what ... a couple of hundred yards, or it's just a walk across there.

AA Fairly idyllic then.

CG It is, yes, I think, in fact I believe there was an American paper that mentioned that ... top 50 places to live, [58 mins] or to visit in Great Britain, Cartmel was one of them. So that says something for us, yea.

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