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**A Brief History of Castle Hill (Mote Hill) and The Settlement**

Historic England describe Castle Hill as a monument which includes the “earthworks and buried remains of Castle Hill motte, a 12th century medieval castle. The motte is strategically situated at the end of a ridge overlooking a horseshoe bend in the River Ellen, close to the river’s mouth, and overlooks the point where an earlier Roman road crossed the river. The motte is surrounded by a ditch on all sides except to the the west where defence is afforded by a steeply sloping hillside.”

**1785** - The existing house was built as the residence of Captain William Currey, a Maryport ship owner. It was sited at the very top of Mote Hill with a commanding position looking down on the River Ellen with views across the Solway Firth.

**1789-1937** the building was used as the dower house to the Senhouse family and rented by the Addison family from the Nether Hall Estate for three generations. When the late Miss Addison died the house became vacant and remained empty for three years until it was sold.

**1937-2005 (including 1940-1959 Maryport Infant School)**

In the 1930’s the government introduced, through the The Commissioner for Special Areas, a number of educational settlements in particularly deprived areas. Cumberland was one of those places and Maryport, with an unemployment rate of 60%, was a chosen location.

The purpose of these educational settlements was to try to alleviate the deprivations of the people through access to educational courses and to the arts and crafts. Castle Hill, still owned by the Senhouse family, was purchased by the Quaker Friends Society, for this purpose, for £900.

The building has been in almost continuous use as an community-led educational establishment since then.

**In 2005** the building fell into disuse because of it’s dilapidated condition.

**In 2006** - The site was sold to Cumbrian County Council (CCC) with the understanding that the building continued to deliver educational provision in the town of Maryport. The building was modernized and transferred to a newly created charity - Maryport Education Settlement Ltd. The CCC rented a suite of offices upstairs which contributed to the running costs of the building. A paid part-time manager and caretaker were employed to run the facility and raise funds.

**In 2017**, because of government cutbacks, CCC cut back on local offices, cutting off a significant income source. Grant funding attempts were unsuccessful as were efforts to find new tenants and it became clear that this was no longer a sustainable model and closure was threatened.

Fortunately, a new charity was formed with the aim of running the organization with volunteers only, massively reducing running costs.

**In 2018** Castle Hill Trust CIO, the new charity, became the owners of the Settlement with the aim of rejuvenating it to benefit the people of Maryport, especially the most disadvantaged, through a programme of arts, crafts, education and social activities as well as making the facilities available for other local groups and organisations.

Over the last two years the activities taking place have expanded enormously and include:

1. **Settlement-run weekly activities** open to all, regardless of age, ability, etc., at minimal or no cost. These currently include:
* Job Seekers
* Paint & Draw
* Potter
* Gardening for All
* Craft and Chat, sewing bee
* Youth Group
* Ukulele for Beginners.
1. **Monthly events**, with guest speakers – local authors, etc. We hope to start other regular events such as a film night and a music night.
2. **Special events**, such as our
	* 2019 ‘Over Here, Over There’ 4-day event, and our
	* Performance of ‘The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists’
	* Local Artists’ Exhibitions
	* Flower & Produce Shows
3. We have hosted two major art exhibitions, a regular Makers market, a programme of daytime and evening talks by local authors and business people.
4. **Room Hire**

We hire out the facilities to other people and organisations - currently regular yoga sessions, Cumbria Council Adult Education classes, a local history group, an NHS therapy group, Baby & Toddler group. This has grown steadily over the last 2 years, the last regular booking starting 2 weeks before Covid-19 lockdown.

1. **Office Rental**

Upstairs rooms are rented out to the Healthy Skin Clinic, With Love Photography and a local artist.

1. **Grants** secured in last 3 years (CCF= Cumbria Community Foundation)
* CCF - £15,000 Robin Rigg Energy Conservation
* CCF - £3,000 Gardening Club
* CCF - £3000 Man Shed
* CCC - £5000 - various
* CYA - £12,000 per annum for youth group
1. **Improvements**

These grants have enabled a number of improvements to be made, including

* CCTV upgraded
* Security system upgraded
* Door Entry System replaced and improved
* Wi-Fi/broadband improved
* Old desktop computers replaced by laptops – this enabled IT room to be used for other purposes, including hiring out.
* Interior refurbishment (college)
* Energy saving measures – Genius smart heating system

**The Future**

In the 80 years since its establishment, the Settlement can justifiably claim to have been the social, cultural and educational hub of the community and is still held in great affection by the local community.

Substantial amounts of central government money have recently become available for the economic and cultural regeneration of Maryport, with The Settlement being asked by Allerdale Council to front the Culture group.

There are exciting times ahead and there are great opportunities to make a big contribution to the social and cultural wellbeing of the people of Maryport..