

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2005

Welcome to our annual village meeting.

At the start of the year we welcomed 5 new councillors and a new clerk and on reading through the minutes of the last years meetings, it is quite remarkable how quickly the new 'team' settled in and knuckled down to business.

But first, this year must go down in parish council history as the year that the flooding at Clawthorpe finally stopped – this is course was achieved by much hard work and dogged persistence by retired councillor Bob Mason and councillor George Isherwood and we must start by giving them all due credit.

Clawthorpe now has its very own 'Information shelter' funded by the Countryside Agency and officially opened by Councillor Janet Alderson who very deftly, at the eleventh hour together with Councillor George Isherwood secured the funding.

Through our Village Action Plan, a housing needs survey was called for and from this, South Lakeland District Council recognised a need for affordable housing – although a suitable site is yet to be agreed, and work continues to find the best site in the interests of the community, it is generally agreed that the need exists and hopefully, in the not too distant future, new homes will be built for rent and for shared ownership enabling those unable to afford to buy, to stay in the village to which they belong. Here's a sobering statistic for you – in South Lakeland, in the years 2002 – 2005, wages have increased on average by 12%, house prices by 73%.

We have a website! One which, in my opinion, any corporate entity would happily have paid thousands for. Its easy to read, fully accessible, has a feedback board and a monthly 'Hot Topic' as well as all the minutes, information about the village, councillor profiles and links to other village organisations & government bodies. We hope this will make the parish council much more accessible and a huge thankyou to the very professional Anne Nichols and Barry Morgan assisted by councillors Mason-Hornby and our clerk, Charles Dale.

We are working towards 'Quality Parish Status' Parish Councils have limited powers and there are moves afoot to devolve some of the services presently undertaken by District and County Councils to the Parish Councils – when this happens, only those parishes who have proved they are capable of undertaking these roles – by having achieved 'Quality Parish Status' can apply. We aim to be one of those councils – to provide better services to the community which we serve.

In addition to the provision of affordable housing, we are presently working on a Village Design Statement – this will enable us to have some influence on the District Councils new Local Development Framework

We will be commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of the second world war with a tribute to all the men and women of the Parish who served in whatever capacity. This will take the form of a bench and plaque. We have, through the Quarry Liaison Committee made a bid to The Countryside Agency to fund a number of projects to improve the quality of life in the village.

These projects include more footpath work, work in the school field to assist environmental awareness for the children and a lengthman – to share with Holme parish Council. This funding is by no means certain and we are continuing to explore every funding avenue in order to provide the two villages with this valuable service

These are of course in addition, the rather more mundane although no less important 'housekeeping' issues that form the bulk of our monthly meetings. We commented on only 25 planning applications this year as opposed to 35 last year and 45 the year before – I hope this means that everyone is content with what they have and not some sinister indication of a downturn in the economy! We continue to be troubled with dodgy pavements and seem always to be way down on Cumbria County Councils list of pavement resurfacing priorities. This one of the examples where being a Quality Parish will pay off. We now have a regular and very welcome police presence in the form of PC Casson who attends our monthly meetings to give an update of police activity in the area. We are very fortunate in that the area has a very low rate of crime, nonetheless any form of crime is very serious to the victims and we welcome the presence of her and her colleagues and I would like to thank her for attending our meetings. I would also like to thank Kath Hayhurst who is also a regular attender. Kath is a retired Parish Councillor but has overseen the 'Lost Ways' project on our behalf and continues as custodian of our footpaths, signs and boundary markers. Kath is our local historian and her knowledge of the area and it's history is invaluable to us and to the village. Roger Bingham attends very nearly all our meetings, certainly as many as his busy schedule allows and we are very fortunate to have our, not only our District but also County Councillor, take such a keen interest in village affairs. He keeps us informed of the District and County affairs that affect us and also takes back our concerns and queries and we thank him for his dedication to the village.

As well as the monthly parish council meetings, councillors represent us on a number of village committees – the Recreation Trust, The Memorial hall, The School Governors, Burton Education Foundation and Holme Park Quarry Liaison Committee. We also form working parties where more time is needed to devote to particular projects or functions.

I would like to thank Charles Dale, our now not-so-new clerk. I think only Councillor Alderson, having 'been there and done that' can fully appreciate the amount of work and dedication to the cause that is involved in being Clerk. I think you have done an admirable job in your new role and thank you for your support over the last 12 months and I look forward to the next 12 months.

Finally I thank all the councillors for their commitment and hard work. I think we've got a good team and I hope that we continue to serve the people of Burton to best of our ability and help to keep Burton alive and well and a great place in which to live.