

**BLEADON PARISH COUNCIL**

**[www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk)**



Clerk to the Parish

**Bruce Poole**

Dip. HE Local Policy; Fellow ILCM

**Annual Report 2008/09**

**Chairman's Report**

I feel lucky to be able, once again, to begin my report by saying it has been a good year for Bleadon as we still progress and prosper: two of Bleadon's greatest assets are the Coronation Hall and Jubilee room; these valuable function areas have continuous hirings and events, which bring many visitors into our village, plus the now well established Monthly Markets.

We as a Council have many compliments on the overall appearance of the village. This is due to the diligent work of our Village Ranger, John Hurcombe. The tubs and garden areas will be planted up in summer colour before the May Fayre on 4<sup>th</sup> May. The dry stone wall on Roman road was being repaired by the Mendip rangers and hopefully with grants will now be completed by volunteers by the end of the year.

The play park with the wonderful new piece of equipment, not one but three slides, is constantly used and enjoyed by the little ones. As you will realise, for safety, this area is constantly monitored and maintained by the Parish Council.

This year we dealt with 31 planning applications, one more than the previous year even with the new planning regulations that came in last October. North Somerset upheld the decisions of the Parish Council in all bar one application. Our target of the road improvement on the A370 is, apart from the signage, completed. The revised bus service is running smoothly with no reported problems. The Patch-work Gang for remedial repair on our roads will soon visit the village again.

The Youth Club continues to thrive maintaining a steady 50 membership, 27 of whom live in the village and 10 from Lympsham. Our volunteer youth leaders, which include the guides and brownies, must be thanked for their work and the endless support which they give in caring for our young people.

I know you all appreciate the work and effort that has gone into making our open spaces look well maintained and tidy, every nook and cranny in fact. The allotments are all taken and there is a waiting list – I think they look even better than the ones on Television. In the last year, we have also completed the land registry of Parish land.

Our beat police officer PC Church and PSO Emma Wright have deservedly won an award for their policing, which includes Bleadon. Their conscientious work has been recognised. The Neighbourhood watch scheme now covers 100% of the village and thanks to the volunteers helps to

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keep the Bleadon relatively crime free. I take this opportunity to thank David Jones for his enthusiasm for this scheme.

This is a brief report only. Much more information may be found on the new Parish web-site, where fuller reports by the Councillors will be available. We have again applied for Quality Council status and await the outcome. As a tier of local Government, we as a Parish Council are closest to the people that it serves. I hope you feel that this council does its best to serve you well and works hard on your behalf.

**Penny Skelley, Chairman**

P.S. Since completion of this report, the Quality Council status has been reaccredited.

### **OPEN SPACES REPORT**

I am pleased to report yet another good year for Bleadon and its open spaces; I hope that the residents have appreciated the work and effort that has gone into making the village look good the whole year round.

The summer floral displays around the village were up to the usual standard and I have to thank all those volunteers who planted them and also the good folk who tended them during the summer. (In spite of some unwanted attention from a vandal determined to spoil them). The winter tubs have been equally well maintained and the spring bulb display both in the tubs and along the roadside look very welcoming as you drive into the Village.

We have to thank our Village Ranger John Hurcombe for his constant attention to these as well as other aspects of village tidiness, e.g. the old quarry, the lay-bys, the pathways, the play area and the Hall car park – not to mention the outer boundaries of Accommodation Rd. and Roman Road.. Never have so many leaves been swept up! During the February snow he and others also helped to keep the paths etc. open and safe.

There still appears to be the perennial problem of ‘dog mess’ on the footpaths and verges, in spite of the bins which were strategically placed around the village for this purpose. I really am at a loss to know what more we can do unless the offenders are caught in the act, when perhaps ‘naming and shaming’ would prove an effective deterrent.

Mark Howe has continued to keep the grass cut around the play area and the churchyard and for this we thank him and his team.

The Churchyard will soon have a new look, as plugs of spring flowers will be planted in the grass amongst the gravestones and along the path. This is due to take place at the time of the annual ‘plant-up’ at the end of April.

Probably the full benefit will be seen next spring, rather than this one.

The car park and area around the youth club have both been upgraded during the past year and I know that you will all agree what an improvement there has been. CCTV installed last year has been invaluable in controlling some of the vandalism, and is set to be upgraded as well.

As ever the more outlying rural parts of the Village have been kept in good order by Andy Eddy and the Mendip Rangers. In addition to the usual maintenance of the gates and stiles, the band of willing ‘stone-wallers’ have done a great job on the boundary walls along part of Roman Road.

My thanks to Councilors Mary Sheppard and Keith Pyke who respectively look after the allotments and the children's play area; their reports will contain details of the past year's activities on these fronts.

## **Penny Robinson**

### **Play Area**

The biggest improvement to the play area for years came with the installation in the summer of a new triple-slide multi-play tower.

After decades of providing fun for the children of Bleadon, our old steel slide was succumbing to rust and corrosion. It was rapidly approaching the end of its safe life. We were fortunate to be able to draw on some of the windfall funding that the parish council had generated in the previous year. A budget of £8000 was set aside to install new play equipment to replace the slide.

We looked at a variety of options and consulted with the park users. Finally settling on a **Monster Play Systems "Escapade"** as the best-value option within our budget.

Installed on three very wet days in August, the multi-play tower quickly proved to be a very popular addition to the play area. Surrounded with 12 cubic metres of play bark for safety in the event of falls and tumbles the new kit has established itself as a focal attraction in the park. Children can scale the curly climber or the mountain climb or choose to socialise with friends on the play seats below the platform. With three parallel slides, even sliding has become a more sociable activity.

Throughout the year John the Bleadon Ranger continues to clear up litter, rake the play bark and sand, and regularly check that the play area is safe for our children. Mark Howe ensures that the grassed areas are maintained throughout the growing season.

The popularity of the park has meant that some areas of grass are suffering from a little baldness. We plan to reseed these areas in the Spring, so it may be necessary to keep ball players off these areas for a while. How lovely it is to report that our only problem is created by over-use!

### **More planting**

We've bought native mixed wildflower seeds to sow in the Combe Quarry this spring. Hopefully, we'll begin to see a swathe of colour appear across this little nature reserve over the coming years.

This spring in the churchyard we'll be planting 300 Cowslip plugs. So look out for these sunny additions to your walk through the churchyard in future springs. If this proves to be successful we hope to extend future planting with bulbs and native plants to other areas.

### **Youth Club**

Membership of the Youth Club remains at a steady 50+ throughout the year. There's a regular Thursday night attendance of around 20 youngsters. Lately there has been a predominance of boys, but no doubt the gender ratio will shift back to redress the balance as members come and go.

There is a misconception amongst some residents that the youth club is of benefit mostly to youngsters from outside the village. In reality the membership details show that 52% say they live in Bleadon (27 members), 10 come from Lympsham (19%) and some from as far away as Mark and Highbridge. So, whilst it is true that many young people from outside the parish boundary do benefit, it's our local children who benefit the most.

There has been a bit of a shift round in the leadership provided and funded by North Somerset Council. Mike has now taken over the regular leader's role with support from Patrick and Ann. Their enthusiasm and energy for their work is inspiring and boundless. Under their watchful and caring eyes you can be sure that our young people are getting the best possible support.

The young people themselves suggested that the weekly subs should increase from 50p to £1. This was welcomed by the leaders and the management committee who struggle with the cost of running activities and maintaining the building.

We've seen and heard lots of activity with the musical instruments that the club purchased last year. There's no sign of any new Madonna or Robbie Williams yet though! The new table tennis table and Wii games have added a competitive edge and are always popular. There have been the usual trips and activities, including ice skating in Bristol, a trip to Thorpe Park and Churchill dry ski slope, BBQs, healthy cooking, sexual advice and much more.

A grant of £500 from the parish council helped enormously towards the purchase of ten folding tables for use at markets and other events in the club. The Christmas and Easter market overspill from the Coronation Halls has become a regular and welcome feature of our events calendar. It gives the whole village the chance to have a nose around the club and see what a delightful asset we have.

**Keith Pyke**

### Village News Magazine

Most of you do not realize is that each copy costs at least £1.20p to produce. Other villages charge a subscription, - we deliver it free, however the charges for advertising will remain the same as last year. Last June we introduced a new system of asking advertisers to pay in advance for their entries, thus avoiding the need to send out too many repeat invoices. Several new advertisers have come on-stream during the year and I'm pleased to say that most of them are staying with us. Already the pages for 2009-2010 are filling up.

The photo-centrefold is still a feature much enjoyed and I am again most grateful to Marshall's, who have generously sponsored us to the tune of **£250.00p** in the coming year, to cover the additional cost of printing these extra pages.

As always I have to thank John Hickley who every quarter comes up with original drawings for the cover, and he always manages to find a topical theme. . Regular contributors also send in short stories and interesting articles so making our quarterly newsletter more than just a series of club and Parish Council reports.

My thanks all those who regularly distribute the magazine, thus ensuring that all the households in the Parish receive a copy. I am pleased to report that 'Bleadon Village News' still reaches a much wider audience as copies are regularly posted to Canada, Australia and the USA, to ex-pats who still want to know what goes on in our lovely Somerset Village. Via the website there is even a 'Face book' entry!

The magazine was entered into the 'Village Newsletter of the Year' competition; unfortunately we didn't win but did get a good report. We may well be trying again this coming year.

**The Parish Council Website ([www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk](http://www.bleadonparishcouncil.gov.uk))**

As of this month, regular 'web surfers' will notice that our site has a 'new look'; we have changed to a company called 'Customers Really Matter' and they have designed us a really interesting and dynamic site. The new version will be more user friendly and colourful; parishioners will be able to contact the BPC directly via e-mail, receive up to date news flashes of events around the village and be able to sign up to receive the 'Village News' electronically. There will also be links to local businesses, hostelrys and much, much more! The village clubs and societies will all be represented as before and I hope that they will keep Keith, Bruce or me informed of their events so that we can make the site as current and interesting as possible.

If for any reason you do not receive a copy of the magazine it is possible to access it via the website as before.

This site also carries the up to date agenda and minutes of the Parish Council meetings, a diary of village events as well as details of the markets etc. I am also in the process of putting more photos onto the site. Other useful links include those to the Church, N.Somerset and the Mendip Society. More to come as the site develops.

Councillor Pyke, the Clerk and I thank the staff at CRM for their efforts on our behalf and their patience with us during the training period.

Penny Robinson  
Editor

**Bleadon Village Roads and Transport**

I had hoped that by the time I was preparing this report the improvements to the A370 at Purn Way would be complete. The Parish council was advised by North Somerset last year about the improvements that should have been completed by the end of 2008. This date slipped until early 2009 and the works have not yet been completed.

The early plans proposed moving the lighting columns back to the wall in order to improve the sight line when emerging from Bleadon Road on to the A370. However, once the work commenced it became apparent that, due to the various services running along the verge, moving the lighting columns was not possible. However, the pavement has been laid, new road markings are in place and a raised bus stop formed.

New vehicle activated signs are in place and set to illuminate if a vehicle approaches the junction at a speed in excess of 55MPH. It seems that there is a problem with the sign supplier and this is delaying completion of the project.

On the whole, the improvements have helped make the area safer, tidier and made waiting for, boarding and alighting from busses, a much improved experience.

North Somerset highway maintenance department have been very responsive to our requests for pot-hole repairs.

The orange bus continues to operate on a regular basis without any reported problems.

Brian Gamble

### **Bleadon Coronation Hall Management Committee**

I am pleased to report that the Independent Examiner, Shirley Campbell, has examined the accounts for the year ended 28 February 2009 and she has confirmed that these have been correctly maintained and there is no matter which gives her cause for concern.

The Coronation Hall and Jubilee Room continue to be popular village venues that are now used by a wide range of people in the community for family events, group meetings, craft meetings, exercise classes, dancing and so on.

Total Income for the year amounted to £21,124 down by 4% on last year but Expenditure was also down by 3% to £15,908. As a result, £5,216 was transferred to the General Fund which now stands at £34,258. Expenditure covers all aspects of maintaining and running the Coronation Hall and Jubilee Room which includes heating and lighting, water and sewerage, insurance, licences, cleaning, general repairs and improvements. Energy costs continue to be a problem and steps are being taken to attempt a reduction of consumption.

The main income has been from hiring the Hall with fees down by some 6% compared to last year. This reduction is in spite of increasing the hire charges on 1 January 2008 and is a reflection of the current financial climate. We have seen another year of successful Village Markets and a new innovation, a Silent Auction, was another successful event enjoyed by the community. These functions generate valuable funds for the Coronation Hall and credit for the success of them must go to the many volunteers who assist on these occasions. The Hall Management Committee would also like to thank the various people and organisations who have kindly made donations or offered their services.

The Hall Management Committee has continued to invest in the Coronation Hall and Jubilee Room with the following improvements made during the past year:

- Installation of new upvc windows in the Coronation Hall kitchen which have considerably reduced the problem of condensation
- Complete redecoration of the Jubilee Room which now has a much brighter and acceptable ambiance.
- Additional trestle tables purchased for the Jubilee Room

In addition, £1,592 was spent on general maintenance which includes £512 to seal and by-pass the leaking water pipes buried in the concrete floor of the Coronation Hall kitchen.

The issue of Custodian Trustee and the associated matter of whose name should appear on the Hall insurance policy have both been resolved. By rescinding its earlier Resolution, the Parish Council accepted that the asset value of the Hall Buildings should not be included in the accounts of the Hall Committee. One matter remains to be addressed and that is to redraft the Governing Document (the Trust Deed of 14 January 1938) to remove the ambiguities contain in that document. This matter is being discussed with the Charity Commission.

This has been another successful year for the Coronation Hall and Jubilee Room. The Hall Management Committee would like to thank everyone who has used the Halls for their continuing support, in particular the various organisations who regularly hire the facilities and, of course, supporters of the monthly Village Market.

**Clive Morris** Treasurer



## **Community Safety Report**

Over the past year, and through the efforts of David Jones, the Bleadon Village Co-ordinator, and Emma Wright, our Police Community Support Officer, we now have full Neighbourhood Watch coverage for the village. 23 street co-ordinators are in place and over 400 properties have shown interest in the Neighbourhood Watch Scheme and are now formally registered with the scheme.

Crime statistics clearly show that, on average, crime is one third lower in Neighbourhood Watch areas. In addition some insurance companies give premium discounts to properties within the scheme. The police welcome the scheme and already a number of timely telephone calls to co-ordinators and the police have resulted in crime prevention and even arrests.

The village police surgery continues to run every Tuesday between 2pm and 4pm in the Church Rooms. A member of your Village Beat Team is there to listen to any concerns regarding policing issues and give advice. The village is fortunate in having a relatively low crime rate but, nonetheless, the surgery gives a very welcome and visible service to support parishioners.

The Village Beat Team responds to normal policing priorities but, also, to those identified by the local population. Currently the two local priorities are to keep a high profile in the parish and to monitor speeding on Bleadon Road / Celtic Way.

Parish crime numbers for the past year are very similar to the previous year, although the second half of this year has shown higher numbers than the previous year. It is not clear whether this is a trend upwards or is the result of more Neighbourhood Watch and police surgery reporting. All of these crime statistics need to be viewed against the backdrop that the parish is still a low crime area and that more than half of the recorded crime in the parish is associated with the holiday and entertainment areas of the parish.

Every year the Avon and Somerset Police Authority run an award scheme to recognise "The best of the best". This year our Village Policing Team won the North Somerset Village Beat Team award. Steve Church, our Beat Manager, and Emma Wright, our Police Community Support Officer, were presented with the award on 5 March. Well done.

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