

ANNUAL PARISH REPORT – 2006

Chairman's Report

May I again begin the Annual Parish Report 2006 by expressing my pleasure for a very good year for the Parish Council. We have accomplished much and met many targets, all bolstered by our Quality Status to give a comprehensive community service. The most important ongoing project of the year has been the village plan. Progress has come through many sub-committee meetings and the questionnaire sent to all households, of which 58% were returned; these are now being assessed and I hope will be presented to the Parish Council in the near future.

The internet ready PC is now sited in the Post Office, although just at the moment we are experiencing internet problems. We are very near the first birthday of the Post Office and congratulations are due. The shop, post office and "Tiffins" are already a vital part of our village life and the success of the venture is due to your support and enthusiasm.

In fact, we have had more planning applications this year than in previous years, some difficult, some controversial, but I must reassure you that the Council deals fairly with each and has site meetings for anything larger than a porch. Of course, when the internet is available, all planning applications can be viewed on the PC in the Post Office by going to the North Somerset Web Site.

The Highways Services General Purpose Gang has promised Bleadon four visits over the coming months. Our dropped pavement scheme is now completed, numbering 6 pairs. Our next project, which is already in the planning stage, is the bus stop and lay by in Purn Way. This will enhance the west side of the village, then perhaps later we will add a bus shelter and street furniture. I feel sure that being a "Gateway" village has helped with our pleas to North Somerset. Remedial work will start soon on the grass verge and willow trees on Bridge Road.

Recently, we have paid for the resurfacing of the Coronation Hall car park. We congratulate the Bleadon Youth Club, with their new leaders, excellent community involvement and the growing number of members – well done. On behalf of the Parish Council, I also wish to thank the Hall Committee for their excellent work in maintaining the high standards of the Coronation and Jubilee Halls.

The environment, as nationwide, should be uppermost in everyone's mind. The green boxes and garden waste bags are a small start, but we realise a great deal more needs to be done. Sadly, just at the moment, due to the road through Banwell being closed, Bleadon once again is being used as a short cut. The toll on our roads will again be monitored. Unfortunately, the radar gun is unused. This is largely due to there being no follow up by the authorities and, sadly, a lack of volunteers from the village.

One last achievement for me to mention is the employment of the Village Ranger, who we feel sure will be a great help in maintaining Bleadon's open spaces, as well as inspecting and checking Bleadon Parish Council's assets. This will formalise and regulate many of the activities and services previously undertaken by volunteers. The Jubilee Garden and village tubs will be replanted later this month.

As I hope you can see, the Council is a good working team – long may it continue.
Thank you.

Open Spaces Report

I am pleased to report another successful year for the village and its open spaces.

Once again our village tubs have looked splendid all the year and I have to thank those who regularly turn up to help with the planting and tending, your endeavours are much appreciated. There are other villagers who take it upon themselves to plant their own containers and the overall effect is very colourful, I should like to take this opportunity to thank them too.

Thanks too, to the volunteers who helped with 'clean up day'. At least for a short time the village looked tidy but it is a shame that there is not enough public spiritedness to keep it so on a regular basis. Now of course since March 2006 we have a Village Ranger, John Hurcombe, so we are sure that Bleadon will always look its best.

There has also been more to say on the subject of 'dog mess'. I enquired into the costs purchasing bins and cost of emptying them, but the real stumbling block still remains i.e. their positioning. Once again I can only implore all dog owners to be responsible, carry plastic bags and take the offending material home to their own bins!

Mark Howe and his team have continued to maintain our playground and other grassy areas in the usual efficient manner, and have also done a good job in tidying the Jubilee Garden, which has improved visibility in that area immensely. The shrubs around the telephone box and the toilets have been cut back and that has also visually enhanced the area. We are also grateful to Mark for his work in looking after the Churchyard so well, and all the other jobs he undertakes when the occasion arises.

My thanks too, to the Mendip Rangers who led by Andy Eddy have kept our stiles and footpaths in good order. They also have taken care of the picnic furniture in one lay-by in Roman Rd. The information table is to be re-positioned. New kissing gates/squeeze gates have been positioned on the footpaths in and around the village, for which many of us are very grateful.

The Churchyard

There has been need for the usual remedial work around the churchyard, the cutting back of the undergrowth and the trimming of the trees etc. and this year the area abutting the Churchyard wall has been drastically dealt with so that it may come to be used as a new Garden of Remembrance.

The safety of headstones became an important issue during the year, but our Church Warden has the situation well in hand. Also our local MP has written to the appropriate Government Department for a definitive answer so that the removal or 'knocking down' of apparently unsafe memorials would not be undertaken without first informing those relatives concerned.

After a meeting with the PCC in 2005 a recommendation was made concerning the resurfacing of the footpath which runs through the Churchyard and also the entrance up to the West door, but as yet this has not been implemented as there is now some difference of opinion as to who is responsible for the footpath. It would seem while the path itself is in the ownership of North Somerset, the trees that are causing the upheaval and cracks belong to the Parish Council; so the discussion continues. The Church Warden is again keeping an eye on the situation, but there would seem to have been minor accidents already and this is a worrying situation.

Village News Magazine

The News has had another good year and has attracted several new advertisers, many of them small local businesses, and I hope that they will continue to support us in the coming year. We have introduced a two tier system of advertising rates so as to give advantage to those living in Bleadon. I am looking into obtaining further 'sponsors' to help ease the cost of printing which I'm afraid is escalating.

Once again I am indebted to Marshall's for their continuing sponsorship of our photo page; this feature has been well received by the villagers and has attracted interest from far and wide. Each Magazine is put onto the Parish Council website as it appears, and I continue to receive letters and e-mails from ex-Bleadon residents who are interested in the affairs of the village.

The Newsletter was entered into a competition and received a letter of commendation.

My thanks once again to John Hickley for his original cover designs and to all those who, every quarter, deliver the News to the residents, and of course to the regular contributors, without whom there wouldn't be any news!

Play Area

The play area continues to be a very popular recreation area for families and children of all ages. On Thursday evenings it provides a popular open-air social venue for young people from the revitalised youth club. On Tuesday summer evenings the Brownies are also able to safely run off their excess energies.

A new (Smiley) waste bin was installed in the summer and this has helped reduce the amount of litter. However, there still appear to be lots of children and adults with holes in their pockets!

In June the park passed its RoSPA inspection and continues to provide safe play for our children. The play area is now regularly inspected and maintained by John Hurcombe, our Parish Ranger.

Mark Howe continues to provide an excellent grounds maintenance service with regular grass cutting throughout the year. Generally the park always looks tidy. It is wonderful to see this green heart of the village so well used and enjoyed.

Other open spaces

In the autumn the Combe Quarry area received a serious three day clearing by Mark Howe. Brambles and nettles were scrubbed out and removed. Dozens of saplings and shrubs cleared away to allow more light and access into the whole site. Hopefully, we will begin to see more naturalisation of the bulbs and flower seeds that have been planted in recent years.

The Spring and Autumn clean-ups and planting continue to be supported by a regular group of stalwart volunteers, with material help from North Somerset Council and Sanders Garden World. Thanks go to all those volunteers who help make our village a tidier and more colourful place to live in.

Rubbish dumping and abandoned cars down Accommodation Road and in the Roman Road lay-byes remain an occasional eyesore, and create a costly clean-up problem. The community needs to be vigilant in maintaining a look out for such antisocial behaviour. Our new Parish Ranger will help the parish council and North Somerset Council to keep on top of this perennial problem.

Coronation Hall Management Committee

The Coronation Hall Management Committee has continued to invest in the Coronation Hall and Jubilee Room by making further improvements for the enjoyment of the residents of Bleadon and surrounding areas.

Improvements completed in the past year include:

- Redecorating the interior of the Coronation Hall
- Enlarging the storage room in the Coronation Hall to accommodate the large table trolley
- Installing new fire doors
- Installing the new Rangemaster cooker in the main kitchen
- Installing a new sound system in the Jubilee Room
- Maintaining and resealing the wooden floor in the Coronation Hall
- Installing new washbasins, taps and vanity tops in the Coronation Hall toilets
- Obtaining 150 new padded chairs for the Coronation Hall

Our objective is to be self-financing for all normal running costs which are funded from hall hire charges, income from the Village Market and fund raising events. However, for major capital items or projects we have to obtain external financial assistance and for this we are grateful to Bleadon Parish Council and North Somerset Council for their continued support. The Hall Committee also wishes to acknowledge the generosity of local businesses who have kindly offered their products or services at reduced prices in recognition of the charitable status of the Coronation Hall. Nevertheless, the cost of these improvements is still a significant sum of money amounting to £11,000 in the past year.

The Hall Committee is pleased to report that the Coronation Hall and Jubilee Room are being used by a growing number of organisations and also by a wider range of residents for their special family events including Christening celebrations, children's parties, wedding anniversaries, special birthday parties and family gatherings after funeral services at the Church. Every booking helps to maintain and improve the facilities of the Hall. The monthly Village Market organised by Joanne Jones and other fund raising events in the past year, especially Ballroom Dancing organised by Les Masters, have been extremely successful and have generated additional income of some £5,400.

The Hall Management Committee wishes to thank all the volunteers, the user groups and the residents of Bleadon for their continuing support.

Highways and Footpaths

During the year ending April 2006 there have not been any major improvements to roads within the village. Bleadon Road continues to deteriorate but is not deemed as being serious enough by the Highways department to warrant attention at the moment.

On the whole the conditions within the Parish are good. There is a continual assessment of the roads and footpaths within Bleadon and, as necessary, the Highways Department Patchwork Gang is informed of deficiencies. If the council or general public are aware of any locations requiring attention, these are gratefully received and will be acted upon

The Bus stop area by the Catherine Inn is a significant scheme that has received special attention. The work is expected to include the reinstatement of the verge, a new footpath and bus pull in adjacent to the post office. We await confirmation of the proposals and we look forward to this area of the village being improved in the near future.

Additional dropped kerbs are also due to be installed along Shiplate Road with more being constructed as funds become available within the North Somerset budget.

As a result of the works in Banwell, Bleadon is yet again subjected to additional traffic. This is the third year that we will suffer disturbance. As previously noted, unfortunately there is little the Parish Council can do other than to monitor the situation.

I am glad to summarise that the general condition of the roads and footpaths is higher than average, but a continual process of observation and, where necessary, submission of reports to the Highways department is required.

Report By:- Justin Harvey-Bennett

Footpaths and Bridleways

Again an uneventful year for Footpaths and Bridleways with only a few applications for changes to existing footpaths.

Set out hereunder is the schedule of works carried out in the last twelve months.

Right of Way AX6/8:-

Purn Hill	G.R. 3329 5734 Old stile removed & replaced with new gate. Stone steps from field up to gate to allow easier access.
Purn Hill	G.R.3330 5708 Old stile removed & replaced with new gate.

Right of Way AX6/10:-

Rear of Manor Grange	G.R. 3362 5725 Two old stiles removed & replaced with two gates.
Junction with Celtic Way	G.R. 3402 5726 Old raking ladder removed replaced by flight of wooden steps with platform.
The Dring	G.R. 3408 5746 Old stile removed and replaced by gate.
North of The Dring	G.R. 3414 5738 Old stile removed and replaced by gate.
North of The Dring	G.R. 3420 5750 Old stile removed and replaced by gate also flight of stone steps, leading up to this gate, replacing old wooden steps built in 1994. Felling of dangerous trees and scrub clearance.

Right of Way AX6/12:-

South Hill	G.R. 3465 5661 Old stile removed replaced by new gate. Stone steps built to allow easier access.
River Axe South Hill Farm	G.R. 3457 5640 Old metal farm gate removed from bridge new 'walkers' gate installed. This is a 13ft. metal farm gate incorporating a self closing smaller gate. The main gate can be chained shut but still allows unhindered access for walkers.

Right of Way AX6/14:-

Near Caravan Park G.R. 3324 5675 Repairs to broken boards on bridge.

Right of Way AX6/16:-

South Hill Near the Veal G.R. 3456 5683 Old stile removed replaced by kissinggate. Stone steps from road up to gate installed.

Right of Way AX6/22:-

Shiplate Road G.R.3460 5688 New kissing gate installed.

Total of eleven gates installed during the year. Seven more gates will be installed at various locations in the parish in the near future. On going path clearance of vegetation and fallen trees etc. carried through the year.

ALCA (Avon Local Council Association)

ALCA has continued to provide an excellent back-up and co-ordination service for all the Local Authorities in the old AVON area during the past year.

One of their most valuable functions is to monitor all Government legislation which affects local authorities and provide advice to Parish Councils about its implementation. A typical example being the Racial Relations Act 1976 and Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2009.

The Amendment Act strengthened the 1976 Act and extended it to include the Police and Public Authorities including Parish Councils. Under the Act an enforceable duty was placed on all government authorities to:

- 1) Eliminate unlawful racial discrimination
- 2) Promote equality of opportunity
- 3) Promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

The Act protects people from discrimination in four main areas and gives them legal remedy should they feel they have been discriminated against. The key areas are:

- 1) Employment
- 2) Housing
- 3) Education
- 4) Access to goods, facilities and services.

Examples of cases that have arisen recently are:

- 1) Planning issues relating to Gypsies/ Travellers
- 2) Unfair treatment of European workers in respect of pay and conditions.

It also examines proposed legislation and makes representations via the National Association of Local Councils.

Currently the Government is carrying out a wide ranging review of the structure of Local Government to:

- 1 Reduce the number of Councils and cut out the complexity of many of their operations.
- 2 Bringing Government closer to the people by "Empowering Neighbourhoods.

This includes:

- a) Formalising the rights of Local people to trigger enquiries into local issues.
- b) Extending the neighbourhood policing approach.

- c) Extend and strengthen petitions so that people are able to force issues onto the council's agenda.
- d) Extend the use of satisfaction surveys.
- e) Extend the use of delegated budgets for local councils to spend on local projects in consultation with the community.
- f) Extend the use of neighbourhood charters, which set out the responsibilities of service providers and residents for keeping the neighbourhood safe.
- g) Transfer of the management and ownership of assets to community groups.
- h) Giving new powers to strong parish councils, for example greater rights of representation in decision making to complement the right to issue Fixed Penalty Notices.

The outcome of the consultations is expected to be: the elimination of one tier of Government for example the County Councils, an amalgamation of some District Councils into new unitary authorities (back to Avon?!); increase in the role and responsibilities of Parish and Town Councils. The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has asked for views on the discussion paper and these are being co-ordinated by ALCA and NALC.

Members of the ALCA executive committee also play an active role on key committees e.g Regional Planning, PostWatch, Bristol Airport Liaison Committee, which discuss matters affecting the local communities in the old Avon area.

Another key area for ALCA is providing information on employment matters and levels of remuneration and expenses for local authority employees and Councillors. They also provide a comprehensive range of training programmes for both Clerks and Councillors.

Perhaps the most valuable function of ALCA is providing advice and a reliable source of information to the Clerk and the Council about any new matters raised by constituents. In particular it is able to share experience about issues that have arisen in other areas and to recommend appropriate courses of action. This reduces the time taken to deal with issues and prevents everyone re-inventing the wheel.

1st Bleadon Brownies

Bleadon Brownies remain very active in the village with the majority of the 24 girls attending Church Services and the monthly market as well as manning the park activities/games at the May Day Fayre. Brownies also made many entries in the Bleadon Horticultural Society Flower Show this year.

A waiting list of six girls is hoped to reduce as some girls will become 10 years old this year. The success of the pack in recruiting more adult leaders in the past year gives the present Brown Owl, Bella Ware the opportunity to set up a new Guides pack for 10 to 14 year olds in September this year.

Bella will transfer responsibility of the Brownies to Rachel Hemmings who will take over as Brown Owl and Emma Tucker as Tawney Owl.

Two other younger women will join Bella in setting up Guides which will follow on from Brownies on a Thursday night from 7.45 pm. to 9pm.

Guides give girls leaving Brownies an alternative to attending the Youth Club. Both Youth Club and Guides leaders have agreed to share some activities in the future.

The thanks of the Parish Council go to the un-paid leaders and helpers who enable our children to develop such wonderful values and social skills.

Youth Club

This year saw continued growth in youth membership and a restructuring of the Club leadership. Usual weekly attendance on Thursday evenings (6.45-9.45) is 30 young people. The Girls & Young Women's Project has extended funding from North Somerset Council until the end of

September 2006 with a regular attendance of between 12 - 15 young people on a Tuesday evening.

The new management by Suzanne Elliott, a full time qualified youth worker at Weston Youth Centre is working well. The permanent staff team now comprises Anne Fortune and Sarah Mitchell - Assistant Youth Worker. Sarah joined the team in January and the young people have taken to her readily. She has an art degree which will enable us to deliver an imaginative arts and crafts curriculum.

A third member of staff has recently been appointed and we look forward to welcoming Patrick to the team. We also have two very willing volunteers Karen Robinson and Judy Tozer, who provide essential and valued extra support.

Many activities and events are now happening together with Weston and Oldmixon - more team work is proving very successful and the young people get an opportunity of working and taking part in events together.

With the help of the Community & Probation Service the whole of the inside and outside of the club has been painted in youthful new colours. The maple floor in the main hall stripped and waxed back to its original honeyed tones. The parish council provided funding for the materials and new exterior lighting.

Other investment includes fitting new windows, kitchen door and guttering. Much of the interior electrical system has been refurbished. Malcolm and Kim Herivel worked hard over many weekends fitting a brand new kitchen and equipping it. This has led to a new enthusiasm from the young people to focus on healthy food. A visit from a nutritionist who works with Jamie Oliver helped too.

The atmosphere these days in the Youth Club is one of youthful energy and enthusiasm. Everyone involved can feel proud of way this valued facility for our young people has been reborn.