

## BRETT HUMBLE: THE PC'S NEWEST RECRUIT

**How long have you been a Parish Councillor, and what made you get involved in the first place?**

About a year ago. I left the village for a few years. When I moved back I wanted to get involved in what's happening. These are our villages so we should all have somewhere to voice our opinions.

**What position do you hold and what does it involve?**

I'm an ordinary Parish Councillor. For me it involves helping residents bring any prob-

lems or comments they have to the attention of the PC to see how we can help.

**Tell us something we might not know about being a Parish Councillor!**

You don't get paid :)

**Wave a wand and make a wish for our villages. What would it be?**

For them to stay the safe, clean rural environment that Churchill & Blakedown have always been, so our children can have the same benefits we had growing up.

**What keeps you motivated in your Parish Council role?**

Whenever someone asks me if the PC can help with a problem, or there's something planned that I feel may be detrimental to the village.

**What do you do in 'real life'? Tell us a little bit about it.**

I'm a Commercial Manager for a Secure Destruction/Recycling Company.

**What do you do in your leisure time?**

Pray for good weather!

## DATES AND CONTACT DETAILS

Forthcoming Parish Council meetings are on 16th April, 21st May and 18th June at 7.30pm in the Sports Pavilion. You are most welcome to attend.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about items for future issues, please contact the Parish Council Clerk, on 01905 830756  
[rogerdgurney@btinternet.com](mailto:rogerdgurney@btinternet.com)

### Parish Councillor contacts:

Pete Dearden (chair) 01562 700603

[pete.dearden@tesco.net](mailto:pete.dearden@tesco.net)

Pauline Hayward 01562 700476 [pauline.hayward@wyreforestdc.gov.uk](mailto:pauline.hayward@wyreforestdc.gov.uk)

Jim Long 01562 701168

[jwlong@jwlong.co.uk](mailto:jwlong@jwlong.co.uk)

Roger Shade 01562 700375 [roger.shade@virginmedia.com](mailto:roger.shade@virginmedia.com)

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# CHURCHILL & BLAKEDOWN NEWS

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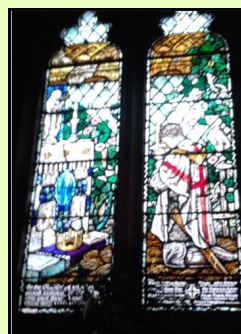
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**'Soldiers Window'**

Churchill Church  
Made by the Broms-grove Guild c.1920 and designed by A J Davies

## A NEW PUBLICATION FROM YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

Welcome to the first edition of Churchill & Blakedown News, a quarterly publication aimed at keeping you in touch with the activities of your Parish Council. In it we'll be trying to de-mystify what it is that a Parish Council does, and, perhaps just as importantly, explain the things a Parish Council can't do!

Many people don't understand the functions of the various layers of local government, and the article on p2 by Cllr Jim Long should help explain some of the differences.

On the back page, we'll be talking to members of the Parish Council to gain some insight into what makes them tick and why

they do it. In this edition, we meet Brett Humble, the newest and youngest member of your Parish Council.

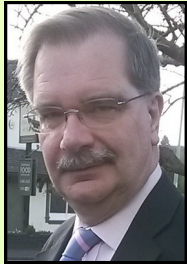
We hope that you'll get in contact with your ideas, and suggestions for topics you would like to see covered in future editions. Plus, if there's a question you'd like addressing, we'll do our best to find the answer. We are happy not to print your name if you prefer, but hope you understand that we cannot respond to anonymous communications.

Your point of contact for the newsletter is Roger Gurney, the Parish Council Clerk. You'll find his contact details on the back page. Please do get in

# WHAT IS YOUR PARISH COUNCIL AND WHAT DOES IT DO?

**Cllr JIM LONG**

**explains**



Elected every four years, your Parish Council consists of nine councillors (six for Blakedown and three for Churchill), all of whom are unpaid volunteers. There are currently no party political groups. The PC has a part-time qualified clerk and a small number of sub-contractors for work, notably the village handyman/lengthsman. Apart from these, all work is currently done by the Parish Councillors themselves in their own time.

Outside the metropolitan areas of England there are up to three tiers of local government. Parishes are the first level, followed by districts and then counties at the top. Not all areas have a parish (or town) council. Kidderminster, for instance, does not yet have a town council, although they are trying to get one.

Churchill and Blakedown was created as a Civil Parish in 1885 with its own Parish Council from 1933, and is the *only tier of local government covering our villages to have remained constant ever since*, outliving many local government reorganisations, most notably the one in 1974. In that year Wyre Forest District and Hereford and Worcester County were created. The County later became Worcestershire again. Each level of local government has its own responsibilities.

The lion's share of your council tax bill goes to Worcestershire County Council, which broadly deals with:

- Education
- Health management
- Social services
- Libraries
- Roads and transport
- Trading Standards
- Refuse disposal (not collection)
- Registration of births deaths and marriages, and coroner

Meanwhile Wyre Forest District Council deals with:

- Planning and building control
- Conservation and countryside
- Refuse collection and litter picking
- Environmental health including pollution control
- Parks and leisure centres
- Benefits management
- Social housing strategy
- Parking provision and control, both on and off street
- Licensing of taxis, premises, etc.

Each council does not necessarily do each activity itself, but is responsible for it. For instance, housing benefit is managed on behalf of central government. The social housing stock itself has been transferred to Community Housing, a housing association. And of course the NHS provides healthcare.

Parish and town councils have traditionally had very few powers of their own, but do

have the right to be consulted on a number of things by district and county councils, particularly on planning. This doesn't mean that your Parish Council has any power to stop one of your other councils from doing anything, but by goodwill and persuasion we can sometimes influence a change in a decision, but by no means always.

- Street lighting in most of Blakedown
- Bus shelters and benches
- Litter picking and grass mowing in parts of the Parish
- Grants to village organisations to help finance the cost of maintaining their amenity land

## What does your Parish Council do?

As well as representing local views to the other councils when consulted, the Parish Council currently provides among other things:

**In the next issue, Jim Long explains how the role of the Parish Council is changing under local government re-organisation and how it will affect you.**



## REPRIEVE FOR 197 BUS SERVICE

The 197, one of the County Council-subsidised bus routes serving Blakedown and passing through Churchill, has been temporarily saved from closure following pressure from the Parish Council, at least while alternatives are considered.

The service runs as a circular twice a day linking Blakedown with Churchill,

Hagley, Clent, Belbroughton and Kidderminster. It is seen as a lifeline by less able and older residents of the Sculthorpe Road estate, as well as those in the other villages.

A 66-signature petition was organised by resident Molly Thomas who lives on the Sculthorpe estate.

