

## PARISH COUNCILLOR PROFILE: BRIAN HESSION

"I have been a Parish Councillor since May last year. I catch the train every day from Blakedown with Pete Dearden, the previous chair of the Parish Council. Pete said that it would be useful to have someone on the Council with a legal background, as there are often issues with property and planning law. That conversation



with Pete coincided with the elections so I quickly signed up! I'm a solicitor in the Commercial Property department at Shoosmiths solicitors in Birmingham. I deal with all sorts of property law issues, and this helps with the many weird and wonderful property matters that land on the Parish Council's doorstep!

"At the moment I am putting together a draft response to the West Midlands Rail Franchise Consultation on behalf of the PC and will be raising issues regarding the station and train service. If you have any concerns please let me know, and I will include them in my response! Points of note include the Sunday

service (or lack of it to be more accurate), a bridge from one side of the station to the other, parking, and buying tickets at Blakedown station.

"If I had a magic wand I'd create a bypass to reduce traffic flows, though I think someone has already had that idea, and the moment has passed! We recently received the results of three traffic surveys; unsurprisingly there is a lot of traffic, and speed limits are largely ignored. We'll take this matter up with the relevant authorities and press for urgent action, particularly regarding speeding.

"In my free time, I go the gym quite a lot during the week, and have been known very occasionally to make an appearance for the cricket team based in the village. I have also taken part in the Blakedown Bolt over the last few years though I am reaching the stage in life where my times are gradually getting slower not quicker! I have two children and seem to spend most weekends ferrying them between various activities!"

### DATES AND CONTACTS

The Parish Council will meet on Wed 20th April, 18th May (AGM) and 15th June at 7.30pm on in the Sports Pavilion. You are very welcome to attend these meetings. For questions, comments or suggestions please contact the Clerk, Angela Preece, 24 Holmes Orchard, Alveley, Shropshire, WV15 6NX  
Tel 01746 781171 or 07572 108924  
[churchillandblakedownclerk@gmail.com](mailto:churchillandblakedownclerk@gmail.com)

### DEFIBRILLATOR FOR VILLAGES?

Churchill and Blakedown residents are warmly invited to attend the **Annual Parish Meeting**, hosted by the Parish Council, on 25th May at 7.30pm. The venue is the Sports Pavilion, and a representative from the charity Heart Trust will be speaking about the advantages of having a local defibrillator.

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# CHURCHILL & BLAKEDOWN NEWS

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## BLAKEDOWN BOWLERS: WE'RE ON A ROLL!

Blakedown's already impressive sporting facilities are getting a further boost from a state-of-the-art outdoor bowling green at the Millennium Green. It will be jointly administered by the village's

short mat bowling club and the Millennium Green Trust, which owns the land. The project was made possible by a £70,000 grant from the Norman Dawson Trust. Club member John

Beckley says: "Until now we could only play indoors at the Parish Rooms one evening a week. Now we'll be able to play outside, morning, afternoon and evening, seven days a week! It's going to make a huge difference to our club, and we look forward to hosting league matches against other clubs."

The new facility was designed and built

by Dales, acknowledged world experts in bowling green construction. The playing surface is made of a highly durable woven carpet material, able to withstand the British weather.



"We'll use a special vacuum appliance to suck up excess water, along with any dirt before we start to bowl," John explains.

"We hope the new green will encourage more people to come

along and have a go at bowling. Everyone's welcome, from complete novices to experienced players. All you need is a pair of shoes with smooth soles and no heels."

The club is planning an Open Day event later this month. Further details are available from Alan Walters on 01384 831098.

## REBIRTH OF A LOCAL LANDMARK

Work to rebuild Blakedown's historic Signal Box finally got underway during January. Initial preparation included clearing the land, getting the services in and digging the foundations. By late February, signs of the building itself started to emerge from the ground. Total build time will be around 12 weeks, and as Parish Councillor Sue Fowler explains, the task is rather a tricky one: "All the bricks need to be individually cleaned and sorted, the timber has to be stripped down and repaired, and then it all has to be fitted together like a huge 3D jigsaw. "We're lucky to have Holland Contracting doing the work for us under the management of Steve Holland. He recently rebuilt the Nailor's Cottage at Avoncroft, so he knows exactly what he's doing when it comes to heritage reconstruction."



Once the external building work is completed, the focus moves to getting the interior into shape. Sue says: "The restored box will become a small Community Museum, and will be run by members of the Local History Society. It's just a question of making the budget stretch far enough to get the project finished."

## UPGRADE FOR SPEED WARNING SIGNS

Blakedown's speed warning signs have been upgraded to improve their efficiency in reducing the speed of traffic passing through the village. First installed in 2014, the signs could only ever be partially effective, as Parish Councillor Neil Rowlinson explains: "The problem was that a heavy volume of traffic would trigger the signs repeatedly, and that made the batteries go flat. We couldn't keep up with re-charging and changing the batteries so frequently, so we needed to think again."



The Parish Council decided to go back to the sign manufacturer and arrange for the signs to be converted to run off mains electricity. The upgraded signs have now been re-installed and will work continuously, acting as a more effective warning to drivers. Neil says: "Often, it's easy to be driving a little faster than you should when you come

into a 30mph area. All it takes is a gentle reminder to slow down, and you should now always get that nudge when you're coming into Blakedown."

## AUTUMN REFERENDUM

You may remember that the Parish Council published its draft Neighbourhood Plan last December, and asked residents for their comments. The steering group incorporated these comments into the plan, along with those of a number of other statutory stakeholders. You can read all the comments by visiting the website [cnbdnp.co.uk](http://cnbdnp.co.uk).

The Parish Council submitted the plan to Wyre Forest District Council in January, but discovered there was a need to carry out further technical work before they could submit the plan to the inspector. Chair Roger Shade explains the knock-on effects of this delay: "Unfortunately, we won't be able to submit the final plan to the villages for a referendum vote in May, as we had

originally intended. However thanks to the goodwill of WFDC officers who have undertaken the extra technical work for us, along with the support of our District Councillors, we should now be able to hold the referendum in the autumn. We hope that by then everyone will have recovered from referendum overdose!"



## CHURCHILL & BLAKEDOWN QUIZ TEAM VICTORY

The Parish Games, a friendly competition between the Parishes of Wyre Forest, have been organised by the District Council for at least 25 years. Until recently they consisted of a variety of activities such as archery, cricket, dominoes, golf, tennis and rounders, traditionally ending with a quiz. Churchill and Blakedown have always supported the Games and usually managed to enter teams for most of the events, regularly taking the overall prize. You can see the winning certificates displayed in the vestibule at the Parish Rooms. In recent years, cuts in local government funding have meant



that the Games have been reduced to just the quiz. This year's event took place on 15<sup>th</sup> March at the Town Hall, and saw the Churchill and Blakedown team scoring an emphatic victory, dropping only two of the 100 questions posed, and beating their closest rivals by 18 points. Jim Brown, Ron Brinsdon, Howard Carlton, Sue Fowler (pictured, receiving the winners' shield from Leisure Development Officer Amy Smith), Gill Moncrieff and Tom Powell were delighted with their win, although admitted it could have been a perfect score if they had only stuck with the other two answers they had first thought of! Better luck next time?