

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT TO DALSTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING 2010

This will be my last report to the Annual Parish Meeting as I am due to step down as Chairman at the Annual Parish Council meeting in May. I regard it as great a privilege to have been Parish Council Chairman for four years and would like to thank my Councillor colleagues, as well as the two clerks, for their help and support during my time as Chairman.

There has never been a dull moment during the last four years, but there have been some dominant themes, perhaps the most significant of which has been the steady increase in traffic through Dalston village. We now know that in excess of 40,000 vehicles a week pass along The Green every week and we only need to try and visit one or other of the Dalston shops to appreciate the chaotic and often dangerous parking that takes place around The Square. I will return to this in a moment.

In 2006, the year that I became your Chairman, the Dalston Festival was launched, and this has proved to be a resounding success. An event like this just does not happen on its own. It has grown steadily each year under the guidance of a dedicated band, some of whom have been there from the beginning, namely the Festival Chairman Alan Dinning and close colleagues Anne McKerrell, Steve Withers, Judy Rickerby, Peter Kirby and Cynthia Millar. Of course there are others, but it is the consistency of this team which has gradually developed the Festival. There is no doubt that the 2010 event will be the biggest yet. Thanks are therefore due to the whole team.

Dalston is a Parish of many organisations and meeting places. This year I would like to pay tribute to some of these. I have already mentioned the Festival team. It so happens that nearly all of the afore-mentioned Dalstonians are also involved in the very successful Recreation Association. This association not only organises activities etc. for our younger generation, it has also masterminded the planning and construction of the Recreation Building which has quickly established itself as an important meeting and events building in the Parish. People who run associations like this in villages around the country all too often go unrecognised, so, tonight I would like to record our thanks to them.

The dedication and hard work shown by the members of the Rec. are mirrored in the team that runs the Victory Hall. This is another group of people that work away in the background to provide a first class facility in our Parish. I would like to thank them on your behalf for the hard work and dedication that it takes to keep the Hall going and ready for each and every meeting.

Of course we have other meeting rooms, and these take just as much upkeep and dedication from volunteers. Primrose Hall in Gaitsgill, where the Parish Council met for the very first time at the end of last summer, Church House and even our own, and sometimes forgotten Forge Green, come to mind.

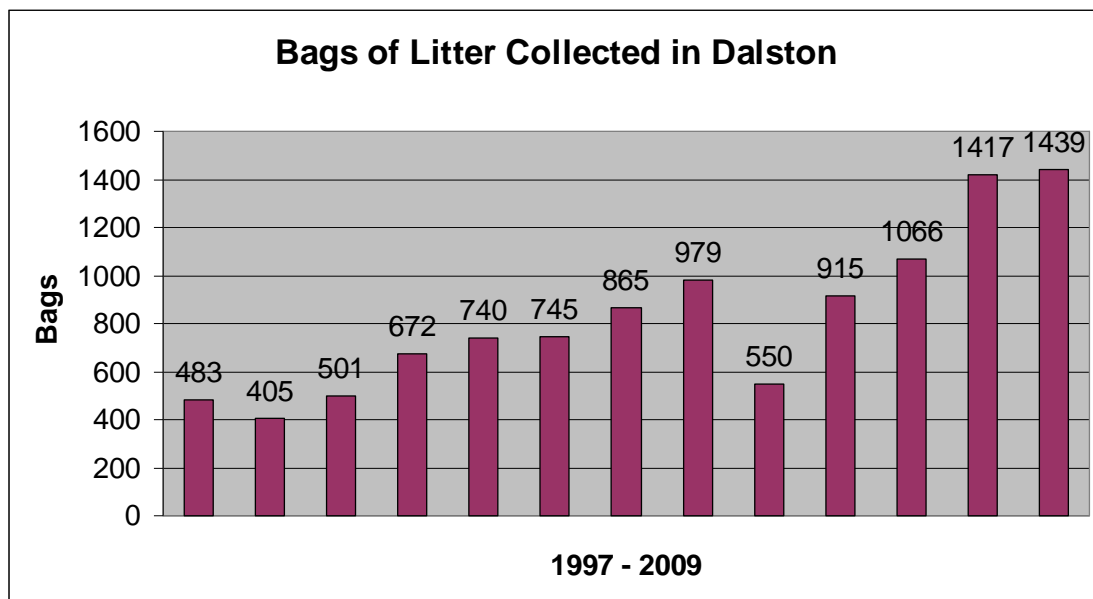
We are very lucky in Dalston to have a number of very successful and popular clubs, societies and groups, some of which are specifically aimed at providing

activities for our young people. Equally valued are the groups which tend to attract the older generation. All of these are run by volunteers, too numerous to mention by name, but the Parish Council would like them to know that they are recognised and greatly valued.

We have many unsung heroes in our Parish, all of whom work quietly in the background getting things done. I would like to specifically thank Councillors Ian Newton and Steven Scaife for maintenance work and additional litter picking, David Cowen, Gary Harrison and Bryan Craig for their building and surveying knowledge, as well as other members of the Council that have attended extra meetings mainly on traffic and parking issues.

I would also thank the District and County Councillors who support the Parish Council in many ways and would make special mention of John Collier who worked tirelessly as our County Councillor for a long time.

Another person that I would like to mention by name is Stephanie Diver MBE who continues to walk around the village picking-up litter. Without her efforts, and those of others who do the same, Dalston would be a much less tidy place. Each year Stephanie records the number of bags that she has collected in the previous 12 months. In the 13 years since records began the number of bags of litter filled from around Dalston village has steadily risen from just over 400 in 1997 and 1998 to a staggering 1439 in 2009. This says something for the society in which we live.



As well as litter, the disgusting practice of allowing dogs to foul in and around the Parish is attracting the attention of the Parish Council. Quite recently this problem has been highlighted again by Ian Gray who picks up around 640 dog piles a month. Like Stephanie Diver this shows a great deal of concern for the environment and the Parish Council would want to publically thank Ian Gray for doing this. While no-one would want to stop residents walking their dogs on The Green and other places in the Parish, it is unacceptable for them not to scoop the poop and place it in an adjacent bin. The worst places, apart

from The Green, are the churchyard, the cycleway and the railway path (here people often bag the evidence and then toss the bags over onto the railway or up into the trees). The Parish Council are currently looking at ways and means to enforce the existing legislation. This carelessness with dog muck is a threat to children. The last thing that the Parish Council would want to do would be to ban dogs from The Green. The Carlisle Dog Warden is already keeping an eye on the situation.

This last year or two has been dominated by some major planning applications, many of which have taken up a great deal of time. Earlier in my period as Chairman it was the Kingswood application, but more recently it has been the Co-op and Dobbies applications which have dominated that part of Parish Council business. Sufficient to say, these applications have now been approved in one form or another. The Parish Council has sometimes been criticised for the stand that it has made on some difficult applications. But often by fighting the cause for the residents improvements have resulted, something which I think is true of the Co-op building. We understand that this project is now at the stage of agreeing the Section 106 Agreement and no doubt we will see work starting in the near future. This year a total number of 91 planning applications have been examined by the Parish Council, an increase of 15 on the previous year.

Returning briefly to the matter of traffic and parking, the Parish Council has been trying to work with others to make some sort of impression on the problem. I have been to innumerable meetings on the subject, but sometimes it is like knocking your head against a brick wall. At the request of Cumbria Highways the Parish Council organised a week long survey of parking habits in Dalston during October 2009. Councillors took turns at counting vehicles. The results are available in detail from the Clerk. However, the headline figure is that at any of the 4 times each day when the counts were made, there was an average of 73 vehicles parked in and around the centre of Dalston. The worst day of the week was Tuesday when the average was just over 95.

Without doubt the planning approval granted to Dobbies is bound to result in increased traffic flow through the village, but, despite all the efforts of your Parish Council, the planners seem blind to Dalston's traffic issues.

We have recently raised the subject of a Carlisle Southern bypass, but the spectre of some very tough times ahead make that development less likely. It took 15 years to obtain approval for the CNDR.

Dalston Parish Council has, over the years, consulted with the Parishioners on a number of occasions, via questionnaires and public meetings. You have consistently asked for additional parking to relieve the pressure on The Square. Permission has now been given for an environmental improvement scheme down the Kingsway. This will incorporate a 40 space car park at the top and a recreational area, with paths, seats and planting, down the rest of the length. The intention is to restrict cars to the car park area. This type of development takes a great deal of time and we are just now at the tricky legal

stages. When this development is completed, steps will be taken to relieve some of the congestion in The Square. As you will see from the accounts, your Council has found it necessary to raise the precept in order to contribute to the high cost of this development. We will be looking for significant outside funding for this project as the cost is likely to be in excess of £100,000.

This coming year, as you will hear, the Parish Plan will be updated. One important item on the action list was the formation of a Parish Trust. I am delighted to report that steps have now been taken to begin the formation of a Dalston Parish Trust which is likely to be aimed at helping younger people, the elderly and other charitable organisations working in the Parish. You will hear more of this in the coming weeks.

From an organisational point of view the biggest change for the Parish Council in 2009 was the retirement of Liz Auld as clerk, after 17 years, and the appointment of Andrea McCallum, who is also clerk to Stanwix Rural. Although there have been a couple of opportunities to thank Liz for everything that she did for Dalston Parish Council, I would like to record the thanks of the Council formally in this report. Liz will continue to be involved in many aspects of life in Dalston, not least the 2010 Cumbria in Bloom entry.

The mention of Cumbria in Bloom is my opportunity to record the Parish Council's congratulations to everyone involved in the 2009 entry where Dalston scooped 7 awards – Rose Lodge Rose Bowl for the Best Residential Home (Barras House), Continental Landscapes Trophy (Dalston Bowling Club were the joint winners), St Michael's School won the Doreen Parsons Young Persons Trophy, Dalston itself won the National Park Trophy for the Best Large Village and the Kimberley Clark Trophy for the Best Village Overall and, last but not least, St Michael's School and the Dalston Station Group won Certificates of Merit in the Neighbourhood Awards. Many congratulations to all concerned.

With the appointment of Andrea McCallum the Parish Council undertook some renovations to the office premises at Forge Green. This provides a Parish Office which is open to members of the public at specific hours each week. Andrea can be contacted directly there via the 01228 712766 number. When she is not there the calls will be forwarded to her mobile. It is never easy to take over from someone else, but a three month overlap and experience elsewhere has enabled Andrea to quickly find her feet in Dalston and we look forward to many years of her valued service.

During the year the Parish Council distributed a total of £6,348.92 in grants to local organisations. I am also delighted to report that Parish organisations received a total of £3682 from the Carlisle Parish Council's Association. Beneficiaries included the Victory Hall, Cumdivock Hall, Raughton Head PCC, Dalston PCC and the Recreation Committee.

During the last year members of your council have worked, where appropriate, on outside committees. Pauline Dalton continues to sit on the Cumbria Association of Local Councils Executive Committee, where I also sit

by virtue of chairing the Carlisle Parish Councils Association. I also have a role on the Carlisle Economic Development Forum, The Local Strategic Partnership and Carlisle Convenors Group while John Kelsey remains on the Carlisle Environment Forum.

It is likely that there will be significant changes in local government services in the coming years when constraints are bound to be tight. We do know that there will be changes to the successful Highway Steward scheme and right now we are trying to find out what these will be.

The Parish Council does, of course, work closely with the police and regularly receive reports on crime in the Parish. We also work with our local District and County Councillors, who endeavour to keep us closely informed about on-going developments. Our thanks to them all.

Finally I would like to record our thanks to the following Parish Councillors that are retiring – Jean Rawstron, Gary Harrison, David Hand, Tony Sinclair and Steven Scaife. I also would like to publically acknowledge Councillor Robert Potter, who has now completed 40 years on the Parish Council, which is a magnificent achievement.

On your behalf I am sure that you would want me to thank the Dalston WI in advance for the refreshments which we will enjoy at the end of this meeting.

Ronnie Auld
Chairman – Dalston Parish Council