

BECKERMET PARISH COUNCIL Conception and Birth?

In May 2011 after many years of deliberation the new parish of Beckermets was finally formed.

The Boundary Commission had recommended some years earlier that because of anomalies within individual parishes they wanted all authorities to look at their areas with a view to change. They wanted the historical boundaries to be reviewed with rivers roads etc. no longer being the sole criteria for boundaries but to base new boundaries on more realistic criteria within/between communities.

One such anomaly was within the parishes of St John's and St Bridget's, St John's covered the village of Thornhill and the part of Beckermets north of the Kerbeck, Bankfield, Morass Road, The Millfields etc. together with a few isolated properties. St Bridget's on the other hand covered all properties south of Kerbeck together with half of Calderbridge, outlying properties and the area around Sellafield.

After numerous meetings, hours of discussions together with many different versions of where the new boundaries for all the parishes should be a final decision was eventually made. All parishes were affected one way or another. Some increased in area and the number of properties within their parish whilst others decreased. This change also brought with it either an increase or decrease in budget as the number and type of property dictate the annual parish budget. The task was not an easy one to undertake for as well as making simple boundary changes by looking at a map there was also the human aspect that came into the equation. Many people do not like change, especially the older or long standing residents of any community so therefore to find themselves being informed that they were no longer in their traditional parish came as an unwanted/unnecessary change.

Within West Cumbria the biggest anomaly of all was within the village of Beckermets, which as previously stated was being governed by two parish councils. After numerous consultations with the residents of the local parishes Copeland Borough Council with permission from the Boundary Commission finally agreed that most of St John's and half of St Bridget's should amalgamate to form the new parish of Beckermets, a name chosen by Copeland Borough Council. It was felt that this new parish was large enough to be financially viable. This change was formally approved and therefore on the 31st March 2011 the parishes of St John's and St Bridget's were consigned to the history books. A month had to pass without any parish council, and then on 1st May 2011 the new parish of Beckermets came into existence for the very first time.

The parish council members of this new parish in the main consisted of those previously on St John's and St Bridget's together with one new member. The new parish now serves two main communities, Beckermets and Thornhill and every attempt is made to ensure council membership is made up of equal numbers from both of these communities, thus trying to ensure equal representation. Alongside equal representation of members the parish council meetings alternate on a monthly basis between the two communities with meetings alternating between the Reading Room in Beckermets and the Social Club in Thornhill.

The parish councillors do not represent any political party. Although each individual may have their own political point of view their role whilst on the parish council is to represent the best interest of all the members of their community regardless of national politics. On occasions this will be in line with government policy whilst on others it will be the total opposite as they are there to act in the best interest of the locals that they have been elected to their four years of office.

The present make-up of Beckermets Parish Council comprises of 11 members and a clerk who is employed by the council to organize the meetings, take minutes, deal with all correspondence and organize any work authorized by the members. At present seven members are residents of Beckermets while four are residents of Thornhill. These members cover a cross section of the communities with five members being retired from their previous professional roles while those in employment have a varied occupational background both in the public and private sector. We also try to ensure that all other aspects of the community are represented with four female and seven male councillors. All the above can be difficult to keep in total equilibrium as all members of the council are members of their communities who have volunteered or at times been elected by the voters of the parish to represent you the residents of Beckermets Parish.

On 1st May 2012 Beckermets Parish Council will be one year old. During the past year a great deal of work has had to be undertaken not only to do the normal day to day business of a parish council but also to enable the smooth transition from two councils into one thus ensuring that the new Beckermets Parish Council provided as good if not better service to the residents of the members it serves.

There has been consultation with Copeland Borough Council during the past year to rename Beckermets so as to encompass the area it serves. The parish council has requested that the name is changed to Beckermets with Thornhill Parish Council and we await a decision on this request.

That decision came in June 2012, and Beckermets Parish Council became Beckermets with Thornhill Parish Council.

Beckermets with Thornhill Parish Council, like most, is looking for new volunteers who are willing to give up some of their spare time to help their own local community. To be a parish councillor you need to live within the boundaries of the parish or at least within three miles to qualify. If you are interested in becoming a parish councillor or would like to know more, either contact the Clerk (E-Mail beckermets@hotmail.co.uk) or come along to a meeting to which the public are always welcome to attend. These meetings are generally held on the third Wednesday of each month, alternating between Beckermets and Thornhill.