

The Parish Meeting

I recently had the pleasure of looking at the Minute Book for the Parish Annual Meetings. The first entry is for Annual Meeting on March 31st 1914 but there is a second entry for a Parish Meeting on September 11th this was shortly after the beginning of the First World War and it was because of the war that this meeting was called. The meeting was held in the Day School and Councillor Alfred Asher was in the chair.

The meeting was called to give the inhabitants of Goxhill an opportunity of devising ways and means of dealing with the distress likely to arise from the widespread unemployment caused by the war. Letters were read from the Chief Constable of Lincolnshire and the Barton on Humber Superintendent of Police, suggesting that provision be made for providing a meal for wayfarers, who might be expected to wander about the country in large numbers, through unemployment in the large industrial centres.

A committee of five members was appointed with power to raise the necessary funds by public subscription and it was "left in the hands of the committee to deal with the question of relief to the best of their ability".

Now I am sure that it will be agreed that it is not often that the Parish Council, together with a Chief Constable and a Superintendent get things wrong but they certainly did then. At that time in September the war had just started and the expectation was that, "Our soldiers will be home for Christmas." The war did not end until 4 years later in November 1918 and it was well into 1919 before demobilisation got under way.

By the end of the war there was such a shortage of labour that all over the country women were

working at jobs previously only thought suitable for men. It must of course be remembered that women did not have the vote at that time and so they did not attend Parish Meetings and had no voice in village affairs. There is no further mention of the committee of five in whose hands so much was left.

Much later in the village history an effort to foretell the future, which was not mentioned in the minute book, was made by the Glanford Borough Council. The building of two refineries in the vicinity raised the question of where the large number of people who worked in the refineries would live. Unfortunately they were not aware that it did not require a large work force to operate a refinery and also that it was a well paid industry in which the people would provide their own homes. Land was purchased in Goxhill with a view to providing council housing. Plans were made to widen Willow Lane to accommodate the traffic which was to flow via Thornton Road, Ferry Road and Willow Lane into the large new estate. A great silence ensued when it was found to be unnecessary.

All was not lost, a new school was needed and the land provided the site for the school and grounds. Also after an initial period during which the Parish Council rented the Playing Field from the Glanford Council it was eventually able to obtain a grant and the field was purchased for the village. A large amount of work was done the land was drained and fenced and the village had a new playing field next to the school. So that piece of forward planning although not as expected had been utilised to the full.

Well not completely to the full, there was that little bit of wisdom about the need to provide for the traffic which would need access to the estate. That was not carried

through and sometime after the school was built it was eventually cancelled. This is why twice a day in term time the traffic reminds us of the sins of omission.

During the early years covered by the minute book, the Annual Parish Meeting was often used to elect the parish council and there was a large attendance. In later times when the council was elected by a poll attendance diminished but there was still considerable discussion.

Many of the subjects discussed at the parish meetings over the years are still relevant today. Problems with sewers, drainage, flooding and repairs to footpaths and roads, all were raised in the past but are unfortunately still with us today.

In 1951 there were two parish meetings. At the first, the meeting was informed of the statutory obligation to survey the footpaths of the village in accordance with the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. The parish council had prepared a list of the footpaths together with their recommendation and pointed out that when a map was finally approved it would indicate for all time the footpaths etc which the public have a right to use. At the second meeting one month later a list was agreed of those paths that were to remain open and also of those which were to be closed. Six years later in 1957 at the parish meeting the subject was raised again and the meeting was told that the Draft Map was not yet completed. Although they said that this would indicate for all time the footpaths which the public have a right to use alterations to the parish footpaths do still take place I wonder if the map was ever finished and approved.

Maurice Brawn

goxhill-gander@fsmail.net
www.goxhillgander.com