

SOLD ON THE OLD SCHOOL

At this moment in time I find myself on the Island Princess sailing round the toe of Italy, knowing I would save this day of my holiday to write this editorial about the future security of the old school. I realize, after being a resident of Town Lane for forty years, and a Parish Councillor for nearly thirty years, the importance of the Parish Rooms, i.e. the Old School to the community of Charnock Richard.

The building is already well used by the Community for e.g.: Parish Council Meetings, Brass Band practice, Pre-school, Community Centre Trust meetings, etc. etc. Not to mention the things it could be used for if it was appropriate e.g.: Mothers Union meetings, Further Education, Gardening and Book Clubs, dancing classes, not to mention birthday parties for all ages, a youth club, after all they are our future. After reading Margaret Stewart's excellent editorial earlier this year in the Chronicle, I am totally sold!!!! on the current and future need for the renovation of the Old School and School House which is now referred to as the Charnock Richard Community Centre. But, it was from a most unexpected source I was Sold!!! Which provides yet another reason for maintaining and renovating this building for the future.

It all began on the weekend of the Scarecrow Festival. I was circumnavigating the village inspecting the scarecrows, on my bike MAY I ADD, feeling somewhat guilty at once again not having made a scarecrow but admiring everyone else's. I had just stopped outside Cowling Brow Farm, contemplating how much work had gone into making the Tyrannosaurus Rex, when a voice, in an accent I did not recognize, said "good isn't it?" "Of course" I stated "they are all good!!!" "I know" the man said "I came last year, I love the Scarecrow Festivals."

Curiosity was getting the better of me so I had to ask him where he was from. "FROM OVER'T BIG HILL" he said. My brain was working overtime; I thought maybe he means Euxton, Coppull, Heskin, Dob Brow or even Parbold Hill, that's big. "I give in" I said, "which big hill?" I asked. "That big hill", he said and pointed. "Oh, you mean WINTER HILL" I said. "No t'Pennines, Yorkshire, near Barnsley!!!" he said. It was at this point he pointed to his T-shirt which read, and I quote, "Born in Yorkshire, blessed to live in Barnsley". "Oh, ok I replied". Somewhat perplexed, and not wanting to replay the War of the Roses, I wished him Good Day and said "might see you later". I had to move on to the rest of the village, lots to see you see.

With that in mind I moved onto Neargates, Southgates, Leeson Ave etc. every scarecrow I must see. Turning into Church Lane, I stopped to admire the money tree I think Karen Lawson made. It was very realistic and a thought went through my head, could I get one of those twenty pound notes past Ian Holland in the Football Club for a pint of Guinness? No defo not!! Anyway, my conscience got the better of me and I left the money tree as poor as I came. Moving on past Pole Green Nursery's, then Meadowlands, Charter Lane and on to the Football Club for that well deserved pint or two of Guinness, plus a burger from Ian. Then, I helped Harold to sell raffle tickets, I even bought a few books but still didn't win!! From there, on to the Parish Rooms where I found Borough Councillor Leadbetter admiring the progress of the festival. At this point I must congratulate everyone involved in the Scarecrow Festival and, I'm sure you will all join me in saying a heartfelt thanks for all their hard work.

It was at that moment that I heard the Yorkshire tones of my new friend from Barnsley. “Hi Councillor” he stated!!!! “You ‘Sold’ me the Village and the Festival, but you didn’t ‘sell’ me this place” he said, pointing to the Community Centre/Parish Rooms. I thought, someone’s been talking, as I don’t even remember telling him I was a Councillor. I immediately stated “well, it’s not actually for sale”. He proceeded to enthusiastically describe the architectural beauty of the high pitched roof, the Gothic looking doors, the bell tower, the ornate wrought iron fencing, the hidden beams behind the suspended ceilings and the period stone window arches. At this point I thanked him for his observations and then proceeded to inform him of how much we had spent on the building just to keep it standing upright!

After reflecting on what my new found friend from ‘over’t big hill’ had to say, I thought, maybe it takes a stranger to tell us what they see, for us who see it every day, to appreciate what we have. There is no doubt there is a lot of work to do, and a lot of money to raise. The new Cross-Committee, with the help of other volunteers, and some grant aid, will make progress. Please keep your eye on the money Barometer on the wall of the Old School, this reflects the amount of money raised for the renovation of this wonderful building, not the everyday running costs. So, it will be clear for everyone to see as the marker is raised as funds grow.

With this in mind, if it costs £5 or £10 a year per household on our local precept, I for one think it would be money well spent. With this editorial I hope I have SOLD!! THE RENOVATION OF THE OLD SCHOOL PARISH ROOMS NOW THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, TO YOU.

Your Parish Council Chairman

Allan Shaw

Email: allanjimshaw@gmail.com