



# Parish Profile: Great and Little Broughton



The Parish of Broughton which includes the villages of Great and Little Broughton is situated in the present district of Allerdale, 3 miles west of Cockermouth and 6 miles east of Workington. It has approximately 850 dwellings ranging from very old cottages to large fashionable houses providing a mixture of rented and owner occupied accommodation. However, in recent years there has been an increase in second homes and holiday rentals which is influencing availability and affordability for young villagers. The population is a healthy mix of people with a balance of long-standing families and 'off-comers' which tends to make the many social opportunities in the villages well supported.

In the 16th century farming communities began to develop based on the south facing slopes of the moor to the north of the village down to the river terraces of the Derwent. These are fertile and have the best of the sun which is ideal for cultivation. In the 17th century the exploitation of the minerals on the moor to the north of the village began as coal outcropped and was later accessed through bell pits. The discovery of potters' clay led to expert potters coming from Staffordshire who were active as farmers in the growing season and as potters in the winter. In 19th century demand for coal meant real investment was made to work the rich coal seam 200ft below the surface. Extraction of fire clay led to the establishment of brick and tile making and in Little Broughton, domestic pottery and clay pipes were manufactured. The mix of housing we have today is reflective of the substantial houses built by the landowners and entrepreneurs and the cottages and later the social housing estates built for the workers. The owners also established and endowed some village institutions. The community was strongly religious, signified by the construction of a Quaker Meeting House, three non-conformist chapels and a church. They developed their own entertainment through church activities, music, and drama groups. Competitive sports teams, particularly rugby and, later, the annual village carnival, also played their part. At the beginning of the Second World War, the Ministry of Defence enclosed about three square miles of the moor and used it as a naval armaments' depot providing many local jobs. This tract of land, through its security fence, has been defended from intrusion for the last seventy years and has now been returned to Allerdale/County Council and leased for the development of the Derwent Forest master plan. The site is rich in wildlife and historical interest and its future continues to occupy many hours of parish time. This site and the villages have many ancient hedge rows and boundary walls which there is a desire to preserve.

There are many reasons to enjoy living in Great and Little Broughton and of particular highlight is the expansive network of walks enjoyed by many and particularly, dog walkers. In 2021 a booklet was published to highlight the many bridleways, footpaths and accessible routes. The walk across Soddy Gap, a community Asset, and a site once open cast, is particular enjoyed

with the bird life settling on the legacy ponds. The river with its available fishing licence, is also popular and hosts increasing wildlife. The village has 26 seats which not only provide rest but also the opportunity to chat. With a hotel, community pub and 3 other pubs, all with a different feel, refreshment and socialising is close at hand.

In 1927, the mining owners endowed the village hall which thanks to a group of enthusiasts, has been completely renovated in the past 5 years and now hosts activities to suit any age and most interests. This is complemented by a village cricket field, a scout's field and the Red Rose rugby league pitches. The children's playground on the Welfare Field, is well used and requires significant maintenance, the upgrade of which is one of the focuses of the parish council who have already secured funding for safety netting for the football area and an adult outdoor gym facility.

At one time there were 8 shops in the village, but now we have just one and a visiting fish and chip van. Unfortunately, we have lost buses over the last few years which means that car usage has increased making parking and road safety a big issue. Whilst there is still active farming in the village, most people commute to work in the nearby towns and to the nuclear industry although home working has become more prevalent. The village has campaigned long and hard for better access onto the A66 and there is the promise of an imminent roundabout... we hope! One of the main stays of the village is the school with its excellent reputation. This is important to maintaining young people within the village and for ensuring associated activities are viable. One of the highlights in the calendar is the annual July Children's Carnival when the villagers come together to support the beautiful children's floats but also the entertainment provided from the pubs, school, marching bands and other groups.

In 2017, the parish council decided that the allotments could be a much stronger asset for the village and a group was formed to manage a transitional plan. Today we have 102 allotments with 81 tenants who grow an increasingly wide range of produce and have quite a selection of poultry. The waiting list is actively managed, and it is encouraging to note the number of young people requesting plots, which will ensure the future of these well used sites.

Our 9 councillors supported by our clerk have recently undertaken a review and now have an action plan to move forward which includes revising our parish plan, ensuring the Derwent Forest development has local involvement, maintaining soddy gap access and the lovely walls and amenities, developing the Welfare Field and supporting all that makes Great and Little Broughton a good place to live.

