

Bramham parish council clerk lays down his pen

By Jenni Moulson

BY his own admission Ian Watson is a 'backstage boy' who enjoys working quietly behind the scenes.

After a decade as Bramham's respected parish clerk Mr Watson said he had enjoyed supporting the councillors in their work and giving his time to the community.

The post became vacant in 1993 just as Mr Watson, a former engineer, retired after running his own carpet cleaning business for 16 years.

Much has happened in ten years but he said the biggest achievement was one that no one would ever see.

Mr Watson recalled: "In 1995 the council did great work, helped by the campaign group WARDEN, to fight off the possibility of an 8,500 house development half a mile from here that would have changed the character of Bramham beyond all recognition.

"The proof of our success is that we have nothing at all to show for it - Bramham looks just as it always did."

He said dedicated parents had helped establish a children's playground in 1996

and a youth club earlier this year and the parish council had been proud to support them.

Mr Watson said the clerk's job had changed since he first took up the post and there was now more work involved to meet the bureaucratic requirements of The Local Government Act 2000, the Rural White Paper and the Freedom of Information Act, in addition to meeting the needs of parishioners.

He commented: "When one hears what has gone on in the past in councils like Doncaster one can understand how all this extra paperwork came about to protect the public."

"Sadly, though, we cannot help feeling that it is a sledgehammer to crack a nut in the case of small parish councils."

Despite stories of councillors and clerks at odds with each other Mr Watson said that had never been the case in Bramham.

He added: "I shall miss my friends on the council and their efforts to contribute to the welfare of the village. It has been my privilege to know them and work with them and I shall certainly miss the involvement.

"The new clerk, Colin Pool, is a friend and neighbour. He will be excellent for the job and I wish him every success."

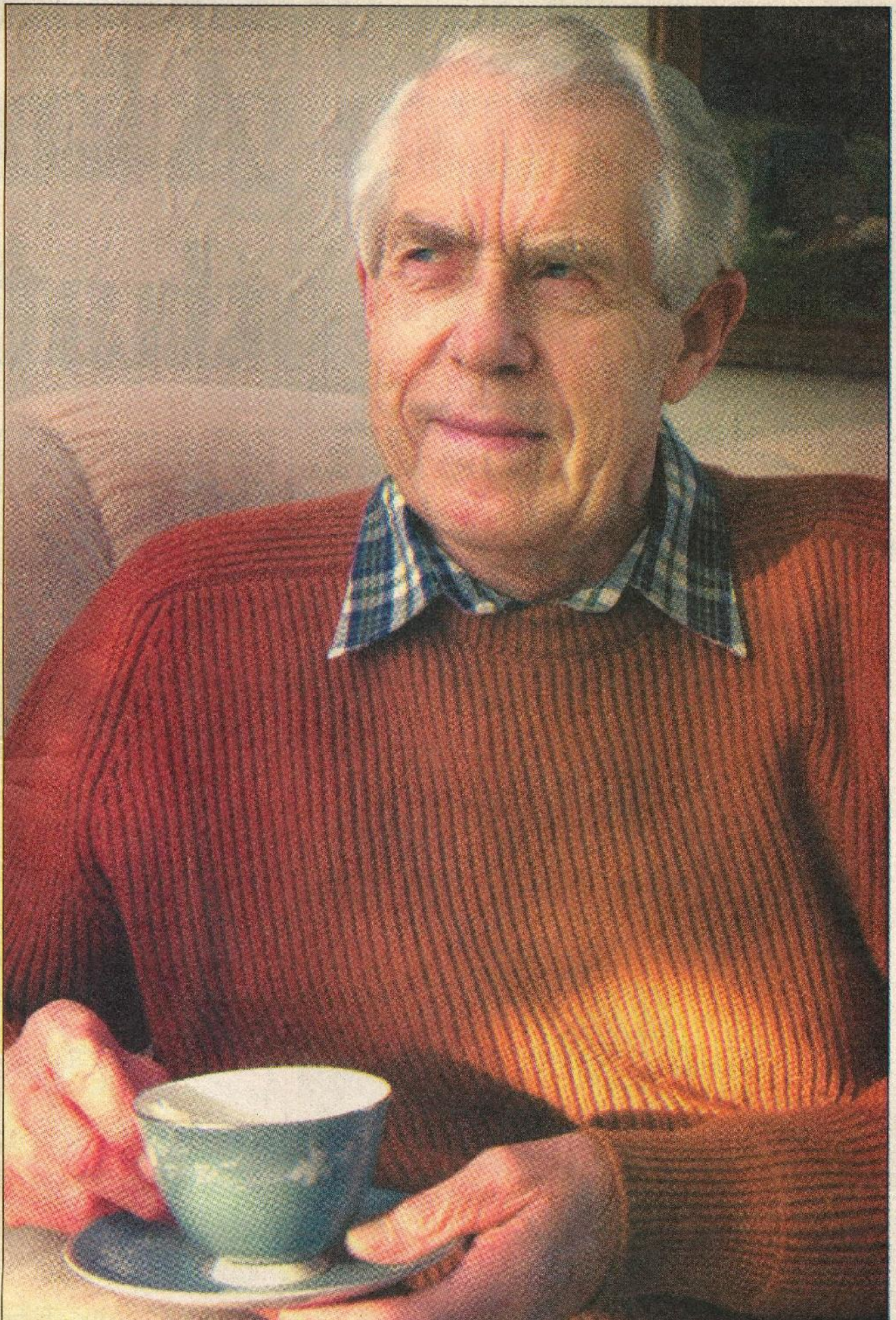
As well as continuing his hobbies as a member of the York Scottish Country Dance Club and a volunteer worker at the National Railway Museum helping to catalogue drawings on to a database Mr Watson said he was looking forward to having more free time.

"My wife and I now look forward to being able to plan any holiday that takes our fancy. For the last ten years we have had to avoid all trips that encroached on the second week of the month because that was the week of the council meetings.

"I shall also spend a little more time getting down to some serious research into family history, though perhaps not rivalling my wife who can trace some of her ancestry back to the 11th century!"

Mr Watson will hand over to Mr Pool at the next parish council meeting on January 8. He was presented with an inscribed cut glass decanter at the December meeting as a mark of thanks for his years of service.

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Chair David Evans presents ship's decanter to retiring Clerk Jim Watson

