

2 • First Meeting of the Parish Council

On Tuesday 4th December 1894, under the new Local Government Act of 1894, the overseers, George Frederick Dalton and William Henry Hutson called the very first Parish Meeting. It was held in the Drill Hall of the Homes for Little Boys, South Darent.

The meeting commenced at 7.15 pm. Mr Dalton proposed that Mr George Burvill Rashleigh, Barrister at Law, of Riseley, Horton Kirby and Lincoln's Inn, should be the first Chairman. Of the 282 electors in the Parish only 83 were present and they all approved of Mr Rashleigh for Chairman. It will be seen from the following that he was not a member of the Parish Council. Indeed he did not even put himself forward for election, yet this was to be the beginning of years of close association between the Council and George Rashleigh.

Only one of the electors present was a lady, Mrs Eliza Boyce, who lived in South Darent and was the Registrar for Births and Deaths for many years.

Voting for nine councillors was by show of hands and it is interesting but perhaps not surprising that the grocer and the butcher, topped the list. Those who failed to gain sufficient support were Leonard Allen Shuter, Charles Yates, Frederick Johnson and Silas Lee. One can imagine the chagrin of Mr Allen Shuter, the gentleman, who probably expected to be elected as a formality. South Darent had six representatives and Horton Kirby three, a ratio which also applies in 1994.

Thirteen nominations for nine seats on the Parish Council were accepted. They were:

Oliver Bicknell	The butcher, Horton Kirby
Hawthorne James Brown	The Manager, South Darent Paper Mills
George Frederick Dalton	Grocer, South Darent
William Henry Hutson	Landlord, The Sun, South Darent
Frederick G. Johnson	The tailor, South Darent
James Lamont	Labourer
Henry Lawley	Head gardener, Franks Hall
Silas Lee	Schoolmaster, South Darent
John Lewis	Publican, Horton Kirby
Leonard Allen Shuter	Gentleman, Kirby Hall
Sydney T. Spalding	Wholesale stationer, South Darent
Benjamin T. Whiffen	Farmer, South Darent
Charles Henry Yates	Printer, South Darent

The result of this first election was, according to the Dartford Chronicle, conducted "under the most orderly conditions". However, much was made in the local paper of the fact that there were so few voters as follows:

"...There were 13 candidates nominated for the 9 seats, each of whom had given their word at a preliminary meeting that he would stand down if at the bottom of the list, rather than demand a poll. The wisdom of this may, perhaps, be questioned, seeing that out of nearly 300 voters on the list only 80 attended the meeting. The candidates themselves being thus prevented, no-one present seemed courageous enough to do what certainly ought to have been done in the interests of absent voters, whose apathy in the matter of attendance is much regretted".

The percentage poll at parish elections is sometimes not very much greater nowadays and attendance at meetings is sparse so interest in parish business has changed little in 100 years.

Horton Kirby Parish

Minutes of the First Parish Meeting held under the Local Government Act 1894 on Tuesday the 4th December 1894 at 7 P.M. at the Drill Hall, Home for Little Boys South Darent in the Parish of Horton Kirby, in the County of Kent for the nomination & election of Parish Councillors for the said Parish.

The meeting having been duly summoned by the Overseers Mess^{rs} George Frederick Dalton and William Henry Hulson for 7 P.M. a quarter of an hour was allowed by the overseers to elapse before commencing the business of the meeting.

At 7.15 p.m. precisely Mr. George Frederick Dalton one of the Overseers proposed that Mr. George Burvill Nashleigh of Risley Horton Kirby and of Lincoln's Inn Barrister at Law, a Parochial Elector should be chairman of the Parish Meeting, and the proposal was seconded by Mr. Leonard Allen Shuter of Ship Hall Horton Kirby and being put to the meeting was carried unanimously.

Mr. George Burvill Nashleigh accordingly took the chair at 7.20 p.m. and at once suggested that as 15 minutes must elapse before any voting could be taken upon the election of Parish Councillors the interval should be filled by his reading over the Register of