

23 • A Dip into the Minutes

The issues addressed by the Parish Council have remained very much the same over the years - speeding vehicles, highway cleansing, street lighting, bus services (lack of!), behaviour of some “sundry youths”, vandalism and litter and many more. Additional problems in recent years have been planning applications and trying to safeguard the environment of our ever-expanding villages.

If asked for one word to describe the Parish Council over the past 100 years it would have to be “tenacious”. Over the years, Councillors would not be put off if they felt something was needed for the parish. The Post Office, British Railways and other public bodies were especially hounded for better services month after month no matter how many negative replies were received! Two typical examples of this were the attempts to get the 5.20 from Victoria to stop at Farningham Road over a number of years and throughout 1955, and the request for stamp machines at both our post offices in 1938. In the latter case the MP and the Post Master General were brought into the argument to no avail.

The following extracts from the past 100 years are intended to give a flavour of past attitudes and concerns.

1894 The cost of conducting the first election of parish councillors was 14s 4d.

October 1895 “The Chairman reported that on the 25th September last four members of the Parish Council namely Messrs Bicknell, Dalton, Hutson and Whiffen started with the Chairman at about

8.30am from the old elm tree in Franks Lane (being the place of starting about 90 years ago) and walked round the boundaries of the parish - keeping the parish on the left hand. The day was very sunny and hot and the party had lunch in a field near Pinden. They were joined by Mr Lewis at Netherways at about 3 and accomplished the circuit by 6 o'clock passing through the Franks garden and being ferried over the river by Mr Lawley. The boundaries in Farningham Wood to the south of Calfstock Lane were not examined, the party coming straight down the Lane. The boundaries are fairly marked most of the way but between Speedgate and Longfield and again between Pinden and Gills Farm they are indistinct. The whole Parish Council dined at Riseley with the Chairman and Lady Edith Rashleigh at 7.45 the same evening - the only other guest was Mr James Rashleigh Hale.”

November 1895 The parish had an area of 2840 acres and a population of 1551.

May 1897 “The Council ordered handbills and posters to be printed to restrain the throwing of tins and rubbish upon the roads and footpaths.”

June 1902 400 New Testaments priced at 2d each, bound in red and inscribed in gold outside with a crown and the words “Edward VII R & I June 26th 1902. God Save the King” were purchased for presentation to each child in the parish. (The date on the Bibles subsequently had to be altered because of the change in Coronation Day.)

October 1905 There was general concurrence with “a reduction in the speed limit of motor cars to 12 mph for inhabited rural areas in order to decrease problems from dust clouds raised to the detriment of roadside dwellers, by speeding traffic.”

April 1909 “The Chairman was directed to write to the Superintendent of Police at Dartford and ask for further protection during the fruit growing season.”

March 1925 Housing: the types of housing that would be desirable would be “a parlour type for the better class artisan and a non-parlour type for agricultural and other labourers”.

April 1932 “The clerk reported that he had inspected the various pig pounds in the parish and that they were all in a clean and healthy condition.”

October 1935 “An application was received from the Head Postmaster at Dartford asking for the opinion of the Parish Council as to the application of local postmen requesting a half day on Saturdays. Such practice, if agreed upon, would mean the withholding of the Saturday afternoon mail until the following Monday morning.

“The question was carefully considered and it was agreed that while in agreement with the postmen having a half day, the Council could not recommend that the Saturday afternoon delivery of mail be deleted but urged the Postal Authorities to arrange for the auxiliary postmen to carry out this duty. At the same time, the Clerk was instructed to apply to the Postal Authorities for three deliveries daily of mail.”

November 1938 “Mrs Parkin wrote to suggest that steps be provided to enable access to be made to the stage (of the village hall) in a dignified manner as at the moment no such facilities are available.”

September 1939 “It was reported that certain bookings of the Hall have been cancelled owing to the War and Major Brown stated that such was very unfortunate for the reason that during the present time especially, the public required opportunities for recreation and hoped that those persons responsible for organising functions would consider this aspect of the matter.”

April 1940 “Egyptian Consul. Formal notification was received from the Foreign Office, through the Police Authority, of the change in the appointment

of the Egyptian Consul in London.”

May 1940 “It was learned that Mr Eric Verton, a Member of the (Village Hall) Committee is serving in the forces and not to forward notices of the meeting for the present.”

June 1940 “Details were received as to the formation of pig clubs, but in view of the recent policy of the Government, no action was taken.”

December 1940 “Evacuees Party. Permission was given to the Billeting Officer for an evacuees’ party on 27th December when the Darenth and Horton Kirby children would be entertained jointly.”

December 1940 “Major Brown sought permission to use the village hall committee room for one hour every Wednesday evening for the purpose of instruction in connection with the training of the Home Guard.”

January 1941 The total amount collected for the Spitfire fund was £71 8s 10d. Collectors were thanked for making the event so successful.

February 1941 “War Weapons Week. The Chairman reported upon the most excellent meeting addressed by Mr W L Parry and to the arrangements that are going forward both in South Darenth under Major Brown and Horton Kirby under Mr Tanner. It was learned that £5000 is the objective the committees have set themselves to raise by investments during this week.”

September 1942 “Attention was drawn to two untidy and uncultivated gardens at School Lane in council houses and the necessary action desirable under the circumstances was promised”.

May 1945 “A circular was read from the Ministry of Health authorising the expenditure of money from public funds for suitably celebrating the termination of organised hostilities in Europe. The Rating Authority had allocated a 2d rate for this purpose, the sum being allocated to Horton Kirby amounting to £130.”

October 1946 “Sealed tenders were received in respect of wiring the hall for electricity ... agreed that the tender of the Darenth Valley Battery Service, in the sum of £122 10s 0d be accepted.”

October 1946 “Library facilities. Correspondence was read from the Kent Education Committee expressing regret that the suggested use of the disused air raid shelter near the Westminster Mill will not be possible...”

January 1947 “The clerk submitted the following figures as being the estimated populations of villages in the parish, such being forwarded to Mr Mealand, the Planning Officer.

Horton Kirby	920	Dean Bottom	14
Speedgate	12	Rabbitts	30
South Darenth	960	Pinden	90

No provision made for the Little Boys’ Homes and Parkwood.”

March 1947 “This Council strongly protests against the reduction of 75% in the supply of exercise books to the schools of the Kent County Council, books which are so essential for educational purposes, especially at a time when every endeavour is being made by teachers to improve the standard of education which suffered many handicaps during the War, and urges that every effort be made to supply the necessary materials without which the educational progress of the children will be retarded.”

January 1947 “The Head Postmaster to be asked to arrange a later collection on Sundays as residents are unable to deal with their correspondence by 1.15 pm.”

July 1947 Inadequate sanitary conditions at Franks Farm Cottages - cesspools had not been emptied for 12 years!

June 1953 Police House in Horton Road next to Fir Tree Bungalows to be built.

June 1953 “Resolved to thank SE Gas Board for great improvement to gas pressure in the village following laying of new main.”

October 1953 Jumble sale in Village Hall raised £18 7s 4d towards new chairs.

November 1953 Public Conveniences. “The Chairman reported that the brick building in Westminster Field was to be converted to a public convenience for the use of the general public ... the adaptation would cost $\frac{1}{3}$ of the cost of a new building and was one which would fill a long felt want in the parish”.

May 1954 “The Chairman referred to the matter of his communication to the members with regard to the revision of the Clerk’s salary which had not been reviewed since 1941 and to the increased costs applicable today, and it was unanimously resolved on the motion of Mr Tanner, seconded by Mr Best, that such remuneration be increased by the sum of Fifteen pounds per annum”.

June 1955 It was resolved to continue the allotments competition. Prizes to be £1, 15/-, 10/- and 5/-.

November 1960 “In response to a letter received from the Dartford Rural District Council, it was agreed to reply stating that with regard to the site of Days Cottages, there was no demand for further shops in Horton Kirby village.”

It was agreed to support the Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council in its campaign to induce the Planning Authority to consult with Parish Councils on matters of planning importance.

February 1961 “Thames Tunnel Approach Roads. Resolved that this Council, being convinced that grave problems of traffic congestion and danger will arise if Route A225 is the only major southerly route available after the anticipated opening of the Dartford Tunnel in 1962, is seriously perturbed at the continued absence from the major work programme of the Minister of Transport (notwithstanding representations made to him over a long period) of the project for constructing the section of the South Orbital Road from the termination of the Tunnel Road at Route A2 south-westwards to the Orpington By-Pass (A224) and beyond.”

March 1961 “Correspondence from the Dartford Rural District Council was read stating that steps had been taken to prohibit the parking of motor vehicles at New Road, South Darenth.”

July 1961 “Correspondence from the Dartford Rural District Council was read setting out the position of the proposed explosive store in the Parish, stating that an objection would be made in respect thereof.”

May 1963 “The matter of improvements to the Highway at Lombard Street was raised, and in discussion it was stated that Mr Crowhurst of Reynold’s Place Farm had offered to present to the Kent County Council sufficient land to carry out road widening operations by removing the dangerous bends.”

May 1964 “Resolved to advise the Dartford Rural District Council of the nuisance caused by rodents congregating in the hedgerow at Forge Lane.”

September 1964 “Village Hall. Following a report in the press, a number of offers of second hand pianos had been received, and the

Chairman and Clerk had accepted an excellent upright grand instrument, free of charge, from Mr and Mrs Bonner of Dartford.”

September 1964 “Westminster Field. Mr G Finch reported that eventually the Rural District Council proposed to provide the following amenities:-

<i>Two Football Pitches;</i>	<i>Tennis Court;</i>
<i>Cricket Pitch;</i>	<i>Paddling Pool;</i>
<i>Putting Green;</i>	<i>Car Park;</i>
	<i>Pedestrian Bridge.”</i>

December 1970 An invitation was received from Dartford Rural District Council for the Parish Council to comment upon the demolition and redevelopment of 2 East Hill as an establishment with “service bays, lubrication facilities and petrol sales”. The Parish Council “generally supported this development subject to its being in keeping with the locality and its surroundings and to its being set back a suitable distance off the highway”.

December 1970 A letter was submitted from the Clerk of the Dartford Rural District Council asking for Tufty Clubs, which were established to teach the fundamentals of road safety to the under 5s, to be set up in each parish of the Rural District. It was reported that one had already been established in the parish, known as the Riverside Tufty Club.

May 1971 “Resolved that the WI be requested to arrange for the damage to the ceiling in the village hall, caused during their hire of the hall, to be repaired”.

June 1971 A letter was submitted from the County Surveyor in reply to this Council’s request for consideration to be given to the implementation of a one-way system in South Darent involving Shrubbery Road/East Hill/Holmesdale Road/Holmesdale Hill. For a number of reasons, it was not possible to accede to the Council’s request.

February 1975 Town Planning. An application for a touring caravan park on 16 acres adjacent to Mussenden Lane was objected to on the grounds that it would be detrimental to the rural nature of the area and the access roads would be unsuitable.

November 1975 “The reply from the Head Postmaster refusing to re-open Horton Kirby Post Office was considered. General dissatisfaction was expressed and it was felt that the matter should be pursued further.”

July 1978 “It was agreed that the County Librarian be informed of the opposition of the Parish Council to the closure of the Library in the Village Hall, having regard to local views, the use by children and the evening use by those working during the day.”

October 1978 “The clerk reported that the Library would close at the end of November and additional visits of the Mobile Library would commence in December. Some concern was expressed at the inferior service now to be provided.”

January 1979 “Listed Buildings. It was agreed that the buildings on the existing list be retained but that attention be drawn to the poor condition of Avenue House and its present use questioned.

“It was further agreed that the following buildings should be suggested for inclusion, provided that no undue obligation or inconvenience would be placed upon the owners:- Royal Oak Cottage; The White House; Reynolds Place; Ash Tree House; The Cottage; Bridge in Franks Lane; and the Church in Southdowns.”

August 1979 “Mr McGill reported on the efforts to re-establish a Post Office in Horton Kirby”.

June 1981 Royal Wedding. Each child under 16 to receive a commemorative spoon.

June 1981 “Mrs Curtis of New Road to receive flowers on her 104th birthday.”

March 1983 Strong opposition to the rebuilding and widening of Franks bridge.

February 1989 Results of the ballot of local residents regarding the proposal by Dartford Borough Council to take this and three other neighbouring parishes into its administrative area was as follows: 466 for staying in the Sevenoaks District and 189 for going into Dartford.

December 1989 Parish Council enters the computer age by purchasing an Amstrad 2086 personal computer for the office.

1994 Local Government Review intends to abolish the two-tier structure and form unitary authorities. Parish Council firmly resists attempts to be taken into a new Dartford and Gravesham authority in preference to staying with Sevenoaks District Council and becoming part of a more rural-looking authority.