

Evening News 2nd Aug 77



AFTER the juggernauts . . . Pamela Driscoll takes her three-year-old son Peter across a deserted Bridge High Street.

Stop look . . . and liste

Stop, look . . . an

THEY'RE taking down the pelican crossing in the Kent village of Bridge.

The Women's Institute has had a new lease of life, the youth club has started buzzing with activity and the gardens are flowering again.

Yet if you walk along Bridge Street, you'll find a scene of undisturbed calm.

High Street is a misnomer. This tarmac ribbon trailing to nearby Canterbury is only about seven yards wide in places. Yet until June 29 last year it split Bridge in two as if it were a yawning chasm.

For that was the day they took the tuggernaut lorries away from Bridge and the village came back to life again. Now only the occasional car disturbs the peace and they don't need the pelican crossing any more.

A far cry from the day in 1962 when 6-year-old George Smith was killed by a van. His death was the beginning of a 14-year campaign for a by-pass to

TOM ROCHE on the village that stilled the tr

channel the A2 traffic away from the rustic beauty spot.

Bridge and its battle for peace is to be the subject of a play by a group from Canterbury's Marlowe Theatre. The villagers are delighted. The musical, which should open in September, will be the highlight of a memorable year.

"Who'd have thought it?" said butcher Peter Jordan. "I wonder if they can find a part for me?"

TROUBLES

"I only moved here four years ago, at the height of the by-pass campaign. I had lived not far away in Folkestone and knew all about the lorry troubles.

"But I never realised it was so bad. Giant lorries were thundering through this little street every minute of the day and night.

"Since they stopped, life has improved ten thousand per cent. We

can sleep in our beds at night and don't have to shout at each other to make ourselves heard during the day.

"Even business has improved. I'm seeing new faces in the shop all the time, people from Canterbury and nearby villages who would never have dreamed of coming to Bridge before."

Down the road, housewife Pamela Driscoll was guiding her three-year-old boy Peter across the street on a tricycle. She said: "It's wonderful to be able to bring him out on the bike. I would never have dared before.

"We have only just bought him this tricycle and I have noticed a lot of other parents giving their children bikes as presents.

"Last year no children rode bicycles in Bridge."

And Mrs. Eileen Bevan said: "I often used to wait more than ten minutes trying to get the children safely across the road. We were all living on our nerves.

"The greatest thing of all now is being able to sleep at night. Everyone is so much happier these days."

Mr. John Purchase a leading figure throughout the long fight, stood in the street outside the Norman church and

said: "The quality of life has improved in the village."

"There were nervous breakdowns, lorries were the cause of many accidents."

"It's not so noisy now. It was noisy in London. At one time goods vehicles were passing at the rate of one every few minutes."

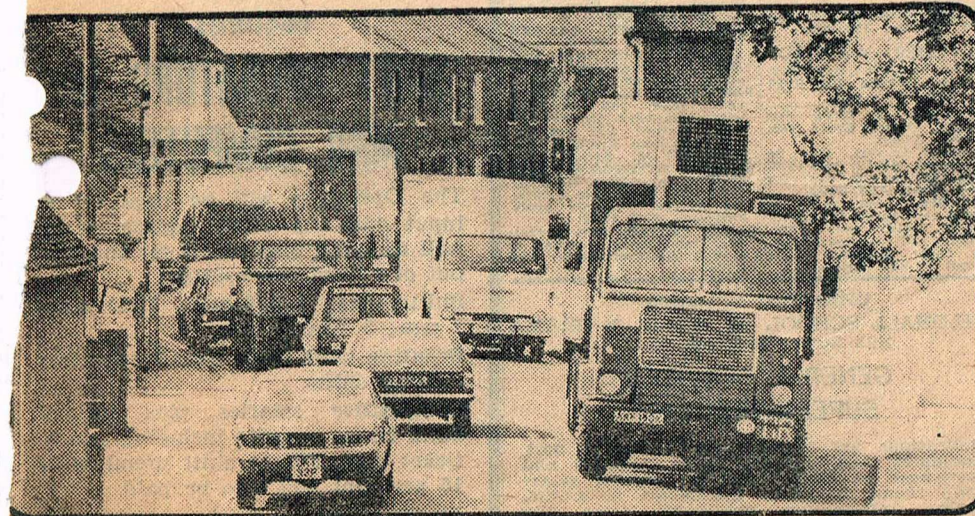
"People were afraid to go out at night. The side of the road seemed that terrible."

ENT

"Now people are healthier. The local organisation, the Women's Institute, the village has had a new lease of life."

"But we are proud of our cultural society. It became important to the village. People are happy and have had a new lease of life since."

"These may be the days of peace but it takes time to bring the village back together."



The way it was . . . heavy traffic rumbles through Bridge.

... and listen

the village that stilled the traffic roar

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"The greatest thing of all now is being able to sleep at night. Everyone is so much happier these days."

Mr. John Purchase a leading figure throughout the long fight, stood in the street outside the Norman church and

said: "The quality of life in Bridge has improved in every way."

"There were more heart attacks and nervous breakdowns here when those lorries were thundering through."

"It's not surprising. The AA conducted tests in our High Street and found it was noisier than the Westway in London. At one time we recorded heavy goods vehicles cruising down the street at the rate of one every 46 seconds."

"People were losing touch with their neighbours. You either lived on one side of the road or the other and it seemed that the two would never meet."

ENTHUSIASM

"Now people are happier and healthier. Trade is improving, all the local organisations like the Women's Institute, the youth club and so on have had a new burst of enthusiasm."

"But we are most proud of our horticultural society. They disbanded when it became impossible to hold shows in the village. But they have reformed and have had some successful shows since."

"These may sound like little things but it takes time to put all the pieces back together again."

Mr. Purchase, who runs a printing firm in Canterbury, gleefully recalled some of the tricks he and his partner Brian Lewis employed to fight the invasion of Continental lorries.

"We found that the pelican crossing wasn't properly phased so I would watch the traffic then shout a signal to Brian to push the 'cross' button," said.

"The local police, who were very helpful, would then leap out and stop the juggernauts. I reckon Dunbar ought to pay us commission for all the new tyres they've sold through us."

"We had leaflets in five languages distributed on the Continent and even won the backing of the French truckers union. Nobody could sleep at night in Bridge because they could always tune in to me and Brian putting our case on some radio station."

"I never thought it would take so long to get the by-pass but it has been worth it."

Barman Stuart Pope in the White Horse summed it up: "I saw two grey geese walking across the road last month. They had tried that a year ago and we would have been serving them up as pate!"