

VILLAGE OF BRIDGE - PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

...ed officialdom to such a
... that the rural district
... of Bridge-Blean, Dover
... Swale, and Dover Town
... Council and Canterbury City
... Council met a member of the
... Ministry to view the situation
... at hand.



By-pass campaigner, Mr. Brian Lewis.

"We are delighted," continued Mr. Lewis, "that work is progressing on the A2 and we do feel we have got somewhere by our efforts. The only damper is that Bridge, which is scheduled to be by-passed in five to seven years, could in the meantime become the equivalent to a small hamlet straddling the M1, unless priorities are put into the correct order."

"However, it is possible that a survey of the by-pass will be started within the next two years. We want to see not only Bridge, but all other communities that straddle the A2, by-passed."

"They should all be part and parcel of a new scheme, which the authorities are undertaking, to build a dual carriageway alongside the existing road," added Mr. Lewis.

He also said they did not feel they could do any more at this stage because it was in the hands of officialdom. But they had to consider the village's safety and if things came to a standstill they would start shouting again—they had the support, not only of the young people, but all of the village.

New councillor

Keeping a close watch on the village's problems is Cllr. Laurence Shirley, of the Post Office. He was recently elected Bridge's representative on the Bridge-Blean Rural District Council.

Married with two boys, 31-year-old Mr. Shirley has known the village for 10 years, although he has lived there only 18 months. He decided to stand for election because he thought younger blood was needed. At the moment he is not a parish councillor but said he will stand for election next year.

He echoes Mr. Price's sentiments of the need for a new hall and he strongly supports the by-pass demand. He is also extremely keen on seeing the introduction of main drainage, which will come under the Nailbourne Valley scheme.

If carries with it the hopes of a new village school. The present building, say the villagers, is old and inadequate and a new one is planned on a site at Bilton Park.

The school also has the proud boast of getting an average of 30 to 40 per cent. of children through to grammar schools. This is above average.

The newcomers

Fully aware of all village problems is the chairman of the Parish Council, Mr. A. Stickels, of Lloret Cottage. Born in the area, he went away for a time but returned to the village for his retirement.

A member of the Parish Council for 10 years, he has been chairman for just over one. He is also secretary of the Canterbury branch of the Kent Association of Parish Councils.

Of the many new people coming to the village, Mr. Stickels said that three months ago they held a "Getting to Know Your Neighbour" evening, which was organised by Mrs. J. D. Smith. At first he thought the new people were inclined to segregate themselves but now they were taking an interest in village affairs and many made new contacts through the efforts of that special evening.

Looking at the problems of the village, Mr. Stickels said they had not yet got a definite date for the Nailbourne Valley drainage scheme but they knew that the authorities were looking into the matter and were working out their estimates.

"Of the by-pass, Mr. Stickels said, "I am disturbed at the news that this is not likely to come for some years. Bridge is suffering from a lot of through traffic which goes at a fast pace."

"Some people are inclined to treat the High Street as a race track, particularly now that we have the yellow line parking regulations. With no traffic allowed to park by the side of the kerb, traffic is allowed a free road to speed through, leaving pedestrians in peril."

Mr. Stickels said they needed new street lighting and there was the urgent problem of providing a car park. Over the last year they had been trying to get the authorities to help acquire a site in the centre of the village at the junction of Western Avenue, but at the moment the position seemed by no means certain.

All the items, he continued, had been stressed time and again by the Parish Council. Villagers were also intent on seeing the proposals become reality and there was every indication that interest in village affairs was growing.

Parish meeting

Mr. Stickels gave an example of this interest. He said the village held an annual parish meeting, when the electorate were invited to attend and voice its suggestions and complaints.

Unfortunately, in the past, public parish meetings in general had been poorly attended, although Bridge had always responded better than some. Recently, in connection with the Commission on the Reform of Local Government there seemed to be some tendency to suggest that parish meetings were useless because no-one attended them.

With this opinion facing them he decided to take steps to encourage people to attend and thus show that the arguments before the Commission were not well founded.

In Bridge the result was surprisingly good and this year the had an attendance of 160. The people did not hesitate to speak their minds and there

Like Bridge every community must have its problems, although some may not be quite as frank as Bridge when airing their difficulties. Yet, problems or not, the village is an extremely pleasing place to live and visit.

With its charming old-fashioned built-up area, Bridge is a village of contrasts. Away from the main road there are many beauty spots to be found, including the ford and the fields at the top of Conynham Lane—formerly Laundry Lane—but changed because some residents objected to that title.

Something of a roaming village, the High Street is tipped by St. Peter's Church, which is just around the corner from the Methodist Chapel.

The Vicar, the Rev. Colin E. H. Perry, has been in the village for three years, coming from St. Martin's and St. Paul's, Canterbury. He said that there was a great sense of village life and everyone was friendly towards each other.

Stranger welcomed

Proof of these words came from Mrs. G. Flynn, of 12 Dering Close, who came to Bridge three years ago from Canterbury. On her first day in the village a stranger came to her house and said, "Welcome to Bridge and Bridge Church."

"Since then," she added, "I have seen many acts of kindness. Even now there are little gifts, such as bunches of primroses, left on my doorstep and I have no idea who leaves them—it is just another sign of the friendship here."

"Really, it is the most friendly community I have ever known and I have never found a grey sheep, let alone a black one."

With such glowing testimonials to the sincerity and friendly approach of the people, it is no surprise that the community spirit extends to the formation of many clubs and societies. All are aimed at catering for leisure time and in many cases the activities are coupled with good deeds to people less fortunate than themselves.

One such group is the Bridge branch of the League of Friends of Canterbury Hospitals, with Mr. Perry as its chairman and Mrs. F. E. Apps secretary. The group pays particular attention to The Close, which cares for the elderly.

Built in 1835, The Close has two husband and wife teams in charge. The superintendent and matron are Mr. and Mrs. H. K. Urwin and their deputies are Mr. and Mrs. D. D. Smith.

Obviously the village cares a great deal for its old folk. Apart from The Close there is Churchill House, where the residents live in their own flats.

For the girls

On the younger side, life has been a great deal more pleasant for the girls since Mrs. R. J. Good, of 34 Bridge Down, began the 1st Bridge Brownies in November. There are no Cub Scout or Scout groups and probably, without the enthusiasm of Mrs. Good, there would still have been no Brownie pack.

However, the 28 members now make full use of the amenities offered them by being a Brownie. They meet at the school and help at some of the fetes in the area.

Although there is now no Bridge Youth Club, some of the young people have joined the village Badminton Club. Formed

three years ago, it has a membership of 15. The ladies see a particularly well catered for. Apart from the Mothers' Union and Young Wives' Group, there is the Women's Institute under its president, Mrs. V. Dawson, of The Cottage, Bridge Hill.

Mrs. Dawson said that there were about 80 members and it was good to see the young people in the village joining the Women's Institute. They meet monthly in the Village Hall.

Apart from these organised gatherings, which also includes a chess club and horticultural society, popular informal meeting points are the three village public houses: The Plough and Harrow, the Red Lion and the White Horse Here, not only do you find villagers, but also the townies who prefer a country pub for their evenings out.

The Red Lion gave local journalists' hearts a flutter when the engagement was announced between Miss Toni Gardner and King Hussein of Jordan. For it was revealed to a "Kentish Gazette" reporter that Miss Gardner had lived in Bridge when her father had been the



For almost 30 years Mr. J. McNally has been round in the village. "The milkman has to chap," he says.

landlord of the

One of the streets to be seen in the arrival of morning Park Benedictine have found the hours to the Club at Bridge

The club will Peter Malkin at Loveday. It will floors and two opening is on J appearance of his Jazzmen.

Asked of the tion to the tho Mr. Malkin said people were a there would be from late-night, and from the club had disappeared had built a set clear of any hou

And so you c new faces arriv on, sometimes what they see. courageous and change and no certainly look fo perous future.