







SUMMER SONG
FOR SERVICES
15-16
17-30

WHITBREAD
WHITE

WHITBREAD

Hotel
Luncheons
Dinners

NO
WAITING



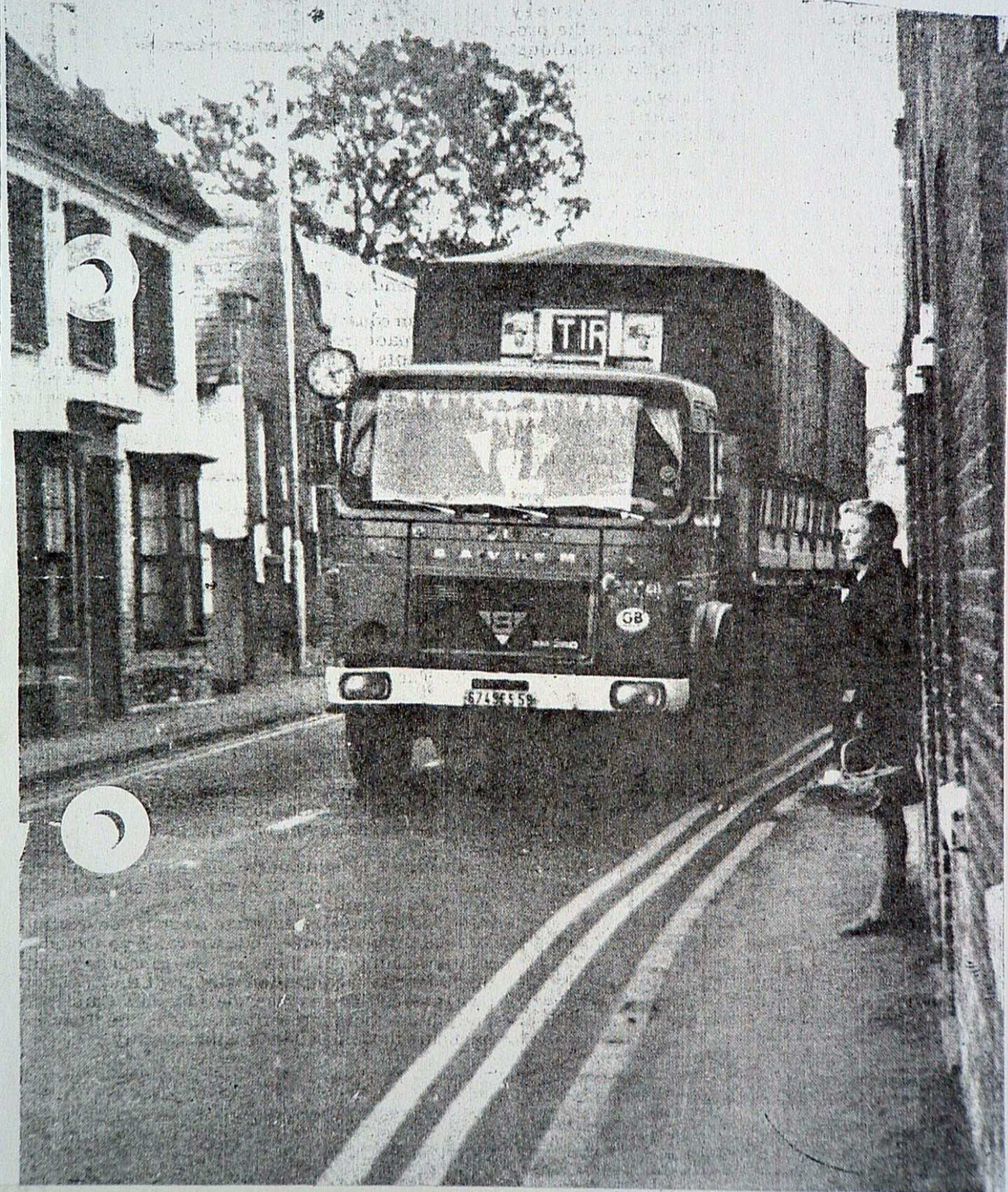


Esso



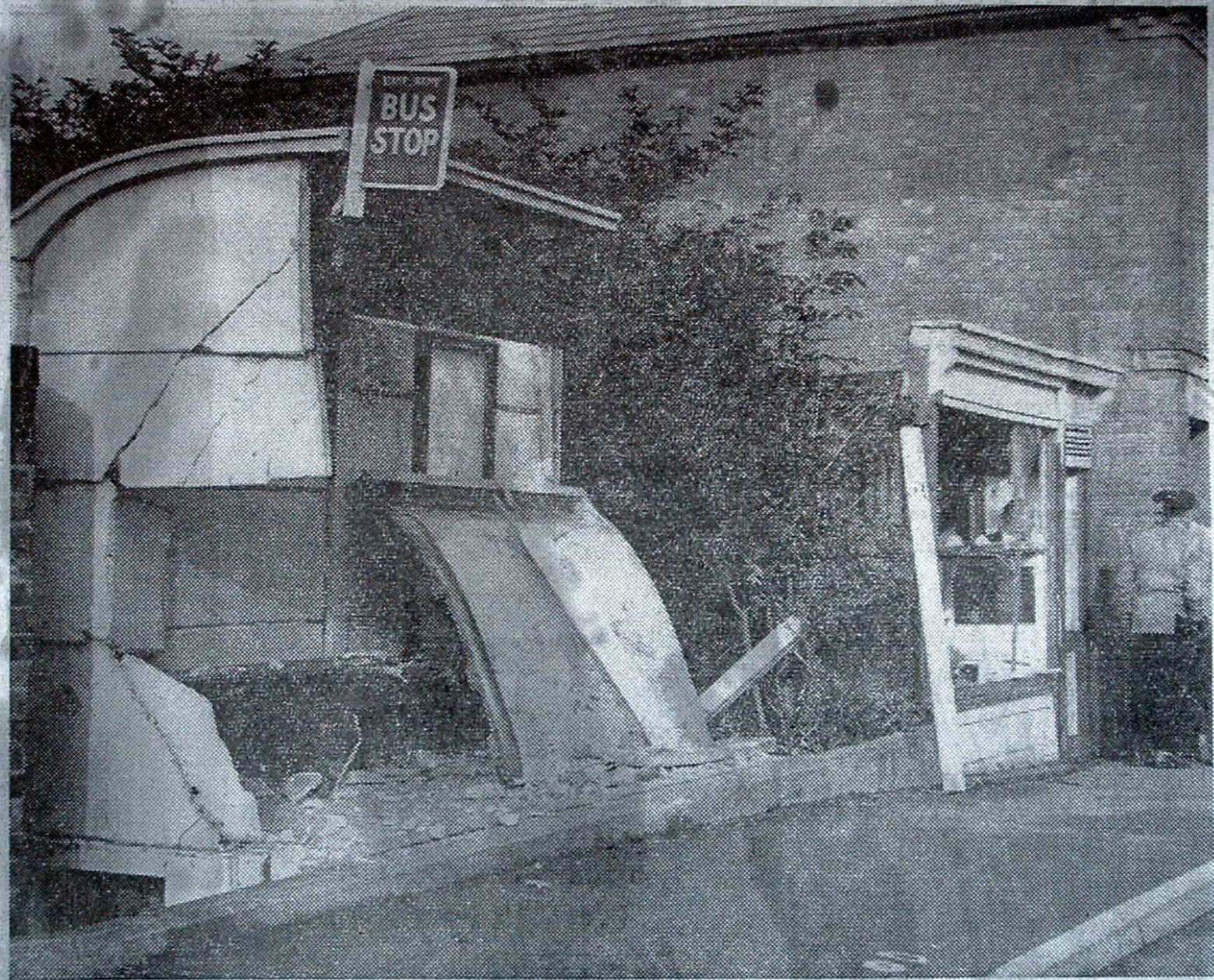


A WARY PEDESTRIAN stops and stands with her back against the wall to allow a heavily-laden foreign lorry to pass. There have been many accidents at this point in recent months. The road is at its narrowest here.









The wrecked bus shelter and damaged shop.









THE BATTLE FOR BRIDGE BYPASS



From this... c.1922



To this... 1972



To this... 21st century

The story of Bridge's 14-year-long struggle to save the village from the danger and noise of ever-increasing traffic, leading to a victorious celebration in July 1976

INTRODUCTION

The A2, the main route from Dover to London and based upon the road known as Watling Street, constructed by the Romans, had remained mostly unchanged for centuries. It meandered through towns and villages and throughout this time had served its purpose reasonably well.

However, with the advent of motorised vehicles and their mass production, things began to change.

After the Second World War, the number of vehicles on Britain's roads increased rapidly but little had been done to improve roads and the road system. The A2 still remained the main route from Dover to London and the towns and villages along it were suffering badly from the increased traffic, noise and pollution and the problems posed by the ever-larger lorries.

Bridge was no exception with its narrow High Street and narrow pavements, tapering to nothing in places, making it extremely dangerous for pedestrians and road-users alike. The long descent into the village from both Canterbury and Dover made it even more hazardous.



The High Street, 1872

THE 1950s

In the 1950s, Local Councillor, Alfred Ross, called for a bypass for Bridge but nothing came of it. In general, throughout the country, road building and improvements were failing to keep pace with the ever-growing traffic problems and Bridge suffered its share of traffic accidents.

THE 1960s

During the early 1960s, John Purchase, printer, who lived on the High Street, was becoming increasingly concerned by the amount of traffic passing through Bridge and anticipated that the situation would worsen once the M2, under construction at the time, was completed. He agreed with Cllr. Ross that a bypass was needed and he urged villagers to write to the Ministry of Transport to request this.

DECEMBER 1962

On the evening of 30th December, Thomas 'George' Smith, a resident of The Close in Union Road, home for the elderly and disabled, stepped into the main road in front of a van and was knocked down. He later died from his injuries.

1963

The accident prompted John Purchase to begin a letter campaign. He wrote to Councillors, County Planners and local papers. He was soon joined by Brian Lewis, who also lived on the High Street, after he saw one of the letters in the local paper.

A petition with 564 signatures was presented to the Minister of Transport.

– EASTER SATURDAY – RUNAWAY LORRY, BRIDGE HILL

A lorry loaded with six tons of earth careered out of control after its brakes failed at the top of Bridge Hill. It ran into the back of another lorry, pushing it into a bus. A private car then collided with the bus. Miraculously, no-one was injured. The road remained blocked for some time while the earth was cleared and the lorries towed away.

Villagers erected a banner: SLOW, PEOPLE LIVE HERE.



JANUARY 1964

Police set up a radar trap and caught five motorists speeding.

FEBRUARY 1964

"MP doing nothing" – the accusation levelled against Sir Leslie Thomas, local Conservative MP, by the Canterbury constituency Liberal candidate, Ted Moss, with regard to Bridge's traffic problems. Although the MP had apparently taken up this issue with the Minister of Transport, Mr. Marples, and he continued to press for an extension of the M2 to Dover.

MARCH 1964 – EASTER PROCESSION HIGHLIGHTS EIGHT VILLAGE FATALITIES

A purple-covered coffin was trundled slowly through Bridge High Street – a reminder to the Minister of Transport of the shocking statistic that since 1959 eight people had died and 49 had been injured in road accidents between Bridge Hill and Canterbury Hill.

About 150 villagers of all ages formed a procession through the village, holding up about 100 cars. The prospective Liberal and Labour Party candidates attended – but there was no sign of Conservative MP Sir Leslie Thomas.

APRIL 1964

Meeting in the Village Hall to discuss the traffic problem.

"A bloodbath before anything is done?" asked one villager.

The meeting was attended by about 40 villagers. On the platform – Liberal and Labour Parliamentary candidates, Cllr. Ross (representing Sir Leslie Thomas), John Purchase and J.D. Smith (local Road Safety Officer).

There was also an 'empty chair', placed there for the spokesman of the Ministry of Transport, who had declined an invitation to attend.

Cllr. Ross said that, according to the Police, since the completion of the M2, traffic from Brenley Corner had increased 47%. He suggested the Bridge bypass campaign link up with the other villages along the A2.

MAY 1964 – TRAFFIC CENSUS: 7,000 VEHICLES A DAY

7,074 vehicles passed through the village in 24 hours.



JULY 1964

Villagers march again. An effigy of Transport Minister, Ernest Marples, was displayed in bed with the caption: ASLEEP TO OUR NEEDS.

SEPTEMBER 1964

During electioneering Sir Leslie Thomas MP dismissed protesters' demands, saying "they need a sense of proportion". He also denounced the A2 Group as undemocratic and said a committee must be elected. It was.

AUGUST 1965

– LORRY'S BRAKES FAIL ON BRIDGE HILL

A lorry crashed into a line of cars, crushing one, smashing a second and shunting three more cars and a van into the rear of another heavy lorry. Six people were taken to the K&C Hospital, two were detained. One woman had to be lifted through the windscreen of her car.

The accident happened at lunchtime outside Lynton Cottage – hundreds of holidaymakers heading towards or from Dover were delayed in massive queues.

SEPTEMBER 1965 – AUGUST 1969

Incredibly, major accidents ceased. Disillusionment with the campaign began to set in. It took another awful accident to wake villagers from their apathy.

AUGUST 1969

– LORRY DRIVER KILLED AND FIVE OTHERS INJURED

The accident happened at the Bishopsbourne turning at the top of Bridge Hill. Two lorries and an East Kent bus were involved. Massive jams built



up as it was one of the busiest days on the A2 with holiday traffic mixed with cars heading for the cricket at Canterbury.

Diverted traffic soon choked up the narrow lanes around the area.

The accident prompted a renewal of the campaign.

"Village of Bridge is a nightmare" claimed Cllr. Alfred Ross, who threatened a sit-down on the A2 in protest "at the noise and great lorries roaring through the village street, practically non-stop – even if it results in arrests".

– *FOUR ARRESTED AT BRIDGE SIT-DOWN DEMO*

It was decided to halt the traffic on the A2 by having a sit-down in the middle of the road in Bridge at 3pm on Sunday 24th August.

Around 100 people sat down and a further 150 watched. 20 policemen were on duty.

After 10 minutes the police began to carry A2 demonstrators to the side of the road.

Four refused to move and were arrested.

Those gathered there then formed a procession and marched through the village before dispersing.

Many carried oak branches, a symbolic gesture of rebelliousness to remind people of the time they were carried by the Men of Kent – when resisting the rule of William the Conqueror.



23b. How sips water to take a pill for his heart trouble... and tells Police he cannot be moved for 10 minutes.

SEPTEMBER 1969

– *BYPASS PLANS ANNOUNCED*

Kent County Council revealed a £6.5 million improvement programme for the A2 from Brenley Corner to Dover with by-passes for Boughton, Dunkirk, Upper Harbledown, Harbledown, Bridge, Lydden and Temple Ewell. However, work was scheduled to start in 1971 and targeted for final completion in 1977.

The A2 Group branded this as 'unacceptable'. Brian Lewis said: "If traffic continues to increase at the rate it has over the past five years, we shall be in a terrible state." He continued: "This is the main road to and from the Continent. In Bridge it is only 18 feet wide in one place and these massive lorries either have to stop to pass each other or, more frequently, mount the pavements as they roar through."

THE 1970s

The campaign went quiet again until 1972, although minor accidents frequently occurred and the lorries got even larger.

MAY 1972

– *LORRY DRIVER KILLED, SHOPS AND HOUSES DAMAGED*

At around 3am on the morning of Friday 27th May, a 30-ton meat lorry, heading for Switzerland, ploughed into a row of shops and houses in Bridge High Street.

This was a terrible, tragic accident. The lorry driver from Dagenham, Essex, died instantly. The grocery shop and front room above, 15-year-old Angela Lewis's bedroom, were wrecked.



Angela was in bed at the time and awoke to find herself looking out into the High Street, her bedroom wall gone. Angela was injured but she was very lucky to escape with her life.



N.B. The Lewis family involved in this incident were no relation to Brian Lewis, bypass campaigner.

Again it was an accident that prompted further action.

After the crash Canterbury MP David Crouch described the road as the most dangerous in his constituency, if not in the country.

Canterbury City Council decided to send an all-party deputation to the Minister of Transport Industries, Mr. John Peyton, to seek acceleration of the building of the City's bypass.

Bridge-Blean Rural District Council (RDC) sent protest telegrams to Mr. Peyton and to David Crouch.

Cllr. Lawrence Shirley put forward a five-point plan for safety including an immediate ban on all heavy lorries, in particular Continental TIR lorries, and their re-routing on to the A20.

– **GRAFFITI IN BRIDGE DEMANDS ACTION**

Two feet high letters appeared on the boarded up shop in Bridge High Street, spelling out villagers' demands: **BYPASS NOW**.



– HUNDREDS STAGE ANOTHER SIT-DOWN

On 29th May, more than 400 people gathered for another sit-down protest outside the wrecked shop, creating long traffic jams on both sides of the village, lasting for nearly 50 minutes.

"Terror by day and terror by night" declared Cllr. Ross, referring to the lives of those villagers whose houses were next to the road.

He went on: "When we join the Common Market, I am told that the weight of these lorries will be increased." (Up to 40 tons.) He said that originally protesters were told the bypass would be completed by 1972. Since then the date had been put back to 1976.

The Police were generally sympathetic to the villagers and their demands but after 10 minutes warned the protesters that they were obstructing the highway and asked them to move. The demonstrators refused and shouted: "This is not a highway – it's a country lane!"

After a second warning, the Police began forcibly moving people to the roadside. The protesters then formed another procession through the village, led by John Purchase (pictured below), before dispersing.

JUNE 1972

A Brian Lewis letter is published in the Kentish Gazette drawing attention to the endeavours and actions of campaigners since 1961 and calling for a re-formation of the A2 Group and whatever militant action is necessary until the authorities take notice.

– INCREASED INTEREST SHOWN IN PARLIAMENT

David Crouch's demands for an extension of the M2 to Dover were turned down by the Department of the Environment (DoE) but Graham Page, Minister responsible for road development, told him the A2 between Brenley Corner and Dover would be improved to modern dual-carriageway standards by the mid-1970s.

Mr. Crouch was not satisfied. He claimed that it showed that the Department of the Environment continued to underestimate the problems of the A2: "Whether they are drivers of TIR lorries, tourists trailing caravans or local motorists, they all have to experience the frustration and danger of driving on an English country lane instead of a modern motorway."



– OVER 114 LORRIES – EVERY HOUR

A survey carried out between 9.30am and 5.30pm on 6th June revealed that 915 lorries had passed through Bridge in that time – an average of more than 114 per hour.

The A2 Group wrote to all the European Ambassadors, suggesting that their Commercial Attachés should contact the British authorities to urge early road improvements. The letter pointed out that, with Britain poised to join the Common Market and with the possibility of 40-ton lorries, the matter was of some consequence.

The letter proved effective in that the media in several European countries highlighted the dangers of their lorry drivers travelling on Kent's antiquated roads. Germany even sent a film crew to Bridge and several residents were interviewed, including Mrs. Berta Lewis, a fluent German speaker, who had lost her home and business in the recent accident.

– JUNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

The meeting was attended by Mr. Alan Bullett, Deputy County Surveyor, who produced a plan showing the provisional line of the new road, passing to the north of Bridge across Bifrons Park and Patribourne Road and rejoining the A2 beyond Highland Court. He said that there would have to be a Public Inquiry and he did not think work on the proposed bypass could begin before autumn 1974.

– AT WESTMINSTER

David Crouch tabled 11 questions for the Government: seven related directly to the A2 and the bypass delays, particularly for Bridge, considering the line of the bypass had been provisionally decided.

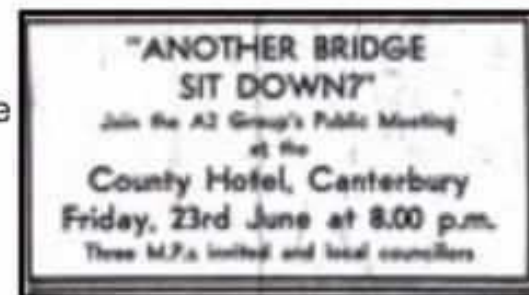
In response to his questions Mr. Crouch was told that work on the new road would be unlikely to start before 1974 due to a number of statutory procedures which needed following. Also the road would not be a motorway, just a dual-carriageway – considered adequate by the Government.

– IN BRIDGE: 'SLOGANS MUST GO'...

Bridge-Blean RDC issued an order proclaiming the slogans on the boarded-up shop and house constituted, in their view, "an unauthorised painted advertisement".

A near disaster occurred on 14th June when a lorry's brakes overheated coming down Bridge Hill and it slewed across the road near the bottom.

Campaigners demonstrated outside Bridge-Blean RDC. They arranged a meeting at the County Hotel, Canterbury, for 23rd June at 8pm.



23RD JUNE, 1972 – COUNTY HOTEL MEETING

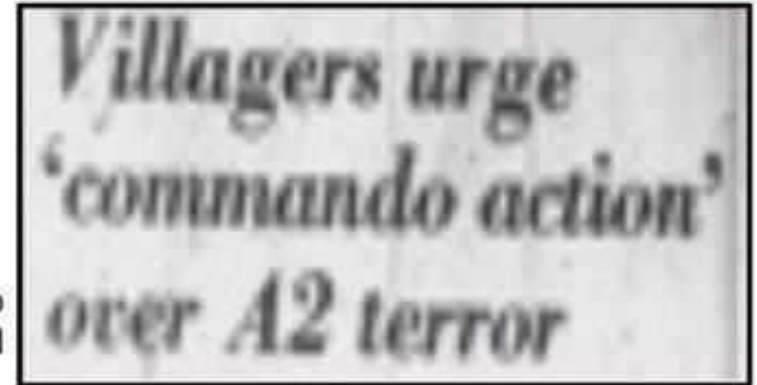
The meeting was attended by over 300 people. The villagers urged 'commando action' over the A2 terror.

A2 Group Chairman, John Purchase, suggested two courses of action:

1. The official channel – getting more facts through a census and then pushing every avenue of approach.
2. The unofficial channel – more sit-ins and marches including some at Dover's Eastern Docks and on the Minister of the Environment's doorstep.

He reported that Dover Harbour Board had recorded 2,052 freight lorries through the port in 1962, 83,277 in 1970, with a prediction of 230,000 a year by 1975.

A Kent County Council spokesman tried to reassure those present that they wanted to 'help' people living along the A2. "Help us into a coffin!" cried out one rather angry and unimpressed woman.



*Villagers urge
'commando action'
over A2 terror*

AUGUST 1972

On 5th August, 40 protesters marched through Dover to the harbour where the path of a large TIR lorry and trailer was blocked as a token demonstration against the heavy traffic on the A2. Prior to the march, a letter went to 11 foreign consuls warning of the inadequacy of the A2 road and the dangers to drivers using it.

John Purchase addressed the marchers, saying: "We have told the political people about this road – now we have to tell the commercial interests. You have got vehicles worth £12,000 each and drivers' lives are at stake."

– WAKE-UP CALL

Around this time a contingent from the A2 Group travelled to London and carried out the long-promised threat to take their demands to the Minister of Transport's doorstep. A bugler sounded 'Reveille' in a bid to "Wake up the Ministry to the problem of the A2."

SEPTEMBER 1972 – SECOND TRAFFIC CENSUS

16,494 vehicles used the road – one every 50 seconds. The road was 2.5 times overloaded. Further agitation ensued, resulting in plans for another sit-down protest.



OCTOBER 1972 – FURTHER CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE

On 21st October, over 500 banner-waving demonstrators blocked the A2 at Bridge. More than 100, calling for immediate safety measures to protect the people living along the A2, sat down outside Rogers' Garage. Locals and others bussed in from villages between Brenley Corner and Dover were joined by members of the Transport & General Workers' Union and the Trades Council. By now the media were using Bridge as a typical example of a traffic-battered village.

The Police warned John Purchase and Brian Lewis that they may face prosecution for causing an obstruction. Chief Superintendent Johnson, in charge of the 50 police officers present, then warned the crowd they would all be arrested if they continued to block the road after his second warning.

Five minutes later the the sit-down was called off and the demonstrators marched through the village to a rally in the car park of Bridge Place Country Club.

David Crouch MP had not been prepared to take part in the demo because it was an "illegal act" but was happy to speak at the rally and turn a blind eye to the "law-breaking" because he was "sick and tired of the slowness of the Ministry to deal with the problems of this road".

A resolution deploring the apathy of the DoE in its attitude to the safety of people using and living by the A2 was put to the rally and passed unanimously. A bowler-hatted 'Effigy of Officialdom' was set on fire by John Purchase at the end of the meeting.



NOVEMBER 1972 – AT LAST! THE BRIDGE BYPASS ROUTE IS FIXED

After 10 years of agitation, tragedies, petitions, sit-down demos and marches, the villagers of Bridge were relieved to witness the official publication of the proposed route for the village bypass.

DECEMBER 1972

A public meeting was held to allow the public, farmers and landowners to put forward their views on the proposed road.

JANUARY 1973

Bridge residents were divided over the siting of the bypass – should it run north or south of the village?

Concerns about the size and number of lorries that continued to pass through Bridge to and from Dover were not eased as Britain officially joined the Common Market.



FEBRUARY 1973

Sadly, Cllr. Ross died and was thus deprived of seeing his ambition of a bypass for Bridge come to fruition.

– PUBLIC INQUIRY NEEDED

The Secretary of State for the Environment ordered Public Inquiries into the Harbledown and Bridge bypass schemes.

The one for Bridge was scheduled for May. It was ordered because of the strong feeling about its proposed route from residents in Conyngham Lane and Bridge Down, those who would be most affected by the northern option.

MARCH 1973

A 40mph speed limit was placed on Bridge's two hills.

Bridge was declared the winner by 'Motoring Which?' – for having the highest level of traffic noise in the country!

APRIL 1973

A Pelican Crossing was installed in the High Street (by the White Horse public house).

MAY 1973

The Inquiry into the £1m scheme to bypass Bridge was held at Bridge Place Country Club by Mr. Frank Adams, an Environment Department Inspector, who would then report back to the Secretary of State.

Nearly 30 people spoke at the Inquiry, which lasted two days. Brian Lewis and John Purchase took along pieces of metal and debris, which had fallen from heavy lorries passing through the High Street, to show the Inspector.

A warning was issued that a change of the proposed route running to the north of the village in favour of one to the south would result in a further delay of at least two years.

**Route switch
delay warning
for by-pass
Bridge villagers
put their views**



JUNE 1973 – ACCIDENT KILLS THREE SOLDIERS ON A2

A dreadful crash occurred at Watersend Bridge on the A2 near Temple Ewell when a Belgian juggernaut overturned onto a car in which four soldiers were travelling. Three were killed outright, the fourth was taken to the K&C Hospital for treatment.

Although not in Bridge, the incident was significant because the crash prompted renewed demands for an extension of the M2 to Dover. David Crouch MP called for the A2 to be brought up to modern European motorway standards.

JULY 1973

– BRIDGE BYPASS SCHEME REPRIEVED

Government spending cutbacks on road improvement schemes were announced in order to save £54 million, but the A2 bypasses between Brenley Corner and Dover were given the green light.

– AT WESTMINSTER

David Crouch and other Kent MPs forced an adjournment debate in the House of Commons to push for the A2 improvements to be speeded up.

David Crouch said: "It is an outrage to have monster vehicles pounding through these villages night and day."

In response, Mr. Keith Speed, Under Secretary of State for the Environment said: "...It is invidious to suggest that any one area is substantially worse than another but, if I have to single out one piece for extra special treatment, I mention the village of **Bridge** which I believe is well known to the entire House."

Afterwards, John Purchase and Brian Lewis met with Mr. Speed in the Members' Bar. They later believed more was achieved in that bar than ever before.

– TELEGRAM FOR MINISTER

"No houses left standing in Bridge by the time the village bypass is completed in 1976" said angry villagers, after witnessing another crash involving a Dutch TIR lorry carrying tons of a highly inflammable chemical. It ploughed into a line of cars in the narrow High Street after a brakes' failure coming down Bridge Hill.



A telegram was sent to the Minister of Transport Industries, Mr. Peyton. It read: "Yet another serious accident occurred in Bridge this morning. We are having a smashing time. Wish you were here."

On 19th July yet another lorry crashed – the third one of the day – after its brakes failed on Bridge Hill.

AUGUST 1973

– DECISION ON A2 BYPASS ROUTE

The DoE announced that, following the Public Inquiry, it had decided to choose the route on the northern side of the village; also that yellow bar markings would be put in place on Bridge Hill over a length of 400 yards, at diminishing intervals, which would give drivers the sensation of increasing speed.

Cllr. Lawrence Shirley commented: "This is absolutely marvellous. Now all I hope is that they put the contract out to tender quickly and get on with the work as soon as possible."

– THIRD TRAFFIC CENSUS

20,836 vehicles passed through Bridge in 24 hours, a 16% increase over the previous year.



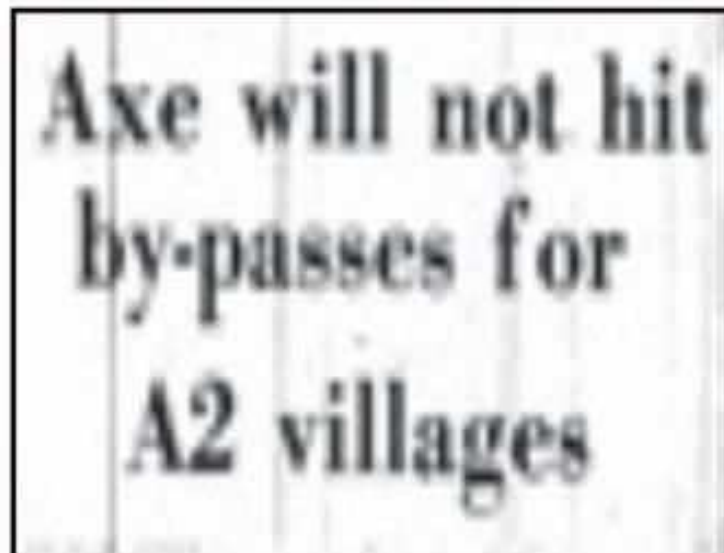
NOVEMBER 1973

– MORE YELLOW BARS, PLEASE

Accidents ceased to happen following the installation of yellow bars on Bridge Hill. The A2 Group requested another set on Town Hill to slow traffic entering Bridge from the Canterbury direction.

DECEMBER 1973

Another round of public spending cuts posed a threat to the building of the Bridge bypass. The A2 Group advised that there would be further public exhibitions of anger if there were to be any more delays.



JANUARY 1974

Bridge residents breathed a sigh of relief when they learned that the bypass was to go ahead as planned.

AUGUST 1974

Work began on the bypass. John Purchase and Brian Lewis kept a close watch on its progress.

During the construction, August 1974 – June 1976, members of the Canterbury Archaeological Society unearthed a number of finds, including several Saxon graves and an Iron Age settlement.

For the first time since the Romans built a road from Dover to Canterbury, the village of Bridge would be bypassed.

SUMMER 1976

With the bypass nearing completion, the villagers decided to hold a massive celebration and a Bridge Bonanza committee was elected to organise events.

John Purchase and Brian Lewis (pictured below) expressed their elation that the battle was finally over.

The new road had taken 22 months to build and was finished two months ahead of schedule. The Transport Minister, Dr. John Gilbert, who came to declare the road officially open and travelled from London to Bridge along the old A2, arrived around 20 minutes late!

In his speech he admitted that he had not realised the country still had roads like it. He also reported that there had been 34 accidents in or near Bridge in the last three years alone – “a terrible and sobering thought”.

29TH JUNE, 1976

– OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE BRIDGE BYPASS AT 3PM

Dr. Gilbert snipped the tape and officially opened the new road before an audience of villagers, Councillors, contractors and leading campaigners John Purchase, Brian Lewis (pictured right) and David Crouch MP. The VIPs then drove off along the new road.

To mark the opening, Bridge Primary school children were given the day off.



3RD JULY, 1976 – BRIDGE BONANZA

This was the day the residents of Bridge had been waiting for, the day they could let their hair down and really go to town (so to speak).

They awoke to a lovely, sunny morning, eager not only to celebrate the opening of the new bypass but also to savour the prospect of the peace and tranquillity that normally comes with living in an English country village, a pleasure they had been denied for so long.

A number of events had been organised for the afternoon and the High Street between the White Horse and the Plough & Harrow public houses was to be closed to traffic from 2.15pm – 5pm.

Hundreds of villagers gathered along the High Street, decorated with bunting, ready for the procession from Conyngham Lane to the bridge in the High Street where the formalities were to take place. Morris Men and members of Ramsgate Folk Dance Club provided entertainment by dancing in the street.

At 2.15pm the church bells rang out and the procession moved off towards the bridge for the official launching of the Bridge Bonanza, headed by David Crouch MP, John Purchase and Brian Lewis in a pony and trap, followed by another carrying local dignitaries.

A cavalcade of vintage cars and a brand new Rover 3500, supplied by Barretts, the only modern vehicle allowed in the parade, came next. Then the Band of the 5th Battalion, the Queen's Regiment, the majorettes and, finally, those in fancy dress.

The marching display, the majorettes and the maypole dancing were all greatly enjoyed. The pram race proved hilarious and the entrants in both the adult and children's fancy dress competitions were much admired and praised for their efforts.



Besides the organised events, there was an exhibition of 'Bridge Through the Ages' in the Village Hall, a display by a village blacksmith, a potter at his wheel, an antiques' market and the opportunity to buy locally made jewellery and a selection of bypass commemorative mugs.

Collages, made by the school children, decorated the High Street. A tombola, side-shows, arts and crafts and refreshment stalls added to the enjoyment and the Plough & Harrow pub stayed open all afternoon.

In the evening, there was a barbecue and dance. It was a great and memorable day and a grand time was had by all.

The next day a special interdenominational service of thanksgiving for the new road was held in St. Peter's Church, addressed by the Bishop of Dover.

In Dr. Gilbert's words when he opened the bypass, Bridge could now "return to the peace and calm which it deserves – and used to enjoy".



A future landlady of the Plough, Siobhan Hamilton (née Mullan), dressed as a May Garland flower girl

Footnote: They thought it was all over...

Just three weeks after the opening of the bypass, two houses were damaged when two cars collided in the High Street.



With grateful thanks to:

- Peter Eigar
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- Kevin Mullan
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- Cathedral Archives
- Kentish Gazette

NOTE: All images are either scanned copies of the original newsprint pictures that had appeared in the Kentish Gazette or were kindly donated for reproduction by past or present Bridge residents. We thank both for their permission to use them for this local history project. [Version updated April 2018. Artwork file is held by the Mullan family.]

Poster produced 29.9.1962



M.O.T. REF. HGP-14-42-068

BRIDGE BY-PASS CAMPAIGN

'Rosebank', High Street,
Bridge, Canterbury, Kent. *Bridge 485*

BRIDGE BY PASS COULD SAVE YOUR LIFE !

Please support the movement by writing your comments to:

Mr. G. DAVIS, THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT,

St. Christopher House, Southwark St., London, S.E.1.

PLEASE FOLLOW UP THE KENT
POLICE FIRST RADAR SPEED CHECK.

■ Nearly 30 motorists were caught at 30 m.p.h. plus last Tuesday.

WRITE TO MR. DAVIS TODAY !



MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT
St. Christopher House, Southwark Street, LONDON S.E.1
Telegrams: *Transminry London Telex*
Telephone: *WATERloo 7999, ext.*

Our reference:
Your reference:

29 November, 1962.

Dear Mr. Purchase,

Mr. Davis who is a senior member in my branch has shown me your personal letter to him of 17th November. I wonder if I might try to clear up the doubts you seem to have about where responsibility lies for dealing with Bridge's road affairs?

As I am sure you will have appreciated it is the Minister who has been given certain powers and responsibilities for roads. In turn, the Minister answers to Parliament. It is the duty of officials to advise the Minister as he may require, and that advice must be put together with many considerations in mind, and it must often include the specialist advice of engineers and others.

It was therefore quite inaccurate for you to have described Mr. Davis as "the official in charge of Bridge's traffic difficulties", or to have led people to believe that he was the person to be persuaded to build a by-pass. He was, in fact the official who on some occasions was deputed to reply to your letters. On other occasions, others had that responsibility.

Should you wish to write to the Ministry further the correct way to address your correspondence would be to "The Secretary, Ministry of Transport", and to quote the reference HGP 14/42/068. The matter can then be dealt with appropriately.

I hope that you will accept this as an effort to clear up any misunderstandings that may have arisen. I would not of course, wish to imply that you intend writing further to the Ministry in the pursuance of your views especially as the Minister has only recently written fully to Mr. Thomas on the subject. It would be quite out of order for me to seek to influence you in any way in this regard.

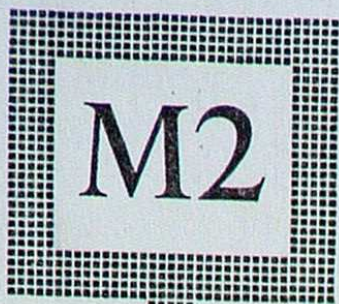
But if you should write to the Ministry I would like to explain that after your letter has been fully considered the final reply will be signed by the appropriate official who might or might not on that particular occasion be Mr. Davis.

Yours sincerely,

R. A. PEARSON

John Purchase Esq.,
"Rosebank",
High St.,
Bridge,
Canterbury,
Kent.

One civil servant was upset



The letters 'M2' are the Ministry of Transport's designation for the new Medway Towns by-pass Motorway, opening next year.

You have experienced already the heavy traffic through this village, but M2 will mean a ceaseless flood. With possible Common Market links, the Dover Road will assume a national importance. Vehicles will roar past day and night.

The Ministry refuse to see any danger. They have said so repeatedly, in writing.

Our children and elderly folk must be protected from a 'Race-track High Street' !

DON'T YOU AGREE ?

Please become a supporter for

BRIDGE BY-PASS

DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE

Support the movement to reduce the traffic menace in Bridge by writing your comments to: MR. G. DAVIS, THE MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT, at St. Christopher House, Southwark St., London, S.E.1. - Ref. HGP/14/42/068.

He is the Official in charge of Bridge's traffic difficulties.

PLEASE MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!

PUBLISHED BY JOHN PURCHASE, HIGH ST., BRIDGE, KENT

Issued to all Bridge residents. 29.7.62.

Bridge By-Pass

THE volume of week-day traffic using a by-pass seldom exceeds and is usually less than the volume which continues to use the old road because of the large proportion of traffic which is local. In most cases where a by-pass is contemplated or has been provided the existing road may need improving as and when opportunity occurs to provide adequately for local traffic. When schemes for the improvement of existing routes in built-up areas are under consideration it should be borne in mind that a narrow section of road in such an area often results in drivers reducing speed and using more care, thereby reducing the risk of accident.

This extract from the County Road Plan ("Planning Basis for Kent") should be of some interest to those who are asking for a Bridge By-pass.

They might also like to consider the following, from the report, "From Canterbury to Dover

the traffic is comparatively small and it is considered that a single carriageway 30 feet in width will suffice for that section."

The plan was published in 1948 but, under "Future Development of Traffic" stated: "This report has been prepared on the assumption that sooner or later restrictions will cease and pre-war increase to saturation point will continue."

Kenil Gazette. 27.7.62

IN STARTED 1962



T BREAD

WHITE BREAD
WHITE HOAST

Hotel
Luncheons
Dinners

BRIDGE BY-PASS
FOR OUR SAFETY
AND YOURS

HELP SAVE LIVES
BY SUPPORTING
BY-PASS
CAMPAIGN

SLOW

BOWZELL
FEBRUARY 1957



STREETS

KENTISH CHRONICLE 29.8.1969

Police called to carry away A2 demonstrators

Four arrested at Bridge

HEAVY traffic on the A2 has been disrupted twice this week — as villagers at Bridge and Boughton sat down in the road as a protest to the Ministry of Transport over traffic conditions on what they have tagged a "death trap."

AT BRIDGE on Sunday, traffic was diverted through narrow country lanes and four people were arrested as Police broke up the sit-down in the High Street.

AT BOUGHTON on Wednesday — Canterbury's market day — about 100 people sat down in the narrow main street. Police, who had been warned what to expect, diverted traffic from Brenley Corner along the Thanet Way to Whitstable and back to rejoin the A2 at Canterbury.

Both demonstrations were organized by the A2 Group — and more have been threatened unless the Minister of Transport speeds improvements to the road.

Central figure at both demonstrations was Cllr. Alfred Ross, of Barham, a 66-year-old farmer and member of Kent County Council, who has been campaigning for improvements to the road for years.

He told the Boughton meeting: "Stick together — we will keep on until we get things put right."

And Mr. Gabriel Barlow, one of the organisers of the Boughton protest, announced that he had just heard from Mr. Terry Easton, Faversham's M.P., that he would raise the question of the A2 in the House of Commons.

Mr. Barlow also said that he had asked the Ministry of Transport to provide a pedestrian crossing in the village and had been told that the Ministry considered there was no need for one.

"It is only by staging a protest that we can get anything done," he said.

Thunder through

Villagers, who say they fear for their lives as huge Continental lorries thunder through Boughton, carried banners calling for action.

One carried by a little girl, Theresa Stevens, said: "I was a road victim — thank God I'm still alive."

Another summed up most of the villagers' feelings. It said: "There are two classes in the village — the quick and the dead!"

At both protests were placards which said: "The Ministry has the problem — so do we."

After the villagers had been sitting down for 15 minutes, 30 policemen led by Chief Supt. Henry Hougham, of Sittingbourne, arrived and began carrying demonstrators to the pavements.

One policeman's helmet was knocked off but there were no serious incidents and no arrests were made.

At Bridge, however, four people were arrested as Police tried to clear the road but later Mr. Brian Lewis, secretary of the A2 Group, said none of their members was arrested.

"I understand they were outsiders, from Canterbury and Dover, who decided to join in," he said.

Cllr. Ross had told the Bridge meeting that heavy lorries, from as far away as Persin, were causing roads and bridges to break up and collapse but were not paying a penny towards the maintenance costs.

Demonstrators cheered his resolution demanding that the Ministry make the road safe for local people to use.

Cllr. Ross led the sit-down and, when Police appealed to the demonstrators to move on, Cllr. Ross swallowed a pill which he said he had to take for his heart condition. "I must not be disturbed for 10 minutes," he announced.

But he was gently carried to the pavement by two policemen. "I've been protesting constitutionally for six years and have got nowhere," he said. "Now I have lost my patience and they can arrest me if they like."

Twenty policemen were used to clear the road at Bridge. Chief Supt. Albert Hopkins said: "We were prepared to allow them a 10-minute token protest and we only took action when they refused to move after that."

Banners waved

Police reinforcements were called in as demonstrators stayed in Bridge High Street, waving their banners at cars and coaches that inched through the crowd.

But the 100 people who had sat down, and the 150 who had watched, formed up for a protest march through the village and then dispersed without further incident.

Many carried oak branches which were carried by the men of Kent who challenged William the Conqueror.

Said Cllr. Ross: "We carry them now as a traditional Kentish sign of defiance and to show that we will not be impressed by overpaid Civil servants at the Ministry of Transport," he said.

While the demonstration was taking place at Boughton, Bridge-Blean Rural District Council was considering a motion by Councillor Ross: That this Council urges the Ministry of Transport to make the A2 road safe for vehicles and pedestrians.

Safe to walk

Cllr. E. Mummery, from Adisham, read a statement from Cllr. Ross, which said: "Sixty years ago it was safe to walk up this High Street of Bridge in Kent; now it is not."

"A by-pass has been promised for the last 20 years; it is desperately needed if accidents are to be reduced and apart from this parish the whole of the A2 needs to be made safe."

The Ministry of Transport, said the statement, had got no farther than giving the scheme a reference number and "may-be that is all we can expect."

Proposed by Cllr. Mummery, the motion was seconded by Cllr. J. Shirley, from Bridge.

The motion is to be referred to the Council's Building and Planning Committee.

KENT HERALD

Established 1792
THE KENTISH CHRONICLE
WEDNESDAY
Registered at the General Post Office

VILLAGE PLAN BLOCKS

MORE demonstrations like the sit-down Sunday — when 100 people completely blocked the road — are being threatened unless the Minister of Transport agrees to take action to improve the "death trap" road.

Police are already preparing for big trouble today (Wednesday) when another sit-down is due to be held at Boughton, where demonstrators aim to bring the A2 traffic to a standstill.

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Mr. Brian Lewis, one of the organisers of the protest, said later: "Those who were arrested were not members of the A2 Group. I understand they were outsiders — from Canterbury and Dover — who decided to join in."

And he promised further action by the Group until the Ministry begins to tackle the A2 problem. "There will be more demonstrations," he warned. "We do not intend to rest now."

Sunday's protest got off with a bang — as two cars collided at the junction of Patricbourne Lane and the A2 just before the protest was due to start.

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No. 12,836

THE KENTISH CHRONICLE and EAST KENT INDEPENDENT

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 27, 1969

Registered at the General Post Office as a newspaper, Inland Postage 4d.

THREEPENCE

VILLAGERS PLAN MORE A2 BLOCKAGES

MORE demonstrations like the sit-down protest at Bridge on Sunday—when 100 people completely blocked the A2—are now being threatened unless the Minister of Transport takes rapid action to improve the "death trap" road.

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"For six years I have been protesting constitutionally and I have got nowhere. Now I have lost patience and they can arrest me if they like," he said, as he sat down in the centre of the road.

About 100 men, women and children joined him on tarpaulins spread across the road, and another 150 stood watching.

Using a loudspeaker, Cllr. Ross said, "We are sitting on the old Roman bridge that gave

Cllr. Ross said that he was expecting the Rector of Barham to arrive to hold a short service and asked those sitting down to stay where they were.

But then Insp. Charles Baldwin, with a loud hailer, announced: "You have been sitting down for 10 minutes. The Police now request you to clear the road or it will be necessary to take some action."

Nobody moved except a group of 20 policemen and police-women, who were greeted with jeers and cries of "Here come the B-Specials."

Cllr. Ross announced: "I have to take a pill because of my heart condition. I am taking the pill now and I must not be disturbed for 10 minutes."

COUNTRY LANES

Police had been operating traffic diversions through country lanes while they allowed a 10-minute protest but as cars began to inch their way into the village, the Police began carrying demonstrators off the road.

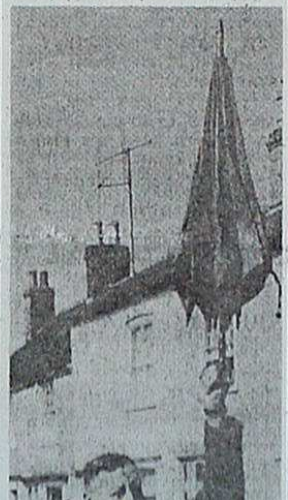
Chief Supt. Albert Hopkins, in charge of the Canterbury Division, said: "We were prepared to allow them a 10-minute sit-down and only took action when they refused to move after that."

As the banner-waving crowd milled around the High Street, an ambulance arrived with blue light flashing to offer assistance to Cllr. Ross. Cllr. Ross said he knew nothing about an ambulance and refused to get inside—and it drove away.

Demonstrators claimed the ambulance had been called by the Police as an easy way of removing Cllr. Ross but Chief Supt. Hopkins denied this.

Many of the placards carried by demonstrators said: "Ministry sits on the problem—so do we," and the majority of people taking part carried oak twigs.

KENTISH SIGN



through the village dispersed without incident. Carried oak branches were carried by the men who challenged William Ross. "We carry them as a traditional sign of defiance and that we will not be overruled by the Ministry of Transport," he said.

The demonstration was held at Boughton, an Rural District Council area. Councillor Ross said the Council urges the Ministry of Transport to make the road safe for vehicles.

Mummary, from the parish of Boughton, read a statement from the Council which said: "Sixty years ago it was safe to walk along High Street of Boughton. Now it is not. A car has been promised for the last 20 years; it is needed if accidents are reduced and a parish of the whole of Kent is to be made safe." The Ministry of Transport, in a statement, had got no answer giving the scheme a number and "may all we can expect." It was said by Cllr. Mummary, who was seconded by Cllr. Birley, from Bridge.

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KENTISH SIGN

Cllr. Ross said these were carried by men of Kent who challenged William the Conqueror. "We carry them today as a traditional Kentish sign of defiance and to show that we will not be oppressed by over-paid civil servants at the Ministry of Transport," he said.

Police reinforcements were called for but, before they arrived, the demonstrators formed up for a protest march through the village—and then dispersed without further trouble.

Cllr. Ross, who says he intends to take part in the protest at Boughton today, said afterwards: "I am well satisfied with the support we received today and I think we made our point."

"I'm sorry that some people were arrested. I told the Police that if anyone was to be arrested, I should be first."

Pile-up at Bridge

Two people were injured on Monday when a van, a car and a micro-bus were in a pile-up in Bridge High Street only yards from the scene of Sunday's sit-down protest over traffic conditions.

They were Mr. Peter Champion (23), of 179 Old Dover Road, Canterbury, the driver of the car, and his passenger, Mr. Peter Herrington (22), of 24 St. Stephen's Court, Canterbury, who were both treated in Kent and Canterbury Hospital for bruises. Neither was detained.

The van driver, Mr. Dennis G. Barnes (35), of 10 Allison Crescent, Whitfield, near Dover, and the driver of the micro-bus, Mr. Hans Nevendoff (22), of Berlin, escaped uninjured, although all three vehicles were damaged.



The call to action! Cllr. Ross raises his grandfather's umbrella to signal the start of the sit-down.

its name to the village. It has been here for 800 years and has been renewed but never widened.

"Now we have great juggernaut lorries coming from as far away as Persia with goods for this country. They use this same bridge—and that makes you think."

"The lorries pay absolutely nothing towards the maintenance of our roads. The roads are collapsing and the bridges are giving way."

"It is you and I who are paying for repair work to be done while the lorries come through without spending a penny. The money we spend could be used to buy new roads."

The demonstrators cheered a resolution put by Cllr. Ross, which said: "We men and maids of Kent demand that the Ministry of Transport shall make the road safe for us and our children to travel on by car and on foot."





BY PASS NOW!

WE CAN
AC-
IMPROVE THE
AL







High Street, Bridge

Bridge High Street. A pensioner died here in 1962.

In 1972, TIRs were passing along the A2, one every fifty seconds.

1972: a meat truck smashes a High Street store. The driver dies.

The village of Bridge in the tranquil Twenties — one car on the High Street.

First protestor John Purchase in the hands of the law in a 1972 sit-down. Placard demos followed.

Summer of '76: villagers wave goodbye to the last juggernaut.

Protestor Brian Lewis: a victor's smile.

June 1978: villagers celebrate the opening of the by-pass.

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THE VILLAGE THAT BENT THE A2

The Romans increased, summer,

started it all. They put Bridge, a settlement in Kent, on a road from London to Dover. As trade with the Continent the juggernauts came along the A2, slicing the village in half, bringing death, destruction and pollution. This after 14 years of protests, a by-pass was opened. *Michael Hill* tells how the villagers sustained their campaign.

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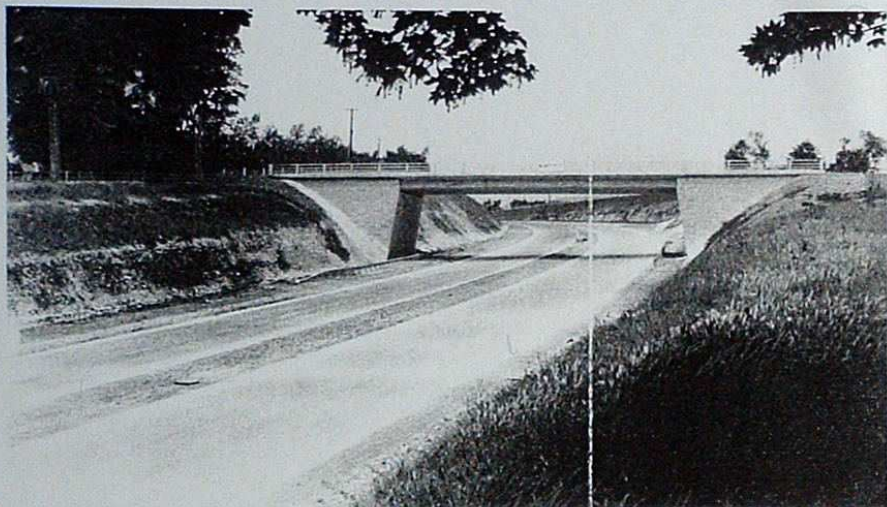
HOW THE BATTLE WAS WON

says Lewis, "of a 14-year Tweedle- dum and Tweedledee act." Certainly

know now we could have done it in half the time," claims Lewis. "We

the needs of Bridge", direct action is only effective if it can be used to apply pressure where it can gain

BRIDGE Village A2 By-Pass



MEARS commenced this two-year Contract in August, 1974. Now, in spite of the setbacks brought about by the first wet winter, they have completed the 3.6km. by-pass PLUS a 2.0km. extension at the eastern end (total value exceeding £3M), two months ahead of the original Contract completion date.

This has involved the excavation of about 1,000,000 cubic metres of earth, the construction of five major bridges, and other ancillary structures.

25,000 tonnes of road construction materials have been imported to form the twin lane, dual carriageway to carry the heavy Continental traffic around the village of BRIDGE.

In order to limit the amount of disruption to village life during the Contract, no construction traffic has used the lanes connecting these surrounding villages.

The completed work has been designed to blend into the surrounding countryside. This is particularly noticeable in the Bifrons Park

area where surplus excavated material has been used to disguise the embankment on which the road has been built. In the area adjacent to the Highland Court Hospital the road is built in a cutting and traffic will pass virtually unnoticed.

One of the features which has enabled the increased volume of work to be completed at this early date has been the spirit of co-operation between K.C.C. and MEARS' site staff producing an atmosphere of real teamwork.

The contract was for the Kent C.C. (County Surveyor Mr. Allen Smith), acting as Agents for the D.O.E.

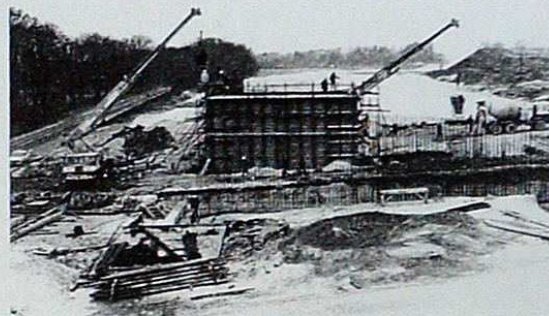
With the opening of BRIDGE BY-PASS, MEARS have, during the last three years, provided 17km. of dual carriageway between the eastern end of the M2 and the Channel ports, a major contribution to the trunk road system in Kent, and relief for the villages previously choked with Continental traffic.

Bekesbourne Road Bridge crossing the new Bridge By-Pass.



An Agricultural Subway at Bifrons Park.

The Kent C.C. and Mears' Men of the Moment



The winter promise of things to come at Coldharbour Lane Bridge.

Looking towards Dover from Bekesbourne Bridge.



At 4.30pm on June 29, 1976, Mrs Angela Bartlett led her Shetland pony Dandy down the steep hill, past the church and into the village high street of Bridge in Kent. It was a symbolic gesture – two hours previously it would have been suicidal. To understand why, one only had to read the hand-written placard tied to the pony's tail: 'Farewell TIRs' it said.

But then it was a day for symbolic gestures for the 1500 residents of Bridge. After 14 years of campaigning they had finally got rid of the big

trucks which had brought death, destruction and disruption in increasing doses over the past 20 years. Now Bridge has its by-pass to take the main A2 – London to Dover – international long-haul traffic away from the houses, shops and the narrow High Street. It had never been designed to cope with the strain of carrying a heavy TIR, let alone the two-a-minute average, day and night, which increasing trade with Europe had brought.

For Angela Bartlett the by-pass meant that the village was now safe for her seven-year-old daughter to ride through, just as she had done at

the same age. For 65-year-old Harry Hawkins it meant that the village would once again bear some resemblance to the sepia postcard in his photo album showing his newsagent's shop and just one 1920s car in an otherwise deserted main street.

For Mrs Freshman it meant that she could once again trundle her splendidly vintage electric bathchair down Bridge Hill to visit some friends. "Even after the war I used to come down in a pony and cart but it's years since I've been down to Bridge on my own – this thing would have been squashed in no time."

It was the death of a 66-year-old

local pensioner, George Smith, in January 1962 that started the Bridge By-Pass Campaign. Smith, a patient from the local geriatric hospital, had walked to the village to buy sweets and cigarettes for the bedridden old folk. Just as he stepped out of Hawkins's shop he was knocked down by a van and killed. Such things happen. But it highlighted the increasing traffic danger for all residents who were not so nimble on their pins.

Geographically Bridge was an inevitable disaster area. When the Romans constructed Watling Street as the principal link between London and their main supply port of Dover they laid it out in a straight line. Three miles south of Canterbury the road drops down into a valley to cross the Nail Bourne before climbing again to Barham Downs. The bridge at the river crossing gave its name to the small community which over the years straddled the trackway through the valley bed, one of those comforting blends of mediaeval, Georgian and Victorian houses and cottages which managed to avoid being overtaken by bungalowmania. Bridge prospered: before the last war 34 small businesses thrived there. Of all the surrounding villages, Bridge was easy to get to and avoided the extra trek into Canterbury.

There isn't a main road in the country that hasn't seen an increase in traffic flow over the past 20 years. Bridge's problem wasn't so much the volume of traffic but the weight. Increased trade with the Common Market and new ferry and harbour facilities in the Kent ports had brought a sharp increase in heavy lorries to the A2 route and its towns and villages. During the late Sixties, TIR traffic through the Channel ports was growing at the rate of almost 40 per cent. a year until in 1975 282,000 TIRs passed through Dover and Folkestone, 90 per cent. of which were using the A2/M2 link to London.

Bridge's problems were three-fold. Traffic entering the village from either direction had to descend a steep hill with a heavier than normal risk of brake failure or loss of control. Any truck driver who knew the road would also know that he'd have a steep climb out of the village and would want to sustain momentum. Furthermore, right in the centre of the village the road narrowed to a maximum of 17ft. 6in. —>



First protestor John Purchase

THE VI

78

insufficient for two TIRs to pass without mounting the pavement.

The villagers have always been a little sensitive about their problems. Harry Hawkins remembers complaints about the traffic and horses in Edwardian times. In the Twenties the villagers had to contend with an eccentric local, Zborowski, and his succession of monster 'Chitty Chitty Bang' cars which frightened their children. The idea of a by-pass was first mooted in the late Fifties by councillor Alfred Ross, but it was Smith's death to produce concrete action.

John Purchase's house stands on the A2, across the road from the site of the Smith accident. He was naturally worried: "At the time I had young children and it brought home to me the dangers of the traffic, both young and old – we have the highest proportions of Old Kent." Purchase wrote letters, wrote to councillors, county councillors, local papers. He wrote as a concerned resident, asking what could be done. Brian Lewis says that the letters in the local paper made contact with Purchase and his help. "It was the begin-

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HOW THE BATTLE WAS WON

1962

January: pensioner George Smith is killed by a van. John Purchase starts letter campaign. Brian Lewis joins forces. 564 sign petition to Minister of Transport.

1963

April: two lorries hit East Kent bus. Villagers erect banner: 'SLOW, PEOPLE LIVE HERE'. They also died there: since 1959 eight people had died, 49 had been injured between Bridge Hill and Town Hill. Demonstrators from local youth club distribute leaflets to motorists.

1964

March: 150 villagers block Easter traffic. **June:** a carnage carnival includes coffins and an effigy of Transport Minister Marples - fast asleep. Bridge By-pass Campaign enlarges to become A2 Group. Sharp lesson, as Canterbury M.P. Sir Leslie Thomas denounces Group as undemocratic. Committee must be elected. It is.

1965

August: lorry's brakes fail: ten vehicles are shunted, six people injured. Ministry will spend £½m widening A2, but no mention of by-pass. Major accidents miraculously cease. Apathy sets in.

1969

August: 100 people stage first sit-down; four arrested. Another village follows suit. Campaign appears to be marking time, waiting for fresh impetus.

1972

May: meat truck demolishes a Bridge shop. Driver dies. 300 protesters block traffic. New M.P. David Crouch meets Kent planners. Demonstrators lobby Ministry. **August:** traffic census shows Bridge High Street is 2½ times overloaded. In October, a thousand people block A2 for an hour. Government announces intention to by-pass Bridge.

1973

March: 40 mph limit placed on Bridge's two hills. *Motoring Which* survey pronounces Bridge the winner - for traffic noise. Close by village, juggernaut kills three soldiers. M.P. Crouch forces adjournment debate on A2 chaos. Lewis and Purchase meet Under-Secretary in Commons bar, which works wonders. By year's end, work on scheduled by-pass is underway.

1976

June: by-pass opens. There's dancing in the - empty - streets.

says Lewis, "of a 14-year Tweedledum and Tweedledee act." Certainly it looked an unlikely alliance: Lewis was 18, living where he'd been born, right by the A2, while Purchase was a relative newcomer, a local printer and 37-year-old family man.

Fourteen years is a long time in anyone's life but in protest group terms it's about seven times the going average. "Most groups," says Lewis, "manage only two years before apathy or political or personal dissent creeps in. We've sustained this campaign through sheer grass-roots love of the village. I was born here. My mother still lives on the main road. I love this place - and I was prepared to fight for it."

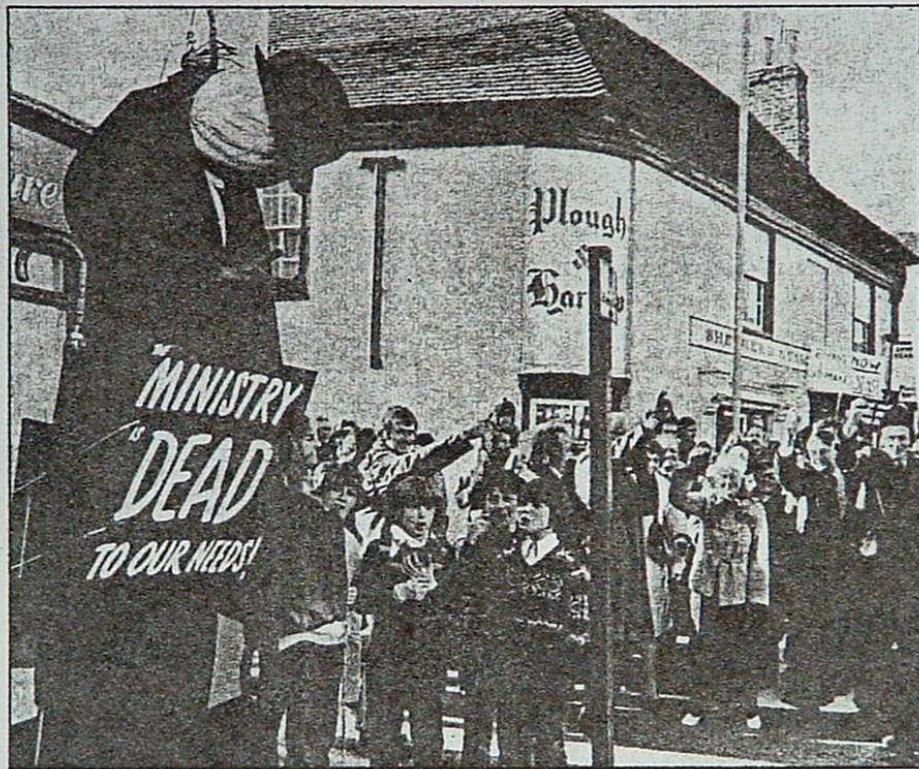
Neither Purchase nor Lewis now lives on the A2. Purchase, now into his early fifties, leads a quieter existence in nearby Bekesbourne. Lewis, now married and a quantity surveyor, has a new bungalow off the main road at the top of the notorious hill. But, despite the international publicity which the cause has attracted, it's always been strictly a local protest, succeeding without the help of the semi-professional environmental heavies. You can learn a lot, too, in 14 years. "If we knew then what we

REALITY

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of Bridge Hi
bend. They
loved the car

know now we could have done it in half the time," claims Lewis. "We just started out as angry residents – we'd no idea which channels to take." They quickly learnt that their initial polite written requests for information were easily brushed off: "When you're dealing with bloody-minded county or ministry officials you've got to be equally bloody-minded. You've got to demand, not ask."

As the two prime movers in the campaign, Lewis and Purchase also attracted the mistrust and disapproval that often accompanies anyone who stands up and makes demands or expresses an opinion. Much of the village was openly hostile to their early efforts. A petition in 1962, expressing alarm to the Minister of Transport, produced only 564 people who were willing to be counted. It had negligible effect. However, the campaign organisers were learning that they needed impact to back their argument and to apply pressure. In 1963 the demonstrations started, beginning with a protest march by 50 youth club members to drive home the accident statistics of the previous four years. By this time, it was eight killed and 49 injured in the village.



Carnage carnival: part of a 1972 demo to keep death off the High Street

The following Easter, 150 marching villagers blocked holiday traffic. Among them were symbolic horses and coffins, and Mrs Rose Wonfor, now 75 and a Bridge resident for 50 years: "I pushed my young grandson in a pushchair to stop the traffic," she says, "and I've carried banners and sat down in the road. Must have had some effect, mustn't it? When

I moved here you could here a pin drop in the High Street. All different now, my dear. It's like being in another world with these big trucks. A wonder we haven't all been killed," Mrs Wonfor says.

However emotive demonstrations may be, however poignant the gestures (there was an effigy of the Transport Minister in bed 'asleep to

the needs of Bridge'), direct action is only effective if it can be used to apply pressure where it can gain most support. In Bridge's case it was clear that any decision affecting the village would be part of a much wider assessment of road needs along the whole non-motorway section of the A2. So the Bridge By-pass Campaign became the A2 Group with the declared aim of making the road 'fit to take the type of traffic it is going to have to take in the future'.

With 1600 houses facing directly on to the A2 the new group could call on wider support. It also attracted stronger opponents: the local M.P., the late Sir Leslie Thomas, publicly denounced the group as undemocratic – no-one had bothered to formally elect a committee or officers and it was easy to imply that Purchase and Lewis were a couple of unlawful nuts.

The group persevered, grafting away to produce every little scrap of publicity from every accident or official statement. And there were plenty of accidents. In August 1965 a truck's brakes failed on Bridge Hill carrying 10 vehicles with it and injuring six people. That was the year Bill and Joyce Rose moved ➡➡

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 at next to the church at the bottom into the gutted rubble of the shop.

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into their brick and timber cottage, set next to the church at the bottom of Bridge Hill on a barely perceptible bend. They went there because they loved the cottage with its long garden overspilling with hollyhocks, delphiniums and London Pride. But they reckoned without the trucks. In 11 years the Roses' cottage has been hit 10 times. They've been hit by trucks, cars, caravans - Bill Rose once chased a lorry all the way to Canterbury to retrieve his guttering from its load. Now they have a red and yellow striped signboard to mark the most vulnerable corner of the unprepossessing grey cottage (well, it looks grey, but the last time it was painted it was cream).

Outside the cottage the pavement narrows to 15 inches wide.

Accidents were becoming commonplace in Bridge and, ironically, the more there were, the more the campaign's impetus flagged. "At one time a couple of accident-damaged cars would provoke press comment and pictures," says Lewis. "Gradually the shock value diminished and people just accepted it as one of those things." The six years from 1966 to 1972 would have deterred less dogged campaigners than Lewis, Purchase and their supporters. After the early rabble-rousing, there was an almost total lack of official action to show for it. A hundred people sat down in the road in 1969 - four were even arrested for the cause. But despite the goading and the posturing, nothing positive resulted.

Lewis admits that even the villagers were prepared to give up on him at this time. "Many people thought we were crying for the moon when they saw nothing was happening." It was this limbo period which the protesters feel they could, with hindsight, have reduced; they were learning about diplomacy and finding their way around the corridors of power in the Kent County Council offices and at Westminster. Most important, they had won their new M.P. round to their demands. But they needed a fresh stimulus to drum up support and enthusiasm. In May 1972 they got it. On the night of May 26 a Swiss-bound meat truck careered through the front of a general store in Bridge High Street, killing the driver. The shop owner's daughter, Angela, was sleeping in the front bedroom over the shop and woke up sandwiched hard between the wrecked truck and the wall, with what was

left of the bedroom spilling down into the gutted rubble of the shop.

This was the emotive trigger that the A2 Group needed. On the same day villagers received printed leaflets with photographs of the crash. Two days later, 300 Bridge residents sat down to block the A2. In the same month, an emergency meeting was held between the new M.P. David Crouch and the Kent planners. As they met demonstrators protested. Another demo took place at the Ministry of Transport. And yet another in Dover, backed by letters to the transport ministers of all EEC countries warning them of the danger to foreign nationals using the Bridge route.

By now M.P. Crouch was heavily backing the by-pass campaign, though not condoning the civil disobedience. As a result the Transport Ministry sent an envoy down in September to report on the A2. Lewis and Purchase sustained the pressure on Crouch by demonstrating the weight of support for their cause amongst his constituents. Crouch may not have liked their methods - but he couldn't ignore the villagers' message.

In the same month Lewis and Purchase placed advertisements in the local paper calling on support for another demonstration - another sit-down to block the traffic. The demo was peaceful but purposeful. "We told the police we were going to block the road," Lewis says. "We've had very good support from our police, even when we've been breaking the law. Many of them are local lads - and it's they who've had to come and clear up the mess when there was an accident."

To ram their point home, the A2 Group called another sit-down in October 1972. This time over 1000 villagers sat down and blocked the A2 for an hour. Village old timers like Harry Hawkins joined in: "I was fighting for my home, my life, my everything," he says. Five-year-old Nicholas Millyard sat down holding a placard. Nice, middle-class parents, whose protesting voice normally extended no further than a pained bleat about increased school fees, sat down too; Bridge had made its point. "The demos and the sit-downs were necessary," Lewis claims; "they were necessary to apply the pressure. Some of us have criminal records as a result - I was charged with conspiring to incite members of the community, with obstruction and ➔

with placing an illegal advertisement. I'm not proud of that - but I'd do it again."

David Crouch now concedes the importance of the demonstrations. "An M.P. can make as much noise as he likes in Parliament, but he must be able to show that his constituents are concerned and angry, too. Here we had a responsible pressure group prepared to stand up for its rights."

It cannot be wholly coincidence that the tough talking of October 1972 was followed within weeks by the announcement of a provisional Bridge by-pass route. But as many protest groups know to their cost, a statement of intent can be years away from reality and for the A2 Group, 1973 was a year for turning words into action. "We couldn't have done it without our M.P.," Lewis admits. "An M.P. can put down parliamentary questions in the House - and these cannot be ignored. David Crouch put down question after question, debate after debate, on our behalf. That's what gets results - private individuals writing letters to nameless officials can't get results in that way."

In July '73 Crouch forced an adjournment debate on the A2 problem and brought Lewis and Purchase to the Commons to meet Keith Speed, then Under-Secretary of State for the Environment over informal drinks in the members' bar. "We probably achieved more at that meeting than through any other action in our campaign," says Lewis. The following month the by-pass route was fixed. Less than three years later elated villagers outside the Plough and Harrow were handing a pint of real English beer to the driver of a Polish refrigerator truck - the last TIR in Bridge.

Four days later the entire village street was closed for a By-Pass Bonanza, a festival to mark the end of the danger, the noise and the dirt, and the return of village life. "Bridge would have got its by-pass without us," say Purchase and Lewis, pragmatically. "But when? Thousands of road schemes have been planned, re-planned and then shelved. What we have done is to get our by-pass on schedule; without the pressure it could have been years away. Our fight hasn't been against the trucks or the truck drivers, but against the authorities who have failed to provide the roads for them to travel on."

86 Lewis and Purchase are now ➔

deluged with requests for help from residents all over the country angry over similar problems. They aren't interested in becoming a kind of John Tyme double act, popping up at enquiries in all manner of protests. But they are happy to pass on their guidelines for successful protest.

● "First you must have an elected committee - otherwise opponents will say you aren't representative.

● "Then you'll need a printer on the committee for the paperwork, or at least know of one sympathetic to the cause.

● "You'll need some funds - we raised money from door to door and street collections. But play it straight and get permission from the police. We've never added up what we've spent personally, but our individual 'phone bills have been £30-40 a month!

● "You must begin by getting your M.P. on your side - but keep politics out of it. We've made sure that the A2 Group has represented all Parties - it's important that you're speaking as concerned residents or constituents, not following a Party line. Anything you do should put pressure on him to work on your behalf.

● "Be positive: never take no for an answer - and never let up, otherwise support will fizzle out."

Lewis and Purchase admit to a sense of unreality now that the 14 years of effort are finished. "When I walked into Bridge the day the traffic was switched away, it was like Alice and the other side of the looking glass," says Purchase. Lewis still felt completely flat. "I couldn't believe that we'd actually done it. Even a fortnight later my wife said, 'You're still planning that wretched road'. And it was true..."

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Five months after the by-pass opening, Bridge is a different place. It may not yet resemble that sepia-tinted Twenties' postcard, but the transformation is tangible. Next to the church the Roses' cottage shines with new Snowcem. Hawkins's newsagents has its long promised face-lift. So have the two hairdressers' shops and a scattering of little cottages closest to the narrow section of the village.

And was it just a diplomatic gesture on somebody's part that Bridge has just received an award for the best kept large village in Kent? ●

BY-PASS BRIDGE BONANZA

Programme

celebrating the removal of heavy traffic from Bridge

- 1.45 – 2.30 **MORRIS DANCING** THE WANTSUM MORRIS MEN
FOLK DANCING THE RAMSGATE FOLK DANCE CLUB
- 2.15 CHURCH BELLS PEAL
- 2.20 **CARNIVAL PARADE** moves off from Conyngham Lane.
- 2.30 **OFFICIAL OPENING** by DAVID CROUCH, M.P.
Master of Ceremonies: MALCOLM MITCHELL.
The OPENING takes place by the Bridge.
- 3.00 **TEA PARTY** in Vicarage Grounds for Senior Citizens.
PARTY in Green Court for Primary School Children.
- 3.15 **DECORATED PRAM RACE:** Start by the Plough and Harrow; route, High Street, Western Avenue, the Ford!, Brewery Lane, finishing at the Bridge in the High Street.
- 3.30 **MARCHING DISPLAY** in the High Street by the Band of 5th Battalion, THE QUEEN'S REGIMENT (T.A.V.R.)
- 4.00 **MAYPOLE DANCING** in the High Street.
- 4.30 **MAJORETTE DISPLAY** in the High Street by the CAROUSSELS.
- 5.00 **RAFFLE RESULTS**, corner of Western Avenue and the High Street.
DUSTBIN RACE.



MANY STALLS AND SIDESHOWS

MAJOR ATTRACTIONS

- 'BRIDGE THROUGH THE AGES'
Exhibition in the Village Hall.
- VILLAGE BLACKSMITH
- A POTTER AT HIS WHEEL
- ANTIQUES MARKET
- LOCALLY MADE JEWELLERY
- BY-PASS COMMEMORATIVE MUGS
- STRAWBERRIES (subject to availability)
- ICE-CREAM
- RAFFLE AND TOMBOLA



- Information and announcements centre by the Bridge.

See the map on the back.....





TBREAD

Hotel
Luncheons
Dinners

BRIDGE BY-PASS
FOR OUR SAFETY
AND YOURS

HELP SAVE LIVES
BY SUPPORTING
BY-PASS
CAMPAIGN

SLOW

BOWZELL
TYPICAL BUILDING



































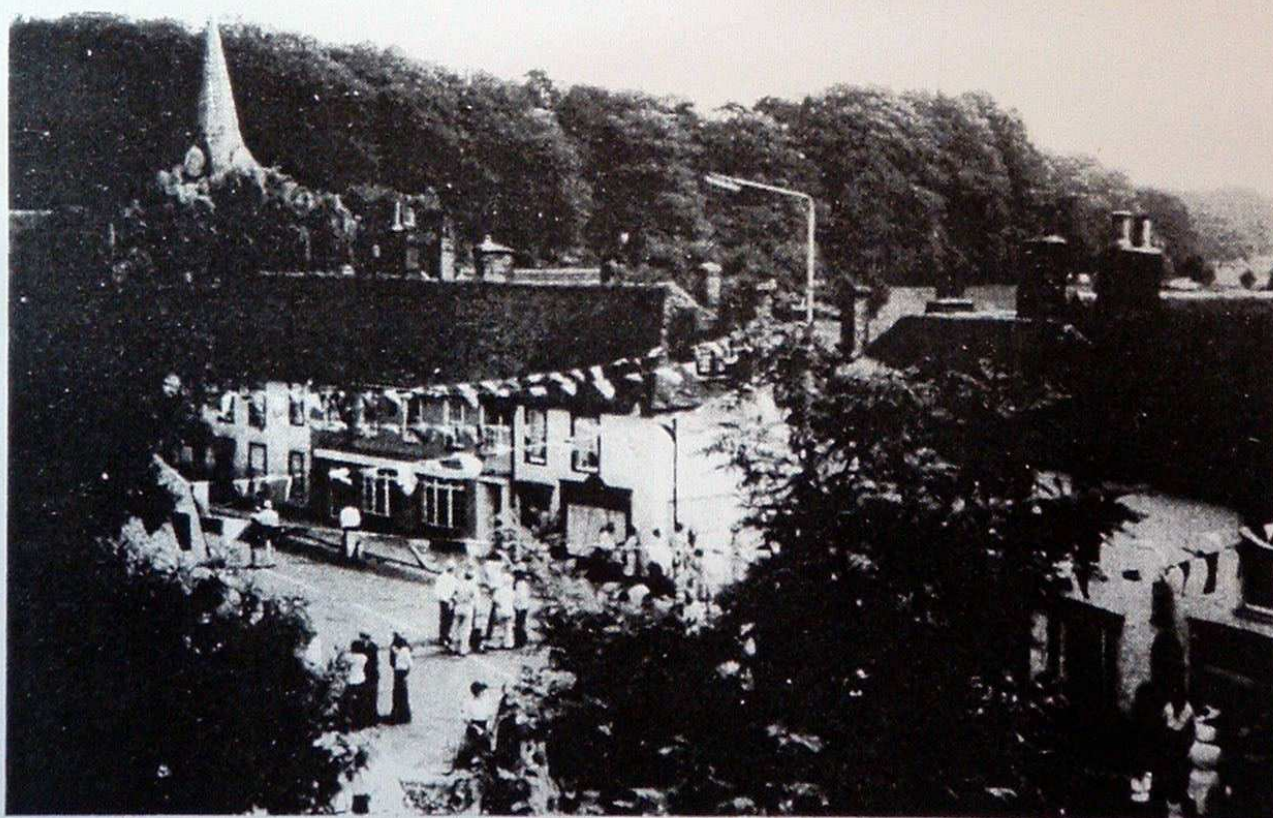








The Band of the 5th Battalion, The Queen's Regiment, plays the ever-popular 'Sunset' in the High St.



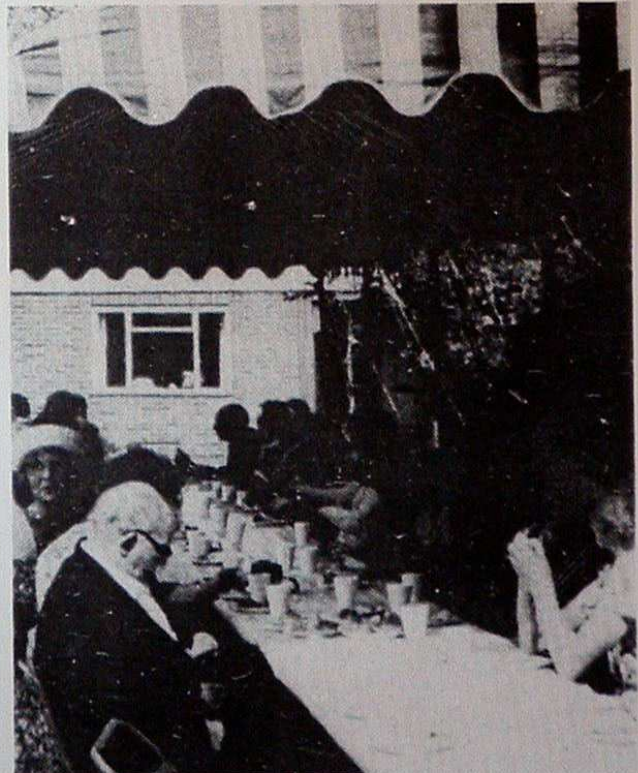
And a picture which sums up all that had been achieved – a quiet village street where groups can safely walk and talk, with the church of St. Peter's, Bridge, celebrating its Patronal Festival in the background. Let us remember that the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Donald Coggan, wrote to us at the beginning of the year saying he knew how pleased and thankful we would be when the by-pass was opened, and hoping it would act as a stimulus to rediscovering a sense of community.



On Saturday July 3rd the Bonanza celebrations were opened by the M.P. Mr. David Crouch, who came over specially to the village to join the crowds out to enjoy themselves. He said that the village should be proud of its achievement in gaining the by-pass, and having enjoyed itself at the Bonanza should try to re-establish the village community. This last comment was echoed by the Bishop of Dover, the Rt. Rev. Anthony Tremlett, at the special service of thanksgiving held the following evening at St. Peter's Church. He said that we lived in a divided world, and Bridge well knew what that meant in the past. Now was the chance to build a really happy united community. The village was full of people of good will. 'Rise to the challenge' he concluded 'because you can!'.



The pram race was won by a team from Canterbury Rugby Club. The pusher who did all the work was Hugh Bothwell.



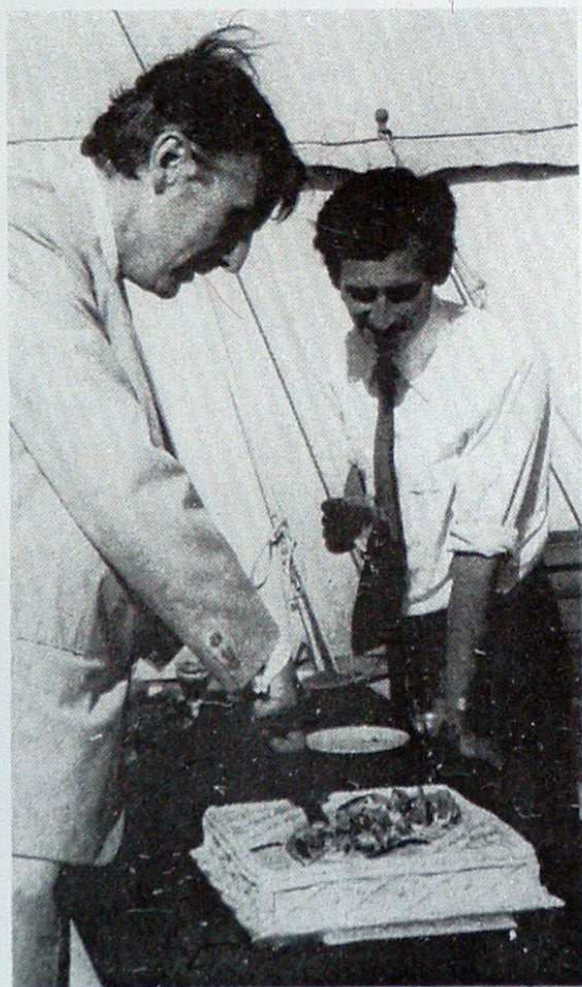
Very many of the older villagers had a tea party which was set up under an awning along the Vicarage drive.

BRIDGE-COMMUNITY JOY

AT THE OPENING OF THE BY-PASS ON JUNE 29th, AND THE BONANZA HELD ON JULY 3rd



The Vicar, Canon Colin Perry, leads the prayers for all who use the new by-pass.



The Minister also cut a cake which was in the shape of the village and the road. It was made by Mrs. Elizabeth Purchase and her mother Mrs. Averil Norton.



Dr. John Gilbert, the Minister, with his hands full – a recalcitrant radio mike and a pair of scissors – officially opens the new road watched by the villagers.









