



# RPS NEWSLETTER

RUDGWICK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

AUTUMN 1997

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

A year ago rumours were circulating round the Village that Churchman's Meadow might be next in line for development. Initial plans to develop the site were lodged by developers earlier this year. There was a flood of objections and I understand that the District Council have now requested the developers to re-submit their plans. These will not be considered by the Planning Committee until the New Year.. It was the Inspector appointed by the Department of the Environment who considered the objections to the Horsham District Local Plan Draft Deposit 1994, who in his Report published in December 1996, decided that Churchman's Meadow should be developed. The District Council has accepted his report despite local opposition..

The density of houses suggested is of 9 to the acre which is far too many. This is a greenfield site and this density would be more appropriate in a London Suburb. Cramped housing developments create a transient population as people move on because of the lack of privacy. This does not help sustain traditional village life.

If consent is granted, it should be clearly understood that the infrastructure must be in place before building starts. Every effort should be made to minimise the impact on the residents directly affected. Access to the site, via Kilnfield Road, is not satisfactory, but three visits from the County Surveyors Department of the West Sussex County Council decided otherwise. There is a suggestion that there should be a roundabout at the junction of Church Street and Kilnfield Road and there is no doubt that traffic calming measures are desperately needed in the Village. Water supply and sewage disposal are already a problem, so future development must resolve these services satisfactorily. Already residents in Pondfield Road, backing onto Gravatts Hanger, are subject to flooding. More houses in the south eastern corner can only increase the danger of flash flooding. Measures to deal with this hazard must be properly planned.

We congratulate the Churchman's Meadow Action Committee for their efforts. They have worked hard to come up with valid legal reasons for rejecting the Inspector's recommendation. The threat of development does not end here. At the time of writing this, the number of applications made in Rudgwick number over sixty so far this year. In general too much development has taken place in Rudgwick in recent years and not always appropriate to the essential rural character of the Village. If Sustainable Development has any real meaning, it can be reasonably stated that Rudgwick has "reached the limits of environmental change".

Change is inevitable, but the speed of recent development has been too dramatic and time must be allowed for our Village to absorb the consequences of expansion. Much future housebuilding is planned up to 2011 for Horsham District, and this community as a whole must resolve to resist any further development until that date - but we must act together.

It is with sadness that I have to report to you the untimely death of Bob Sutton. Bob joined the Committee in December 1991 and was a valued colleague. He was always ready to turn his hand to any task, running raffles, book stalls, shifting chairs, wine waiting and he compiled the useful survey of recent building in the Village published in our last newsletter. Our sympathy goes to Pam and the family.

We have altered the day of our Autumn Meeting from a Monday to THURSDAY, 4th December. This is so that we could arrange to have Dr. Annabelle Hughes talk to us. She will give an illustrated talk on houses in Sussex and the people who lived in them. We have also slightly altered our usual format. We will begin the evening with mulled wine and mince pies while Malcolm Francis will show a video illustrating "The Changing Face of Rudgwick". Please put this date in your diary, Thursday 4th December, 1997, 7.30.p.m. at the Rudgwick Hall, Bucks Green. Everyone will be welcome.

Once again my thanks go to the Committee. Every member plays a part and I am grateful to them all.

**Vanessa Lowndes**

## FUTURE PLANNING PROPOSALS

Counties in the South of England are being, subjected to an Examination in Public organised by the Department of the Environment, setting allocations for future housing developments. All counties are seeking reductions in their allocations.

In similar cases Bedfordshire, Berkshire and Kent failed to persuade the Department to allow them to build fewer houses. West Sussex became the next county to be considered and in a sense became a test case for those yet to be considered Cheshire, Devon, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Dorset, Hertfordshire and Somerset.

With commendable speed and efficiency, West Sussex County Council Planning Department published a "Capacity Study" in June 1996 covering every town, village and parish in the County. It showed convincingly where, to what extent, development could take place

which protected the "quality of life" and not damage the environment irretrievably.

For the first time expert evidence was produced to support the concept of capacity limitation. In a word "sustainable development" was at last a reality. Previous environmental arguments by local authorities had been supported by little real evidence of capacity limitation.

Reading through the County Council's "Capacity Study"(165 pages), we would like to take just one statement which epitomises the whole tenor of this well-conceived county environmental study.

1. 2. 7. "At the heart of sustainable development principle lies the acceptance that

the environment places limits on human behaviour. *In planning for sustainable development the aim must be to define limits of acceptable environmental change* (our italics). This means making judgements about the capacity of environmental resources - and the environment as a whole - to absorb change without irreversible changes, for unacceptable change and for unacceptable loss or damage. This suggests that much greater weight now needs to be attached to the environment than hitherto."

As a result, provided central government does not over-rule the panel's report, a reduction of 13,400 in housebuilding below Regional Planning Guidance demand for the period 1994-2011, which means that the figure will be 41,600 instead of 55,000. This means that West Sussex is the first County to have housing numbers reduced.

Our grateful thanks are due not only to the pioneering work of the West Sussex County Council, but to Tony Burton of the Council for the Protection of Rural England. Equally important was the work of John Buchanan, Vice-Chairman (West) and North West Sussex District Representative of the Federation of Sussex Amenity Societies. We have worked closely with John and we are impressed with his complete dedication, and his long experience as a professional journalist means he was an expert in presenting our case in an impressive way.

However, this means that Horsham District still has to take 9,000 houses:-

4,100 in 1994 - 2001

2,500 in 2001 - 2006

2,400 in 2006 - 2011

But it could have been much worse.

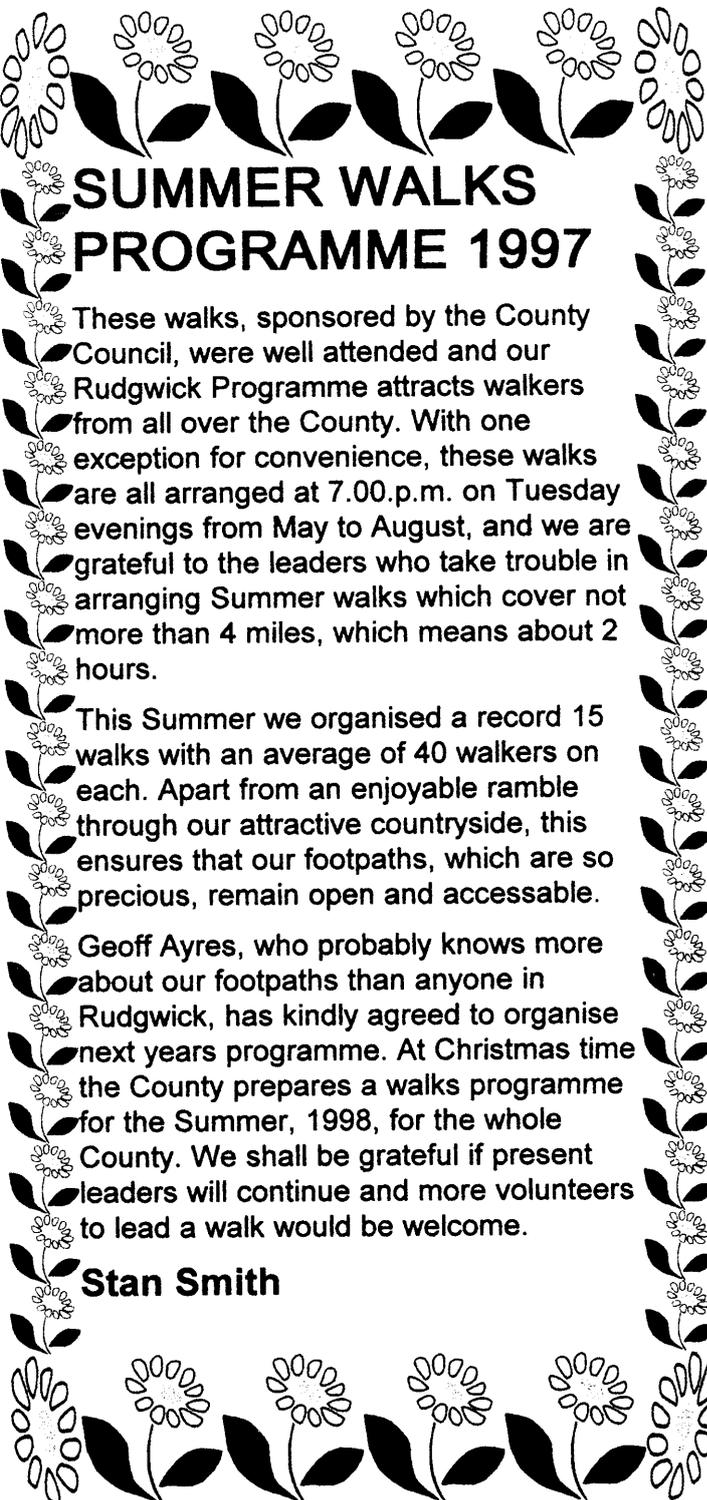
Although this important victory has been won in the County Council's Structure Plan in reducing potential numbers for future development, there remains the controversial 2,300 houses yet to be built, probably on green-field sites.

The pressure for housebuilding continues in the South East, and in particular West Sussex. We shall not

succeed in resisting these undesirable developments unless we act together and concern ourselves with Horsham District as a whole. In this respect, the Federation of Sussex Amenity Societies acts a co-ordinating force in unifying the different amenity societies to act in unison. We must not overlook the work of Dr. Peter Brandon, Chairman of the Sussex Branch of the C.P.R.E., who so eloquently plays a vital role in the protection of our countryside.

Our best wishes go to East Sussex County Council, which is due for an Examination in Public in the Spring of 1998.

**Stan Smith**



## SUMMER WALKS PROGRAMME 1997

These walks, sponsored by the County Council, were well attended and our Rudgwick Programme attracts walkers from all over the County. With one exception for convenience, these walks are all arranged at 7.00.p.m. on Tuesday evenings from May to August, and we are grateful to the leaders who take trouble in arranging Summer walks which cover not more than 4 miles, which means about 2 hours.

This Summer we organised a record 15 walks with an average of 40 walkers on each. Apart from an enjoyable ramble through our attractive countryside, this ensures that our footpaths, which are so precious, remain open and accessible.

Geoff Ayres, who probably knows more about our footpaths than anyone in Rudgwick, has kindly agreed to organise next years programme. At Christmas time the County prepares a walks programme for the Summer, 1998, for the whole County. We shall be grateful if present leaders will continue and more volunteers to lead a walk would be welcome.

**Stan Smith**

# CHURCHMAN'S MEADOW

When the Inspector presented his schedule of recommendations a year ago, he could not have possibly taken account of the problems inevitably created by the above development opposed by all concerned. With Foxholes and Talon in place, we believe there should have been a breathing space to integrate these developments into the Village before any further plans.

Apart from the site itself, we are dismayed that the County Council should consider the access suitable to serve the proposed development. Kilnfield Road was originally constructed to serve the 17 homes in the road and Woodfield Road is barely adequate to serve existing houses.

In a letter of objection, we invoked three policies from the Local Plan, all of which require "a satisfactory means of access" - indeed Policy TU5 requires the developer to meet the cost of necessary on-site and off-site highway works.

Residents in Kilnfield and Pondfield Roads will be seriously affected by the changes in the lay-out of the existing highway. Their concerns cannot be ignored - therefore we believe that before any site plan is considered, the County Council must produce access plans available for comment by residents.

This is the most pressing problem at the moment. There are others of equal importance that can be considered when the site plan is open for consultation. We are in entire agreement with the Chairman of the Parish Council in his statement in the November issue of the Parish Magazine, that EDC22 sets the agenda for future consultation.

With commendable foresight, we are grateful that the District Council have designated 36 tree preservation orders on site. More five bedroom houses are not needed but provision must be made for social housing.

We await the County Council's access plans and eventually the detailed site plan from the District Council.

**Stan Smith**

# Hedgerow Regulations

By Don Muir

New rules on Hedgerows came into force on 1st June 1997. Under the regulations it is against the law to remove most countryside hedgerows without permission. The way in which the regulations apply to individual hedgerows is complex and informal advice should be sought from the local planning authority at an early stage and before seeking formal permission.

**Permission to remove a hedgerow is required where it is on or runs alongside:**

- Agricultural land
- Common land, including town or village greens
- Land used for forestry or the breeding or keeping of horses, ponies or donkeys
- A Local Nature Reserve or Site of Special Scientific Interest

**No permission is required if it:**

- Is shorter than 20 metres (unless both ends join up with other hedgerows or it is part of a longer hedgerow)
- Is in or borders your garden

Gaps of less than 20 metres or less are counted as part of the hedgerow. A gap may be a break in the vegetation or it may be filled by, for example, a gate.

*In anticipation of the development at Churchman's Meadow the Preservation Society has actively collaborated with Horsham District Council to ensure that the surrounding hedgerow and trees are protected. Preservation Orders have now been placed on 36 trees in the Northern and Eastern Hedgerows and in the entrance to the meadow. A new set of Regulations aimed at enhancing the level of protection that can be afforded to ancient and significant hedgerows is described here by Don Muir. However there are weaknesses in the regulations, in particular the fact that there is no automatic listing of important hedgerows.*

Application for planning permission to remove a hedgerow must be made to the local Planning Authority who have six weeks to decide if the hedgerow is "important". The regulations specify in detail the criteria used to decide if the hedgerow is "important" but the following is a simplified guide.

- ✓ Marks a pre-1860 parish or township boundary.
- ✓ Incorporates an archaeological feature.
- ✓ Is part of, or associated with, an archaeological site.
- ✓ Marks the boundary of, or is associated with, a pre-1600 estate or manor.
- ✓ Forms an integral part of a pre-Parliamentary enclosure field system.
- ✓ Contains certain categories of species of birds, animals or plants listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act or Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) publications.

Includes:

- (a) at least 7 wooded species, on average, in a 30 metre length;

(b) at least 6 wooded species, on average, in a 30 metre length and has at least 3 associated features;

(c) at least 6 wooded species, on average, in a 30 metre length, including a black poplar tree, or a large-leaved lime, or a small-leaved lime or wild-service tree; or

(d) at least 5 wooded species, on average, in a 30 metre length and has at least four associated features.

The number of woody species is reduced by one in northern counties. The list of 56 woody species comprises mainly shrubs and trees. It generally excludes climbers (such as clematis, honeysuckle and bramble) but includes wild roses.

✓ Runs alongside a bridleway, footpath, road used as a public path, or a byway open to all traffic and includes at least 4 woody species, on average, in a 30 metre length and has at least two of the associated features listed in (i) to (v) below.

The associated features are:-

- (i) a bank or wall supporting the hedgerow;
- (ii) less than 10% gaps;
- (iii) on average, at least one tree per 50 metres;
- (iv) at least 3 species from a list of 57 woodland plants;
- (v) a ditch
- (vi) a number of connections with other hedgerows, ponds or woodland; and
- (vii) a parallel hedge within 15 metres.

If it is concluded that the hedgerow is not "important" the Planning Authority cannot refuse permission to remove the hedgerow. If the hedgerow is considered important the Authority will issue a "Hedgerow Retention Notice". Appeals against a Hedgerow retention notice may be made to the Secretary of State within 28 days of the applicant receiving the hedgerow decision.

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## CHURCH FETES IN THE 1950'S

### By Malcolm Francis

The Church Fete was held in the grounds of the Old Vicarage in Lynwick Street for many years. I remember them during the incumbency of the Rev. John Tanner in the late fifties. The grounds of the Vicarage lent themselves to the occasion, but there was not a lot of spare room.

The Vicarage, as was often the case, was not in a good state of repair, part of the building was as it appears today but an older section was suffering from dry rot, with the upper floors sagging dangerously. (The building was renovated later, after it had been sold by the Church.) This older part of the building was full of

interesting by-gones, including all the "servant call" bells that were still connected to the kitchen by an ingenious series of rods and cables.

The morning of the Fete was taken up with all the usual preparations, stalls to be built, bunting to be fixed (with many more Union Jacks than today as it was only a few years since the last Coronation and the country was still in a celebratory mood). Mr Frank Butcher was getting his public address equipment ready, a turntable sat in a bay window and wires found their way to wooden speakers in the trees.

The small orchard in front of the Vicarage had had its crop of stinging nettles scythed and replaced by a more useful crop of rickety wooden tables and chairs for teas to be served. The stalls were busy filling up - the Bottle Stall, the Blue Stall, the Book Stall and the ever popular Cake Stall. The White Elephant Stall always puzzled me as a child - I never saw any sign of one!

The Vicarage garden had only one flat section of lawn, always commandeered by skittles for "Bowling for the Pig" and some fetes really did have a piglet as the prize.

At 2 o'clock the fete was opened, many people arriving via the footpath from Church Street, the slippery flagstone path known as the "Bunnychute", which linked the Vicarage with the church. Cars were parked in Lynwick Street and spilled into the Vicarage field. Soon the fete was in full swing, the Bottle Stall always did brisk business and Mr Davison's ice cream was always in demand.

There were quite a few sideshows, some that I have never seen since, including Mr Williams, the local plumber, with his game of stopping "rats" escaping down a drainpipe; and another lovely game where model boats had to be hauled up the "beach" (a rough piece of lawn) with a very crude winder that made one's fingers ache..... The game to find buried treasure on a section of the lawn, which always produced a forest of miniature flags, and one small child who asked "How do they know it's under that part of the lawn?" Then there was the Fortune Teller, with her mysterious booth, did one dare to go in..... While the Vicarage field was host to pony rides, often a child's first taste of riding.

The afternoon wore on and the stalls started to look bare, would that cake be melted before it was taken home? and was it a good idea to buy all those books?

Everyone waited for the Raffle, the first prize number was about to be called and tickets were clutched anxiously..... "Trust her to win it, she did the same at Ellens Green....." The lesser prizes gradually vanished from the table and suddenly the precious tickets were just worthless litter.

People began to drift away, tired but happy. All the flotsam and jetsam of the afternoon was cleared away by an army of helpers, leaving the green sward of the Vicarage lawn in its more normal state. Only one question remained - "Lets hope the takings, being counted by the Vicar in his study, are up on last year's."