

residents have the right to know what was written about them by the 'Parish of Winchelsea' Action Group and so I am quoting verbatim from their written statement to Rother.

In the original official submission to Rother, (Appendix E), their references to Icklesham, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour state these wards are merely 'dormitories for Rye and Hastings'; they 'lack a physical heart'; share a 'declining sense of community' are areas 'of deprivation'; 'suffer from serious youth problems', are unfriendly and 'alienate newcomers, particularly the young'.

This is NOT 'hearsay' but actual published statements made by this Action Group.

In comparison they state Winchelsea, on the other hand, has 'a history of over 700 years' - (Icklesham was first mentioned in 772) - has 'over 20 successful clubs and societies', is 'unique', 'part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty' - (our area in Icklesham is also an AONB) - is of 'international (international is underlined) importance', 'vibrant and ambitious', implying Winchelsea has every reason to seek divorce from the parish and disassociate itself from its three poor, dull and worthless neighbours.

Residents of Icklesham, Winchelsea Beach and Rye Harbour are honest, hard-working citizens. They also belong to successful local clubs and societies and are entitled to be treated with respect and basic courtesy from others. To denigrate these good people and the areas in which they live as a reason for seeking to obtain self-rule for Winchelsea is unacceptable. This is truly 'an affront to common democracy'.

In closing, I thank the many residents in the parish of Icklesham who have called me in the last few days to confirm they have seen me at public meetings of the Parish Council and to voice their support.

IAIN KERR

Windmill Lane, Icklesham

## Public stocks, maybe?

WHEN letters were first circulated objecting to the proposed Balkanisation of Icklesham Parish Council and signed 'the silent majority of Winchelsea', I felt those responsible might have been better advised to make their points (many of which seemed very sensible) publicly, within the existing framework of local debate.

The fact that a notice has subsequently been put on public display outside the Little Shop urging these nameless dissidents to 'shut up' leads me to believe that perhaps they had better cause to fear an intimidatory response than I previously imagined.

What kind of commitment to local democracy is demonstrated by telling people who disagree with you to 'Shut up'? And what kind of impression does this give to visitors of the place they have come to visit?

Is this what the proud new people's republic of Winchelsea has in store for its citizens?

Perhaps we might go further and erect a public stocks on Barrack Square where anyone who disagrees with plans for Winchelsea to withdraw from the EU and establish its own independent nuclear deterrent can be pelted with rotten fruit by an angry mob.

Setting aside the potentially disastrous consequences for the town itself of breaking away from its surrounding communities, it's the selfishness of this proposal that really upsets me.

Are we really willing to threaten the viability of local government in all our neighbouring villages (where no such yearning for political isolationism exists) merely to gratify the whims of a small but well-organised cabal of local movers and shakers?

If so, perhaps Winchelsea will deserve nothing better than to regain its former reputation as the pariah of the South Coast.

Malcolm Pratt's excellent civic history **Winchelsea: A Port of Stranded Pride** (a title which has never seemed more apposite than it does in the context of this absurdly puffed-up debate) quotes William Durrant Cooper to memorable effect.

"To this day [1850] when the boats of Winchelsea... enter some of our Western ports, a hatchet is held up to them as a sign of their ancestors' conduct".

If we carry on the way we're going, the people of Winchelsea won't have to travel as far as the Western ports to get a hatchet held up to them.

BEN THOMPSON

Bluebell Cottage, Winchelsea

## A town divided

THE beautiful Ancient Town of Winchelsea, peaceful, dignified and tranquil, loved by my family and all it has stood for over our last 40 years, has now become a town divided - still beautiful, but no longer peaceful, dignified or tranquil.

The divide, caused by The Parish of Winchelsea Action Group (which has the temerity to think it can do better than Icklesham Parish Council, which has served us well and fairly for many years), by bombarding half the town with numerous letters and public meetings they have called.

This Group has in turn been seriously upset by two letters delivered to all the town, by a group calling themselves the Silent Majority of Winchelsea, which pointed out the pitfalls if we did 'go it alone' - the truth always hurts.

This animosity has caused friends of long-standing to turn against one another, residents have actually left the town because of the undercurrents - and has any thought been given to the consequences to the other three wards? This has turned into a very unpleasant situation and I am not sure I wish to live here any longer.

PETA CAMERON-CLARKE  
Old Malt House, Winchelsea

## Winchelsea at war

IT IS apparent we have Winchelsea at war. There is no doubt that Mr Comotto has worked tirelessly for the community. However he and his campaign group should be ashamed of how they have conducted themselves in achieving a referendum for the vote to create the break-away council.

They called a public meeting to discuss and vote for a referendum without publicising the event to the whole community, this should not have been allowed to happen and is wholly un-democratic.

It is unclear as to this group's ultimate intention, however if this is the manner in which they intend to conduct themselves it should fill the whole community with a sense of nervousness.

The action group appears to be trying to create an elitist society, I wish these individuals would review the way they conduct themselves and embrace the whole community

S P M DETSICAS  
The Strand, Winchelsea

## Affront to democracy

IF Mr Mears, who appears to be the spokesperson for the so-called 'Parish of Winchelsea' Action Group, wishes to withdraw Winchelsea from the parish of Icklesham, then he and Mr Comotto's supporters have every right to make appropriate representations to Rother.

However, in support of their case, in their written statements to Rother, they unfairly denigrated the three remaining wards. I believe that before casting their votes, all

Rye Observer 14/7/06