

# Town isn't at war

THE idea that there is some sort of uncivil war in Winchelsea is ridiculous. No one has moved out of the town since the review of the proposal for a separate parish council was announced by Rother in March. No resident has cut any other resident. I am still talking (politely) to Mrs Cameron-Clark and Ben Thompson, and they are still talking (politely) to me. Winchelsea is a polite place and we are all mature enough to separate political from personal opinions.

Mr Kerr, the gentlemen who has previously written with such conviction about a meeting he did not attend, is now trying to claim that the Parish of Winchelsea Action Group has denigrated other wards. I would urge people to look at our submission to Rother. Mr Kerr is trying to mislead by quoting extremely selectively and completely out of context.

The submission made the point that each ward is a distinct community with its own problems and priorities. The description of villages as 'dormitories' of neighbouring towns is not pejorative but standard planning terminology. The fact is that most residents do not work in their villages (which has consequences for the life of those villages). However, Mr Kerr attempts to turn this fact into insult by adding his word 'merely'. Similarly, describing Icklesham and Winchelsea Beach as linear settlements is a simple statement of fact. I would be interested to hear Mr Kerr's alternative descriptions.

The point is not to demean these villages but to identify the reasons for their particular problems. This intent can be seen if one reads more than two or three words at time. Let me quote in full about Icklesham: "The lack of a 'physical heart' to the village has contributed to social problems typical of rural communities: declining sense of community, loss of facilities like shops and post office, the threat to the few remaining community facilities like the village hall and the alienation of newcomers, particularly the young".

Is Mr Kerr denying that these problems exist? If there is no declining sense of community in Icklesham, why did an Icklesham Parish Councillor dismiss the idea of a traffic watch scheme in Icklesham by saying that there was no community spirit? If there is no youth problem in Icklesham, why did the Chair of the Parish Council (from Icklesham) describe Icklesham youths as 'toe rags'?

I note that Mr Kerr tries to imply that we called the other wards 'unfriendly' by inserting that word among his very selective quotes. That word is not used anywhere in our submission.

As for the references to Winchelsea, the point is that the town has an evident historical legacy that means that conservation is a priority, whereas it is not for the other wards. That is the whole point. Each ward has its own problems and priorities, and would therefore be best served by its own parish council. Our submission does not say Winchelsea is 'unique'. It actually said "physically, Winchelsea has evolved from a unique, planned historic settlement..." This statement has a completely different flavour to that of Mr Kerr's selective quotation. As for the reference to 'informational importance', we are quoting directly from page 19 the High Weald AONB Management Plan, which discusses the historical significance of Winchelsea. Again, the point is to stress the priority of conservation in Winchelsea. And the submission did not say that Icklesham was not in the AONB.

Like Mr Kerr, Ben Thompson is selective. He says that those supporting a parish council for Winchelsea "might have been better advised to make their points... publicly, within the existing framework of local debate". He may recall that the proposal was first broached at a public meeting in December 2004 and again at the Town Meeting in May of this year.

The notice that appeared on the noticeboard outside the Little Shop was a call by two residents, who signed their names, for those (who signed themselves only as the 'Silent Majority of Winchelsea') circulating anonymous letters around the town, to participate in a public debate moderated by a neutral chairman or else live up to their name. They have declined to do so.

Ben believes that the other wards of the parish are incapable of managing their own affairs without the assistance of Winchelsea. He reflects the view of some that the four communities can only survive like shipwrecked sailors clinging desperately together on a sinking raft. I have rather more faith in the ability of all local communities.

Finally, I am puzzled by Steve Detsicas's claim that a referendum is undemocratic!

RYE HARBOUR needs your vote, on Thursday, July 27th 2006 4pm to 9pm only.

You must vote "NO".

Richard Comotto of the Winchelsea Action Group called a Parish Council meeting in Winchelsea. As a result of this meeting Rother District Council now have to conduct a PARISH POLL (a referendum) throughout the whole parish.

The question is "Does your ward wish to become a separate Parish?" The cost of the referendum will have to be paid by Icklesham Parish Council and is likely to be £2000. All qualified electors in the polling districts of the parish of Icklesham are entitled to vote from 4pm to 9pm only on Thursday, 27th July.

Ballot boxes will be at Rye Harbour Village Hall, Icklesham Memorial Hall, Winchelsea New Hall and Winchelsea Beach Community Hall, no voting cards



needed.

Icklesham Parish Council has served all four wards well and will continue to do so, if you vote NO on Thursday 27th July between 4pm & 9pm, it will take two minutes to do and keep our wards safe.

Don't forget if you have an event going on in August for the newsletter, which you would like publicised, I need details this week, you can send them on ryeharbournewsletter@tiscali.co.uk.

Many of you may have noticed that the website has not been updated too much this month, this is due to some major gremlins creating havoc within my main computer and at present I am struggling with an old laptop, which has its moments.



THE REFERENDUM about the Parish Council of Icklesham, Rye Harbour, Winchelsea and Winchelsea Beach will take place NEXT THURSDAY JULY 27th. All qualified electors will be able to say 'yes' or 'no' to the following question "Does your ward wish your ward to become a separate parish?" The polling station is ICKLESHAM MEMORIAL HALL which will be open from 4pm to 9pm. The other three wards use their halls at the same time.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO VOTE IN THIS PARISH POLL.

The meeting when Councillor Richard Comotto proposed this poll was on June 26 and Rother District Council was obliged to hold the referendum within 14 to 25 days. This explains the short notice. Mr Comotto leads a group of some of the residents of Winchelsea who wish Winchelsea to be a separate parish council. The questionnaire, which has been distributed to all households - and some organisations in the parish - is still valid and should be returned to Rother by August 25. These will help Rother District Council in the decision which it must make.

Rye Observer 21/7/06