

**OBSERVER MAIL****Historic opportunity**

THE residents of Winchelsea have received yet another anonymous flyer from the royal or schizophrenic individual proclaiming himself to be the 'Silent Majority of Winchelsea', warning us of the apocalypse that the proposed restructuring of Icklesham Parish would bring.

The fact is the current parish is oversized and outdated, created as it was at a time when Rye Harbour and Winchelsea Beach did pretty much not exist and Icklesham was much smaller.

It now has a population that is two and a half times larger than the three parishes of Iden, Playden and Rye Foreign combined.

Each of the four villages within Icklesham parish form distinct and cohesive communities, incorporating key ingredients - hall, church, pub, playing field, playground and (until recently) shop and post office.

Unlike coupled villages that are within a mile of each other, such as Pett and Pett Level, Guestling and Three Oaks or Brede and Broad Oak, the four villages are not even within close proximity of each other.

By road, Rye Harbour is closer to Rye, Playden, Rye Foreign, Iden, Peasmarsch and Udimore than to Icklesham and conversely, Icklesham is closer to Rye, Udimore, Brede, Broad Oak, Three Oaks, Guestling, Pett and Pett Level than to Rye Harbour. Ours is an artificial parish creaking at the seams.

The residents of Winchelsea, and indeed those of the three other communities, now have an historic opportunity to have their own thriving parish, allowing them to make their own decisions on local matters, rather than having them imposed on us by outside councillors.

DOMINIC MANNING  
Higham Green, Winchelsea

**Affront to democracy**

SO, Mr Kerr has had to come clean. He admits that he did not attend the meeting about which he wrote with such conviction.

But having tried to create the impression that he was there, he is now trying to claim he has been acting on behalf of friends who were 'eye witnesses'.

It is interesting to note that none of those friends was so 'distressed' that they could be bothered to complain to the council, the Standards Board, or the local newspaper.

If Mr Kerr was to attend meetings of Parish Council, then he would be entitled to pass judgement on the conduct of not only the members of the public in attendance, but also the performance of the Parish Council, which at times is an affront to common democracy.

Finally it seems that Mr Kerr has been given poor legal advice. He says that members of a jury do not have to be present at the scene of a crime.

Quite so, however a jury would be directed not to listen to 'hearsay' and to listen to the defence as well as the prosecution.

CHRIS MEARS  
Hiham Road, Winchelsea

# Winchelsea wins call for parish referendum

**WINCHELSEA residents have forced a democratic referendum on the separate parish issue**

A review is already underway with Rother District Council sending out questionnaires to every home in the parish.

This is seeking views on the proposal for Winchelsea to break away from Icklesham Parish Council and form its own council.

But some Winchelsea residents say the survey does not go far enough and every individual should have a voice.

Rother had refused demands for a referendum, but Winchelsea residents have used a provision of local government legislation to force the district council to hold a referendum on the issue.

A specially-convened parish meeting held in Winchelsea last week approved the referendum.

The district council must now hold a referendum within 14 to 25 days.

**By Andy Hemsley**

Winchelsea residents supporting an independent parish acted after the annual parish meeting in Icklesham at which Rother District Council told residents that it planned to conduct a 'household survey' rather than a referendum.

Supporters of the proposal for independent parishes say there was much disquiet at the way in which the democratic principle of 'one man, one vote' was peremptorily dismissed.

One of those involved in the campaign, Richard Comotto of Winchelsea, said "Rother originally planned to send one form to each household regardless of the number of people in that household.

"Although they agreed to include a box in the form for the number of adults in a household, they are still not allowing each person to register their own opinion on the form.

"They have also proceeded with

their contentious plan to send forms to businesses, clubs and other organisations, and even holiday-makers who happen to be staying in the area at the time of the survey.

"The inclusion of businesses and other organisations also means some residents have received more than one form. Some people have six forms and a say in several others! Even the Digital Photography Club and the Winchelsea Singers have got forms.

"The district council has extended the franchise in a haphazard and reckless manner.

"I am sure they will not be doing the same for the election of district councillors.

"There is also much unhappiness about what relative weighting Rother will give to opinions from different types of respondent. The review process appears very murky.

"A survey analysed behind closed doors by unelected officials is exposed to the risk of being fudged to produce the result desired by a few influential

people, whereas a referendum is an exact measure of the popular will. It is vital people have confidence in the review and confidence requires transparency. A referendum will provide an objective reference point for the review."