

EWHURST: THE PARISH

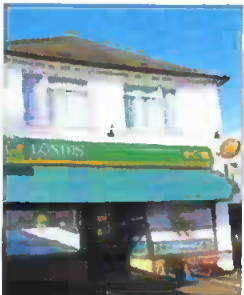
Stone Age civilisation was emerging in our country 5000 years ago in the form of primitive settlements. We cannot know whether Ewhurst Parish, as we now know it, started then or somewhat later. We do know that the arrival of the Romans (and their later departure) and the Saxons – and the 1066 Norman invasion - were key moments in our parish history and its development.

Although Harold did not prepare a Parish Plan for us, he did survey and publish an inventory of this region, *The Domesday Book*, for taxation purposes. Planning of our parish commenced with the defined ownership of land, evolving over a period of more than a thousand years, and building of homes and places of work, farm houses etc - generally in groups - now marked out as parishes with village centres. Establishment through desire lines for the passage of pedestrians, horse drawn carts and cars through creating footways and roads, generally around field and ownership boundaries, formed what we now see today.

The quietude of village life was last threatened by the outbreak of World War 2. Geographically on the front line for defence of our kingdom, it is said that German occupation of East Sussex would have reached Hawkhurst by tea time on the first day of invasion! The action of the Battle of Britain did take part over the villages here and was witnessed by many from day today. Our local 'Dad's Army' stood by throughout those years for an invasion that never happened.



Like other parishes, Ewhurst has experienced post war development which insidiously eroded the natural cohesion of village life. The arrival of supermarkets in nearby towns, increased use of the motor car (with reduced public transport), infill development of modern housing and the arrival of 'newcomers', reorganisation of education arrangements, declining church attendance, home working, diversification of farm property use and farm mechanisation all gradually changed the nature of our parish. Certainly none of this was 'planned'.



The relentless march of modernisation for local government finally introduced the idea of Parish Plans, or put another way 'perhaps we should listen to the electorate before deciding how to spend money on things they may not want!'

On the positive side, the parish has several active community organisations, has retained its village shop and post office, has enjoyed the competent management of its public footpath system - and established planning development control procedures that, in theory, prevents house building on any piece of land outside of the settlement areas.

Consultation for the Parish Plan began in 2007 and after a brief pause continued through 2009, now ready and published. The invitation to consult and respond through a distributed questionnaire to just over 400 households with over 1000 residents produced a response of 8%. Although this may seem a small percentage our council felt that it was positive, bearing in mind that usually only two or three members of the public attend monthly parish council meetings.

The Plan – which will be reviewed formally annually – is not the sole preserve of the parish council. Although it will guide the council's work, taking forward the 'actions' (rooted in the community's needs and aspirations) will require also the participation of our parishioners, community groups and other statutory bodies.

Robin Redsull