



THE CHARING PARISH APPRAISAL



CHARING • CHARING HEATH • WESTWELL LEACON

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THE CHARING PARISH APPRAISAL 2000/2001

INTRODUCTION

In March 2000 the parish council held an open meeting to find out if there would be any interest in setting up a parish appraisal, David Terry, of the Kent Rural Community Council, was the guest speaker. He explained that the objectives of an appraisal are to evaluate what assets the parish has and to establish specific areas of need, concern and aspiration.

A good deal of enthusiasm was shown and those at the meeting were asked to fill in forms if they were willing to assist in any way. The parish council selected a cross section of volunteers and these formed a committee. Their inaugural meeting was held on May 31st 2000.

It took many meetings and much discussion to select a manageable 56 questions from the 324 contained on the Village Appraisal computer programme. Sadly, 56 questions proved too many for some villagers who gave up part way through the questionnaire! 1157 copies of the questionnaire were delivered and 678 (57%) were returned.

Thanks to all those who helped by delivering and collecting the booklets, and to those who filled them in.

The Parish of Charing has much to commend it. It has bus services, a railway station, a good range of shops, a modern library, three churches, a primary school, a new surgery and many clubs and societies. However, we cannot be complacent with what we have. There is always room for improvement and the completed questionnaires have shown the committee what *you* want. It is hoped that the various bodies who can now help the parish fulfil its aspirations are willing to help.

This document has been produced from the analysis of the questionnaire. It has been sent to the parish and borough councils, Kent County Council and the Kent Constabulary. We now await their comments.

THE CHARING PARISH APPRAISAL COMMITTEE

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CHARING PARISH COUNCIL

by chairman, Tylden Reed.

Charing Parish Council was set up in its present form in 1894 and has seen many changes since then. We are represented at borough level by two borough councillors but that may change with alterations to the parish boundaries.

All parish councils strive to do their best for their electors and we are no exception. We live in the parish and are always meeting and chatting with parishioners and would like to think that we know what the electors want and, where possible, we provide it. This hit and miss method of gathering the views of the parish has been the only way until now.

Never before in Charing has a parish appraisal been undertaken. We, the parish council and parishioners of Charing, Charing Heath and Westwell Leacon, will gain an enormous amount of information from the appraisal. Your council will, for the first time, know where the weaknesses and needs are and where the greatest effort should be concentrated.

Your parish council has been working to make the highways in the parish safer and has been in touch regularly with Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council. For the first time we can prove that 63% of respondents want something done about the A20 crossroads. This will give your council more ammunition when we next meet the borough and county councils.

68% believe that we should have more starter homes, sheltered accommodation and housing associations. This gives a strong argument for your council to continue with its policy of promoting such housing.

Communication seems to be a problem with 18% of respondents thinking that the parish council publicises its decisions and activities badly. We have, for the past year, issued a quarterly newsletter to every household. We publicise our minutes in the Charing column of the *Kentish Express* and they can also be found on the Charing web site at charing.net. We have several notice boards around the parish and, from time to time, use the parish magazine.

We are concerned that the parish keeps its identity and does not become a dormitory town of Ashford. If it should grow it should do so sympathetically and keep its historical values.

The whole parish should be grateful to the few who have worked extremely hard to enable this document to be published. Sheila Cowdry and her small committee have spent months raising funds to pay for the project, compiling the questionnaire, distributing it, collecting it and putting the data into the computer. The design, printing and publishing also took many hours. Thank you Sheila and your Parish Appraisal Committee.

Charing Parish Council also thanks the parishioners who returned the questionnaires. Without your interest the document could not have been written. Thank you all.

It is now up to your parish council and others to use the information enclosed to make our parish an even better place in which to live.

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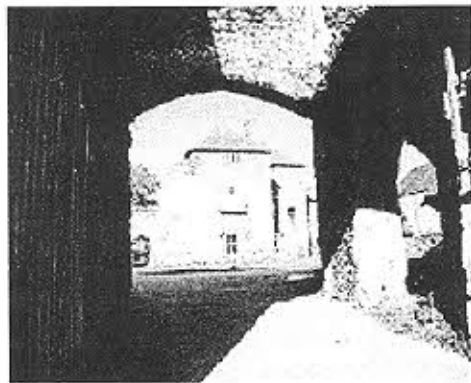
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Charing Parish Council

A SHORT HISTORY OF CHARING



The remains of the Archbishop's Palace.

'In the Domesday Book, the male population was 65, of whom 12 were unfree'



An early print of the Market Place



Elizabethan Court in the High Street, formerly The Swan Inn.

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The name *Charing* has been spelt in various ways. The origin is obscure, but may have been named after early settlers. The village lies on the spring line below the North Downs, where ancient trackways running east to west - wrongly named *The Pilgrim's Way* since Victorian times - were crossed by one of the north-south drove roads to the Wealden forest.

The settlement has always been a stopping-off point between London and the coast and today the A20, M20, railway and CTRL all pass through the parish.

The place first appears in recorded history in the 8th century when Egbert II, King of Kent, gave the manor of Charing to the Church at Canterbury for the use of the archbishops. The remains of their 14th century palace still survive.

Subsidiary manors in the vicinity of the village, such as Pett and those in Charing Heath, were created by the archbishops for knights who had performed military service.

The parish church, on the site of a Saxon predecessor, dates mainly from the 13th century. The splendid Kentish tower is 15th century and the nave roof, burnt in 1590, was replaced at the expense of the parishioners. At the Reformation the manor reverted to the Crown and was sold by Charles I in 1629. It was purchased by Sir George Wheler in 1692, and Mr Granville Wheler, now living in Otterden, is still the lord of the manor.

There was a market at the palace gate which was replaced in the 15th century by timber-framed shops in the High Street. The only property to retain its medieval appearance, Peirce House, was built by the Brents in the 15th century and eventually passed to the Sayers of Pett who allowed the aged and homeless to live there, rent free.

During the 18th century several fine brick houses were erected and turnpike roads created the need for large coaching inns like the Swan, now Elizabethan Court, and the King's Head.

In 1761 Elizabeth Ludwell of Ludwell House bequeathed money for the salary of a school master. During the 19th century the school was in Old School House, but moved to purpose-built premises in 1873.

In 1900 Charing was a, more or less, self-sufficient community with around 20 shops. The railway arrived in 1884, and the parish hall was built in 1897. Forty-two men from the parish were killed in World War I, and nine in World War II.

The 20th century saw the building of several new estates, a new library, and a well-equipped health centre. Westwell Leacon was incorporated into the parish in the 1950s.

In the Domesday Book the male population was 65, of whom 12 were unfree. In 1664 there were 170 households, by 1891 the population of the parish was 1906 and today it stands at 2239 in 1184 households.

CHARING HEATH

Charing Heath lies one and a half miles due west of Charing village on the sandy soils of the Greensand Ridge. Historically, the Greensand was used for commons, both at Charing Heath, Raywood and Westwell Leacon. Recently, the sand has been commercially extracted, and the quarries are seeking to expand.

In the Middle Ages, four of the sub-manors of Charing lay in this area; Burleigh, Newlands, Brockton and Tramhatch. Both Burleigh and Newlands had small chapels and fine 12th century remains survive at Newlands.

It is an area of mixed farming with arable, pasture and some orchards, originally worked from isolated farmsteads, many of whose timber-framed houses date from the 15th century. Several smaller houses survive from the 16th and 17th centuries. There was a brickworks at Tile Lodge from the 17th century.

Before the turnpike, a main road from Lenham to Ashford passed through Charing Heath, crossed by numerous drove roads from the downs to the Weald.

The common, bounded by Church Hill and Egerton Road, was enclosed in 1868, although part remains as the recreation ground. Shortly afterwards, the church, school and vicarage were built on former common land. The school has now closed and the church is united with Charing and Little Chart.

The 1840 Tithe map has 30 dwellings. By 1891 the population was 592. Today it is 334.

The M20 motorway and Channel Tunnel Rail Link have cut off the southern part of the parish, and this area has recently been transferred to the parish of Egerton.

WESTWELL LEACON

Westwell Leacon derives its name from 'the well in the west' and 'Leacon' meaning 'a kitchen garden'. Until the 1940's, the area formed part of the parish of Westwell and a map, dated 1769, shows that Westwell Leacon was almost the same size as Charing.

Originally a heath, surrounded by cottages some, like Leacon Farm and Walnut Tree Cottage, are still standing. It was granted common land status in 1857 and there was a shop in Leacon Lane until the early 1950's.



Village focal point - The Red Lion at Charing Heath.

'The 1840 Tithe map has 30 dwellings. By 1891 the population was 592'.



Leacon Lane looking towards the A20

