

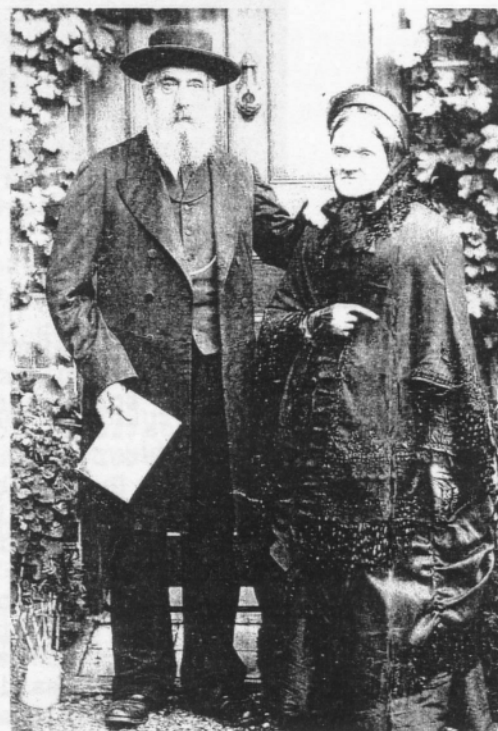
BUTLEY PARISH COUNCIL - BUGGINS' TURN

My interest in local history began a decade before I went on a course on the subject, because I like to know why things happen, or don't happen. Thus, as will be seen below, I was keen to discover why people were so apathetic about parish politics in the recent past when I became chairman of Butley, Wantisden and Capel St Mary Parish Council in 1979. The ordinary people of the village did not take advantage of the emancipation offered by the Local Government Act of 1894. They were apathetic from the outset, only two parishioners attending the first parish meeting, they being the foremost farmer, soon to become chairman, and the future clerk. The pinnacle of interest in parish government occurred in 1899 when six parishioners attended. Politics continued to be a public house affair, and parish meetings only came alive when there was something to celebrate such as coronations or jubilees.

The seven councillors elected in 1894 consisted of two farmers, William Durrant of Neutral Farm and Robert Foulcher of High Corner Farm, the blacksmith Edward Burch, the grocer Wesley Hazelwood, the bailiff at Abbey Farm, George Rule, William Large the carpenter and one agricultural labourer, Samuel Last, who was also clerk to the church. Evidence of some pre-arranged plan seems to emerge from the first minutes in which it was noted that, "in the absence of the intended chairman, WW Estaugh Esq, the chair was occupied by Mr RN Foulcher". Early in 1895 Councillor Large handed in his resignation and Mr Estaugh, the farmer at the Abbey, was asked to fill the vacancy and he was then elected chairman. Mr Large subsequently became clerk at a salary of two pounds a year. Only once were there more nominations than places on the council. This was in 1904, when there were eleven. It would seem that for many decades membership of the parish council was, to all intents and purposes, by invitation. In due course Sir Peter Greenwell became chairman of the council and remained so for many years. I moved to the village in May 1972 and heard that the annual parish meeting was to consider the amalgamation of Butley with Chillesford, Capel and Wantisden to form a single council. My wife and I persuaded a long-time resident, Steve Pallant, to accompany us to the meeting. It was normal for Sir Peter, after the council meeting, to throw open the door of the village hall so that parishioners could come in for the open meeting. For years nobody had stood waiting to go in, so it was with surprise that he greeted the three of us. Eventually Chillesford decided to stay a separate council, but the other three agreed to combine, with Butley electing six councillors, Capel two and Wantisden one.

In April 1976 I was invited by Alan Wallace to take his place on the council. He hoped an election could be avoided, but it transpired a further new candidate had been proposed and an election was necessary. Not surprisingly, nobody knew the procedures since there hadn't been an election for over seventy years. Not even William Large (born 1881), whose father or grandfather was the clerk in 1895, knew whether election notices were sent out or if canvassing was 'the done thing'. The three William Large's were distinguished by the appendages 'Wiggy' and 'Young Wiggy' applied to the two youngest. The father wore a 'legal wig' to cover his baldness. In the event I used a John Bull rubber stamp set to produce some cards saying 'Vote for Vic Harrup' and left them in the pub. Fewer than thirty turned out to vote and I was elected by one vote. Sir Peter died suddenly in December 1978, and Mr Large took over until the following year when I was elected chairman. It was during this time that I looked at the parish council minutes and found I might have been 'Buggins' whose turn it was to succeed Alan Wallace in 1976.

Vic Harrup



William Large 1814-1898 and Eliza Cooper 1820-1896. He was a builder and wheelwright by trade and Baptist Pastor at Sutton & Sudbourne