

## Council History

### **Ferring Parish Council: Business in the Early Years (1919-1934).**

*The time had arrived for making application to the County Authority for the formation of a Parish Council*, was the suggestion put forward at the Ferring Annual Parish Meeting of 24<sup>th</sup>. March, 1919.

The main catalyst for this proposal arose from frustration with the various council and corporate bodies over the poor condition and lack of adequate maintenance of the footpath leading to Goring Station, which ‘had caused such a difficulty to the Parish over a considerable period’. The Chairman reported that he had ‘communicated to the County Council regarding repair of same’ and had been referred to East Preston Rural District Council, who in turn referred him to the Railway Co. Although appearing co-operative initially, the Railway Company eventually repudiated liability for repair although admitting the land was the Company’s property.

This proposal was duly carried and a bid subsequently submitted. The bid was successful and a special Parish Meeting was called specifically for the election of five Parish Councillors for Ferring. This was to be held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup>. September, 1919 (*more details on these events are contained in the companion article ‘The Evolution of Ferring Parish Council’*).

Following the election, the date of Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 1919, was set for the **first Ferring Parish Council meeting**.

It was at the inaugural meeting, that Mr. G. Penfold (farmer and now Parish Councillor) was asked by the Council to supervise the ‘making up and improving of that (footpath) leading to Goring station’. This first decisive action of the newly formed council was carried out on the Ferring section of the path prior to the next F.P.C. meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup>. March, 1920. It was then resolved to approach Goring Council to carry out repairs on the remaining section.

Over the years, issues relating to Footpaths, Building Development and also the impacts of the increasing prevalence of private motor vehicles have persisted.

#### **Footpaths.**

The maintenance and repair of footpaths became a perennial topic in the business of Ferring Parish Council. Not only the ‘Station’ path but also the ‘Bull’ path required almost constant maintenance (the Bull path would have followed the line of today’s Little Twitten footpath and the still surviving sections continuing east into Goring). As there was no seafront road or Goring Way linking Sea Lane, Ferring to Goring, these would have been a much-used paths. Throughout the 1920s, questions about the maintenance of footpaths, stiles and bridges were frequently raised. There were various letters between F.P.C. and the Rural District Council with the R.D.C. eventually stating that they did not recognise any responsibility for the repair of footpaths (despite having carried out some of the earlier repairs). Progress has

subsequently been made in the recording of public paths and the council departments responsible for their upkeep. Issues persist, however, as budget constraints currently mean there is insufficient resource to maintain them as effectively as would be desired by the Parish.

### **Development.**

1920 saw repeated approaches by F.P.C. to the R.D.C. in regard to the erection of a cottage for the schoolmistress, “for which an adequate rent would be paid”. It was also suggested that there would be no difficulty in letting an additional house if the two were built together and that the matter was urgent. However, there does not appear to be any evidence that this ever came to fruition.

As development increased between W.W.1 and W.W.2 and while additional ‘cottages’ (council houses) had been sought for the village, not all of the new developments were considered, by the council, to be favourable. An agenda item at the F.P.C. meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> March, 1926 referred to “the erection of unsightly buildings now becoming prevalent in the village”. It is likely that this referred to some of the self-build properties being erected in the south of the village and the council moved to call upon the R.D.C. “to assist through the Planning Act to uphold the character of Building in the district”.

The January, 1927 parish council minutes record that a letter had been received from the R.D.C. enquiring if there was a need for cottages to be erected by the council in Ferring and if so, how many? The parish council pointed out that the R.D.C. had already proposed four to be built in the near future but, nevertheless, duly requested a further 6 cottages. These were eventually built in Langbury Lane.

The area now known as the Southern Gap between Ferring and Goring would also have been developed for housing but for the intervention of W.W.2. The initial roads laid for access are still in use.

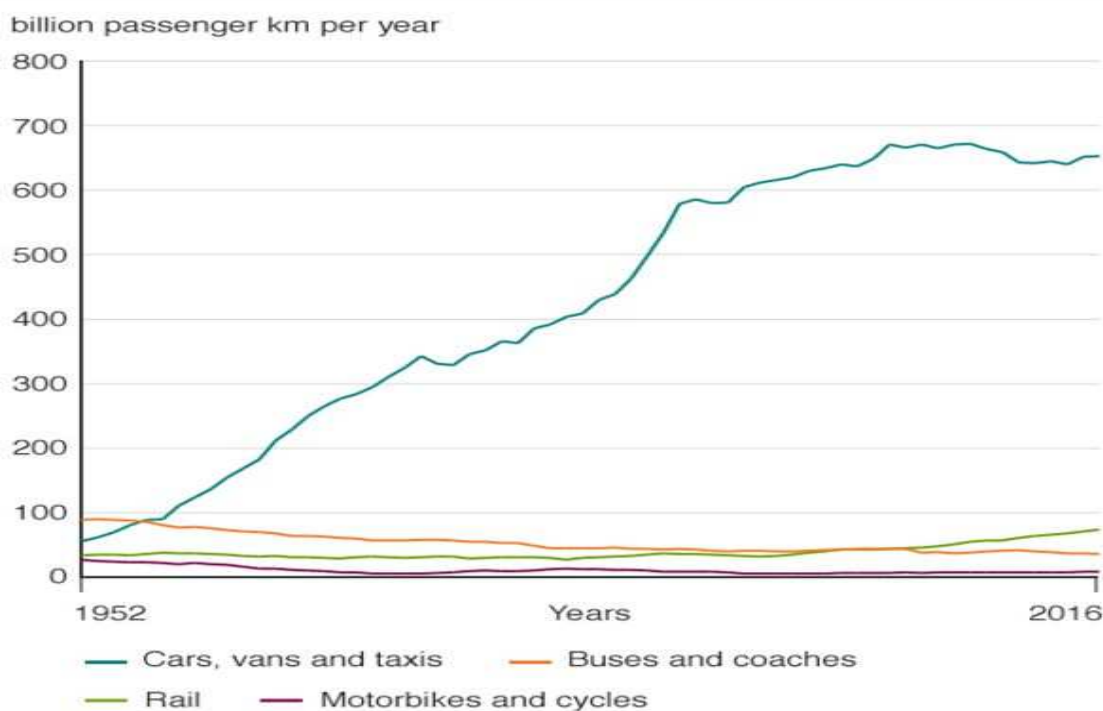
At this time, the Parish Council would have had no direct input on building development, nor was there a Ferring Conservation Group to lobby on planning matters, on behalf of its considerable membership, as it does today. Parish Councils only became statutory consultees following the 1972 Local Government Act. The struggle against inappropriate development continues with increased vigour as the pressure from developers and some householders, intensifies to build on almost any piece of land, extend existing properties outward and upward and wrest agricultural land from its intended purpose. Increased private car usage, the internet and the consequential changes in retail shopping habits, have impacted considerably on village shops and businesses in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Many business units are changing classification of commercial use or being converted to residential properties.

### **Private Cars.**

Perhaps a surprising, and persistent problem is that it was as far back as the early 1920s that car parking in Ferring has caused concern. A particular ‘hot-spot’ then for “indiscriminate parking” was the southern end of Sea Lane (there was no seafront continuation of the road towards Goring at that time). The F.P.C meeting of 17<sup>th</sup>. July 1928, records that matters had become so bad that the Superintendent of Police at Arundel responded to a letter from F.P.C. by arranging for a Police Officer to be at Sea Lane when cars arrived at the weekend. The

generally increasing number of private vehicles also brought an increasing number of “trippers” to Ferring, resulting in some reports of what was considered to be inappropriate behaviour. This included large groups gathering by the groins on the beach at the bottom of people’s gardens and one report on file of a man “inadequately clad”. The level of disturbance and to what degree the man was inadequately clad is not recorded in the minute book. The reports of such incidents extended beyond Ferring Parish Council and required the Chief Constable, in 1929, to inform the Standing Joint Committee of the County Council that he would endeavour to arrange for improved Police supervision at Ferring during the summer months. The parking issues in particular were just a foretaste of what was to come with the rapid increase in private car ownership, particularly from the 1950s to the turn of the century.

## Road and rail travel since 1952



Source: Department for Transport

BBC

### Utilities.

**Electricity:** It was at the parish council meeting of 19<sup>th</sup>. March 1926, that a matter was raised “with regard to Electric Current for Ferring”. The Parish Council had received a letter from the Worthing Town Clerk in which it was stated that “the Electricity Company intimated that they proposed to confer upon several parishes in the Preston R.D., including Ferring, to supply electricity”. No doubt a welcome announcement!

**Gas:** It is with some nostalgic reflection on corporate culture that I add a note here from the minutes of the 17<sup>th</sup>. July 1928 meeting of the parish council. The Littlehampton Gas Co. confirmed its decision to progress with the laying of mains supply to Ferring, but that on account of the summer season, “and not desiring to interfere with the comfort of visitors during August”, the work would commence in September.

**Refuse:** Following a lengthy campaign (rat infestations and other related health issues had repeatedly been raised over recent years) for regular household waste collections, the April 1929 parish council meeting records a request from the R.D.C. for an apportioned cost contribution. For Ferring, this would be £95.5s towards “the purchase of land in Roundstone Lane, for the purpose of home refuse” (disposal), at a price £870. This was agreed and a contract was awarded for household refuse collections, including Ferring, to commence 1<sup>st</sup>. April 1930.

The late 1920’s saw significant advancement in supplies of services to Ferring but as the 1930’s dawned, there was still no immediate prospect of mains drainage (properties still being reliant on cesspits). This was an argument put forward by some for becoming part of Worthing, such a move being considered to offer a greater chance of early connection to mains drainage. Despite this, such a merger (or perhaps ‘take-over’ would be more apt, as it would mean the end of the Parish Council) continued to be resisted.

**Ferring-by-Sea:** 1934 saw a proposal by the Post Office to change the name of Ferring to Ferring - by - Sea. As a Parish Meeting was to be held in June to elect two additional Parish Councillors (taking the number from 5 to 7 councillors), it was decided to address the issue at that meeting. Some of those present supported the proposal, arguing that “with bad writing Ferring might easily be mistaken for Tarring” (reported in the Worthing Gazette). There were, however, concerns that such a name change could identify the village as a resort destination and attract even more cars and ‘trippers’. This was probably born from the parking and inappropriate behaviour issues raised in the preceding years, seen as a direct consequence of the already increasing number of trippers coming to Ferring. It was suggested by Col. Weekes that the name should remain unchanged and “put to the vote, this was carried by a big majority”.

Information for this article has been taken from various sources including the parish council minute books, held at the West Sussex Record Office, archive newspaper reports and with thanks to Ed. Miller for records held by Ferring History Group.

Stephen Abbott, Ferring History Group. October,2019