

## **Pearl's memories on retirement from Eriswell Parish Council**

I have always enjoyed recording Eriswell life and looking back through the years I have been a Parish Councillor and the memories. A little history of Eriswell Parish Council: The first meeting was held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 1894, 7 councillors in the opening meeting and since 1948 they have been elected by secret ballot. There have been 8 chairmen; Mr W. Lock serving for 31 years. I was the first woman to hold the office, which I have done for the last 14 years. There have been 76 councillors to date and I have worked with 26 of those members. Mrs S. Brunning was the first woman councillor and only 4 in the first 100 years; things have changed since.

I joined the council in May 1973. Mr King was then the Clerk. He wished for his salary to be increased but members refused his request so he immediately resigned. Mary Crane took the position in 1976 until she left the area in 2011 when Bob became our Clerk.

Our electoral roll number has now reached 552 - only 120 for most of my time. 80 houses in the village and now swollen to over 500 since the sale of Lords Walk houses which RAF Lakenheath no longer leased. Sadly, they have few amenities and the County Council and Forest Heath have been made aware of all its needs. Many of the residents did not realise they actually live in Eriswell.

When these houses were built £7,000 was raised in the then rating system and we were able to build a bus shelter and provide footpath lights being a rich village. 1990's brought the advent of the community charge and council tax, reducing our income and then having to request a precept. The precept is the amount needed to pay for all the needs of the village and is now over £11,000.

Speeding has been a constant subject at all meetings! Drive carefully signs, 40mph (eventually reduced to 30mph). We supported Holywell Row for 40mph along the C102. At our last meeting the council agreed a proposal to look into requesting for the 30mph to be extended from Sparkes Corner to Lords Walk roundabout after numerous accidents and two fatalities along that small stretch of road.

Church Corner has also featured in many incidents; walls being knocked down, the Reading Room porch demolished, electric poles being knocked down and houses hit. The War Memorial hit 8 times. I have fought to get improvements having met with the Highways Department Officer but to no avail. Rumble strips, give way islands, with appropriate traffic lights was his solution, but there is no money available. This corner is not recorded by the county council as an accident blackspot as there have been no serious injuries there thank goodness! In the Parish council history the corner was giving concern in 1910! We are lucky having numerous speed checks by the police and the speed van is often at the Volvo Garage : BEWARE!

My first memory on the council was the task of walking to claim our footpaths and bridleways. Footpath No. 6 originally enabled us to walk through the middle of the base to the main gate. In 2003 it was completely rediverted for security reasons. We have a map of the footpaths at the entrance to the farm shop.

Eriswell adopted an emergency plan in 2006; the first village to do so in Forest Heath. Mrs Leech and I spent hours preparing it as everything imaginable was included. This is now out of date and we are awaiting what requirements are now needed for a modern emergency plan. The only emergency I was called to was to water and feed the firemen dealing with the large fire on the old asbestos piggery in little London. Luckily the wind kept the smoke from houses so no evacuation was necessary.

I have seen road improvement A1065/B1112, B1102/ C102 Lords Walk roundabout and of course the A11 underpass. Traffic light plans were submitted for A1065 / B1102 but never materialised. The council requested a footpath in front of the houses at Little Eriswell but the contractors misread the plans and came towards the village but suddenly stopped when the mistake was realised!



Today we need it to be completed to join the village to Lords Walk.....perhaps one day money will be available! Noticeboards have been erected at Little Eriswell, Sparkes Farm and Lords Walk and a proposed one to be erected in Radcliffe Road. The Square Notice Board was placed in memory of Mr B. Lambert our chairman who was killed in a road accident in 1980.

It has been sad to see so many closures – our village post-office in 1993 still empty today, cessation of the bus service to the centre of the village, paper deliveries, closure of the village school in 1972 having 100 pupils but 90% American, no modern toilet facilities and the base was building its own schools. Farm buildings became obsolete and are now used as Hairdressers, Antique Shop and Car Sales Garage. The Methodist Chapel became redundant and was converted to a home.

The large planning application for Lords Walk housing was submitted and the field was a mass of poppies before the builders moved in. Roebuck public house and cottages were demolished and replaced by bungalows and now, new homes.

2005 saw another outline plan for houses at Little Eriswell and people were invited to give their views and objections. No further news of this to date. Numerous plans for RAF Lakenheath as most of the buildings are in the parish of Eriswell.

In 2008 Radio Suffolk had a “Don’t Be A Tosser” campaign and from that date we have carried out an annual litter pick. In 2008 we collected 51 bags and received a certificate from Radio Suffolk. Hopefully, volunteers will enable a litter pick to be done this year. Many thanks to Mr Dawson, who I’m sure you will have seen collecting rubbish between the A1065 and the Reading Room.

Outdoor activities have always been supported, 1972 seeing the first swings and slide arrive from the school closure and updates of play equipment have taken place in 1973, 1993 and 2009 now providing a modern play area. But sadly the two caretakers are no longer there and a volunteer is desperately needed to keep the grass cut. 1986 saw the opening of the changing rooms. 1980 we all worked hard to prepare a lawn tennis court and the Parish Council provided a fence. Sadly we no longer have football teams using the facilities, which are not up to the standard they now require. The tennis club folded as the youth grew older and left the village and we older members found it too exhausting to cut the grass and then play. The playing field was passed to a management committee.

The council has held two village appraisals during my years when people gave the council their views. 2007 Eriswell was the winner of Best Small Village in Forest Heath and we received a plaque and a cheque for £250. Unfortunately the plaque had a fall and I haven’t been able to reconstruct the insignia to date.

I love to see trees and we joined the Plant a Tree scheme (1973 to 1994) receiving 10 trees a year from Forest Heath. 51 trees have survived in Roepits lane, also trees were planted around the playing field and the large Cypress hedge – what a struggle to keep it alive.

As a council we have always had the RAF Commander Lakenheath keeping us informed of the base happenings and we said farewell to Gary Neild after 11 years at our January meeting. I recall such enjoyable visits to the base, viewing the planes, sitting in on the Pilots briefing, being on the flight line trying to guess the height of the jets as they zoomed over our heads, the control tower and dark room seeing all the planes in our sky. I attended several civic receptions; delicious food, but always having to stand with food and drink – quite a balancing act.

I have always enjoyed helping with celebrations which the council always supported. For the 1977 Queens Silver Jubilee a blue Cedar was planted in Church Farm Meadow, the children had a party in the Reading Room and each received a mug and the adults had a meal and dance in Chamberlains Barn. In 1981 Prince Charles and Diana’s wedding was celebrated with a meal and dance and I remember making a large wedding



cake for the event. 1986 saw the anniversary of the Domesday Book and I did the report for Eriswell submitting it to be included in the 1986 Domesday Report. 1992 for the Queen's Ruby Anniversary a tree was planted in the playing field by Mrs Alice Woods, the oldest resident. In 1993 12 trees were planted in a ring in the playing field by children to mark our entrance into the Common Market whilst in 1996 the Council supported the Eriswell Festival which was a great success. In 1995 VE/VJ celebration saw gates being made by councillor David King for the new churchyard extension.

At the Millenium, grants were obtained for floodlights for the church, a video was produced of the history of Eriswell and a copy given to every household, a village sign was erected, a wildlife garden and orchard set on the side of the playing field. Eriswell took part in the Millenium Village 22 Book and as the history recorder I prepared a book of houses in 2000, diary of Roepits Lane and a village school history.

In 2004 the council celebrated 110 years and we were presented with a cake, Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee celebration included a picnic, exhibition of 60 years in Eriswell, planting of a tree and a large bonfire on the playing field joining in the beacons across the realm. Diamond Jubilee coins were given to the 17 children in the village. We also marked the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ending of the 1939/45 war with recollections from residents. The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first world war was marked by finding out where all those named on our monument lived and were buried and this information was put in a book. For the Queens 90<sup>th</sup> birthday a new seat was put by the wildlife garden.

I certainly enjoyed all these events. There have been difficult times; the education committee decided to charge our children to travel to Mildenhall schools. I joined with a few other people and we lobbied our councillor at County Hall Ipswich, but the motion was passed. However, having 3 children I insisted on meeting a council member at Sparkes Corner and asked them to walk with me to Mildenhall, but immediately realised it was far too busy for children to walk and our case was classed as an anomaly. Free transport was won for our children.

A large planning application was submitted for extra base housing and sports facilities which would have engulfed the village. As the Parish Council objected I had to attend the enquiry but the base said these were not required and the plans were not passed. The council objected to the closure of Lords Walk Road, but on the withdrawal of the support from the COUNTY Council Highways saying this was not an essential Road we voted to withdraw the objection. I objected on behalf of the Church and went to the enquiry but security won the day. Eriswell was offered and received highway lighting in compensation for the extra traffic.

The most outstanding memories of my time on the Parish Council was being nominated by fellow members for the Suffolk Acre Campbell Cup for service to the village and being presented with it in 2007. And then in 2011 my name was chosen to attend the Queens Civic Garden Party. I shall always remember walking through the Palace Gates into the Palace and out into the garden, the Duke of Edinburgh making his usual witty remarks as he spoke to people.

I have enjoyed these years representing the village at many meetings, but unfortunately age creeps up and after my 46 years, modern technology has overtaken the pen. As I see empty houses being revamped and occupied and all our new residents at Lords Walk, it is my hope that Eriswell will become a vibrant and united community and I offer my best wishes to the new council that will be formed after the May Elections.

I hope I shall still be able to come and listen to its meetings, as I hope to continue to record the Parishes history a little longer.

Many thanks to Bob and my fellow councillors who have supported me throughout the years.

Farewell.

12 MARCH 2019  
Annual General Meeting