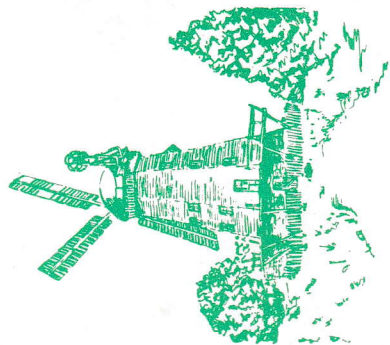




“THE WATCHDOG ON LOCAL AFFAIRS”

**A HISTORY OF
THE RATEPAYERS' ASSOCIATION
IN UPMINSTER AND CRANHAM**

“THE WATCHDOG ON LOCAL AFFAIRS”

FOREWORD

Our title is taken from a slogan used by the Upminster Ratepayers' Association in the early post-war years and as Ken Moore, who was its Secretary from 1941 to 1951, puts it, “Today, vigilance is probably more vital for there are those about us—who if they see the watchdog sleeping—will steal the bone and probably the kennel as well.”

Until recently no-one has attempted to write a history of the Upminster and Cranham Ratepayers' and Residents' Association, but now our first President, Sid Pollard has decided to fill the gap, and with the aid of some material supplied by Ken Moore and Ian Wilkes has set down this chronicle of the Association's affairs.

Following a ward boundary revision in 1959 the two separate Upminster and Cranham Associations merged in order to avoid dividing old loyalties and, to complete the history, Handley Longworth has contributed the material on Cranham as Sid's review is mainly concerned with events in Upminster.

A series of historic notes on Upminster published between 1957 and 1962, under the title “The Story of Upminster” quotes an article in the Daily News some time in 1907 which contained these words: “Two years ago (1905) a few busibodies established a Ratepayers' Association which meets once a month and passes pious resolutions for the betterment of the village so they say, and their secretary writes pious letters to the various authorities but so far they have been quite harmless.”

In the early years of this century, Upminster was just beginning its expansion from a village into a populous suburb, and there was a cleavage of opinion between the older-established residents who were proud of their village and wanted it to expand in the best possible way into a first class residential area, and the new arrivals from higher-rated areas in London who wanted Upminster's rates kept down, even if it meant holding back improvement of services. From the outset the Upminster Ratepayers' Association appears to have represented the former viewpoint.

It has not been possible to trace back the foundation of the Cranham Association beyond 1938. Unlike Upminster, which was a village which expanded, Cranham was for centuries a scattered agricultural parish with no village centre, and even as recently as 1901 a population of only 397. Its great expansion to its present size where its population exceeds that of Upminster has been in the years since the second world war.

I am greatly honoured in this seventy-fifth year of the Association's existence to have been invited to introduce its history. No-one pretends that if the Ratepayers' Association ceased to exist, Upminster and Cranham would come to an end, but they would have lost an entity which has contributed immeasurably to their quality of life in this twentieth century.

GEOFFREY LEWIS,

(Editor of “THE BULLETIN”).

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The first record we have of an Upminster "Residents' Association" is from 1865 when a local branch of the Association for the Apprehension of Felons and the Preservation of Property was founded; this was still in existence in 1870, but faded out some time thereafter.

With the creation of the Upminster Parish Council and Cranham Parish Council in 1894 there came a new interest in local civic affairs, but no trace can be found of records of the formation of an organised Residents' Association until 1905, about which, it was said in 1926, there were six gentlemen then living in the town all claiming to have been the founder of the Residents' Association.

Although the Association was certainly flourishing in the 1920's and 30's—Our President, Sid Pollard recalls being at well-attended Annual General Meetings when he was a new resident of the area—many of the past records appear to have vanished (they probably went for paper salvage during the War) and we have to rely also on newspaper reports and the memories of a number of people, notably Ken Moore, who was Secretary from 1941 to 1951.

Unquestionably the largest success of the Association in the inter-war years was the backing of the Upminster Parish Council in its fight to buy the Rectory Glebe—now the Recreation Ground in Corbets Tey Road—in opposition to housing developers. The battle over the Glebe started in 1920 when the idea of the Parish Council buying the 12½ acres at a cost of £3,750 was first proposed by Councillor W. G. Key and continued until March, 1929, by which time the price had risen to £6,000, which was the equivalent of a 2p. in the £ rate on the Parish. To celebrate the purchase, the Upminster Ratepayers' Association, then chaired by Mr. Rich, donated two fir trees and helped level and re-seed the meadow.

A campaign that was lost was the long-drawn-out negotiations following a suggestion in 1915 that Upminster and Cranham be united into an Urban District Council with offices in Station Road. In 1927 the proposal was revived by a Cranham Ratepayers' group (possibly the forerunner of the present Cranham Association, but of whom we have no further information), but this was turned down by the Upminster Parish Council. Far too late in the day the Ratepayers' Association of Upminster put pressure on the Parish Council again on this subject and formal application for Urban District status was made in December, 1929, but the two parishes were absorbed from the Romford Rural District into the Hornchurch Urban District in April, 1934. This change was not welcomed by many of the residents who had been happy under the authority of the Parish and Rural District Councils, which had more nearly represented the wishes of local people than councillors in "remote" Hornchurch. In 1928 the RA-sponsored candidate for the Parish Council elections had been Mrs. Harper of Gaynes Road who was elected as the first lady Councillor.

Sid Pollard can remember his visits from East Ham as a child to the rural countryside around Upminster but, in the years following the Great War, development, which had until then been largely confined to the Champion Road area, boomed and houses, schools, shops, and a cinema covered those green fields. In 1929 at the opening of the Capitol Cinema in St. Mary's Lane, there was great excitement when Mr. J. W. Gunnell, chairman of the Parish Council and a Ratepayers' Association member, did not perform the opening ceremony in person, but made his appearance on a talking film.

The Ratepayers' Association was a non-party political organisation solely concerned with the efficient administration of Upminster and representatives on the Upminster Parish Council and, later, on the Hornchurch Urban Council were all nominees and members of the Association.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, James Bush was Secretary of the Ratepayers' Association and our Councillors were Herbert Perry, William Pettit and Alfred Salinger. When Mr. Perry retired to Devon in 1941 his place on the Council was taken by Jimmy Bush and Messrs. Bush, Pettit and Salinger remained as Ratepayer Councillors on the Hornchurch Council until after the War.

Ken Moore recalls that the immediate post-war period was vital for the Association because of the new determination of the political parties to contest local elections on National lines and we had a real battle to put teeth into the organisation to safeguard our non-party approach. However, in 1948 the Conservative party first contested the Upminster seat and their candidate, Major Sidney Collischoon—virtually unknown to the bulk of the residents—defeated the sitting Councillor Pettit. The following year the councillor seeking re-election was Jimmy Bush, who had done sterling work as a RA member and was widely respected and liked. He was again invited to stand as a nominee of the Ratepayers' Association, but, after considerable heart-searching, he decided to throw in his lot with the Conservatives. In view of his record and undoubted popularity among residents, the RA committee, in any case greatly depleted by the defection of other members to the Conservatives, decided not to contest this election and instead devoted themselves to building up a new organisation, while acting as "the watchdog on local affairs" and increasing general membership.

During the 1940's little building had taken place in the area, but in the following decade the Upminster Park Estate came into being and soon there was a new community of mainly young families, who found the usual problems—transport, shops, clinics, schools, recreation facilities—associated with new and developing districts. This proved to be a fruitful source of new membership and the committee devoted much of its administrative time to recruiting exercises with great success, adding hundreds of member households and several energetic and enthusiastic members to the committee itself.

It was not long before the new arrivals raised the question of putting up candidates for the local Council—sparked off by an editorial in the *Romford Recorder* of 5th October, 1956, under the headline "Break this monopoly". The final paragraph stated that "... every Council chamber would benefit from the presence of a few members able to take a politically unbiased view of the business before them. This would sometimes make things a little uncomfortable for one or the other of the party groups, but it would serve the community better." The committee of the Upminster Ratepayers' Association gave this matter careful consideration, the older members expressing some misgivings in the light of their experience in the late forties, but it was finally decided to conduct a referendum of the membership. This was duly carried out in October and November, 1956, and the result announced at a General Meeting on 6th December, 86% being in favour of contesting the 1957 election.

The next six months saw feverish activity by the whole committee, most of whom had never previously been engaged in electioneering and, as the date of

the election drew nearer, the Ratepayers' Association was vilified by both the political parties, being dubbed either Socialists or Communists by the Conservatives or pseudo-Conservatives by the Labour Party. When the Conservative leader told the electorate that the Ratepayers' Association was a "moribund organisation" it became obvious that the politicals were getting worried and the May election returned Alan Good, as the first of the "new" Independents, with a substantial majority.

In 1958, two vacancies in the Ward came up for election and it was decided to contest both seats. Our candidates were Ken Hay and Michael Leigh and both were duly elected with majorities of over 500—the total poll being 55.2%, the largest of all the Wards. To some of the older residents the success was tempered with a tinge of regret that it involved the defeat of Jimmy Bush who had done valuable work for the District for many years, but as our Chairman said at the time "when a principle is involved personalities have to be disregarded and the electors allowed a free choice."

During the year, a revision of Ward boundaries was undertaken and as a result the Upminster Ward lost those members living north of the railway, including the whole of the Upminster Park estate from which area so much valuable support had been derived. After much discussion it was decided to merge the Upminster and Cranham organisations, with each Ward having its own Committee.

So it was that in the 1959 election, Cranham put forward its own nominee for the Council in the person of Gordon Hancock and he was duly elected with a majority of 1,286. In the Upminster Ward our candidate, Freddie Powell, was defeated by the narrow margin of 19 votes against the retiring Conservative (ex R.A.) Councillor Alf Salinger, who had represented the Ward for many years.

It was at this election that the Rainham Ratepayers' Association contested an election for the first time. This ward was considered to be a safe Labour seat—imagine the shock when the R.A. candidate Ray Hall was returned with a majority of 647 votes. Incidentally, this ward has been held by the Ratepayers ever since—making nonsense of the Conservative propaganda that "a vote for the Ratepayer candidate is a vote for Socialism."

The fortunes of the Ratepayer movement in Hornchurch U.D.C. continued to flourish and by 1961 they comprised the largest group in the Council chamber with Councillors from Cranham, Upminster, Hacton and Rainham and, in spite of predictions that the absence of a clear majority would result in administrative chaos, we were able to claim that "the greatest service the Ratepayer Councillors have rendered this district is that they have brought a proper sense of proportion and perspective to our local government and have steered it into a channel where, on vital issues, the Council as a whole acts as one body".

So we see what can be achieved by sincerity and hard work. At the time of the first Ratepayer intervention in 1957, the composition of the Council was 22 Socialists and 8 Conservatives. By 1961, it was 12 R.A.'s, 11 Socialists, 5 Conservatives and 2 Liberals. This gives hope to those who seek to eliminate party politics from the local government arena.

Unfortunately, in 1963 another change in local government was foreshadowed, Hornchurch U.D.C. was to cease to exist and Hornchurch and Romford were to become just another Greater London Borough. Many of us did not relish the change and, with the benefit of hindsight, wish it had been

possible to opt out and remain an Essex district.

The political arena in Romford had been a bitter battleground for many years and we foresaw that we would have much difficulty in breaking new ground in such infertile soil.

In the event, the R.A. has maintained its representation very well, the one big disappointment being the loss of the Upminster Ward in 1974 to the Conservatives. In spite of this set-back, however, residents still come to us with their problems and complaints and these are dealt with through the appropriate channels and our four Cranham Councillors give valuable assistance where necessary.

Over the years "members complaints" have been a regular item on the Agenda of the monthly meetings and a glance through the "Bulletins" from 1958 onwards reminds one of some of the achievements of the Association.

One item which attracted much publicity in the National Press and the B.B.C. was in 1959 when as a result of the withdrawal of the bus service No. 249 between Corbets Tey and Upminster Station, and the refusal by the London Transport Executive to re-instate it following vigorous representations, the Committee of the Association arranged with Richard Wordworth, a local coach operator, to run a ten minute free service during peak hours. Two R.A. representatives were interviewed on the television programme "Town and Around" and further television coverage was given in Upminster itself when the "pirate" service was in operation. The L.T.E. eventually wielded the "big stick" and the coach operator was obliged to withdraw, but not before the L.T.E. instituted the 248a service during peak hours, which is still in operation.

Another matter which occasioned much anxiety arose in 1961 when a proposal was put forward to establish a southern ring road around Hornchurch. An extension of this included a suggestion that the route should run through Argyle Gardens, Cranston Park Avenue and Tawny Avenue, the latter to be extended westward to Hacton Lane.

The Association immediately contacted local residents and called a public meeting to protest at the proposed scheme. The meeting was held at the Old Windmill Hall which was filled to overflowing, many residents having to listen to the discussion at the open windows. In addition 167 individual letters were placed before the Highways Committee in protest.

The scheme was abandoned and, although it was apparent that the whole idea was ridiculous, it illustrated the necessity for the existence of a "Watchdog."

Another major item which caused much disquiet among residents was the periodic flooding which was experienced in St. Mary's Lane between the Masons' Arms and Wantz Bridge. Sid well remembers one occasion when a particularly violent storm resulted in the front gardens being completely awash. Our committee meeting at the Clock House was "invaded" by irate householders demanding action and our Councillors exerted intensive pressure on the various authorities to remedy the trouble. The solution to the problem proved to be more difficult than at first appeared and necessitated a completely new surface water drainage system, entailing long negotiations with British Rail and owners of private farmland, but eventually all the difficulties were overcome and the very large and expensive project was successfully completed, much to the relief of the residents, one of whom served on our committee until recently.

Incidentally, it is a fact that many of our recruits to the committee have been encouraged to serve as a result of efforts made on their behalf and the knowledge that we have had many "satisfied customers" has helped to sustain us over the years.

A perusal of the "Bulletin" indicates to what extent the complaints service is used by members, and indeed residents as a whole, and it is our proud boast that all matters are given careful consideration and action is taken where necessary.

The "BULLETIN" was inaugurated in the 1950's and was at first produced by a publicity service with a free issue of 1,000 copies. With the rapid growth of the Association, however, this number was quite inadequate and it became necessary to publish the magazine ourselves. This necessitated a great deal of hard work and it is a considerable achievement that we have been able to provide this news bulletin monthly without a break since February, 1958. With a circulation of more than 6,400 in Upminster and Cranham, it is obvious that much help is needed in distribution and the committee are grateful to all those who co-operate in the task.

Many of the amenities now taken for granted in Upminster stand to the credit of the Association; sometimes having been suggested by individual residents, sometimes emerging through public consultation, sometimes coming through information gleaned by Councillors, and sometimes simply by our being there to be consulted by the local authority or by developers.

Pressure for a community hall began in 1957, resulting eventually in the New Windmill Hall being opened in September, 1968, similar activity produced the Cranham Social Centre in Front Lane.

The branch library serving Cranham and Upminster was established in the Clock House in the 'thirties, but the accommodation for bookstock, reference material and staff was obviously not up to standard by 1960 when, after considerable correspondence with Essex County Council, the new library in Corbets Tey Road was inaugurated. Since then, of course, the Residents' Association has been continually engaged in the fight to preserve the Clock House, originally constructed in 1775 and part of the New Place estate. New Place itself was demolished in 1924 despite a petition organised by the Ratepayers' Association. The struggle to keep one of the few old buildings remaining from Upminster Village has now been successful.

Another battle the Ratepayers' Association lost was that of keeping the Bell Inn at the centre of the old village. In 1962 the brewers sold the property, which dated back to 1765, and developers erected the present Bell Corner despite vociferous protests from the R.A.

We have always been pleased to co-operate with other bodies and, apart from being founder members of the Hornchurch (now Havering) Central Committee of Ratepayers', Residents' and Kindred Associations, we have always supported the Committee that has kept the Emerson Park Branch railway open in spite of Beechingisation and railway accountancy.

A fairly recent example of the vigilance that characterises the Association was the scotching of a plan that might have established a camp for itinerants near the Optimist in Hacton Lane. After a crowded public meeting and harsh words in the local press, the Havering Conservative leaders announced that they never had any intention of setting up this "facility" anyway: it is useless to speculate what might have happened had not the R.A. kicked up a fuss.

To list the various other interests of the Association over recent years would require a larger booklet than this, but we have been continually alert on matters concerning the Green Belt and commuter parking, planning, bus and train services, hospital provision, public utilities and so on. We have added our support to the restorations of the Tithe Barn and Upminster Windmill and were instrumental in achieving the A127 fly-over at Hall Lane.

There is no doubt that experience with the Ratepayers' Association confirms belief in the value of independence in local government; the continual "see-saw" of control by the two political parties cannot be other than detrimental to the sound administration of local affairs.

The earliest traceable records of Cranham Residents' Association date back to 1938 and it is obvious from the minutes of meetings of that year that it was already a flourishing organisation. The main matters discussed were much the same as those that dominate our present deliberations, i.e. planning, highways and public transport. There were obvious worries about the increase in house building in Cranham where the Oaks Estate had just been started.

The membership of the Association in 1938 was 197 and the balance held by the Treasurer £7.9.2d. which the Chairman claimed was a very satisfactory state of affairs. The annual subscription was one shilling and the Treasurer reported at the A.G.M. that difficulty was experienced in collecting this sum from many members.

Reading through those early minutes reminds one of the poverty prevalent in the 1930's. At one meeting a resolution was moved by a member that a donation of £1 from Association funds be made to a local widow in need and this was agreed after the proposer had stated that he would pay it out of his own pocket if the resolution was defeated. A Benevolent Fund was set up and proceeds from raffles and jumble sales were used for the assistance of residents in distressed circumstances.

The Councillor for Cranham Ward on Hornchurch Urban District Council was an Association nomination, Cllr. H. H. Wake whom many residents in Cranham will remember with affection. He was Chairman of the Council in 1938, a great honour for him and the Association. The election address for April, 1939, which still survives, shows an approach in very much the same vein as our present policy—it stated emphatically and unequivocally that his outlook and approach to local politics was non-party. His object was efficient administration with wise spending and economy as he was conscious that increasing rate demands continued to make serious inroads into everybody's income. Forty years later this still sounds very familiar and is basically our present philosophy. Cllr. Wake was re-elected with a handsome majority of 160. Total votes polled were 666 in a 50% poll, a pointer to the size of Cranham in those days.

There was a strong social committee which was busy organising lantern lectures and whist drives, the profits going to the Benevolent Fund. They were well supported and clearly an important part of the social life of Cranham.

In late 1939 and 1940 the minutes begin to show sad reminders of those unhappy days. The inefficiency of respirators, the request for a First Aid Post in Front Lane and members absent on A.R.P. duties were subjects which began to dominate the meetings. The minutes of the meeting in May, 1940 contain a paragraph stating that unless matters of extreme importance occurred it was proposed that no further meetings be held until September. It must be assumed

that this was the last war-time meeting as the next reported was in May, 1945 when the Chairman opened the proceedings with a welcome to all present and expressing his pleasure that all Committee members had come through the war unharmed. A resolution was passed that the activities of the Association recommence as soon as possible. Cash in hand was £9.17.6 which included accrued interest of 18/4d. Colonel Smith was elected Chairman at the first post war A.G.M. in October, 1945 and in his address said the Association had a very busy future and must be strong and active to fight for a lasting peace and an orderly world.

One of the biggest events ever organised by the Association was the first Annual Flower and Horticultural Show which the minutes described as the crowning glory of 1946. This was the forerunner of the Cranham and North Ockendon show which many of us remember as a wonderful day of horse shows, commercial displays, flower and horticultural shows and a very busy beer tent! The show was run by an independent committee as it had become too big for the Association to handle. The last show was in 1966 when a large loss was made because unluckily it happened to be the very afternoon England played in the World Cup. Local residents could not be lured from their television sets and the Committee lost heart at seeing all their months of hard labour wasted on a paltry attendance.

Amongst the many problems tackled by the Association in those immediate post war years was the nuisance caused by campers in Cranham Gardens fields (I wonder whose garden that is now?), improvement to the allotments in Ingrebourne Gardens, the condition of the area around Cranham Church for which the Association donated 15/- to the Rector with a request that the money be used to clean up the area, and the provision of playing fields east of St. Alban's Avenue. There were also the ever present complaints about late delivery of post, poor service on the 370 bus route, the anomalies of the District Line, holes in roads and footpaths—times do not change much!

There is no doubt that the most adventurous and troublesome project undertaken by the Association was the provision and running of a Community Centre. Pressure on Essex County Council to provide a building for the use of residents had produced no response and other suggested solutions had come to naught. In 1950 Mr. A. J. Moss, a committee member and local businessman, announced that he would pay the cost of erecting a pre-cast building and then let it at a peppercorn rent to the Association, a public spirited offer which the Committee agreed unanimously to accept.

Moss Hall at the end of Moor Lane was opened by the Chairman of Essex County Council Education Committee in October, 1952 and problems quickly became apparent. The hall was used by many local organisations including the W.I., Sunday School, child welfare clinic and sporting and recreational groups. They all paid rent to the Association which itself organised evening classes, film shows, dances, etc.

The first problem was heating which was unsatisfactory, so the Association borrowed £200 from an anonymous local resident and bought two gas heaters. This improved the heating but consumed an enormous amount of gas and the first bills worried the Association. Another blow fell when a demand was received from the Inland Revenue for £29 Schedule A tax. The Committee sought legal advice. It was also becoming apparent that Moss Hall was not

situated in the right place, being on the far outskirts of the village and not on a bus route. Attendances at classes and meetings began to drop off and organisations which had promised to use the hall changed their minds. The Association asked Essex County Council to take over the running of the hall but this was refused on the grounds that the hall was the wrong size in the wrong location. It was agreed however to pay off a debt of £25 for which a writ had been served on the Chairman of the Association. The Committee had by then realised that it was hopeless to carry on and decided to cut its losses. Notice was given of the intention to leave the premises at the end of a period of six months and the Committee began to sell off the fittings and equipment. It was a sad end to a noble venture.

It was not long after this that alterations to the boundaries of Cranham and Upminster Wards necessitated discussions with Upminster Ratepayers' and Residents' Association and it was soon obvious that a merger of the two Associations was the best solution to a tricky problem. Some of the older members of Cranham committee were not very enthusiastic because they felt that the resulting Association would be too large and the interests of individual members in Cranham would be forgotten. Nevertheless the advantage of a strengthened Association with two Ward Committees having control of local matters was soon apparent to the majority and Upminster and Cranham Ratepayers' and Residents' Association was born.

A large new Committee looked after Cranham's interests and there was no lack of problems for them. New estates were going up at a rapid pace all over the ward and difficulties with bad planning, inadequate drainage and schools bursting at the seams were all matters that occupied much of the Committee's time. There were also many unmade roads in East Cranham and the influence of Ratepayer Councillors ensured that it was not long before the last road in Cranham was surfaced.

At the first local election under the new boundaries Cranham Ward nominated Mr. Gordon Hancock, past secretary of the old Association, as candidate. He was elected with a large majority and Cranham Ward was once again represented by an Association nominee after a series of Labour and Conservative Councillors. The Ward has been represented by Ratepayer Councillors ever since—with the increasing population we now have four and they were all voted in with increased majorities at the last election.

Other Ratepayer Associations often ask why Cranham so strongly supports our candidates and the answer surely lies in our membership figures. Nearly every year we have increased our membership and at present nearly 70% of residents are subscribers. We think this reflects the service we have been able to give to our members whether their problems have been small affecting only one or two people or large affecting the whole ward. We are in day to day contact with residents whilst the political parties only appear at election times. They have never shown any interest in the large issues that have been so important to Cranham people and appear interested only in scoring party political points over their opponents. Cranham has shown itself too intelligent to be taken in by these irrelevant arguments and promises which are forgotten as soon as the election is over.

A major flood hit Cranham in the late 1950's causing damage to properties and distress to many residents. The Association immediately started a campaign for improvements to the overloaded drainage system. The Council eventually saw that something had to be done and a new drainage scheme was installed much to the relief of worried householders. Since then Cranham has remained clear of flooding in spite of some very heavy rains.

Probably the most difficult problem faced in recent years by the Association was the proposed M25 motorway. When the map showing the route was published, residents were horrified to see that it came within a stone's throw of houses in the Moor Lane area and practically over the top of Frank's Cottages in St. Mary's Lane. A public meeting was called which filled Hall Mead School to overflowing and by a large majority passed a resolution that the route should be moved eastwards away from the houses. Meetings were held with Government Officers and a collection organised throughout Cranham for funds to ensure that the Association's view was expressed in the best possible way at the Public Enquiry. The money flowed in and at the enquiry we employed Counsel who called a number of residents to give evidence of the damage that would be done to the environment if the published route were followed. Ultimately, in spite of the Inspector confirming the original route, the Secretary of State said he had taken note of the views of local residents and agreed that the route should be moved to the East and the junctions with the A127 made smaller. This was undoubtedly one of the Association's greatest triumphs but it would not have been possible without the enthusiastic help of so many Cranham residents.

Many other important issues have been dealt with successfully over the years by Cranham Ward, including the provision of main sewage disposal to North Ockendon (due to start in the near future), the withdrawal of the plan for a gypsy site in Pike Lane, the rejection of planning permission for a sports complex on the Brickfields, the eviction of gypsies from Moor Lane fields and restrictions on parking in roads near the Station. The Association has been equally successful in a large number of minor matters such as holes in roads, improved lighting, erection of traffic signs and a multitude of objections to plans to build on the Green Belt; still intact in Cranham despite repeated attempts by developers to exploit it.

Cranham Ward has always had a strong Social Committee who have catered for the recreational needs of the district. Dances and social evenings were the main events in early days but of late the emphasis has been on coach and theatre trips which are still proving very popular and the fully booked signs often go up soon after the event has been advertised in *The Bulletin*. The Annual Dinner/Dance is the big event of the year and its popularity can be judged by the speed with which the tickets are snapped up.

The Association is as strong as it has ever been and although the pressing needs of the area are not as great as in earlier days the existence of a strong and knowledgeable Ward Committee backed by keen and devoted Councillors is a firm insurance against the possibility of another major threat to our pleasant environment, and a watchdog to ensure that standards are not allowed to drop.