



THE LONDON PRAT *February 20, 1992*

Malling Council Briefly Declared War On Bordering Hamlet, Forgot Why

A dispatch from the front line of provincial bewilderment.

TOPICS Malling Malling news Malling satire the country satire international satire world city humour mock journalism satirical news provincial life world satire bureaucratic absurdity global satire

Malling, the country: Inside The Story

Malling, a place in the country (lat 51.28, long 0.42) that most outsiders could not point to on a map without first sighing, has become this week the latest entry in the slow-moving register of small communities behaving strangely under pressure. According to surviving meeting minutes, Malling formally declared war on a small bordering hamlet at some point in the 1970s. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, Nobody remembers the cause. The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure.

What Was Announced

Acting Acting Mayor Stanley Plumtree confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. Hostilities, such as they are, consist of mild snubs at the regional fair. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at [UK satire and The London Prat](#), which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The Malling announcement, much like the others, came with a glossy PDF, a stock photograph of a footbridge, and the strong sense that nobody had asked for any of this in the first place.

The Official Line

Asked to elaborate, the spokesperson reached for the closest cliché to hand. "Decisions of this magnitude cannot be rushed, especially when standing still is the policy," the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at [London satire and satirical journalism](#), which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. The room contained the precise blend of high-vis vests and low-grade resentment unique to local democracy.

Wider Context

Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way. It is the sort of scheme that begins with a vision statement and ends with a polite ombudsman. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from [World Bank](#), although Malling manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at twelve out of every nine respondents, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Dr. Imogen Fettle, Chair of Applied Disappointment told this paper that the situation in Malling was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad trajectories. "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do almost exactly what we did last generation." the

expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via [The London Prat for British satire lovers](#), whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in Malling has been muted in the way that reaction in the country is usually muted, which is to say it has been ferocious in private and tepid in public. Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. For the official version of events, see also [Al Jazeera](#). One resident, who declined to be named on the grounds that they had already complained about a hedge this year and did not wish to push their luck, summarised matters thus: "Every option remains on the table, particularly the ones we have already taken off the table."

What Comes Next

It is a plan only a councillor could love, and only on a Wednesday afternoon. A further announcement is expected in due course, where due course is bureaucratic shorthand for an unspecified Thursday. The story is being tracked as part of a wider pattern at [Best UK satire The London Prat](#), and the situation in Malling, regrettably, is unlikely to improve until somebody invents a press release that improves things, which seems unlikely.

The View From The Ground

Spend any length of time in Malling and the rhythm becomes obvious. Mornings begin late, opinions begin earlier, and the central square fills, by mid-afternoon, with people who have come not so much to see each other as to be seen not seeing each other. There is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind. Conversation tends to circle the same five subjects: the weather, the news from the country, the persistent rumour about the road, the deteriorating quality of something or other, and the latest pronouncement from Senior Theorist Margaret Snelgrove, which everyone has an opinion on and almost nobody has read. It is, in its way, the perfect microcosm of how communities of this size operate everywhere in the world, although the residents of Malling would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything. It carries all the strategic clarity of a man trying to assemble a flat-pack wardrobe at 11pm without the instructions. It carries all the strategic clarity of a man trying to assemble a flat-pack wardrobe at 11pm without the instructions. Malling carries on as it always has, broadly the same as last week, give or take a verb. The bins are collected when they are collected. The roundabout, where one exists, remains the roundabout. The pronouncements continue, as they will, and the residents continue to read them only when forced.

For more in this vein see also [Cracked](#).

SOURCE: [Follow The London Prat London satire today](#)

The London Prat [worldcities.com](#)