

The Corfe Castle Town Trust

Extracts from the Minutes

4th November 1889: We, the undersigned, declare our acceptance of the office of Trustees of the late municipal property of the Borough of Corfe Castle:

Ralph Bankes, Eldon Bankes, Thomas Luther, Edward Smith, Stephen Paine, R Williams, jnr.

The first meeting was concerned with getting an estimate for the cost of the repairs to the Town Hall. They wished to take out the then present door to the churchyard and fill up the doorway. Then they planned to open up the door of the Lock-up underneath and gain access to the Town Hall via there. They also hoped to obtain a lease to the adjoining cart house with the intent of making a staircase leading to the door of the Town Hall if terms could be arranged with the present Bankes owner.

They also decided that the mace and documents [Order no 1706 dated 9th July 1889 of the Charity Commission; the Exemplification of Letters Patent dated 1577; a charter of Charles II dated 1680; a copy of the Proceedings *Quo Warrantio* of Exchequer dated 1667] would be placed at Kingston Lacy.

A subcommittee was formed to manage the town's lighting and the alterations to the Town Hall.

6th December 1889: The subcommittee met and resolved to alter the doorway of the Town Hall. Entrance was to be gained from West Street and a wooden staircase was to be built. Repairs to the windows and elsewhere were to take place to make the building fit for public use. Since the trustees had been tasked with looking after the street lighting, the subcommittee put out tenders for lamplighters for the rest of the winter.

16th December 1889: Thomas Luther's tender was accepted for the repairs and alterations to the Town Hall estimated at £20 15s and "he was commissioned to open the old doorway and open the window of the old Lock-up to be let as a store house". The clerk was to write to the Highway Board to ask for permission to place a lamp on the Farwell House in West Street.

10th October 1890: They decided to move the lamp on Timothy White's house to the other side of the road. Mr Paine's offer for a lamp case to be placed on the north side of his house was accepted. One of the Marbler's was summoned to explain the "wanton destruction of property" at

their last meeting that was held in the Town Hall. The subcommittee's next meeting was not held until April 1994.

19th April 1894: The trustees discussed the insufficient water supply in Corfe Castle.

19th October 1894: It was decided to purchase an iron safe to keep the deeds in.

4th June 1895: The funds of the Town Trust were to be transferred to the Parish Council of Corfe Castle.

1st May 1897: A letter was received from Mr Care about the proposed erection of the Market Cross as a permanent memorial of the Queen's long reign. The trustees granted permission for it to be erected.

11th October 1897: New lamps had been put up – one on Mr Randall's and the other was to be placed at a convenient location in West Street. It was decided to move the lamp near Ellen Orchard's house and place it on the house occupied by George Day.

25th November 1898: The trustees decided that since they had given permission for the cross to be erected, it was theirs. No documents had been received from the Bankes Estate for the safe. The documents concerned payments made by the Bankes Estate.

7th May 1900: It was suggested by S Cleall that the Town Hall premises be insured up to the amount of £200. It was noted that the store underneath was not let.

26th September 1906: The trustees made a complaint to the Police about "wilful damage done by breaking of windows of the Town Hall".

26th September 1907: It was decided to remove the lamp now fixed to Mr Willshire's house in East Street and reaffix it on a lamp post on the opposite side of the street.

19th September 1908: The trustees discovered that they could not move Mr Willshire's lamp unless the County Council gave their permission.

9th September 1909: The chimney to the Town Hall was now defective.

16th September 1910: A letter from the Parish Council was read out concerning a resolution that had been made by them about the street lights. They had decided that the street lamps should be lit from 1st September until 31st March instead of from 1st October. The trustees decided to light them from 24th September.

18th December 1911: A letter had been received from the Swanage Gas & Water Company. It asked if the trustees would give their assent/dissent/neutrality on their application to Parliament for powers to construct new waterworks at Stoborough and to convey the water through the parish of Corfe Castle. The trustees decide not to give their assent to this application.

17th September 1912: It had been noticed that the street lamps were extinguished by 9:30pm and that they were not lit on moonlit nights. The lamplighter was to be contacted. It was resolved to purchase a hanging lamp for the Town Hall.

23rd October 1915: Superintendent Yode [?] had advised that lamps should not be lit as a protection against air raids. A request from Mrs Singleton of Arfleet had been received asking if the Town Hall could be used during the coming winter by a "Committee of Women who desire to make garments for the War Fund". Permission was granted. The trustees did not meet in 1916.

14th September 1917: The street lamps had still not been lit as the price of oil was high.

13th December 1918: The Town Trust now owned 20 street lamps: 12 new & 8 old ones. It was decided to open an account at Lloyds Bank.

17th September 1920: The street lamps were to be lit from 1st November instead of 1st October.

16th October 1924: Dr Dru Drury and Francis Newbery told the trustees that they were restoring the Village Pump to the position in the Square which it had held prior to its removal. The trustees felt that it did not concern them as it was the Bankes Estate property.

4th February 1929: The roof of the Town Hall had been repaired and now there were insufficient funds to meet the cost of the street lighting. The clerk of the Parish Council had written complaining about the present lighting being inefficient. He suggested that the Parish Council should make a contribution to their cost. The trustees wrote back saying that they would "be unable to undertake the lighting of the streets and other public places in Corfe Castle after March 25th". The trustees wished to hand over the maintenance of the street lighting to the Parish Council.

16th August 1929: The trustees discovered from the Charity Commission that all of their terms of office had expired and none of them were entitled to act. The Charity Commission further asked that

- a. The Parish Council of Corfe Castle was to be asked to appoint 3 representative trustees
- b. The trustees of the Dorset County Museum & Library were to be asked to appoint a representative
- c. The 4 representative trustees were to appoint 3 co-optative trustees

d. An application was to be made to the Charity Commission for their approval re this

The chairman attended the Parish Council and the following representatives were appointed:

Mr F Cavendish Bentinck, Mr George Paine & Mr A White

Dr Dru Drury was appointed as the County Museum representative and the following 3 co-opted trustees were: Mr C Battrick, Mr M Sutton & Mr WE Otterway. It was noted that the windows in the Town Hall needed to be replaced.

17th January 1935: The cash book had been lost so a statement of the account was unable to be produced. Mr Luther, the treasurer, resigned. [He had misappropriated the funds.]

14th February 1935: The account statement covering the period 1926-1934 showed a deficit of £33 6s.

21st July 1936: Electric light had been installed in the Town Hall at a cost of £5 1s 3d. It was in the form of a slot system. The tenant of the boot repair shop underneath the Town Hall had complained that the ceiling was unsafe.

26th January 1938: Insurance had been taken out against fire and indemnity. CT Riddle, the tenant of the store underneath the Town Hall, wished to be relieved of his tenancy.

28th February 1939: Mr Day wished to open up a retail business selling sweets and tobacco under the Town Hall. The trustees rejected this.

27th March 1939: The trustees agreed that Mr Petersen could have a boot repair business under the Town Hall.

27th June 1941: The Town Hall was requisitioned by the War Office for offices and stores. The War Office was to pay £12 compensation yearly. [The Trust was still paying £10 to the Parish Council for street lighting.]

2nd September 1946: The trustees now paid £5 annually to the Parish Council for street lighting. A serious collapse of the Town Hall roof had happened which necessitated heavy expenditure so no renovations to the interior of the Town Hall could happen.

24th September 1947: The trustees made their last payment to the Parish Council for street lighting.

15th May 1950: The minutes mention that the Marblers had paid 2s 6d for the rent of the Town Hall since time immemorial.

15th June 1950: The use of the Town Hall as a Museum was discussed but no decision was reached.

1st August 1951: The trustees wondered whether they owned the Pound.

21st January 1953: The trustees had discovered that the Pound was owned by the Bankes Estate. A new oak door was to be made for the Town Hall. The oak was to be sourced from the Rempstone Estate. [The Rempstone Estate gave the Trust the wood.] It was decided that a Catholic Priest from Swanage was not allowed to hold Roman Catholic services in the Town Hall.

5th March 1956: Dr Dru Drury said that both the Village Pump and The Sign in the Square belonged to him personally. Mr EC Brown suggested that knowledge relating to the past history of the Town Hall and other premises in Corfe Castle should be collected before it was lost.

1st November 1956: The secretary of the trustees wrote to the trustees of Dr Dru Drury's estate to ascertain ownership of the Village Pump, The Sign, and the prints and pictures in the Town Hall.

24th April 1957: It was discovered that the prints and pictures had been given to the Town Hall by Dr Dru Drury. The Village Pump and The Sign did not belong to Dr Dru Drury but it was hoped that the Trust would maintain them.

17th June 1957: Mr Chant's builders workshop tenancy was terminated as the Town Hall's insurance did not cover industrial businesses. However, the trustees agreed to extend his tenancy until he had found alternative accommodation [which he had found by 7 March 1958]. A motion was passed to convert the downstairs premises into a Museum.

2nd June 1959: An electric plug was installed in the Town Hall. An electric fire was to be purchased. The Town Hall was now scheduled as a listed building. The Village Pump and the "Gift of Four" [otherwise called in the minutes 'The Sign of Four'] were repaired and repainted.

9th June 1960: A drawing by Dr Dru Drury of the old Mill Key had been stolen.

23rd February 1961: 'Fleursec' were not given permission to use the seal of the Town Trust for their business. It was not considered in the best interests of the Town Trust.

7th June 1961: The trustees wrote to the Bankes Estate asking for the return of the mace and documents which could then be placed in a safe at Lloyds Bank, Wareham. This would afford the

opportunity for their public exhibition on suitable occasions. The indenture of 1762 was shown at the meeting. [This deed related to the annual rent of 14s paid annually by the Bankes Estate.]

23rd October 1961: R Bankes had handed over the mace and seal but had retained certain documents as he was “unable to lay his hands on them at the time”.

3rd February 1962: Neon lighting had been installed in the Town Hall. The old documents of 1577, 1667 & 1680 had been returned by the Bankes Estate.

27th November 1962: An electric heater was installed in the Museum.

11th December 1962: The trustees resolved to transfer the documents to the County Records Department. [The documents are now held at Dorset History Centre.]

23rd February 1965: It was proposed to renew all the old roof timbers, improve the south wall to obviate the damp condition, renew the floor timbers and strip the wood paneling, re-open the door entrance to the church lawn, take away the dividing wall of the meeting room and stairway, and re-open the window in the coal store. The secretary was to write to the Rector for permission for the right of way and if short length flag stones could be laid from the doorway.

11th January 1966: Re the proposed access to the churchyard – “It was agreed that a formal declaration of intent, prohibiting public access except on special occasions (with the assent of the Church Council) be drawn up between the two parties”.

2nd December 1966: The Town Hall had been renovated and an opening ceremony was planned for March 1967 once the new chairs had been installed.

4th April 1968: The opening ceremony was cancelled.

15th October 1968: Mr Bowyer gifted specially constructed, oak chairs to the Town Hall.

29th April 1970: The Rector was refused permission to hold a Sunday School there.

9th March 1971: £10 was given by the trustees to the Parish Council towards the erection of the Public Noticeboard in West Street.

29th March 1971: Messrs J Spiller were asked to make a new frame for the “Sign of Four”. The existing post was still alright. Bournemouth School of Art had been approached to repaint the sign but nothing had been heard from them.

23rd July 1974: The Sign had been repaired and repainted.

5th February 1976: Rev Squirey was refused permission to hold a Sunday School in the Town Hall. John Battiscomb presented to the Trust a piece of stained glass (the Tudor Coat of Arms in Garter) which had been removed from the castle by John Uvedale. Mr Battiscomb had retrieved it from the Robing Room window when that had been destroyed in 1974.

1st December 1976: The Southern Electricity Board had erected a lamp on the Town Hall but without the suggested tie brace.

27th October 1980: It was noted that the present wooden chest in the Town Hall belonged to Mr PA Brown. The trustees suggested that The Ancient Order of Forester's wooden chest could be used instead.

26th May 1981: The Ancient Order of Foresters were asked to remove their chest from the Town Hall or donate it to the Town Trust.

26th October 1981: The Parish Council suggested that the well in West Street be improved and a plaque erected to commemorate the Royal Wedding [between HRH Prince Charles and Lady Diana Spencer]. The trustees decided that they would like to contribute to the scheme.

25th February 1982: A discussion ensued about the annual payment of £14 made by the Bankes Estate. It was wondered whether a lump sum could be made to pay it off. £50 was given as a contribution towards the repair of the well in west Street.

18th November 1982: It was decided to place a stone in the trough of the Village Pump by the cross to prevent it being filled with litter. [By 27 October 1983, this stone had been stolen.]

4th January 1984: The well in West Street, commemorating the Royal Wedding, had been restored.

22nd November 1984: The Town Trust took responsibility for the well in West Street and a box which collected money would be fitted to it. It was noted that Dr Dru Drury had given the stained glass, showing the Coat of Arms in Garter, to the Robing Room. [This stained glass had been placed in Uvedale House by John Uvedale.]

4th November 1985: The Millennium sign and the Village Pump were refurbished.

20th March 1987: The trustees were shown a copy of the seal which had been lent to them by Tony Brown. It was agreed that a further copy could be struck from it.

11th January 1988: A declaration by all the trustees was signed

25th May 1988: The painting of the Village Classroom by Francis Newbery was to be taken to Sothebys of Bournemouth. Sothebys thought it might be in the region of four figures but could be more. It was hoped that the representatives of the Town Trust might have a term of 3 years but the Charity Commission disagreed with this suggestion so it remained as a term of 4 years.

19th August 1988: The mace was taken to a silversmith in London, Gerrards, for repairs. Mr Bowyer personally paid for the repair.

24th November 1988: The north window in the Town Hall was to be closed. Five lever locks were to be fitted to the Town Hall doors. The Millennium tablet on the churchyard wall was to be reduced in size and the lettering was to be painted in green and gold.

23rd February 1989: It was agreed to erect a sign which said 'The smallest Town Hall in England' as the Guinness Book of Records had no statistics re Town Halls. The work on the Millennium tablet was finished. The trustees considered selling the Francis Newbery oil paintings.

29th August 1989: The sign 'The smallest town hall in England' was up.

30th November 1989: Six fiberglass copies of the Town Seal were made (2 were placed on the two pumps).

28th August 1990: The painting of St Edward the Martyr was to be restored at a cost of £1,884. [Bristol Museum carried out the restoration.]

22nd November 1990: Mr & Mrs Russell of Hatchards, West Street, had offered to paint a new sign of St Edward the Martyr.

28th February 1991: The collection was to be documented. A system had been agreed upon which used two forms. The chest belonging to the Ancient Order of Foresters was still held at the Town Hall.

20th August 1991: The restoration of the 'Sign of Four' painting had been held up as the plywood paneling was pulling apart and needed to be fumigated.

26th November 1991: Gerrards of London had written saying that delivery of the replica mace would take approximately two weeks. [A display case for this replica was made by 27 February 1992.] Two pageant shields had been purchased from Mr McKenna for £150. These were offered to the Village Hall on permanent loan.

27th February 1992: The 'Sign of Four' had been removed to Spillers in Wareham. The oak post needed replacing. The painting of St Edward was on zinc and had been sent to Mr J Kevan, of Sherborne, to restore it.

27th August 1992: Spillers had been instructed to make a new sign of the 'Sign of Four'. This had now been completed at a cost of £2,722.50. [It was re-erected on 26 November 1992.]

22nd September 1994: A wax impression of the Borough seal had been produced by Aspreys of London.

7th September 1995: It was noted that the Town Hall's table had a 17th century base; the top was not original however. An electronic counting machine had been installed in the Museum and recorded that 70,000 visitors had visited between 28 May – 7 September 1995.

30th November 1995: Ron Burniston presented the Town Trust with a gavel, block and box.

27th February 1997: The Corfe Castle Chamber of Trade were refused permission to use the town seal.