

## NEW ALRESFORD PARISH COUNCIL

*By*

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In 1882 Lord Roseberry placed his Unreformed Bill before Parliament and so started the abolishment of the old Corporations of which Alresford with its Bailiff and Burgess was one of many.

In Alresford however these Gentlemen of the dying Corporation decided that a new democratically elected Parish Council was not necessarily wanted and was most certainly not to be trusted with its properties. Some of their moneys were spent on the erection of The 'Old' Fire Station. A scheme was drawn up in January 1889 to transfer the future administration of the properties of the dissolved Corporation. This scheme became the Town Trustees on June 1890.

It was not before November 1894 when we hear of the guidelines and orders for the coming election of a parish council. Eleven councillors to be elected by a show of hands at a Meeting held at the Board School on the 4th December 1894. Rev. A.A. Headley took the chair but as he was one of the candidates he stood down and was replaced by Mr., H.C. Baker an ex-Burgess.

There were 20 nominations and a Poll was demanded within the 10 minutes allowed for this purpose.

This election took place on 15th December and the following were elected:-

Rev. Headley (105), Rev. H. Cooper (99), and Messrs. F.C. Batchelor (120), H.H. Watford (87), Sheppard, Richardson, W. Willis, Merryfield, W. Hemming, J. Hall and C.E. Hunt. Several of the old Burgesses that had stood were not elected. On 5th January 1895 the Parish Council met for the first time and the Rev. A.A. Headley was unanimously elected Chairman. The assistant overseer Mr. G. Lawrence was elected Clerk, There being no other business and the meeting lasted only half an hour.

On 26th there was a further meeting and Rev. Headley with general agreement was replaced as Chairman by Mr. H. Walford.

Finance:- "Election expenses £4.15s the other half being paid by the Alresford District Council. Some stationary had been purchased and 10s 6d was paid for the Parish Meeting.

A box was to be produced for the Parish Papers (where is it now? There are no Parish Minutes to be found prior to 1919, they must still be in this box!).

A bond to be given by the Treasurer in the sum of £102, the Clerks salary was discussed but deferred to the Annual Meeting in April. A Statement of all Charities were to be prepared.

A letter to the Alresford Rural District Council was written asking them to make up the sides of Broad Street. There had been a difference as to the liability of these repairs. The Town Trustees had never done any and the late Sanitary Authority certainly had in the Past. A Committee was to consider the proposed standing orders. So started the Parish Council on some very familiar lines to those which go on today. Later in the following year saw a settling down with Standing Orders being agreed, and the Town Trustees detailing their rights to the Fairs and Tolls in Broad Street. Both they and the District Council still seeing no reason why either should repair the sidings of this street. The trees belonged to the Trustees as part of the estate they inherited from the

Corporation. Some dead trees had last been replaced by Hilliers in 1883. The overseer was confirmed as Clerk and his salary was adjusted upwards by £5.5s.0d. per year.

Their other main responsibilities were the Fire Brigade and Street Lighting (4 ½d rate), these had previously been the responsibility of the Vestry. Dr. Jolly as Medical Officer reported on the health of the town and stated that the Slaughter Houses were too near the dwellings. These continued to be so for many more years.

Allotments were discussed and have been from time to time ever since. Watering of the streets was also a great importance as none of the roads were made up and it is not before 1926 that this service, by then the responsibility of the District Council, is discontinued.

Parish Councillors were represented on The Poor Law Institution, run by the Overseer, As School Managers of the Primary School and Governors of the Secondary School (Perins). Their numbers formed, as they do today, a controlling body on the Town Trustees.

Many of the early complaints were to do with the conditions of the roads and footpaths, being drawn to the notice of the Highway Authority as today. The favourite being between the Dean and the Fulling Mill and Ladywell Lane. At one time as being unsuitable for Bathchairs and perambulators! As this is written, the same problem, now wheel-chairs with motors, is before the Council.

The repairs to Broad Street siding had to be resolved by an enquiry called by the County Council later in 1895 which agreed that the District Council were the responsible authority for their maintenance. These sidings remained gravel, with the frosts throwing up the chalk until tar sealed well after the 1939/45 War. In these early years the street gas lighting was one of the greatest annual expenses being in the region of £80 - £100 per year. There were about 20 street lights and the 'Big Light' at the top of Broad Street. In the early days the Airesford Gas Company lit and extinguished them under contract but in 1922 the Council employed their own lamplighter, a Mr. Wright at 15/-d per week. In the interest of economy each summer a discussion took place on which lights were to be lit during the winter and how long a time the 'Big Lamp' should burn. Lights were not lit on moonlit nights.

In 1931 the Lighting Committee were instructed that lights were to be lit according to moneys available. In 1932 the Police asked for the 'Big Lamp' to remain lit until 11 pm and then the Police would extinguish it. The Fire Brigade caused financial problems from the early days. In 1896 an extra 1 ½d rate had to be raised to repair the Fire Engine. 1901 a motion to provide an additional Fire Engine and hose was countered by an amendment to produce an Escape Ladder. The latter was lost and the original motion postponed to the Annual Parish Meeting.

There is also mention of the possibility of putting a water tank at the top of the town for fire fighting and street watering purposes, this was not proceeded with but by 1906 an Escape Ladder was in use. By 1919 the rot had set in, the Chief Fire Officer. Mr. Sheild and his Deputy, had resigned. The Parish Council were, on financial grounds, urgently requesting the Alresford RDC to take over this responsibility. This came to a head in 1921 when the Chief Fire Officer said that due to the poor state of the equipment he could no longer be responsible for the safety of persons or property: The Brigade was finally transferred to the District Council in 1922.

During the First War little is recorded and there were no Annual Parish Meetings, By 1919 requests for road tarring were being made and the condition of the main road was causing concern; the water channels in Broad Street were to be raised. Discussion took place regarding the removal of the 'Big Lamp' for the possible site for the War Memorial, In 1921 having noticed a report of the Hampshire County Council on the proposed increased salaries of various officials they wrote asking for these to be postponed as high rates were crippling trade and industry, also causing serious hardship on those with fixed incomes. The unsanitary condition of the Drinking

Fountain at the top of Broad Street was causing concern and rather than ask "Mrs. Davies to remove it" the Council agreed to it being covered. One assumes that Mrs. Davies had it installed for the use of animals, she may have been a representative of the RSPCA or similar body, During the twenties we see glimpses into the old order for example a horse damaging a street light and the council claiming £2.16.0d from the owners. At the same time a letter being sent to the County Council drawing their attention to the danger to pedestrians when coming from the Churchyard to cross the road because the traffic from East Street was concealed! In 1924 the Market Company went into liquidation, the Market Hall, "Town Hall" now Community Centre was offered to the Council for £2000. This was laid on the table. It would be well into the 1950/60s before this building came onto the market again when the then owners would not sell to the Parish Council but was eventually persuaded to sell it to the Chamber of Trade.

During this period we learn that the War Office notified the Council each year of the areas and the restrictions in those areas that they would use during their summer manoeuvres.

The Town Trustees were often sent notice regarding the poor state of the paths, seats and that horses had been seen riding in the Avenue They were also requested in 1922 to provide a Dressing Room and Lavatories at the Recreational Ground. Miss Mary Baker was invited to accept election by co-option to the Council, the first lady councillor. This was in 1926. unfortunately she declined to accept but did become a School Manager. It was not until 1943 that the first lady councillor Mrs. J.S. Hankin was elected.

It was the same year 1926 that a request was made to the Rural District Council for a speed limit from the Sun Inn to Perins School and signs to prohibit cycling on the Churchyard footpaths. The AA was the body that supplied and erected direction signs and were frequently asked to modify their signing.

The first Town Guide was produced in 1925 after a lengthy discussion with a commercial company, the contents having first being approved. This was updated from time to time but ceased in 1932 due to the lack of advertisers, this was a result of the Depression years. These Guides were distributed by Mrs., Phair (Lawrences). The Council was again to edit and distribute, a local guide in 1945 in conjunction with the Chamber of Trade.

1926 saw the Southern Railway giving notice that they would fix and maintain a notice stating that the approach road from Jacklyns Lane is a Private Road. This situation remained until the late 1980's when the station car park development took place, when the County at last made up and took over its maintenance. The Parish Council had first started talking to the District Council about car parking in 1929.

It was at this time the new Local Government Act of 1929 started further adjustments to the affairs of Alresford. The Alresford District Council was to be abolished and it was suggested that Alresford should become part. of the Alton R.D.C.

It was finally resolved that the Alresford and Bishops Sutton should come under the Winchester R.D.C. and only the eastern parishes of the Alresford R,D.C. should join Alton. There was also a reduction of representatives to the new council from three to two. The final change came about, in the Spring of 1932. Now was the time to put pressure on the District Council and this was mainly to do with what we now term environmental services.

A Sewage Scheme was considered and dropped in 1931 but. by 1934 the new Council decided to proceed and the Parish Council voted 5 to 4 in favour. At that time complaints were being received that the residents of Bridge Road were emptying their cesspits onto their allotments!

In 1935 there was a request for a Public Lavatory and the Council were informed that this could be provided by the Parish as a special expense rate, no action was taken. They were finally provided

by the District Council some 30 years later. Early on the new District Council asked the P.C. to complete a Garbage Disposal Questionnaire referring to the use of Distructor or Dumps. The Parish Council were still pressing for the collection vehicle to be covered rather than the method of disposal. The garbage disposal was to be directly charged to the Parish but as it resolved the District, were unable to find a suitable dump. The Parish Council however did, together with a contractor, do the job at 15/6d per day. The District, had inherited the responsibility of the Alresford Fire Brigade and although controlling it they always submitted the Brigade accounts to the Parish each year. There was an ongoing series of complaints regarding the "maroon method" of the Fire Brigade turnout as it frightened the animals and the elderly. This was not to be resolved until after the 39-45 War. The RDC also agreed to pay for the services of St. John's Ambulances attending street accidents. Another responsibility that the Parish undertook was to advise the District Council regarding the priorities on the waiting list of Council tenants using their local knowledge of cases of hardship. This situation continued into the fifties. Under the 1930 Housing Act they reported to the RDC on clearance and improvement areas, but were not aware of any such areas.

Having complained in the early thirties about litter in Broad Street, the RDC informed them that if cleaned a clearance charge would be made. The Council replied that as an offence had been committed they expected the RDC and Police to act. At the same time they stated they could not pay towards winding the Church Clock. This was resolved several decades later, that it was right for the Public to contribute towards this service which the Church provided for the Town.

During this period there were two Celebrations, firstly the Jubilee of George V and later the Coronation of George VI. The Council took no official part in either but supported the Special Committee that were set up. In the case of the former the product of a 1d rate and in the latter £80.00.

Not only did the PC badger the RDC to supply better services to the town but also the Hampshire County Council. There was continual pressure regarding Perins School and Perins Foundation. There was a threat to close the school in 1931 which caused a very strong letter of grave regret to be sent. In 1937 we find a request for more public use to be made of the School building, playgrounds and fields to benefit the social and commercial life of the town. The following year the Education Committee agreed in principle. It was many years before, we saw the first start of the Community School.

A random picking of complaints to the District Surveyor in 1932 rings of an ongoing problem in the 1970s: a) Repairs urgently required to the road at Mill Hill, b) Dumping of sweepings at the corner of Jacklyn's Lane. ) Loose gravel on the Broad Street sidings and the dirty conditions of the street. d) Footpath on the Sutton, Road was dangerous.

The footpath conditions always have been of concern to the Parish and all through this period mention is made again of the Dean/Fulling Mill/Ladywell Lane path requires attention.

In 1934 the North West Hampshire Planning Scheme was put to the Council who returned the questionnaire completed. Sixty years on it is the Winchester City Planning Scheme which is receiving similar attention.

The first, dispute of the use of the ford for vehicles was put by the County Council., This rumbled on from time to time until the Late H A White first as Parish Clerk, and afterwards in the 1980s, won the argument. A highway, be it a ford, was a Highway until a Highway Extinguishing Order was placed on it and therefore its entrance and exit slopes must be maintained by the Highway Authority.

The mid-thirties saw the first, concerns for improved Car Parking. Broad Street parking was in chaos but the County said the cost. of improvement was too great to be considered.

The Soke corner was always dangerous and the County was asked to improve it by removing the wall opposite The Globe Inn. They also completed the footpath from Perins School to Swards Bridge after agreement between them and The Town Trustees as it was on the latter's land.

The Town Trustees representation came under scrutiny and the Charity Commissioners were asked for a ruling. They stated that a Trustee did not cease to be a Trustee after he ceased to be a member of the body that elected him. His Trusteeship would cease after his term of office as a Trustee expired. This has caused the Council concern from time to time and in the late forties the then Council agreed that any member who represented them; on any outside body, including the Town Trustees, should be asked to resign if he ceased to be a councillor, thus maintaining the true council representation on an outside body,

Still in the 1930s the Town Trustees were asked to move the German Gun which stood on their land by the entrance to Perins School, however it turned out to be the responsibility of the District Council who agreed to repair the carriage and leave it in position.

It is strange that at the same time the District Council were asking for help with their Air Raid Precautions Committees. Firstly the Councillors were not sure and asked for more information but by the end of 1937 a Local Committee was being formed with Major Eying Hall. Parish Councillor, as Chief Warden, a position he held until the end of hostilities" Boots the chemists invited the Councillors to inspect their Gas Protection Room.

A gypsy encampment in Jacklyns Lane was giving concern, the town drainage scheme' had not progressed. The step outside Mrs. Hankin's house in West Street was unsafe! Electricity was being considered for street lighting. The town having recently been supplied with this amenity.

Quotes for both Gas and Electricity were to be obtained., Of great concern was a letter received "from the Rate Payers Association complaining of the numbers of complaints they had received and the apparent slackness of the Councillors in the affairs of the Community bearing in mind their election addresses. The Council replied thanking them for their interest and would give careful consideration to any constructive criticism.

1938/39 saw the rumblings of war once again. However, the routine matters had to be dealt with such as complaints about Postal Services, The Post Office wished The Dean to be renamed as it could be muddled with the Dene at Ropley. Housing numbering was started and Ashburton Place named, A new scheme for The Stratton Bates Recreation Ground was considered by a joint committee of the Parish Council and Town Trustees the then owners of this ground.

Two names (unnamed) were put forward for the Lieutenancy for consideration of election to the Alresford Branch of Magistrates when a vacancy occurred. Mr. A H Hasted and Mr, E E Witchard both became Magistrates in the forties and both served on the Parish Council at some time.

Plans for the new Fire Station to be built by the Parish Council were approved.

War. In April 1939 a committee was set up of four councillors and five co-opted ladies to survey the accommodation available for the possible intake of refugees. The Home Office was requesting information regarding the extinguishing of street lights at short notice. In 1940 no lighting committee was formed as there were no lights to be lit. Amongst all this trauma there was a request by rhea Chairman to change the name. and nameplates on Jacklyns Lane to Jacklands Lane and he would pay the cost. Old maps were referred to and it remained Jacklyns.

Problems were mainly to do with food and darkness, Community feeding arrangements had to be planned and School meals and milk were to be discontinued. Later a limited number of children from the Dean School were to be given a midday meal at Perins. At a later date there was pressure put for a kitchen at the Dean School which was not carried out.

The Council was astonished that the Education Authority would not connect either school to the new sewage scheme. Lighting or the lack of it caused problems, a request to the County for white lines was turned down due to the economy of the use of white paint and there being only a few hours of working darkness.

There was also concern for people walking into lamp posts and damage had occurred to the posts by military vehicles hitting them. Initially it was not considered necessary, later the painting of the shop veranda posts was conceded and the ARP volunteered to do the work if someone could obtain the paint.

Alresford had no priority for the supply of a siren and after the Air Raid of 19th August. 1942 a further strong request was made but the war was nearly over: before a Siren was installed. The District Council and especially their Surveyor was thanked for their help after the raid. During the early days of the forties law and order reared its ugly head with a request that the Police and ARP should enforce better control at the Dances at the Town Hall. The Rector was asking for a Boys and Girls Club for the over 14s. A new Clerk was appointed at 15/-d per year.

By 1943 the lamp standards were in a poor state of repair, many leaning over after accidents. It was considered that they could go for salvage but it was decided to repair and repaint them. The Town Light (Big Lamp) needed a new concrete base and reinforcing but there was no blacksmith available for this job and the District Council eventually came to their help. The lamp posts were repainted after some haggling over price at 7/-d each. The Police were requested to man. the Dean crossroads at the commencement and end of school time.

At this time Arlebury Park came up for sale. The Town Trustees were asked if they would hand over the Recreation Ground to the Council so that it could be sold and they would then consider buying Arlebury. This proceeded no further.

The end of the first fifty years of the Council ended with the setting up of a committee to deal with Post War Planning including lighting. Agreeing with the District Council for 20 houses in Spring Lane. At this same time they had received a letter from the US Air Corps thanking them for the local help regarding the US bomber crash on the north side of the Pond. Finally in January 1944 the state of Pound Hill footpath came up again!

In conclusion there is a great similarity with todays Council's work to ensure that the Town gets its fair share of the local services and that they are maintained at a high standards. Finances completely restricted them from developing any amenities nor had they inherited any estate to give them capital wealth.

What they did ensure was. that the town was ready to develop during the next fifty years.

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