

NEW ALRESFORD PARISH COUNCIL - PART II

By

Alex Hankin

At the commencement of the second fifty years, I must correct one factual error in the first. (Alresford Displayed No. 19, page 10 last paragraph). It was, of course, the Winchester District Council who built the new Fire Station.

I was a Parish Councilor for a great deal of this period 1944-1994, and am able to express opinions (sometimes controversial) and thoughts behind some of the facts given in the official Minutes.

The end of 1943 had two points of historic interest. Firstly the Town Trustees and Parish Council left as outstanding the idea that the former should lease the Stratton Bates Recreation Ground to the Council at a nominal rent. This would have been to enable the Ground to be better maintained than the Trustees could afford. We will read later, that as the Trustees could not pay the private street works charges, the Council did take over this Ground. Secondly, the path to the Fish House - now called the Eel House, it states "unable to find date it was diverted and terms made. Letter to Mr. Walford (owner of Arlebury) re condition of Path and Bridge". With the change of ownership of the river, a variation order regarding this footpath was challenged at a later date, but no reference was then made to a previous diversion.

1944 again started with a challenge re Parish Council representatives on other bodies. Was a Town Trustee representative still entitled to be a Trustee after he had left the Council? It was agreed, he be thanked for his service, and a new Trustee be appointed. This I maintain should continue to be the case, although legally a Trustee once appointed is entitled to serve out his term.

Perin's School was connected to the main drains. Hampshire County Council and Parish agreed to "no cycling in Church Footpaths" order. The Council said they had no authority to pay 10/- for the erection of a plaque re H.M.S. Alresford in the Church. In fact they did.

The War continued, and the Police were asked to run the "Dig for Victory" week. Alresford did well, and was presented with a Flag having reached a higher total than Lymington. In November a "Salute the Soldier" Plaque (photograph) was presented to the town. A public meeting was to be called to request an Air Raid Siren, and the Fire Force Commander was to be written to, requesting that the N.F.S. huts on the Stratton Bates Ground should be camouflaged. The Parish Council met at the Dean School to discuss financial matters. It refused to pay a rent for its meetings, but agreed to pay for the Caretaker, and also, after pressure, for heating and lighting -- total 2/6 per meeting. It was agreed to look into the matter of water supplies, should enemy action destroy the Water tower. Of equal importance was again the problem of cycling on footpaths. This appears to be unresolved, even today. By August they started discussing the lighting of the town on Armistice Night, and the following month requested urban lighting powers from the District Council. These were granted and placed the development of lighting of the town in the hands of the Parish.

For a moment let me follow this development through. Tenders for gas or electric lighting were requested in January 1945. Odd lights here and there to start with, and perhaps an occasional loan of £100 from the District to pay the capital sums. As housing estates developed and required lighting, the amount would have been beyond the Parish Budget. Mr. A.J. Duffey a councillor and Manager of the local branch of the Electricity Company, found out that estate lighting could be part of the Planning permission, and therefore paid by the Developers. The County took some time to be convinced of this, but when there were, the capital expense of estate lighting became the developers responsibility. The one new road to miss out was Perin's Close. It took some years before the Parish and householders came to an agreement.

Towards the end of 1944 Post War Planning discussions started. The priorities to be given were -- To develop and increase the Recreation Grounds and Public facilities; a Bathing Pool and Community Centre, and finally an A.R.P. ambulance.

It is of interest to see that consideration was given for a bathing pool in the river off Drove Lane. If I remember correctly, this was to be in a side stream to the north west of the main stream which had a deep sump. It is now silted up. (This plan was not accepted by the owners).

The Ambulance was to be housed in the A.R.P. H.Q. (Old Fire Station) and the rest of the building to be used as a Library.

It is of personal interest that the Minutes record receiving a letter from Captain C.A. Hankin with reference to Post war Planning. I am glad to say, what I said is not recorded, so I cannot be taken to task.

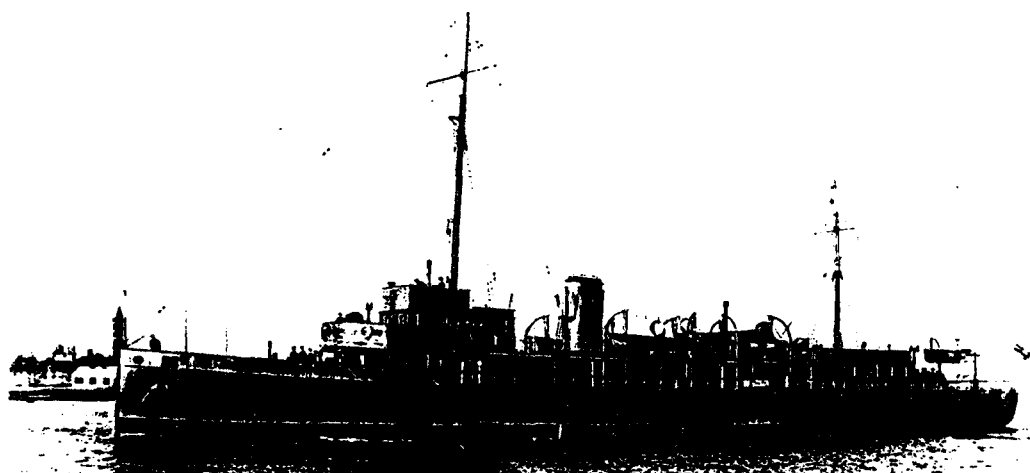
A continual pressure to get the Dean School on to main drainage, led to the County saying this would not be done until after the War. This matter took up a great deal of time during 1945 as the Council petitioned everybody, but without replies from the Ministry of Health and also Education. The Rector complained that he had not been consulted. At the end of the year the M.O.H. asked for copies of the correspondence. One of the main bones of contention was that the supply of 12 Elsan Closets would have cost nearly as much as the connection to the Main drains. In March 1949 when the latter was finally carried out, it is recorded as "Dean School water closets installed".

An interesting note in 1945 regarding the Ford. *Sir* Francis Lindly owner of the Weir House, placed wires across the Ford. The legal representative of the County Council had them removed. Much later on, the late Mr. A.H. White, Parish Councillor and later Parish Clerk had several years of correspondence with the County Council regarding access to the Ford being obstructed. The County Council was virtually saying, "It is not used and therefore no longer exists, why worry". Mr. White was saying quite correctly, "once a highway, always a highway", and the only way to alter this is to introduce a Highway Extinguishing order.

This leads on to unmade and unadopted roads which caused problems. The state of Grange Road was getting sympathy from the Authorities in 1945, but they were reluctant to enforce the Private Street Works Act. When the District housing started to be built it caused considerable damage to South Road and The Dell with the Builders traffic, with a resultant uproar from the residents of that area. It was not until 1955 that the County asked for a list of priorities regarding unmade roads. First was Grange Road, South Road, Rosebery Road, Salisbury Road, and lastly Haig Road.

Housing was not a responsibility of the Parish, but during the War and for some years after, they were regularly asked to send the District Council a list of their priorities for the very limited amount of housing available. For this purpose the Council was very grateful for help and guidance, particularly from the Medical practitioners in the town.

The end of War planning was considered with a great deal of hope, but with the very limited budget, difficult to fulfil.



H.M.S. ALRESFORD

The hope for a Community Centre was discussed in February 1945, but by March the Council were too busy to give the matter further consideration. Transport planning was also very important, in those days when most people had to use Public transport. Bus timetables being worked out to meet Surgery hours, and Bus Companies encouraged to put on new services to enable people from neighbouring villages to get into town for shopping.

In April 1945 the Council declined to be the fund raisers for a "Welcome home for the Troops". As had always been the custom this was left to an ad hoc Voluntary body to raise funds for this purpose. If memory serves me well, we were all entertained to a Dinner in the Horse And Groom, probably during 1946.

At the first Parish Election after the War a new Council was formed, with only two of the old guard remaining. It may be of note that this Council consisted of Dr. Meryon, Mr. Symonds (Manager of Lloyds Bank), Mr. A.H. White, the Head Postman, and the remainder all being persons running businesses in the Town. Once again there was no female representative. A.H. Hasted J.P. one of the previous members became chairman.

A 15 year agreement for Street Lighting with Southern Electricity was signed. The first Guide Book was put in hand with the support of the revived Chamber of Trade.

Victory Celebrations; Think of this with the 50 year celebrations coming up. The Parish Council agreed -- "In view of the state of Europe and the World, no use of any money or food to be used. Demonstrations to be done by individual sections".

Standing orders had gone astray and a previous Councillor was to be asked to return them.

Could new Public lavatories be put at the Bell Hotel? Houses were to be numbered. Lighting was to be restricted to hold the cost within the agreed 8d rate. Mr. Childs (The Town Mill) offered his Fishing rights to the Council for a nominal rent of 1d per year. This unfortunately had to be turned down due to possible lack of supervision and various legal points.

Pre-fabricated housing was nearing completion in November 1946 and the Parish Council were requesting the District to let tenants move in, even if the electricity was not yet connected, such was the pressure for housing.

It was agreed to leave Industry in the hands of the Chamber of Trade which, amongst others was canvassing for a sugar beet factory and other light industries. The Council for their part, was saying that the area (not yet developed) off New Farm Road was not large enough to support employment for the Town.

With the advent of electric street lighting considerable problems arose due to removal of the old Gas standards, disconnection of the supply, and the costs involved. (The town lamp was removed in 1947 by the H.C.C. because of road improvements, but charged the Parish £5). Much later the Town Trustees had to buy old Gas Standards from Reading to enhance Broad Street!

It was agreed not to join the newly formed Associations of Parish Councils, as the Council was very happy with the help and guidance it received from the District Council.

Early in 1947 a Youth Hut was proposed in the Dean - there is nothing new in this town!

East Street, Alresford



(above)
the base of the Town Lamp
(the Big Light).



War Memorial Swimming Pool, Alresford

I refer again to the importance of developing satisfactory rural bus services. At the various Ministry of Transport licensing hearings a Parish Council could not be represented; only District Councils could be heard or other non-statutory bodies. The Council agreed the District should put their ideas, and also agreed with the Chamber of Trade, that the Council's views should also be put by the Chamber. As the members were mostly the same people there were no problems! The result was - Buses to Basingstoke, Cheriton, Wield and Petersfield. Also, the Main road service to continue. Snow in 1947 produced a request for a bye-law to force frontagers to clear their own footpaths. Unsuccessful.

1947 also saw the completion of the Pre-fabs. The use of the Tichborne Down Camp huts for additional housing; they were warm and reasonably comfortable. (I think some of the residents did not agree). The housing in Tichborne Down and Kingsley Cottages was classed as insanitary. The District was to convert the *N.F.S.* Huts for housing but it was noted that the retention of these huts restricted the play area.

Food Parcels; the distribution was in the hands of the W.V.S., but this method was considered unsatisfactory, and it was felt that the Council should be responsible. However, I don't think they ever were although the argument went on for several years.

In the early part of 1948 the rebuilding of the main road was completed and a letter of thanks was sent to the County Surveyor. Older readers will remember the old road in West Street was very steeply cambered with cobbled gullies on each side, rising to paved footpaths. This had been a problem since pre-War days. The cobble stones in Broad Street were also a problem. Some years later these were also removed.

The Council had supported the War Memorial committee in the building of the Swimming Pool (now War Memorial Gardens) but declined to accept the responsibility of running it. However, they had, as early as 1947 requested that the memorial to the dog "Hambone", should be made more permanent. A wooden cross was erected.

Bus shelters at New Farm Road and Bridge Road were to be built around this time with several private gifts, money from the sale of Town guides, and donations from the Bus Company. It took four years to be completed by the efforts of the Chamber of Trade. The lighting programme progressed during this time, with a new light here and there, including lights to the Police Station, Railway and Public Lavatory, each Body paying one third of the installation costs. Broad Street parking was now controlled by a Parking Order, but cars must be lit during the hours of darkness, although there was a street lamp functioning outside the Chemists shop.

At the annual Parish Council meeting it was agreed that the Chairman of the Council should change every year. This was to reduce the great risk of a person outstaying his time (the difficulty of moving an old friend!). Alresford is one of the very few Councils to do this, and long may it continue to do so.

There was a complaint from the Church that the posting of public notices on the Church door was damaging it. The Council replied that it was compulsory for them to do so unless a notice board was provided.

The Old Club House in Mill Hill, who remembers this? It was to be repaired and the Council had no objections.

New Year greetings were received from M. Dulry Marcel of Clichy, France. Who was he and why the greetings to the Council? Early twinning?

The new service road on Pound Hill was unmade and uncared for, and nobody would take on the responsibility. Over the years the Council had asked several friendly Frontagers to check their Deeds to see if this ground was part of their property, and what, if any rights existed. None were found. It was some years before the County Council accepted this as Manorial land and constructed the existing service road.

As the new roads in the public housing sector became completed early in 1950, the name of Jesty Road after a former Headmaster of the Dean School was put forward, together with Mitford for the Author, associated with the town, and Windsor as it was Coronation year. These were the start of the Parish Council taking an active part in naming new roads as they have been developed. Most of these names have been either after persons who have given notable service locally, or previous owners or earlier names of the land. This was over ruled by the Developers in some cases, such as the Castles and Lakes.

The Swimming Pool had served a good purpose but the Trust that was running it was getting into financial difficulties, so it was finally transferred to the Parish. This created an enormous amount of detailed work, from employing an attendant, to fixing payment rates with the Schools. The everlasting cleaning out was necessary as no control of the algae could be found, and stones were forever getting into the water. A *fair* amount of the cost of maintenance was paid for by the profits of the annual carnival, whose Committee was both hardworking and kind to the town.

Running parallel with this project was the Recreation Ground improvement scheme, which in turn was linked to the making up of roads in that area. The County did several soundings of the frontagers who would be required to pay for the new roads. South Road residents were always up in arms about the state of the road; The Dell was always flooded in Winter, and the residents still blamed the District Council lorries for the problems. The Town Trustees who owned the Recreation Ground had two frontages, Grange Road and Rosebery Road, and only a very small reserve of £160. The road problems were finally resolved to most peoples satisfaction with the District Council making a grant towards South Road, The road finally being taken over by the County in the sixties. The Town Trustees resolved their problem in 1959 by transferring the ownership of the Ground to the Parish Council, who had already made plans to develop it with changing rooms, level Football Pitch, running track and childrens play area. The County Council agreed the plan; the National Playing Fields Officer visited and approved, but there were no funds available; a total clamp down on County grants. The children's play area was all that the Council could proceed with, together with renovation of the old N.F.S. Hut. It also produced various problems. Stones in the grass giving rise to complaints about damage by the gang mower driver and the Hampshire C.C. education department who had contracted to cut the grass. Also damage to the grass by tracking, caused by people walking diagonally across. The bye-laws were displayed on the Ground, but were pulled down. However, control was enforced by a cyclist being fined £1 for cycling across the grass.

The Hut required much to be done to it, but this took several years although plans for the improvements were available and agreed by everybody. Money was the problem and the H.C.C. and National Playing Fields grants being agreed, but always withdrawn at the last moment, due to their funds not being available. On the third application grants were obtained, namely H.C.C. £32, Playing Fields £18. These together with a sum from the Council of £235, enabled the refurbishment to take place.

The obtaining and positioning of a Pedestrian Crossing took up much time with meetings and censuses over the years, with the suggested sites being :- Dr. Hodgson's house to Lawrence's, opposite the Peaceful Home, Swan Hotel to the Fish shop, and opposite Bay Tree House. Nobody would agree and the County did not think it was necessary - so no crossing.

Before we leave this decade some snippets. Could the 'Keep left' signs be removed from the Mitford Road roundabout to save petrol because of petrol rationing?

Bye-Pass; N.F.U. and Chamber of Trade objected to the idea. Parish Council to monitor progress.

B.B.C. 'Any Questions' came to town. The Council allocated seats one per family that applied.

County Council plan to double the size of the town.

An 'upside down' lorry and Stock cars parked in Broad Street.

Telephone dial system would not come for "some long time" was the reply from the Post Office. (It was automated in May 1963).

Following an enquiry the Police replied that although the Station was not always open till 11 p.m., by phoning Winchester, attendance would be about 6 minutes!

The Library at the Dean School was poor and therefore under used. Could we have visits from the travelling library van?

An extension of street lighting hours for the Agricultural Committee Dance? They would pay the additional cost.

Could the Council start a Nursery School as there was a shortage of domestic staff, the mothers having to stay at home with their children. The sixties started with the Clerk's salary staying at £30 p.a. but he was to have his telephone rental (£10) paid.

The Ministry of Transport said Alresford was unsuitable (their word) for a Pedestrian Crossing. This was not the end of the matter. The Council then applied for a refuge bollard in West Street opposite the Post Office. In February 1961 the Bank notified the Parish Council that it was overdrawn and broke. For years the annual expenditure had been £40/£50, but with the ownership and responsibilities of both the Swimming Pool and Recreation Ground, the costs had been increasing without being watched. The crisis was overcome by a loan from the District Council of £30 and an authority to the Bank to allow an overdraft to the maximum of £25, to see the Council through to the end of the year. This also was the start of the Council forming a Finance Committee. They recommended a precept of £300 for the following year, equal to a 4d rate.

The next financial problem was to consider how to pay for the street works when the County took over Grange and Rosebery roads. The estimate of the cost of the Parish share was going to be £1800, plus the street lighting of Grange Road and South Road at £1000. This work was being held up by only one frontager arguing, but by 1963 the road bill was presented for £1,754.1.1d. This was paid by £359 from the General Fund, plus a further excess borrowed from the Lighting fund, which at that time was held by the District Council, £1000 to be borrowed over ten years.

Although the loan was obtained, something had gone wrong, as a year later the Public Auditor informed us that the Ministry of Housing and Local government had never sanctioned it!



West Street with Town Hall on the left

Imhan 1 Lulu.

Two other major decisions had to be taken in the first half of the sixties.

First, was the Town Hall. The Chamber of Trade wished to offload the responsibility; The ownership was not popular with the public as they thought, quite wrongly, that the members of the Chamber were making money from it. Also, the building needed renovating. To buy, to sell, to build new, were all on the table. The Council decided that in view of its finances, it would not take it on. The discussion of possible financial dealings were taken in committee, together with the Chamber of Trade. Due to the probable value of the Hall, it was decided to sell. Unfortunately, without the agreement of the Council the Chamber put the whole of the discussions in the Press. This caused such bad feeling that the Council refused further talks until an apology was forthcoming!

Discussions did continue with the help and guidance of the Hampshire Council of Social Services. There were three options.

(1) Parish Council to take over -- this had been ruled out. (2) Parish Council to become Trustees without the responsibility as far as the Rate Fund was concerned. (3) A Community Association be formed with the object of stimulating public activity at the Hall. If this was agreed the Association would be able to obtain grants from the Ministry of Education for capital and towards maintenance. The Parish Council as Trustees would not be able to get these grants. The third option was considered to be the best solution, so a public meeting was called, and the Community Association was formed.

The other problem was to increase the areas of public open spaces. This became tied into the County Council wishing to reposition and build a new Primary School.

The Parish Council had considered the correct place for this was what is now De Lucy estate due to it being adjacent to Perin's sports ground. This would have made it possible for the schools to share some of the facilities. It was not to be, as the Planning Authority gave planning permission for housing on the site. The Council was upset and took advice from our M.P., who informed them how to go about rescinding the order. If successful, this would have meant the District Council having to pay substantial damages to the developers! Therefore, De Lucy Road and housing came into being.

In the meantime the County selected the new School site on the top of Sun Hill, and offered to sell the northern part of the ground to the Parish (some 9 acres) for £20,000, with a grant of one third. This the Council turned down as it would have cost too much, even over 60 years - plus the cost of maintenance. The ground itself was also considered unsuitable as only about a third was flat, and another third was on a very steep slope. The Parish Council considered the County was wrong **in its** siting of the School, which was in line with the full force of the prevailing S.W. winds. They were successful in persuading the County to site the School off the brow of the hill, to the north of the site. This reduced the size of the ground available as a public open space, but the County put the price up to a figure near to the original. The Parish Council did not buy.

Following the Parish Council's scheme through, another site was considered to the West of the School grounds, and the Education Authority agreed to the joint use of the Sports ground, out of school hours.

A public meeting was called to authorise the expenditure, but at the very last moment the County withdrew the offer of joint use, and the Public meeting voted against the purchase. Other ideas included the ground to the east of the Dean/Fulling Mill footpath, the land level to be increased with chalk from the bye-pass when it was built; it would have been parkland with river views but it received little support. At the end of 1966 the hospital land at Sun Hill became available, and was finally purchased in 1968.

Some years earlier the Council inspected a provisional Town Plan produced by the District Council. Among other items it showed a car park in the railway area; this was just before the Goods yard closed. The idea was to be superseded by the County Plan, which replaced this car park with an area of commercial development. The car parks suggested, being, in the Dean, Station Road in the 'Swan' garden, and a larger park between Station Road and Jacklyn's Lane, demolishing the house 'Mulberries'. All these ideas assumed that the railway was going to close. There were many meetings, special meetings and public meetings to discuss all the aspects of this Plan. Both the County and District Councils attended and assisted in most of these gatherings. Some changes were made and the general design of Alresford as we know it today in respect of housing, was finally agreed in the form of a non- Statutory Town Plan.

All the years of the early and mid sixties brought a great deal of hard work to the Council,

with the general items of where to put bus shelters in West Street, to the redesigning and installing a new lighting in West Street and The Avenue. The Swimming pool thatched roof was burnt off, and due to a fatal swimming accident at Petersfield, the Schools had withdrawn their support. The roof was rebuilt, but without the income from the Schools, the Pool's future was doomed in the long term.

The railway also, but it continued to rattle along with its diesel cars for a few more years; many meetings were held with Ropley and Alton to try and find reasons for this public service to continue, but all to no avail. Notice of closure was issued at the end of 1967. A public meeting was called, but by April of the next year it was accepted that the fight was lost.

Finances had to be kept in pace with all these developments but it was possible to reserve £60 for the control of pigeons at the Community Centre.

The Alresford Society had come into being and the Council resolved to become a Life member and to give them their full support.

The Council negotiated the Public use of the tennis courts at Perin's, subject to a Club being formed. The formation was undertaken by the Community Centre with satisfactory results.

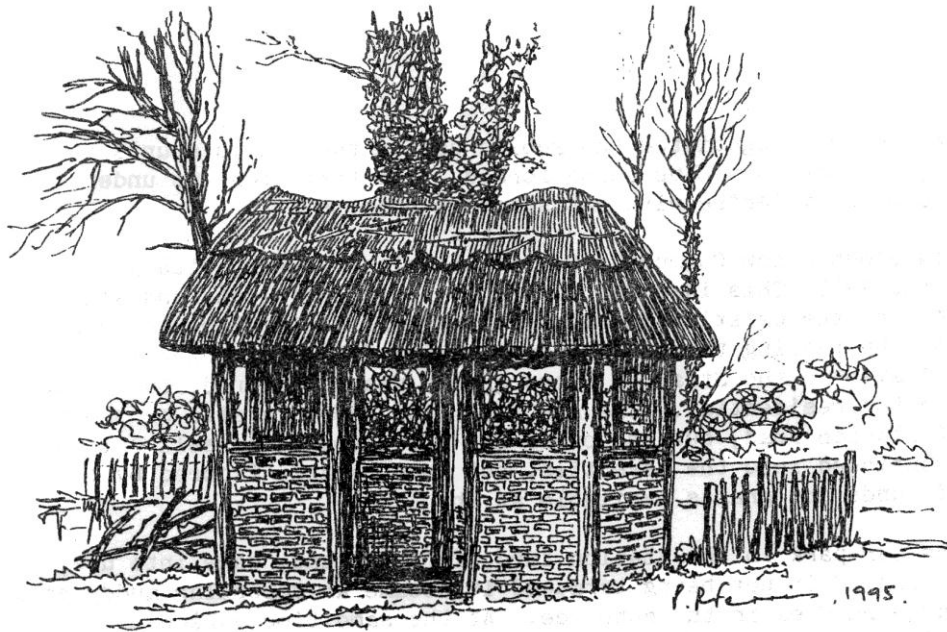
How about a new Community Centre at Arlebury Park, with a Bridge across the A31? This idea was mooted at the end of 1966, and some years before the existing development started. This site was turned down, by the feeling that it was too far out from the centre of the town. A site on the Stratton Bates ground was considered, but this area was too residential. The new Town Plan showed a site on the west side of Station Road, but the owner was not prepared to sell. These ideas continued into the seventies, but were usually floored by the lack of funds and grants available at the time.

The car park in the Station Yard, far west end, came into use, but because of it not being tarmaced it became an unpopular muddy area, with large puddles in the entrance. At the same time various discussions were in hand to limit time allowed for parking in Broad and West Streets. Another important discussion took place with the County Council regarding Street lighting. The Parish had over the years added to and filled in dark spots -- as and when finances allowed. The County now had a highway standard of light for 'A° roads, 'B' roads and estates. If the lighting authorities (in our case, the Parish) wanted to bring the lights up to these standards, the County would take over both the energy and maintenance, thus removing the cost from the Parish Rate. The Council firstly ensured that all new estate developments were to the County standard, so the H.C.C. took then over as they were completed. The Avenue, West and East Street were adjusted as necessary, as were other areas over the next few years. This left the Parish only directly responsible for a small number of Footpath lights; A great saving to the local rates. Broad Street was left for detailed discussion with the H.C.C., Alresford Society and Town Trustees for special consideration. An interesting note - the lights were still only lit up to 11 p.m., with the time switches being adjusted to midnight at Christmas week, and in the centre of the town for special dinners and dances, such as the Police Ball and the Agricultural Dinner. In these cases the function organisers paid for the switches to be adjusted!

The principle of paying towards the maintenance of the Church clock was agreed. New Bye-laws for the Recreation grounds were sent to the Home Office for approval.

The threat of the Post Office being down-graded to a Sub Post Office, the closing of the main entrance and the opening of a new one, were all strongly opposed with some effect. The

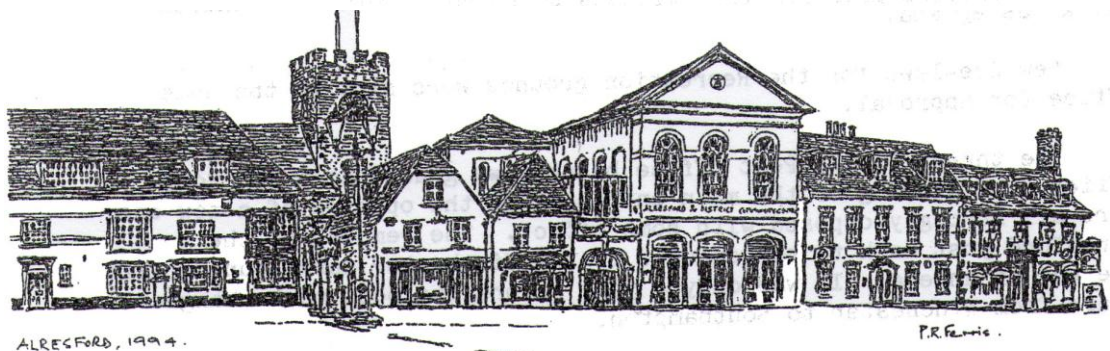
removal of the Alresford post mark to be replaced by the Winchester mark sounded like the end of an era! It was only a year before the post mark changed again from Winchester to Southampton.



War Memorial Gardens - entrance
(land donated by Sir Francis Lindly of Weir House, June 18, 1951)

TO COMMEMORATE THE CENTENARY OF THE GIFT
OF THE AVENUE, ALRESFORD, BY THE LORD BISHOP
OF WINCHESTER, SEPTEMBER 23RD 1869.
UNVEILED BY HIS SUCCESSOR, SEPTEMBER, 1969.

Plaque detail from the Avenue



The future of Perin's School was strongly fought. Was it to be a Comprehensive 11 to 16 years, or to include a sixth form up to 18? The Council lobbied all 93 County Councillors stating their view which was 11-16 with a sixth form College in Winchester. It was hoped that all Winchester schools would be treated in the same fashion, as indeed happened.

This was in 1969, and the Town Trustees asked the Council to join with them in commemorating the century of the then Bishop of Winchester giving the Avenue to the town. The seat on the south side of the road marks the occasion.

There had been a track running from the end of the Weir House road to the north of the Watercress beds across to the B3046 Old Alresford Road. It had become very rutted and unusable. This was in the Old Alresford Parish, and they did not want to know about it. Alresford did not want it to be a highway, but to remain open as a footpath. It never has, and is now very well grown over. Was it ever a footpath?

Litter was again with us. The County Council having withdrawn the use of a lengths man, and replaced him with a Mechanical Sweeper, there was no cleaning of the footpaths, and the retailers were asked to sweep their own shop frontages. Eventually the Parish Council called a meeting of the H.C.C. and District Council, and at the end of the year all parties agreed that the road was the responsibility of the County, and the pavement the responsibility of the District.

The Town was offered a speed limit of 40 m.p.h. from the railway bridge, but only if it was accepted all through the town. They kept the 30 m.p.h. in town.

The Swimming pool had opened for the last year with a record number of children using it. It needed a lot of expensive repairs, and the water was not up to the required standard.

The search for a Community Centre in Station Road continued, as did the request for a pedestrian crossing.

As the decade closed Government reorganisation was starting to rumble. A Public meeting was to be called to hear the merits of both the Maud and Radcliffe Reports, which were to have a far reaching effect on Parish Council funding.

SOURCES : Parish Council Minutes.

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