

WELLS CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ARCHIVES AND CIVIC ASSETS COMMITTEE HELD AT WELLS TOWN
HALL, AT 6:00PM ON THURSDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2016

PRESENT: Cllrs: C Briton (Chairman); C Cox; C Price; H Siggs; D Unwin; C Wride.

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk: F White
Archivist: Dr J Wood

16/32A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: A Gibson (Mayor); T Robbins.

16/33A DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Councillors' Declarations of Interest, made under the Council's Code of Conduct adopted 26th July 2012.

None declared.

16/34A MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Thursday 1st **SEPTEMBER 2016**

Minutes of the previous meeting were proposed, seconded, approved and signed.

16/26A There was discussion about what this meant; it was agreed there would be clarification later in the meeting; see 16/37A.

16/30A The visiting expert has confirmed the Railway picture is not being damaged in its current position. It was agreed to have a future agenda item to consider the whole position of pictures in all Town Hall rooms.

16/35A MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

None present.

16/36A REPORTS FROM THE ARCHIVIST

To receive the Archivist's Report to the Committee: Noted.

The Archivist showed a sample of a restored document, and the recently restored great seal of Elizabeth I.

16/37A CONSERVATION OF CIVIC ASSETS

Forward plan for conservation work on the City Council's paintings and their frames. It was proposed, seconded and agreed to make the following recommendation to Council:

RECOMMENDED

That council take forward the restoration of the pictures either:

i. In a whole package, by means of a one-off payment.

OR

ii. As a five-year program administered from an increased Archives and Assets Committee budget.

16/38A CONSERVATION OF ARCHIVES

Conservation of medieval title deeds and leases.

The Archivist requested expenditure of £152.62 for the next phase of conservation work on the medieval title deeds: approved.

16/39A ONLINE ARCHIVES DATABASES

The Archivist demonstrated the database; data from the Sacramental Certificates and Wells Petty Sessions records has been input under her supervision by the Box Listing Team of volunteers at the Museum. Work has begun on the Wells Property records. The Public will be able to search online to trace their local family records.

The Archivist was thanked for all this work and was asked to pass on thanks to the volunteers.

16/40A ANY OTHER MATTERS OF REPORT

- i. The Archivist reported that the compilation of Jean Imray's book is due to be completed by the end of March 2017.
- ii. Somerset Heritage Trust.
The head of Conservation is due to retire and there appear to be no plans to replace him. It was agreed to write to the trust expressing concern and asking where the Council should seek this resource and support in future.

16/41A DATE OF NEXT MEETING 6pm Thursday 16th February 2017

Report from the Archivist

Heritage Open Day

Heritage Open Day 2016 at Wells Town Hall was on Saturday 10th September. The whole building was open to the public from 10.00-4.00, and to aid visitors to explore it, the Archivist had updated her leaflets entitled "Self-Guided Tour of Wells Town Hall" and "Children's Trail and Quiz". There were various displays showcasing material from the City Archives. In particular, there was a brand new exhibition, researched and written by volunteers, on "Crime and Punishment in Victorian Wells". Other Archives displays at the event included "The Circus Comes to Town!", two medieval charters, historic images of the Town Hall, and "The Court in Wells".

Further displays of local interest were mounted by other groups and individuals. Richard Green brought boards on the Wells Charter Fairs; Wells Railway Fraternity brought a display on railways of Wells; Jeffrey Allen and Janet James lent copies of vintage local postcards from their collections; Janet James' displays about the Bishops depicted in four of the portraits were out; and Wells Civic Society displayed panoramic photos of Wells ('Walk along Sadler Street and St John Street in the year 2000').

There was an incredible, record-breaking total of 585 visitors. Our previous record attendances were 372 people in 2014 and 351 in 2015 (which was a wet day), so this year's total far exceeded them. We are indebted to the local press for running press releases and letters before and after the event. As ever, much of the credit for the day's success should go to the many volunteers who took part. Without their generous support, Heritage Open Day at the Town Hall could not have happened on the scale it did. Many thanks to the Mayor (Councillor Alison Gibson) and the Councillors who did such a wonderful job (Councillors Brandon, Kennedy, Price, Siggs, Unwin and Wride), along with the Town Clerk Felicity White, Mace-Bearers Jan Rood and Melanie Goody, Town Crier Len Sweales, and volunteers Linda Bishop, Clare Blackmore, Richard Green, Tudor Hopkins and his assistant Felicity, Peter Trueman, Chris Winter and the Wells Civic Society volunteers, Andrew Tucker and Ken Smith of Wells Railway Fraternity, and Andrew Haymes, David Mather and Sue Curragh of the City Archives Box Listing Group.

Looking at Heritage Open Days at venues across Wells, the Archivist again produced and organised distribution of the joint leaflet advertising what would be happening. Across the City, six venues took part, along with Wells Walking Tours. All were very well attended. The total number of visitors across the venues was an impressive 1,160, with figures still to come in from two of the venues.

"Crime and Punishment in Victorian Wells" exhibition

This exhibition was prepared for and premiered at Heritage Open Day 2016. It was based on data brought to light by volunteers at the monthly Archives Box-Listing Sessions run by the Archivist at the Museum. It attracted very positive feedback, and the Archivist has arranged for it to go on show again at Wells Museum in 2017. It will run for a month, from Thursday 30th March to Wednesday 26th April.

Conservation and repair

Somerset Heritage Trust's Head of Conservation, Mervyn Richens, has completed work on the latest tranche of material, including reuniting the (recently discovered) missing part of the Great Seal of Queen Elizabeth I with the rest of the seal.

'Know Your Place' Online and Touring Exhibitions

The Archivist has been contributing to the 'Know Your Place – West of England' online and touring exhibitions, so that material from Wells City Archives is incorporated in these. The online exhibition is still being created, but here is the web address for how it looks at present: www.kypexplore.com. The touring exhibition, which is being launched next week, 'features extraordinary images from archives, museums and heritage collections across the West of England, and gives an unique insight into the history of the places where we live, work and visit every day'. It will be coming to Wells next spring, and will be on display at the Bishop's Place in March and April 2017.

Joint Exhibition

Preparation is continuing for the joint exhibition next year between Wells City Archives, Wells & Mendip Museum and the Bishop's Palace. The exhibition dates have been altered; it is now planned to run at the Bishop's Palace from 6th May to 2nd December 2017. The Chair of the Archives Committee and the Archivist are scheduled to review and approve Archives items for inclusion in December 2016.

Polish Friendship Visit

The Archivist welcomed to the City Archives the four visitors from Kluczborg, with whom Wells has a Friendship Agreement, along with the Chairman and Secretary of Wells Twinning Association. She presented to them a 'History of Wells through 12 Archives Documents', which was very well received.

Dr Julia Wood
07.11.2016