

FIVE YEAR PERMITS FOR BOAT OWNERS

"Completely In The Dark About Their Takings" -Says Cllr. Kermode

C.T. March 22, 1947

DESPITE arguments put forward by Coun. S. Kermode that they were completely in the dark as to the takings of motor boat operators, Christchurch Town Council on Thursday approved a Beach Committee recommendation that ten operators should be granted permits for five years to run services between Quomps Quay and the Mudeford Sandbank.

Various conditions were attached to the permits, but Coun. Kermode moved two amendments—one that the permits should be for one year only and the other that official tickets should be issued. Both amendments were defeated.

The reason for the second amendment was that the Council had only fixed the operators' fees for one season and Coun. Kermode felt that the only way they could assess the fees in subsequent years was to ascertain by means of official tickets how many passengers were carried, "unless the Council was prepared to take another big guess like they had this year." He added that the Council had been too fond of guessing in past.

Here are the terms attaching to the permits :—

Payment of fees of £30 in respect of a motor boat licensed by the Board of Trade, £15 in respect of a 12 passenger boat and £6 per boat towards the cost of employing a pier master at the Mudeford landing stage for the first season.

The Council reserve the right to vary the fees and the amount of contribution towards the cost of the employment of the pier master.

Arrangements must be made for the boats to operate between Quomps Quay and the Mudeford Sandbank so that persons wishing to do so may embark from or disembark on such Quay and the Sandbank.

Books of tickets must be issued at 1/9 for the return journey to rate-payers and occupiers of huts on the Mudeford Sandbank, and the charge must not be increased above 1/3 for a single journey and 2/6 for a return journey.

It was also agreed that persons operating boats from places other than Quomps Quay should be charged £6 per boat during the coming season in addition to £5 for the right to land passengers on the landing stage and a contribution towards the cost of employing a pier master on the landing stage.

Applications are to be invited for the position of pier master.

Operators to whom permits were granted were: Messrs. F. Elliott, K. F. Longmore, B. C. Stride, E. R. Elliott, E. J. Stride, T. C. Beedle, E. C. Budden, R. W. Keynes, Mrs. M. A. Elliott and Mrs. E. Thornton.

HAD ENLIGHTENED THE COMMITTEE.

Bringing forward the recommendations, Coun. Cobb (chairman of the Beach Committee) said that the Committee had had all the boat owners before them and they had enlightened the Committee on many points. They pointed out that the cost of getting their boats repaired was so great that there was no guarantee of getting their money back in one season.

"I asked those two questions earlier in the meeting because I wanted to prove that the Beach Committee know nothing at all about the number of passengers carried," explained Councillor Kermode, when he moved his amendment. "What are the Council getting in consideration for tying themselves up for five years?" he continued. "The only thing is that they will issue books of tickets at reduced rates to ratepayers. That's just a normal business procedure and worth very little."

FINEST REVENUE PRODUCING AMENITY.

Councillor Kermode argued that a boat need only make two trips month to cover the fee payable to the Council, and he said that six or eight boats on the Tuckton service last year earned nearly £300 a week. Commenting on the suggestion that there should be a queue controller to "control the rush of people for the 2/6 trips," Councillor Kermode said it was "a slap in the face" for the committee when the boat proprietors were pleading poverty. The Council had discussed the development of amenities and without a doubt motor boat services were the finest revenue producing amenity that the Council possessed.

Councillor Shave seconded the amendment, saying that he was not happy when the committee made their recommendation.

"I'm surprised at that because it was voted unanimously," commented Councillor McArdle.

COMMITTEE NOT UNANIMOUS.

"No!" retorted Councillor Shave, who was backed up by Councillor Miss Padwick. She said that she was the only one who voted against it and there was one abstention. The boat operators, she continued, were not prepared to pay for a pier master themselves and were not willing to let the Corporation take 1d. per passenger carried.

Councillor Ashcroft's opinion was that the operators were entitled to expect some security of tenure, and with regard to the issue of official tickets, he contended that that would be useless unless the Council appointed inspectors. "You are trying to blackguard these men as a set of rogues or something. I am against the amendment because I thought we had settled the matter after a long discussion in committee," he said.

All subsequent speakers were in favour of the recommendations. Councillor Barnes saying that he thought the contributions to be received by the Council were reasonable, and Councillor Mrs. Baker emphasising that the operators had served the town well in the past considering the difficulties with which they had to contend.

Continued below.....

Council Give Way To Boat Owners Permit Charges Now Fixed For Five Years

C.T. April 5, 1947

FOLLOWING the reading of a lengthy letter from the United Services Motor Boat owners stating that they were unable to accept the terms for permits to operate boats from the Quay, Christchurch Town Council at the meeting on Tuesday gave way to the operators and now they can have permits at a fixed charge for five years.

At the previous meeting of the Council it was decided that the charges should be fixed for this season only and the Council reserved the right to vary the charges and also the amount of contribution to be paid towards the cost of employing a pier-master.

It was this clause to which the operators objected, and the letter from the United Services Motor Boat Owners stated:—

"The inclusion of the clause which stated the number of boats landing and the revision of the landing fees as a subject for discussion at the end of each season automatically nullifies any concrete tenure of tenancy, and places the boat owners in the unfortunate position of laying out a considerable sum of money to refit the boats after their term of war service, paying extra for a pier-master, granting fare concessions and then being faced with the prospect of increased opposition and greater overhead charges than might be reasonably borne, and still make a living.

EFFICIENT SERVICE ESSENTIAL.

"The boat owners appreciate the fact that it is essential for an efficient service of motor boats to operate and serve the Mudeford Sandbank to ensure your Council some return for their outlay, and they are prepared to provide that service with a fleet of boats built for the job, but feel that in fairness to themselves they need some concrete tenure to ensure that whilst they provide and endeavour to build up that service they cannot be constantly faced with alternatives that would drive them out of business.

"In other boroughs, including neighbouring ones, the permits to operate boats have been for a set figure for a given number of years and often the price is lower than the aggregate total which we are paying, with the great additional advantage of monopoly of the site and no concession fares.

NO DESIRE TO DICTATE.

"In conclusion, the boat owners wish to state that they have no desire to dictate to the Council, but that in fairness to themselves consider that the original agreement is the only real solution to providing an efficient service and at the same time ensuring them a reasonable chance of a living, and they would, if it would in any way assist, be pleased to send representatives to enlarge upon this statement and answer any questions,"

Commenting on this letter, the Mayor said it appeared to the Municipal Committee that the motor boat owners were rather suspicious of the Council's intentions in reserving the right to vary the charges, and thought that the Council were going to raise them perhaps very considerably. He felt sure that that was not in the minds of the Council at all. The Committee thought that to fix the charges for five years was rather tying the Council. The clause might in

fact react to the benefit of the boat proprietors. "They obviously suspected our good faith in the matter, which now reverts to status quo," he said.

MUST FIND REVENUE.

"Is there any harm in granting these men what they are asking for?" inquired Coun. McArdle. "We have got to find revenue and the way we are going on we shall not find anything," he declared, adding that he would move that the operators be granted a five-year tenure at £30 for Board of Trade boats and £15 for 12-passenger boats. "Never mind what other people do; I will try and give you an accurate return of what goes on at the Quay," he declared.

Coun. Lander seconded, saying that anyone who took over a tenancy for five years wanted to know what the conditions would be.

Opposing the resolution, Coun. Kermode asked what use Coun. McArdle's returns would be if they granted the boat operators the five years tenure. "I would be quite prepared to grant them a five-year tenure at a fixed price if I knew what the thing was worth. Let's know the value of the amenity first," he said. It was an amenity that belonged to the ratepayers and at present they were completely in the dark as to its value. After the first year they could let the boat operators have a ten-year tenancy if they wanted to, but surely the Council must have some figures to work on.

Ald. Tucker spoke of the tremendous cost of providing boats at the present time and said that no man was going to speculate thousands of pounds unless he had some security of tenure.

DEPENDENT ON THE SEASON.

Coun. Lander contended that even if they had figures for this season they could not tell what the operators would earn over a period of five years. It depended entirely on whether the season was good or bad.

"We may drive these men away from the Quay altogether," said Coun. Furneaux, who mentioned that some boat owners had private land from which to operate, and these men might also go to private land and then the Council would get nothing.

Coun. Miss Padwick supported Coun. Kermode and wanted to know how the Council could fix the charges when they did not know what the boats were bringing in.

Coun. Vaughan thought the charges were very fair. It was well known that after the first world war there was a boom and then a slump and the same thing might occur again.

Coun. Kermode: How can Coun. Vaughan say it is a fair charge? Does he know how much is taken in an average season?

DID NOT MATTER WHAT THEY EARNED.

Supporting the proposition, Coun. Cobb said he did not mind how much money the operators made so long as they provided an amenity. If the Council had run the boats no doubt they would have made a loss.

"I don't think the Council should poke their nose into other people's business for the purpose of fixing a rent," remarked Ald. Northover. He thought the men should be granted a five-year lease, especially in view of the fact that the Council had spent so much money on Mundeford Beach. The boats were the only means of getting to and from the beach and unless they were given a fair chance to operate then the money spent on the beach would be wasted.

On a point of order, Coun. Kermode said that the Beach Committee framed a recommendation which the Council approved, and they should stick to it. He said that the Committee reaffirmed their decision when they had a letter before them at their last meeting.

Coun. Cobb: This is a second letter since our last meeting.

Coun. Kermode: And now you have changed your mind for no reason at all.

The Town Clerk explained that if they passed the resolution it would automatically rescind the previous decision.

On being put to the vote, Coun. McArdle's resolution was carried, only four members voting against it.