

Harbour Men Had Lots To Talk About

C.T. March 30, 1962

DISCUSSION at the annual meeting of the Christchurch Harbour and Rivers Association on Friday covered a wide range of matters.

A member asked whether the Council proposed to charge boat owners who put their boats on Mudeford beach by the Haven. He understood that there had been a mooring right there from time im-memorial and wondered whether the association could do anything about it.

The secretary, Mr. John Austin, said he didn't think boat owners could refuse to pay a rental to the Corporation for land they owned. Going back 20 years, fishing boats were virtually the only boats moored there.

But now, owing to the popularity of boating, the Corporation had to do something in the interests of boat users because the situation was now getting "chaotic" and he thought everyone would benefit and there would be some sort of order out of chaos. It was thought, however, to be the "thin end of the wedge"—small fees at the beginning which would increase over the years.

He had written to Christchurch Corporation to find out their policy. In a letter from the chairman of the Beach committee, Ald. J. W. Richardson, the Alderman stated that he was surprised that the boat owners were concerned about the proposals of the Council to impose very modest charges for mooring in the harbour under the control of the Council.

It would be realised from the charges imposed by the Corporation that they did not look at the harbour bed as revenue producing and the revenue only covered the expenses in connection with the Council's proposals.

A member said he was surprised that Christchurch did not have a harbour master or some sort of authority. The chairman Mr. G. Lowe, thought that no boat user would object to having a properly constituted harbour authority.

He continued: "I think there is a lot of discontent in the harbour and a lot of it is because of the Water Company. No one wants to pay them because they haven't anyone interested in seamen and boating matters. But I don't think anyone would object to paying a harbour authority."

Mr. Allen White thought that if a harbour master, or authority, were established by the Corporation the only object would be to extract revenue from users of the harbour.

"The only successful way of having a master or authority is to have a representative harbour authority with representatives from every organisation concerned with the harbour. Such an organisation has been killed as far as I am concerned by the Water Company leasing various bits of the harbour."

TOGETHER

The chairman said it had been mentioned that if the Councils acted together they could buy out the Water Company's lease, "But you can't get the Councils to act together", he said.

Mr. White suggested that if the two Councils were to buy the West Hants Water Company out in this matter and put in their own harbour master he would be there merely to extract money.

Mr. Lowe queried the number of boats in the harbour. He thought it was about 1,000. He thought that people would not mind paying an average of £3 a boat towards an authority if they thought that the harbour was to be properly looked after.

In a letter to the secretary, the Clerk to the Joint Harbour Committee, Mr. J. Macfadyen, said that Christchurch Council had approved of a harbour patrol to patrol in the harbour at week-ends and Bank holidays, but the Bournemouth Council had not approved it.

TRIPS

The chairman said that the association organised harbour trips each year to which members of the Councils were invited so they could see what was going on in the harbour. Out of about 90 members on the two Councils, three had gone on the first trip, two on the second and one on the third.

Another member thought the activities of the Harbour and Rivers Association were not very widely publicised. There were five clubs in the harbour and he thought their interest would all be very great in matters affecting the harbour. He suggested that the secretaries of the clubs be contacted by the secretary of the Harbour and Rivers Association so they could arrange meetings, or join together in some way to increase the strength when dealing with matters appertaining to the harbour.

The secretary: "I regret to say I have tried on every possible occasion to establish a close and friendly relationship with the Sailing Club, but I have dismally failed on every occasion".

The association had always kept in touch with the de Havilland Sailing Club and the Mundeford Sailing Club, and he would contact the Vickers Armstrong and the Highcliffe Sailing Clubs. It would have given him much pleasure to know that the Sailing Club would stand with the association in matters concerning the harbour.

The chairman suggested that there had been a time early last year when it would have been desirable for the associations interested in the harbour to stand together. And that was when the association was invited to meet the West Hants Water Company after the court case was settled, together with representatives of the Sailing Club, the Rowing Club, and two other, representatives.

"If we had managed to get a policy worked out at that time we would have got a far better deal than we did." There had been hardly any argument at the meeting and as a result the harbour was divided into little bits and handed out to various people.

"If all the people had refused to take part in dividing up the harbour and presented a united front, I think things would have been better then. That is what we are up against — lack of co-operation amongst groups in the harbour."

CONSOLIDATED FRONT

A member thought that another effort should be made to get the five clubs in the harbour together. "I don't think you can get anywhere unless the interested associations in the harbour join with you. I think it is desirable that there should be a consolidated front."

The chairman commented: "Supposing the Councils do get a committee going to administer the harbour. I think it won't be very long before they realise they will be incapable of running the harbour and they will realise they will have to be like other harbour authorities and get people on to the authority who know about boats. I think we should encourage the Councils to get control of the water and start doing something about a Harbour Board.

The treasurer, Mr. B. Ratcliffe, told members that their paid-up membership was now more than 130.

OFFICIALS

Officials elected were: chairman, Mr. G. Lowe; vice-chairman, Mr. Hart; secretary, Mr. John Austin; treasurer, Mr. B. Ratcliffe. Committee: Messrs. Longman, Lack, Lavender, White, Loveless, Robinson, Young, and Roy Stride.

A final word from the secretary: "We are the only body in the harbour without any axe to grind. We are the only ones who speak freely and we are the only people who are interested in everybody in the harbour".