

Last days of the Lobster Pot

Times-Herald letter October 11, 1975

SIR—The Lobster Pot Cafe at Mudeford finally closed its doors on Sunday last, ending 23 years of management by my company, who took over the lease from the receiver of a bankrupt company who failed to sell it at public auction.

We carried out considerable improvements at our own capital expense, including the provision of an attractive gift and souvenir shop.

Within the first few years we were able to provide a good catering service, especially late evening meals, but the introduction of parking charges throughout the 24 hours of each day and the subsequent severe increase in the charges ultimately reduced this business.

The Highcliffe Sailing Club were permitted to erect their new headquarters within 10 feet of our premises in 1970 and this completely obliterated the sight of the cafe from the view of persons parked on the quay.

Since 1967 we have carried on the business in a state of uncertainty due to the council's desire to redevelop the quay, and for the last five years have existed on an annual lease in a deteriorating property with the council's continued refusal to undertake any but minimal maintenance works.

As one member in Octopus Gardens Ltd. we have, during the past five years, endeavoured to reach agreement with the council to build a new complex, the council's requirements being the inclusion of the Haven House Inn, cafe, public-lavatories, lifeboat house, fishermen's store, customs post and quay superintendents office.

But the cost of such a project has now become such as to make the scheme financially beyond the means of the members.

The terms for us to continue in 1976 put forward by the council were unacceptable. Consequently the decision to close immediately was made, taking into consideration the fact that after a tenancy of 23 years we were advised by the council's agent on September 18 that we would have to tender for a lease in competition.

There was then no mention that the whole complex would be under one management.

The full council on September 23 approved expenditure of £25,000 for redevelopment before any plan had been produced, and within a week of the council approving the appointment of a architect a scheme only to include the Inn, Lobster Pot Cafe and public toilets was passed by both the amenities and the development control committees.

The scheme approved is reminiscent of one rejected by the full council six years ago, then described as "cowshed" development. My fellow directors and I thank the many patrons from, not only Christchurch but from a wide area of Hampshire and Dorset, who have supported us regularly throughout many summer seasons.

RAYMOND TALBOT

(Director and Secretary the Lobster Pot Cafe [Furneaux Ltd.]

251 Barrack Road,
Christchurch.