

WELLS CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ARCHIVES AND CIVIC ASSETS COMMITTEE HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER AT WELLS AT 6:00pm ON THURSDAY 21ST MARCH 2013

PRESENT: Cllrs: D Unwin (Chairman); M Brandon (The Mayor); C Briton; H Siggs.

IN ATTENDANCE: Town Clerk Mrs. F White; Archivist Dr. J Wood.
Cllrs: N Kennedy; C Price.
Mace-Bearer: Mrs. G Weatherhead.
1 member of the public

13/01A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs: T Butt Philip (Deputy Mayor); A Denison; T Robbins.

13/02A DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS None.

13/03A MINUTES OF THE MEETING held on Thursday 18th October 2012 were proposed, seconded, approved and signed.

13/04A MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Cllr Price spoke about a picture by David Fisher (recently deceased), in the possession of Rail Wells. Following discussion the committee indicated that, subject to the Picture Policy, the Council would be willing to consider becoming custodian of the picture should this become appropriate.

13/05A REPORT FROM THE ARCHIVIST (Attached)

The Archivist presented the report and answered questions. Advice has been taken from a heritage expert regarding correct lighting levels for displays, to prevent damage to archive documents.

13/06A USE OF WELLS CITY ARCHIVES since its move to Wells Museum

Report from Dr Wood, Archivist to Wells City Archives at Wells & Mendip Museum. (Attached).

The Archivist presented the report and answered questions. An application is being made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Heritage weekends. The archivist is opening an Archive enquiry service to the public.

13/07A CIVIC ROBES

The Junior robes have been given to the Council and will be kept available for display purposes. (e.g. Heritage weekend).

Red Robes: a report was received regarding the condition of the red robes; one robe is deteriorated beyond repair. Cllr Siggs reminded members that the council had agreed in the past not to replace the red robes at public expense; there is no significance in the number of them; they were originally acquired from the Aldermen. In conclusion the following decisions were reached:

- i. A vote was taken and it was agreed not to seek a quote to purchase a new red robe.
- ii. It was agreed to carry out repairs to a second red robe.
- iii. Robes are deteriorating due to lack of proper care and storage.

RECOMMENDED

It was agreed to recommend to Council that all robes must be kept in the Town Hall.

It would be the responsibility of each member to collect their robe when needed elsewhere.

13/08A ANY OTHER MATTERS OF REPORT

- i. Everything necessary for Mayor Making and for the Long Service awards has been ordered.

- ii. The Archivist has not found sufficient evidence to support the history of the Dog Pound.
- iii. Somerset Heritage Trust – item for next agenda.
- iv. Civic Review - item for next agenda.

13/09A DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 6pm Thursday 27th June 2013

Report from the Archivist 21 March 2013

Supervision of Students

The Archivist has continued supervising the two students who are on placement from Bath Spa University. They have completed their first assignment, which was to sort and index the unbound Council Minutes dating from 1973-1991.

They have now begun preparatory research for their exhibition on the history of the court in Wells, designed to tie in with the redevelopment of the Court Room; they will use material from the older part of the City Archives, now stored at the Museum.

Town Hall Assets

Work continues on compiling an up-to-date inventory of assets in the Town Hall. Photographs of each item are being taken and an initial assessment of cleaning / restoration requirements. The inventory is almost complete; the next phase will be to arrange for up to date valuations where necessary and for any urgent remedial works.

Exhibitions

In addition to the students' exhibition, two further exhibitions are being prepared by the Archivist. One is to mark Gill Weatherhead's 30 years of service as the Council's Serjeant-at-Mace and the other is to mark the 30th anniversary of the twinning of Wells with Bad Durkheim. These will be on display outside the Mayor's Parlour in April and May respectively.

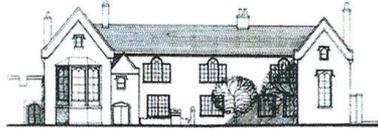
Heritage Open Day

On Sunday 15 September, Wells Town Hall will again be taking part in Heritage Open Day. The Archivist is part of the working committee planning the event across Wells.

Training

The Archivist will be attending a training day on Digital Preservation on 18 March.

Dr. Julia Wood
8.3.2013



WELLS & MENDIP MUSEUM
and Visitor Information Service
“Home of Wells City Archives”

Report from Dr Julia Wood, Archivist, Wells City Archives at Wells & Mendip Museum
13.3.2013

1. Use of Wells City Archives since its move to Wells Museum – Enquiries and visitors

- During the move of Wells City Archives from the Town Hall to the Museum, the Archives was temporarily closed to the public. Time was needed for sorting and organising the collection in its new home, improving and updating the catalogues, and continuing with listing of uncatalogued material. During this period, it was explained that regretfully we were at present unable to answer any enquiries relating to the Archives or receive any visitors, but that there would shortly be a phased reintroduction of service.
- Despite this, some urgent cases were dealt with: 11 enquiries were responded to and 5 visitors were received.
- The move was completed in December 2011 and a limited service began early in 2012.
- Between January and October 2012, there were 52 enquiries and 15 visitors were received. Moreover, the Archivist led three tours of the City Archives.
- Just over 60% of the enquiries and requests for visits came via the City Council, and the rest via the Museum.
- Examples of the types of enquiry received are: (a) general history, such as which schools were evacuated to Wells during World War 2 and details on the Tudor gentry of the city; (b) City Council history, such as the 1768 Wells election; (c) family history, such as details on the first woman Mayor of Wells and information on an individual listed in the court records; (d) house and building history, regarding properties such as the Guardhouse; (e) mapping enquiries, particularly concerning the water of Wells; (f) photographic enquiries, for instance, concerning past Mayors of the city. One visitor was consulting material in the City Archives as part of his PhD research.
- The next stage was to offer the public an extended and more professional service. This required the development of resources such as improved catalogues and new information leaflets about using the collection. The detail of how material would be made available to researchers at the Museum also needed to be worked out.
- During 2012 and early 2013, the Archivist has been concentrating on these preparations. Assisted by a volunteer, she has almost completed a basic digital summary catalogue of the City Archives. She has also been continuing to list uncatalogued items and to reorganise the collection. She has been preparing the documentation which will be needed and trialling it, along with making arrangements regarding matters such as reprographics, security, readers' registration, and the provision of readers' equipment. Procedures for a standard way of dealing with remote research enquiries will be developed once the reading room is open.

2. Material from Wells City Archives displayed in Wells Museum

2.1 To date – Exhibitions and Harry Patch portrait

Items from the City Archives have been included in several exhibitions at the Museum:

- “A Taste of the City Archives” - a major exhibition which filled the whole exhibition room and ran for several months during 2011; approx. 160 reproductions plus some original documents and artefacts.
- “Fresh Researches into Local History” (21 Jan – 25 March 2012) – included (a) a display on the early history of Wells City Band and (b) another on HMS Fleetwood and its link with the city (including the U-boat life jacket belonging to the Archives) – approx. 25 items from the City Archives.
- “Wartime in Wells and Mendip” (21 Apr – 3 June 2012) – contained approx. 8 items from the City Archives.
- “We Be Turrible Proud of ‘Ee – Sport in Wells” (18 July – 9 September 2012) – included approx. 20 items from the City Archives.

Moreover, the Harry Patch portrait belonging to Wells City Council has been on temporary loan to the Museum since April 2012, and has been on public display during most of this time.

2.2 Forthcoming – The history of Wells, including the ‘Wells Room’

The ‘Wells Room’ is being developed at the Museum. The Archivist requested (and has been allocated) display facilities in this room so that there will be a changing display of documents from the City Archives on public view, along with permanent information about Wells City Archives. The first display will be on the early history of Wells Police (completely overlooked until now), and original documents from the City Archives (never before displayed) will be complemented by artefacts from Wells and Bridgwater Museums. It will run from 26 March to 16 July. One of the great benefits of moving the Archives to storage at the Museum is that it has made it much easier to reunite documents with photographs and artefacts which relate to them. Then the results can be used for exhibitions which bring the history of our city back to life.

Report from Barry Lane, Honorary Curator of Wells & Mendip Museum

“Following the museum’s Feasibility Study in 2010, the Board have agreed that the history of Wells needs to be told in its permanent displays. The large western first floor room, currently displaying the museum garden excavations, has been allocated to be used for that space, and the Archivist has already been provided with two desk cases for the exclusive use of material from and about Wells City Archives. In addition, on the ground floor, the public foyer space outside the Lecture Room is also to be used for permanent displays of both Harry Patch and Wells Sport, from January 2013. During 2013 the first floor room will gradually be developed to include more Wells material. Early in the year the displays of Wells railways and of Jack Paul the builder will be enhanced by recent donations from Paul Fry and Jack Paul. Later in the year the pottery from the garden excavations will be moved downstairs, freeing the rest of the room to be used for more Wells history. Both Jean Imray and Tony Scrase have agreed to advise on content.”