

SALTASH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of the Burial Board held in the Guildhall on Wednesday 14th September 2016 at 2:00pm

PRESENT: Councillors: R Austin (Co-Chairman), Mrs J Dent, (Deputy Mayor ex-officio), Mrs H Frank, (Mayor ex-officio), Mr B Jones (St Stephens PCC – Co-Chairman), Mr J Reid (St Stephens PCC).

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Mrs G Challen, Mr M Orchard, (Cemetery Warden), Mr R Lane, (Town Clerk), Mrs S Burrows, (Administration Officer), Mr M Hall, (PFS Funeral Director), 1 Member of the Press, 3 Members of the War Memorial Forum.

APOLOGIES: Councillors: D Holley, W Phillips, L Russell, Mr R Parson, (Hub Manager, The Co-operative Funeralcare), Mr S Watt, (Westcountry Funeral Services Ltd).

Councillor R Austin (Co-Chairman) in the chair.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman informed those present of the actions required in the event of a fire or emergency.

BB/21/16/17 RECORDING OF MEETINGS – PLEASE NOTIFY THE CHAIRMAN IF YOU ARE INTENDING TO RECORD THIS MEETING

BB/22/16/17 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- a. Declarations from Members of any registerable (5A of the Interim Code of Conduct) and/or non-registerable (5B) interests in matters to be considered at this meeting.
- b. Declarations from Members of Matters of Public Interest regarding matters to be considered at this meeting
- c. Dispensations required

Councillor	Agenda Item	Pecuniary/ Non Pecuniary	Reason
None			

BB/23/16/17 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A resident of Saltash Mr Clements informed members that a replacement cross to be provided by the War Graves Commission for Seaman Stone is due mid-October and requested that a ceremony be arranged with the appropriate notices and press releases distributed.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Mrs J Dent and Mr Clements arrange a ceremony and that the Mayor issues a press release.

BB/24/16/17 ST STEPHEN'S CEMETERY – BURIAL BOARD

To receive the current Committee budget statement.

It was **RESOLVED** to note.

BB/25/16/17 REPORT FROM THE CEMETERY WARDEN

The Cemetery Warden reported that grass cutting at St Stephens is behind schedule due to the holiday season and weather however it is anticipated that it will be to standard soon.

The Cemetery Warden informed members that the soil spoil bank behind St Stephen's remains.

The Cemetery Warden informed members that there is no composite box on site.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Cemetery Warden arranges with Duchy Cemeteries to remove the soil bank behind St Stephen's and a wooden box be made for composting on site.

BB/26/16/17 HEALTH AND SAFETY

a. Cornwall Council maintained tombs and memorials.

Mr Reid reported that no work had been conducted or communication received regarding a commencement date for works to start from Cornwall Council.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Austin contacts Cornwall Council to arrange works to the tombs and memorials liaising with Mr Reid.

b. Closed Churchyard footpath

The Town Clerk informed members that contact had again been made with Cornwall Council notifying the lack of barrier adjacent to

Farm Lane in the Cornwall Council section of the churchyard that could result in a member of the public falling down onto the road.

It was **RESOLVED** that Cornwall Council do not consider this to be a risk to path users and as such safety measures are not necessary.

BB/27/16/17 CEMETERY WALL – TO CONSIDER COST OF CAPPING TO MINIMISE FUTURE DETERIORATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AND MARKETING WORKING PARTY HELD ON 11TH AUGUST 2016

The Town Clerk informed members of the cost of capping the wall with a railing to minimise future deterioration and maintenance costs of the boundary wall.

It was **RESOLVED** that an onsite meeting with the Building Surveyor, Councillor Austin, Councillor Phillips and the Town Clerk be arranged to determine the works required.

BB/28/16/17 GRASS CUTTING FREQUENCY IN THE CLOSED CHURCHYARD BY CORNWALL COUNCIL

It was **RESOLVED** to note that Services Committee are preparing a report consolidating all grass cutting issues including frequency of cuts.

BB/29/16/17 REPAIRS TO THE WALL ADJACENT TO KELLYWITHE HOUSE

It was **RESOLVED** to note that the repair work to the adjacent wall to Kellywithe House has been delayed at the behest of the occupants and is due to commence in September.

BB/30/16/17 FIRE FIGHTERS KILLED 1941 WW2 (COUNCILLOR MRS HOOPER, MBE)

To note the reports are independent and do not reflect the view of the Burial Board or Saltash Town Council.

The following reports were presented to members:

The history of my original request to have the two additional names of the WW2 Firefighters (Bernard Jasper and Leslie G Tibbs) included on the St Stephen's War Memorial with their other 4 colleagues is well documented from September and December 2015, and with a close vote of 7/6 against in January 2016 by the STC.

This matter although resolved by STC over 6 months ago, has still been festering with families and some members of the community,

and local firefighters' past and present, (who have signed a petition), supporting the two names being included on the War Memorial).

So too, have letters from members of the Firefighters families (to include those whose relatives are inscribed on the War Memorial at St Stephens).

At the last Services Committee meeting, a Saltash Firefighter (Mike Parker), (although acting independently), addressed the Council during public question time and challenged an item relating to those two firefighters which was on the agenda.

Following some debate, the chairman of Services Cllr David Yates, suggested that in view of the differing opinions, people who had an interest in the matter should discuss the issue as part of a Forum and report back on its findings.

To that effect a meeting was called by Mr Parker who invited members of the community, press, all Councillors (sent via the STC offices), and members of the late Firefighters families – which was held on Monday 15th August at Saltash Guildhall at the complimentary invitation of Saltash Town Council.

The attendees at that meeting/Forum are recorded at the beginning of the report sent well in advance for this meeting.

I was the only Councillor who attended; however, there were some Councillors who offered their apologies for various reasons.

I attended that meeting as a result of the open invitation from Mr Parker, with no pre-determination of its outcome, only an open mind, and to listen to the discussion.

I was elected to chair the Forum on the evening – which I accepted; I also agreed to feed back the outcome of the meeting to the Saltash Burial Authority and Council if acceptable to the Authorities and Chairs.

As the chair for the evening, I oversaw fair and honest discussion, conducted in openness, transparency and impartiality with voices coming from 2 of the families, a Saltash Firefighter, Mr Clements, and the community who felt they could add to meaningful discussions, taking all things past and present into consideration.

The Forum which the Council suggested be formulated, was not, and is not a pressure group, as has been alluded to unfairly recently.

There was never a sense of “a pressure group” at the meeting.

Indeed, we can disagree, without being disagreeable, which is our legal right within our hard fought for, rights of Freedom and Democracy.

That said, there is nothing in my view, wrong with pressure groups in the right context, they can, and do change history - It was as a result of pressure groups and individuals that brought the Vietnam War to an end. It was the women's pressure group the Suffragettes that achieved equal rights and the right to vote for women to name 2 significant events in history.

There was, however, considerable debate at the meeting and those present felt that some of the things stated at the Burial and Town Council meetings by one or two Councillors were arguable, and were assumed rather than factual.

To benefit the meeting's remit, the group present, agreed on a Terms of Reference, which its aim was to take the facts, evidence and arguments for, adding the names of 2 Firefighters, Bernard Jasper and Leslie G Tibbs, to those of their colleagues on St Stephens 2nd World War Memorial.

The Forum felt it had enough material to challenge the Council's resolutions December 2015/ January 2016; and a report was agreed and formulated from the open discussions from the Forum, with three recommendations to the Burial Authority and Council for this meeting today, in the first instance.

Sincere sadness was reflected again on the 6 Firefighters who lost their lives on that tragic day in the Plymouth Blitz 1941. With a Saltash Scout Firefighter killed in action 1 week later.

Indeed, the loss of the 6 Firefighters was the biggest loss of life of those killed in, or from Saltash in 1 incident in the Second World war.; and the loss was the biggest in the Fire Service in England for 1 incident in the War.

All 6 Firefighters' names are commemorated and honoured on the following 6 local and nearby memorials.

St Nicholas and St Faith Church, St Stephen's Church Priest's Lectern, Saltash Community Fire Station, St Andrew's Minster NFS Memorial, and Ford Park Cemetery.

HOWEVER, AS WE KNOW, ONLY 4 APPEAR ON ST STEPHEN'S WW2 MEMORIAL

It is since the STC past resolution, that more emphasis has been indeed acknowledged that War memorials throughout the Country have been found to contain significant inaccuracies and errors, including neighbouring ones such as Morval and Bodmin (the cases

were different, but certainly relevant as they demonstrated how mistakes were made at that time, confirming we cannot always guarantee that our forefathers got it right (despite their best efforts). Indeed in some cases it has been said it was somewhat shambolic, with post war pressures on finance and reliable information, and indeed re-building the very badly blitzed towns and cities, including Saltash of course.

In fact, as far as Saltash is concerned, it may be said there was a severe lack of communication at that time, and following. Indeed, it was said at the meeting that local press facilities were destroyed in the Saltash Blitz; other vital documents were destroyed by incumbent Saltash Borough officers during the Borough to Town changes in 1974

A family member of Mr Jasper (niece Mollie Morgan) confirmed at the meeting, and was confident that her family were never consulted on War Memorial inscriptions at St Stephen's. Mrs Morgan said that, the families of the deceased Firefighters wished their loved ones names to be inscribed (from our research and communication, we find this to be true) - she added strongly, the men lived in Saltash together, served together, trained together, died together and were buried together 200 yards away from the Memorial, yet their names are missing, which is hurtful when the families concerned visit the Church Yard at St Stephen's.

It was further felt that possibly Councillors were inclined to be more autocratic and did not communicate in the same way as today with their constituents.

The research of Mr Peter Clements indicates numerous omissions and inaccuracies, which we will hear about in a moment), but again, a strong case for further discussion/action.

Historic Integrity was a strong case put forward by one or two Councillors as a reason to refuse adding the names.

The meeting felt that Saltash Town Council has not been consistent in those views, as has been the case very recently, when dealing with a matter and item of historic heritage and value.

At that time the Forum did not wish to pursue that matter unless called upon to do so.

Following a very informative and meaningful meeting, exploring and debating the topic in great detail – the Forum sent a full report to the Burial Authority and Council, which made 3 recommendations to the Burial and Council Committees.

1. That the overwhelming view of the Forum, based on the facts and arguments produced, agrees with a proposal to add the names of the 2 missing Firefighters (Bernard Jasper and Leslie G Tibbs), to those of their colleagues on the St Stephen's WW2 War Memorial – incidentally, it was felt that costs should not be an issue, based on existing expenditure of the STC on events and organisations' financial support. Furthermore £500 was set in the BA precept for Memorials.
2. That arising from this, and given ongoing research of Mr Clements, for Council to look into errors and inaccuracies on Saltash War Memorials and, where possible, make relevant corrections in an appropriate way, with an appropriate budget, which may be supported by the War Memorial Trust, and other bodies (to include help with financing).
3. Given the complexity and amount of work that is involved in item 2 Council may consider setting up a specific working party to this end, or indeed, use the existing Memorial Peace Garden working Forum as a possible platform.

Finally, it my personal view that I know is shared by many is

The Saltash Firefighters lost their lives supporting the fight for justice and freedom.

The Saltash Firefighters lost their lives, so we can all live as a Sovereign Nation peaceably, and not a Dictatorship.

The Saltash Firefighters who lost their lives did not go into battle with guns and weapons – as civilians all they had was a water pump, on the back of a trailer.

Let us honour them with dignity and pride “One and All” (inclusively and not exclusively).

And inscribe their missing names on St Stephens' WW2 Memorial, for generations, now, and in the future to Remember them together, as they fell together so tragically in 1941

Councillor Sue Hooper MBE

A more up to date report.

As a reminder this question has already been rejected by the Burial Board and The Town Council.

The firemen are on 3 other memorials in Saltash including inside St Stephens church so anyone visiting the churchyard can see their firemen are not forgotten.

The mistakes on war memorials quoted are at Morval and Bodmin. The changes on the Morval memorial was a man who had lived in Morval but at the time of his death was living in London so it was rejected by the Parish Council. At Bodmin the mistakes were made on erecting a new memorial where names were left off and spelling mistakes made. Therefore neither is really relevant to this case.

I have also been in touch with the War Memorials Trust to ask for their advice. They say there are no hard and fast rules on this because there was no central control at the time. However their advice is;

Which memorial names went on was 'deemed appropriate at the time'. Quote from the War memorial web site is....

In some cases these decisions may not appear appropriate to us when considered in a modern context. However the age of these structures and the era in which they were erected needs to be recognised when considering any changes. It is always difficult to assign modern interpretation and meaning to an historic structure as these modern viewpoints often conflict with the views, understanding and social conventions of the time. As a conservation charity War Memorials Trust feels that it is rarely appropriate to do so.

They encourage 'historic integrity', not keen on having names on more than one memorial. Again the WMT's advice is....

Changes to inscriptions or names can change the focus of the memorial which was deemed appropriate by those who erected it and used it to commemorate their loved ones. It can also be detrimental to the original fabric if it requires extreme intervention. Therefore any changes should be carefully considered.

Peter Clements has found lots of other names of Saltash residents that are not remembered anywhere on Saltash memorials.

Finally they offer an alternative way to consider when tackling this subject.

War Memorials Trust recommends that the wishes of those who erected the memorial are respected. Alternatives to changing the memorial directly can be considered. It may be appropriate to consider whether a nearby notice board with information may assist in addressing such issues. In some cases, such as the inclusion of formally excluded groups, the most appropriate course of action may be to create an additional memorial structure nearby.

Therefore I would propose that we respect the historical integrity of the war memorial at St Stephens by Saltash and I am very willing to continue working, with anyone else who would like to assist me, on a notice board to tell the story of all the firemen on that fateful night. This might also name the citizens of Saltash who have no known memorial.

Councillor Mrs J Dent.

Following a detailed debate which included by invitation of the Chairman speakers from the War Memorial Forum members considered varying opinions relating to the reports.

Councillor Mrs H Frank left the meeting.

It was **RESOLVED** that a sub group be established comprising of Councillor Austin, Councillor Mrs J Dent, Councillor Mrs S Hooper MBE, Mr Jones, Mr Brooking, Mr Parker and Mr Clements to consider the issue in detail further to enable a clear recommendation to be made to the next Burial Board Committee meeting.

BB/31/16/17 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960:

Pursuant to Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, it was **RESOLVED** that the public and press leave the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

BB/32/16/17 PUBLIC BODIES (ADMISSION TO MEETINGS) ACT 1960:

To resolve that the public and press be re-admitted to the meeting.

BB/33/16/17 URGENT NON-FINANCIAL MATTERS BROUGHT FORWARD AT THE DISCRETION OF THE CHAIRMAN

Japanese knot weed

Mr Reid informed members of the return of the Japanese knot weed at St Stephen's Cemetery.

It was **RESOLVED** that Councillor Austin contacts Cornwall Council requesting an inspection takes place and growth that is present be treated.

BB/34/16/17 PRESS RELEASES OF ARTICLES REQUIRED

None

BB/35/16/17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 12th December 2016 at 2.00 p.m.

Rising at 15:30

Signed _____
Chairman

Dated _____