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View from Poole

The Society for Poole: promoting Poole; its history, culture and people



SPRING 2024

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The Society for Poole



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Chairman's Note



Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of our magazine.

2024 has started with a rush, we have finally managed to get our five heritage lights back on their plinths at the bottom of Evening Hill (see pages 10-11).

The organisation of Beating of the Sea Bounds on 7th July.

I have so far approached over 150 local companies for support for the event but with limited results. Further work is required to get the funds in to make the event happen and although I know it is a big ask in these difficult times, I must admit to being slightly disappointed by the reaction of many local businesses. Nevertheless, there is still time and I am optimistic that we will reach our target of £30,000. Meanwhile on the organising front our partners especially at Poole Maritime Trust and Poole Rotary have been working hard to bring together entertainers and to gather the strands which will make the event work. We have even had the Mayor of Wincheslea accept our invitation to attend, the first time in living memory!

I also can't not mention our own birthday. 2024 represents 100 years of the Society as such we are, I believe, the longest running Civic Society in the area. Looking back over the history of the Society we have been at the centre of the growth of the town and have been influential in retaining our traditions and guiding our politicians over this period. Unfortunately, I can't say we can go that far today as more and more the administration of our wonderful town is taken out of our hands. However, we support the notion of a Town Council for Poole and will support calls to bring some control and budget back to Poole so we can at least store the regalia locally and focus on Poole's unique history and heritage.

I hope you can attend our 100th AGM in April as we look to the future and the art of the possible. We greatly appreciate your support but need to look to new faces if we are to continue well into the next 100 years.

Mike Pearce

Chairman

chairman@societyforpoole.org

February 2024

The Society for Poole

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VIEW FROM POOLE DISTRIBUTION

Jan Marsh
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Executive meetings are held on the second Wednesday of the month at The Royal British Legion, North Road, Poole.

The future of the Society

As with every Society it can only exist with the support and ongoing participation of members prepared to join the committees. Over the past few years the Society for Poole has been run by a very small executive committee and a committee of one on the planning side. If we are to continue, we need to broaden our base of active members. We are looking for new ideas, new energy and a sharing of the load. Without this support we will struggle to attend events or make a difference.

AGM

Please note the date for our AGM as the 16th April 2024. We will be serving tea/coffee and some nibbles as well as having a talk.



The Society For Poole

AGM - Agenda

Agenda – Tuesday 16th April 2024 @ 7.30pm
The Con Club, Darbys Lane Poole BH15 3EU

1. Welcome by the President
2. In Piam Memorium
3. Apologies for Absence
4. To receive the minutes of the last annual general meeting
5. Matters Arising
6. To receive the financial report for 2023
 - a. To adopt the annual accounts and balance sheet
7. Summary of 2023 activities
8. To confirm the proposal
 - a. To confirm the Directors of Society for Poole Limited
 - b. To elect the Executive Committee members who will support the Directors
9. To appoint
 - a. Independent inspectors of the accounts
10. To invite new members present to collect their certificates and sign the register
11. To outline the goals for the upcoming year
12. Any other business
13. Closing remarks
14. Talk The History of the Society for Poole by Jan Marsh

Please note that nominations for positions as a Director or members of the Executive Committee should be forwarded to Mike Pearce at Chairman@societyforpoole.org by 18th March 2024

A Poole Harbour Crossing

For centuries, travellers around Poole Harbour have been crossing the narrow strip of water between Hamworthy and Poole, to save a journey of twenty miles or so around the shore of Holes Bay. This article gives some background on the Hamworthy crossing. When the antiquarian John Leland visited Poole in the 1530s or 1540s, he described the Hamworthy peninsular as 'a Point of Land as a Causey (causeway) after the Fashion of a brode Swerd and by this Causey Men come from Lichet to the Fery.' We don't know when a regular ferry service across the water was first established, but it certainly existed by then and a document of 1541 records the operation of the ferry and the passage house being leased to a John Henbury by the Poole authorities for the yearly rent of two capons.

By the 1600s, the ferry operators were paying the Corporation £7 a year, so it must have been a good money-making investment. The service was probably provided by a boat drawn by a rope from one shore to the other. Certainly there seem to have been no oars available in 1613 when an accident occurred



Map showing the Great Quay and passage boat 1771

involving the passage boat, described at that year's meeting of the Poole Admiralty Court: 'One Joseph Long mariner was in the passage boat of poole coming over the passage att wch instant time a young mare was in the same boat wth a halter on her head wch halter then the said Long held in his hand this said mare suddenlie starting and affraide strake the said Long over the boate into the sea. The saide mare fell also over board into the

Fees and Subscriptions

Dear. Members,

Unfortunately it is that time again that I remind everyone who has not paid to please forward their subscriptions for 2024. At the last AGM we confirmed that we would keep them as they were so we remain at the notional sum of £10 for over 65s and £16 for the youngsters. These should be paid at the start of the year and if possible by Direct Debit so we don't need to chase. 😊

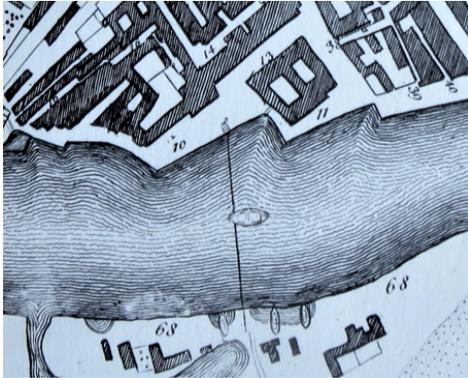
We have held the fees for many years despite significantly rising costs but consider that next year we will need to respond to the increased costs of printing and websites. There therefore will be proposing to increase the charges to £12 and £16 in 2025.

Magazine Distribution

If anyone in the Old Poole Town area is available to distribute our magazine can they please contact Jan Marsh on janette.marsh97@gmail.com as we would love to recruit you to help out.

Many thanks **Mike**

channell by meane whereof the said Long was drowned.' The passage operator, Richard Dolbure, was brought before the court for not having two good oars ready in the boat to preserve the lives of his passengers in an emergency.



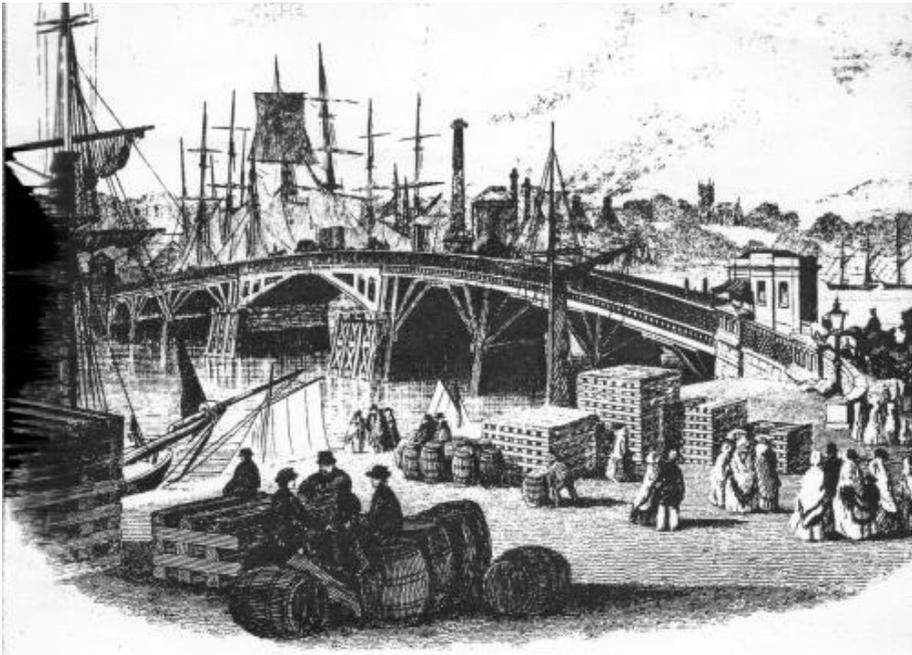
The 1613 report shows that the 17th century passage boat was big enough to carry a horse. By 1788, when Joseph Moore published a History of the Town and County of Poole, the population and trade of the town had grown considerably, with quays, yards and stores on both sides of the water. The history describes a passage boat *'large enough to hold eighty persons, which continues to ply all day, and is hauled by a rope stretched from one side to the other, for which every family pays only 4d a year, and every stranger a halfpenny each time.'* If it could hold so many passengers, I wonder whether it was a conventional boat or more like a raft or floating bridge, an early forerunner of the Sandbanks Ferry?

The idea of a bridge across the water was discussed from at least the 1820s, but it was not achieved without considerable argument and controversy. The background to the debate was a slump in the Newfoundland trade and a deep recession in Poole, combined with agitation for parliamentary reform, both of which threatened the dominance of the local merchant elite. The Hon. William Ponsonby, the trustee for the

manor of Canford and one of Poole's M.P.s from 1826 to 1831, was a keen advocate for reform which made him an opponent of most local Tories. The Poole Corporation first supported the idea of a bridge, but finance was a problem. Instead, William Ponsonby applied for an Act of Parliament to sponsor the building of the bridge himself and charge a toll for its use. The Corporation opposed the scheme but lost the argument and the Poole Bridge Bill was passed in 1834.

On Friday 14th July 1837, as reported by the Salisbury and Winchester Journal, the completed bridge *'was opened by the workmen employed in its erection forming a procession, and walking over it, accompanied by Wadham's brass band – the bridge being decorated with numerous flags and banners, and the event being announced by a salute of twenty-one guns.'* The account in the Hampshire Independent is far more controversial, condemning *'the disgusting conduct of the Tories of Poole'* in first supporting the bridge idea and then opposing it with *'selfish blindness and folly'* as soon as Mr Ponsonby became involved. The new bridge was a wooden structure with a central hand-operated swivel section to allow ships to pass through. The roadway was narrow, only 2m wide, and the pavement just 50 cm. It also had quite a steep slope which was to prove rather difficult for horses and wagons at times. In spite of the design and the toll, however, it did improve communication with Hamworthy, Wareham and the west of the county and when the railway reached Hamworthy in 1847, it provided a vital link for the rail passengers to reach Poole.

This first bridge lasted nearly 50 years, operated by the Poole Bridge Company. Over the decades it became increasingly creaky as the traffic rolled across it. Meanwhile the Poole Corporation continued to debate the possibility of buying the bridge and abolishing the tolls which, as was frequently mentioned, particularly disadvantaged the people of



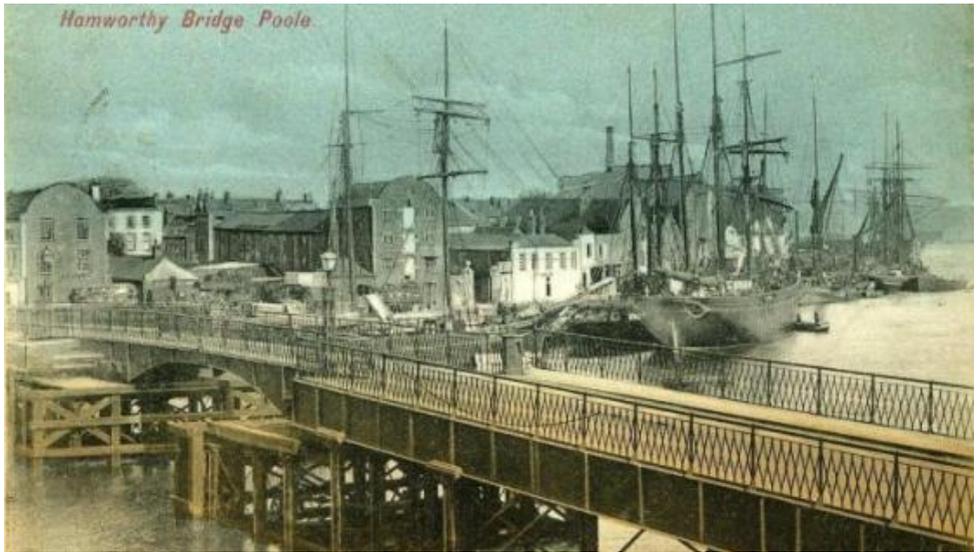
The 1837 bridge

Hamworthy. In 1885, the wooden bridge was replaced by an iron one, with a much gentler gradient. The opening central section, 13m wide, had two leaves which could be wound open by hand to a position at right angles to the bridge for ships to pass. It was not unknown for people on foot to try to cross by swinging from the supports under the bridge.

By the early 1920s, the second bridge, now nearly 40 years old, was showing signs of wear and was reckoned to be unsafe. The Poole Corporation entered negotiations with the Ministry of Transport and Dorset County Council for help with financing a new bridge. The contract was awarded to the Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Company. The Corporation at last achieved their aim of buying the old toll bridge from the Poole Bridge Company, but only in order to demolish it. The total cost of the project was about £70,000, with £17,000 spent on the old bridge. The Ministry paid 65% of the cost and Dorset promised an annual contribution.

Designed in bascule style, the new bridge was 101m long with an 18m wide central opening with lifting spans. The 5.4m wide roadway was made of 25cm slab covered with asphalt. The cylinders to support the lifting spans had to be sunk to a depth of 15m causing problems when the builders encountered wooden piles from the 1837 bridge which had been cut off level with the sea bed. The superstructure was built of reinforced concrete and included four cabins, two on each side. One of them on the Poole side contained the controls. It was the first Poole bridge with a powered opening mechanism, (a 62 horse power motor generator), as well as being the first Poole bridge to be free of tolls. After completion, the structure was tested with loads of 200 tons, far heavier than any working load anticipated.

The bridge was opened on 11th March 1927 by the Mayor, Alderman Herbert Carter. The first choice of opener had been the Minister of Transport but he was involved in cabinet business and the second candidate, the Lord



The second bridge

Lieutenant of Dorset, Lord Shaftesbury, was thrown from his horse while hunting and broke his collar bone so the Mayor stood in. Elementary schools in the borough were closed for the day and crowds of people

thronged the Quay. The mayoral party, accompanied by the town band and troops of scouts and guides, processed from the Guildhall *'through flag bedecked streets'* to the Quay. Alderman Carter cut the ribbon and after the national anthem was played, he led the official party across the bridge. Then it was time for a procession of boats, led by the Harbour Master, Mr. H. W. Chislett and another vessel carrying a huge effigy of Father Neptune, after which the officials returned to the Guildhall for lunch and speeches.



Crowds at the opening ceremony

The third bridge has done great service for many years with various alterations. During the Second World War, the movement of ships and boats to and from Holes Bay was vital. In case of power cuts, the Home Guard were trained to operate the lifting spans using giant winding keys which fitted into slots in the towers, and if the bridge were damaged in a closed position, another method was devised using all available manpower pulling on ropes. Fortunately, this was never put to the test in earnest.



Over the decades, traffic has increased enormously, taking its toll on the structure. In 2006 it was estimated that the bridge was performing about 6,000 lifts a year (an average of about 16 a day). It was said to be 'worn out' with cracks in the concrete and in 2016, it stopped operation for major repairs expected to cost £4.2m and last 9 months. In fact it was 16 months before bridge was in action again and in December 2022 it was once again stopped for emergency work on remaining problems. By this time, another bridge had

come on the scene, with its own controversies, problems and triumphs.



Jenny
poolemuseumociety

Main sources: Cullingford, Cecil. **A History of Poole**, Phillimore 2003. / Hillier, John. **Ebbtide at Poole**. Poole Historical Trust, 1985 / **Twin Sails and the History of the Harbour crossings in Poole** Poole Museum, / Local newspapers.

Shore Road Heritage Lights

At last I can report that the lights are back!

Restored to their former glory the five heritage lighting columns have been reinstated back onto their plinths at the bottom of Evening Hill. Unfortunately the last time I looked only 4 were working but hey you cant have everything. The work was undertaken by Ironwork of Distinction a local forge that managed to completely clean off the old paint, mend the cracks and broken fish with several being recast, then an underlayer of zinc paint and an extremely hard top coat of black which had to be manually rubbed in order to create a key for the hand painted gold elements.

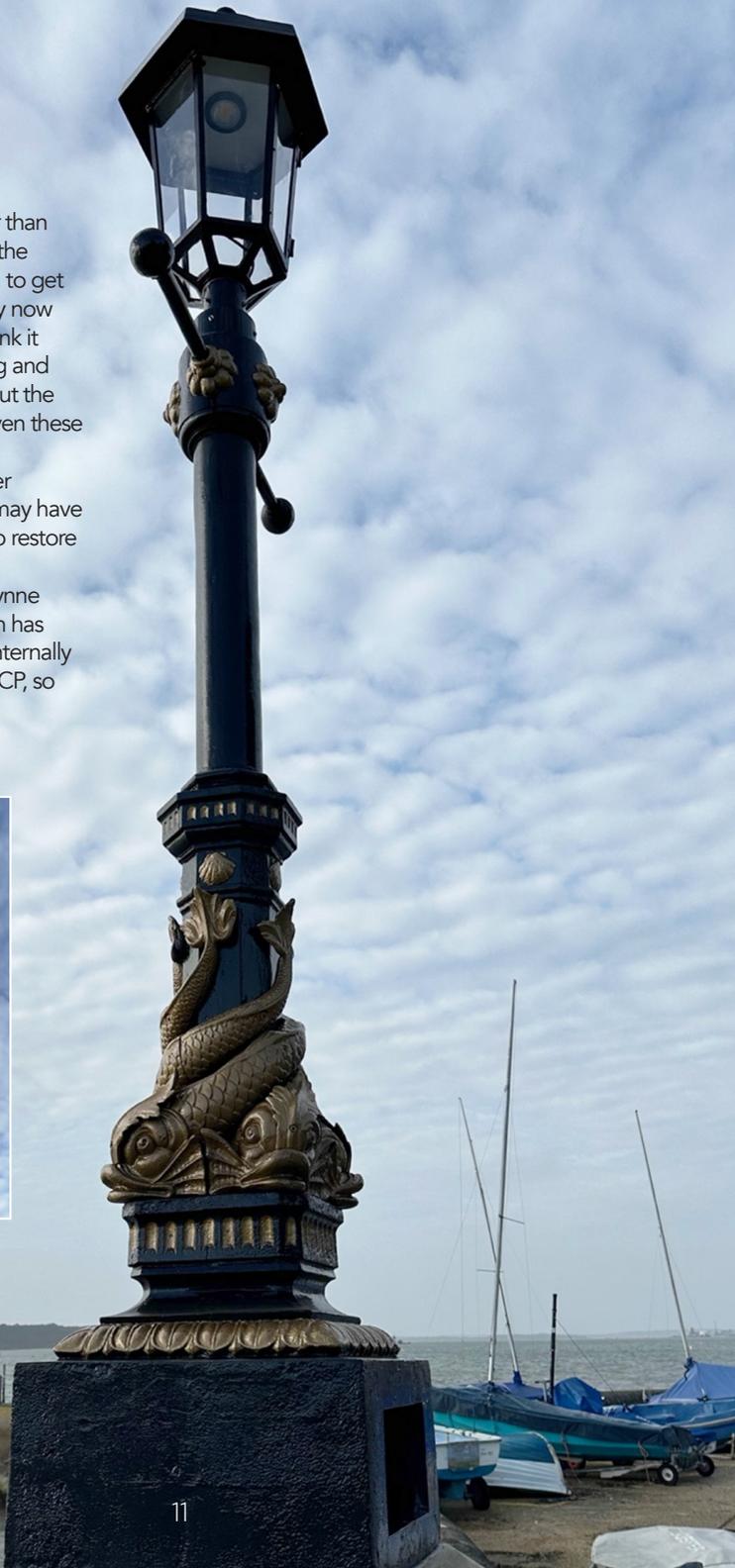


It is fair to say that it took longer than anticipated, due to the state of the them when removed and trying to get the right paint mix, however they now look glorious. I hope you will think it was worth the 2 years of chasing and negotiations with BCP for without the drive of the Society for Poole even these would not have been done.

We have been allocated another £22,000 for the next lights but may have to wait until the spring to start to restore the next couple of units.

Although we do criticise BCP, Lynne Waite of their Engineering Team has been very supportive and has internally driven the project from within BCP, so many thanks to Lynne.

Mike Pearce



MEMORY CORNER

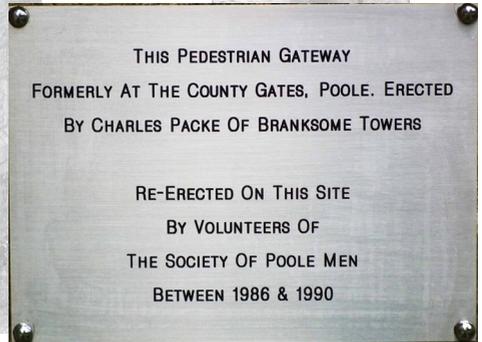
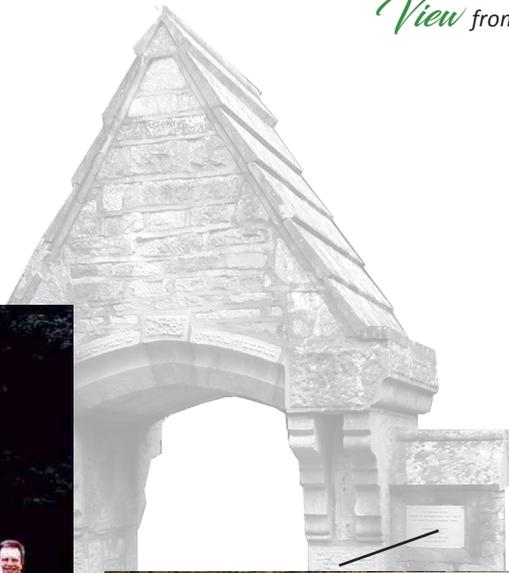
County Gates

The Society of Poole Men had negotiated with the developer who was taking down Branksome Tower Hotel for the removal and safekeeping of the old "Pedestrian gates" that had stood near the Branksome Park Estate Lodge at Westbourne, before the redevelopment of the "County Gates" roundabout and had been moved to Westminster Road in 1974. Poole Council refused to relocate it saying could cost £1,000 to do so. Many people remembered the old Lodge which stood at the top of the Avenue, and the gates to the Estate which were opened to the public once a year a century ago. The area was called "County

Gates", a misnomer as the gates were not relevant to the fact that they co-incided with the old County boundary between Dorset and Hampshire and was the entrance to Branksome Park Estate leading to Branksome Towers.

By arrangement [on 2nd November 1981] the Poole Men agreed to have the "Pedestrian Gate" moved and with the help of Gerry Cope of Uni-Rents, scaffolding was erected, and each stone marked, and a plan prepared so that it could be re-erected later. Twelve members assisted and Secretary John Barham directed operations, forgetting one vital piece of information not realised until the gateway





was to be re-erected. Just how far apart each sign of the gateway should be! All the stone was moved into the rear of the Branksome Park Bowling Green just as it started to snow. Rebuilding the "Pedestrian Gate". The weather in two years had not been kind, the stones had been buried and had to be unearthed. None of the markings by John Barham remained, and much trial and error was used to mock up which stone went where. The main workers were Charlie Squire and Harry Eames, who with Dennis Bodger and Gerry Cope of Uni-Rents laid the foundations

on the main pathway through Branksome Woods near the Bowling Green and Tennis Courts, with a small digger. As the months passed the two main pillars rose until was time to put in the keystone to the arch and its "roof". It was agreed to fix a plaque thereon for future generations to look after a piece of Branksome Park history. [This brass plaque was replaced by the Society with a stainless-steel plaque in 2015].

**Whither Poole and its Society
Chapter 11 pp. 1445-6 & 150**

The True Architecture of the People: Poole's Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Congregational Churches

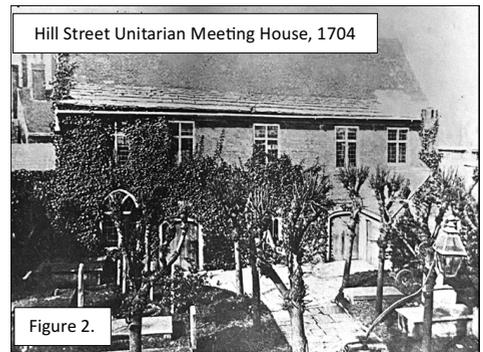
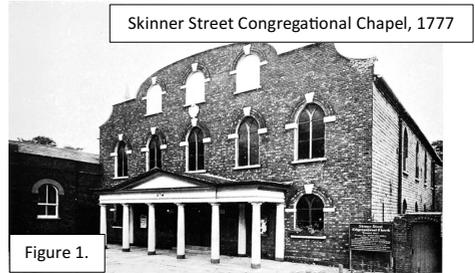
This article outlines the changes in Dissenting church architecture in Poole, showing how the Skinner Street Congregational Chapel's built form (Figure 1.) was transitional between earlier and later iterations of that style, which had originally differed so much from that of the Established Church, later becoming ever more similar – on the outside, at least.

Figure 2. was originally the 1704 Greater Presbyterian Meeting House (probably re-roofed here). The Skinner Street Chapel arose from a split in the older congregation over theological differences in 1760. The austere design of both these churches is arises from the dominance of its plain brickwork and plain windows, with almost no stonework. Whilst the older congregation numbered about 400, the 1777 chapel held around 1000.

Comparing both with Poole's parish church, remodelled in 1821 (Figure 3.), highlights the differences in Established and Dissenting church architecture. When most people imagine a church, it is this last design they have in mind, with its stone-built Gothic-style, so dominant in the nineteenth century. Notice the arched windows and castellation. Why did the Dissenting and Established Church architecture, originally so different, begin to converge in the nineteenth century?

An historian of 'English Dissenting vernacular' church architecture, Esther Moir (who focuses on English Methodist churches) has an explanation [1.], highlighting three interlinked factors: the scale, location and material culture of 'the true architecture of the people'. [2.]

There is little to add about the increased size of Poole's Congregational churches, other than it is linked to what Moir writes about



the significance of their more prominent locations and their morphing architectural styles: "Thanks to their increasing prosperity and growing political power, Nonconformists became impatient of the social stigma that they felt was attached to quiet chapels in the side-streets. So without altering the internal plan, they attempted to marry it to a Gothic or Grecian face, giving it an imposing exterior that should remind the passer-by that this, too, was a place of worship, in no way inferior to any building [of] the Established Church." [3.]

The distinctive 'back street' Dissenting vernacular dates to the eighteenth century. The locations of the churches in Figures 1. and 2., and also the 1760 Leg Lane Meeting House

St. James' Parish Church, 1821

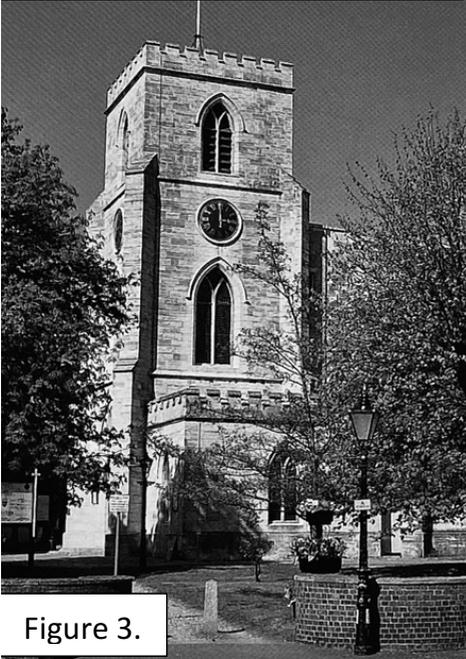


Figure 3.

(the original new home of the later Skinner Street congregation – outgrown within twenty years) all fit this narrative. As ‘daughter’ churches of Skinner Street outgrew their original chapels in the nineteenth century, more often than not they gravitated to more prominent positions and were styled very differently.

This is borne out in *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset* (1899) concerning the two churches: “The [new Long Ham] chapel is a spacious, substantial and imposing structure in a commanding situation...” (It replaced the smaller 1819 chapel.) Of the Parkstone Congregational Church they wrote: “a central situation on the

Long Ham Chapel, 1841

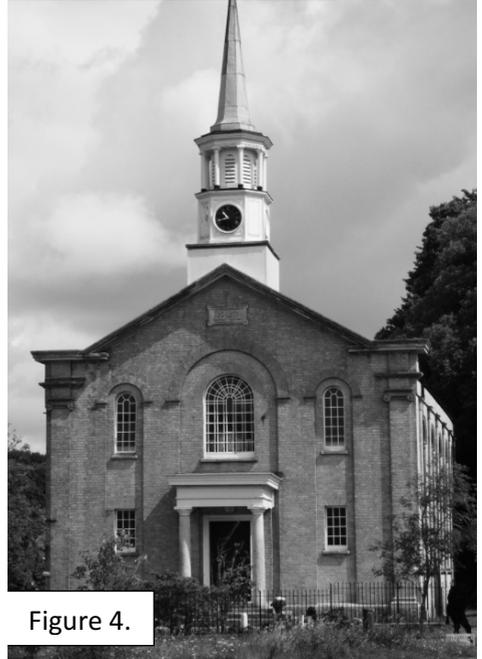
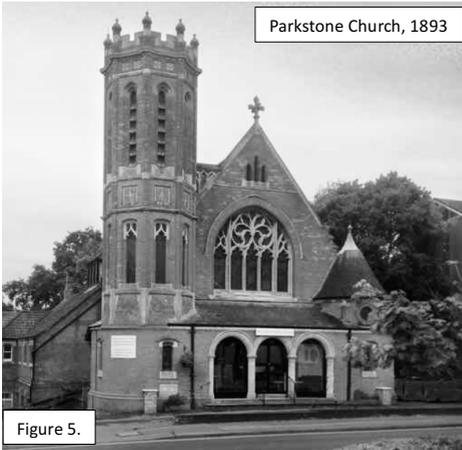


Figure 4.

main road was purchased... The new church is attractive, substantial, and capacious, worthy of fashionable Parkstone and a credit to the denomination...” (It replaced its earlier Buckland Chapel.) [4.]

Poole has two interesting examples (although no images) of ‘the true architecture of the people’, as Betjeman styled it. Entries in the Leg Lane Chapel’s meticulous ‘1760 building account book’ show that some members donated building materials, fittings and/ or their labour. Even more remarkably, on a donated site the cobb-built 1853 Broadstone Chapel was effectively hand-built: “cheerfully [the congregation] gave what assistance they could, especially in the way of labour; the



walls being of mud, and much of the work done free of charge..." [5.]

Apart from the scale, and the addition of a Classical portico in 1833, there is little of substantive difference between the front elevations in Figures 1. and 2. Both bear a similarity to domestic architecture, a key feature of earlier Dissenting vernacular, the dilution of which Moir lamented, specifically its "natural and organic, spontaneous and therefore honest [style]." [6.]

However, comparing the elevations in Figures 1. and 4. the modest addition of Classicism can be framed as transitional to Long Ham's dominant Grecian style, although a long way from Parkstone Church's Gothic style. Each iteration can easily be seen as attempts to show that their buildings and denomination were the equal of the Established Church. Long Ham's design might not have been controversial locally if Joseph Nokng had not run out of money. He was a successful Poole-based boot manufacturer, a Skinner Street deacon appointed in around 1835 to oversee Long Ham's Chapel (built in 1819), located in an outlying village. Under his oversight the congregation grew. He enlisted William Gollop, a local builder-architect of local Dissenting churches, also a Skinner Street member. Perhaps Nokng's wealth

and Gollop's expertise explain why Skinner Street's Oversight Committee allowed Nokng so much latitude in assembling a large site (a bigger chapel, a Sunday School, manse and stables). Six years after the Chapel's opening, Nokng was bankrupt. Skinner Street, the 'mother church', became liable for the debt, as Long Ham was not yet financially independent.

This was the context of Rev. Thomas Durant's self-exonerating letter addressed to the Skinner Street Oversight, dated 18 December 1847. He had been their pastor since 1801. Unfortunately, it seems to have been the main source for the one-sided historical judgement of Nokng's architectural vision. Its relevance here is the light it sheds locally on the evolving Dissenting church architecture, a perspective lacking from Moir's national perspective.

The Oversight only saw the designs late in the process. Durant wrote that "I thought it too fine for a rustic chapel and objected to it, especially to the steeple," adding, "no objection could be made except upon the score of expense [sic], for as a matter of taste – it was unexceptional." Later he hints at a defect in religious feeling: "*I feel most confident that Mr N. [sic] in his natural wisdom meant that he alone would accomplish all that was connected with the establishment of the place.*" [7.] This is code for insinuating that Nokng had allowed 'the natural Man' (we might say pride or ambition) to overcome his better (read 'spiritual') judgement. Durant thought it should have been smaller and and plainer – closer to the Dissenting vernacular, no doubt. However, Durant was himself a devoted classicist. Under his pastorship, Skinner Street's Classical portico had been added. Further, his two-volume Memoir, celebrating a promising life cut short (that of his young son William Friend Durant), is steeped in allusions to classical literature. [8.] Would he really have objected to Long Ham's style, if it had been within budget?

To conclude, Long Ham's and Parkstone's bolder architectural styles conform to Moir's explanation of the evolution from Dissenting vernacular to Grecian and Gothic styles. The trio from a local Congregational vernacular in Poole began under Durant's Skinner Street

pastorship. The listing of both churches has ensured a lasting architectural legacy for both – perhaps more deserved for exonerating Nokng's vision.[9]

© Kit Pearce, 2024

Footnotes:

- [1.] Moir, Esther; *The Architecture of Dissent*, History Today Vol. 13 ; Issue 6 June 1963
Her article seems to have also informed *Nonconformist Chapels and Meeting Houses in Central England*, by Christopher Stell, (H.M.S.O.) 1986
- [2.] Moir, p. 389, quoting Sir John Betjeman's phrase, before directly quoting him, 'the local builder supplied the labour and the plan...' and he lists many other contributions of materials and in kind offered by Dissenting congregations. [3.] Moir, p. 387/88
- [4.] Densham, William & Ogle, Joseph; *The Story of the Congregational Churches of Dorset*, 1899; p. 136 & p.'s 178/9
- [5.] Densham & Ogle; p. 60
- [6.] Moir, p. 389
- [7.] Skinner Street Congregational Church Minute Book; 1813-73
- [8.] Thomas Durant, *Memoirs and Select Remains of an Only Son*, Two Volumes, 1822 [9.] Longham Chapel is a Grade II listed building, Skinner Street URC is Grade II*

Figures:

Figure 1: Skinner Street Congregational Chapel, Skinner Street, Poole

An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset; Vol.2 – South-East; Part 2:

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments; 1970; [Plate 119] Postcode: BHxx etc.

Figure 2: Hill Street United Reformed Church, Poole

The Pride of Poole 1688 - 1851; Beamish, Derek, Dockerill, John & Hillier, John; 1974, p. 85
[The Salvation Army Citadel roughly occupies the site]

Figure 3: St. James' Church, Church Street, Poole

Author's own photo

Figure 4: Longham United Reformed Church, Hampreston Road/Ringwood Road, Ferndown

Author's own photo [Church deconsecrated February 2023]

Figure 5: Parkstone United Reformed Church, Commercial Road, Parkstone

Image from <https://parkstoneurc.co.uk>



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Society talks

All Society for Poole talks take place at the Con Club, Darby's Lane (opposite Oakdale Church) BH15 3EU at 7pm for 7:30pm start (SfP members & Maritime Trust £3, guests £4)

SECRET POOLE



Dorset Shipwrecks



TOLPUDDLE MARTYRS

20th February 2024 – Talk

Secret Poole – Spies of East Dorset and Poole *Ed Perkins*

12th March 2024 - Talk **Note Change of date**
Purbeck Narrow Gauge Railway

Peter Sills

16th April 2024 - Talk
AGM and History of SfP

Jan Marsh

21st May - Talk

Harry Paye – The Pirates of Poole
by Jill Ford

18th June 2024 - Talk

19th Century Poole
Lives & Letters of Faith *Kit Pearce*

17th September 2024 -Talk

Dorset Shipwrecks
Gordon Le Pard

17th October 2024 -Talk

Mr Selfridge
Steve Roberts

19th Novemer 2024 -Talk

Tolpuddle Martyrs
Brian Bates

Poole Maritime Trust talks

At Royal Motor Yacht Club – Sandbanks - @ 7:30pm for 8pm unless stated Talks are free to SfP members

8th February 2024

David Bailey (*Wild Life Photographer*) will give a talk entitled 'Good Hare Days'. David is an author and fabulous photographer

7th March 2024

Leigh Merrick and Richard Balmforth (*Reuters – Eastern Slav Specialist and Bureau Chief*) will give a talk on the Ukraine. Full details to follow.

Useful Phone Numbers

Adult Education
01202 262300

Adult Social Care
01202 633902

Bin & Street Cleaning
01202 261700

Birth, Marriages
& Deaths 01202 633744

Blue Badges
01202 633605

Bus Passes
01202 634249

Children's Social
Services 01202 735046

Council Tax payment
line 01202 672932

Family Information
Services

01202 261999

Poole Hospital (A&E)
01202 665511

Housing Benefit
Enquiries 0345 0344569

Libraries
01202 265200

Parking Penalties &
Permits
01202 634240

Pest Control
01202 261700

Road & Pavement
Maintenance
01202 265255

School Admissions
01202 261936

Street Lights
01202 262223

Toilets
01202 261700



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