

HISTORY OF THE FRIENDS OF UPTON COUNTRY PARK

Pre Friends of Upton Country Park.

Council had acquired House and 55 acres from Llewelin family in 1957 under a Deed of Gift. Was let on 22 year Lease to Prince Carol of Hohenzollern and Rumania in 1961. Lease surrendered 1969.

1975, Upton By-pass completed.

4th February 1976, Public Meeting at Municipal Buildings (Civic Centre) under chairmanship Cllr Stanley Pearce. 17 Organisations present. Society of Poole Men suggested formation of an organisation to represent all organisations and people with an interest in the Upton Estate, under title "Friends of Upton Park", and offered to act as a convenor for an inaugural meeting.

4th March 1976, Inaugural Meeting held. Resolved to form "Friends of Upton Park" and register as a Charity.

8th March a Special General meeting held with 2 Patrons, 4 Group and 12 Individual Members, nominating 10 people to an Executive. Council offered use of the Morning Room in the House accessed from without, as all internal doors nailed shut. This to be used by Voluntary Wardens.

Park officially opens on the 15th May 1976.

Friends of Upton Park

12th May 1976, first meeting of Executive Committee held at the Municipal Buildings. Reported Friends now had 3 patrons, 9 group and 31 individual members.

Duties of Friends, to provide Voluntary Wardens to patrol parklands assisting general public and giving advice. Keeping a watch on the car park.

To generate funds, a Nature Trail leaflet was sold at 5p, and an Honesty Box on a pole was erected in the Car Park on the 9th June 1976.

29th September, and the Friends under Chairman, Bill Rigler were erecting picnic tables and seats made out of fallen trees.

By 3rd November there were 28 Voluntary Wardens on a rota.

5th January 1977, the Dorset Wildfowlers (group member) started to dig out a freshwater lake.

The Friends applied for permission to erect a Refreshment Kiosk.

23rd May 1977, first full time Warden, Mr Jack Hadfield appointed.

July 1977, First refreshment kiosk opened by Cllr Neil Sorton.

November 1977 Friends supervise the Walled Garden Job Creation Scheme with the Manpower Commission.

January 1978, Arrival of Peacock and 5 Peahens from Brownsea Island. Estimated number of visitors to the Park now 12,000.

February 1978, and Chairman Bill Rigler erects a continuous seat around the Holm Oak near the kiosk.

April 1978 and agreed to enlarge the lake.

Work commences with the Friends washing down walls and floor in Morning Room.

Mondays now established as meeting day.

13th August 1978, Friends of Upton Park visit inside of Upton House. Friends change name to Friends of Upton Country Park, as old name confused as being allied to West Ham United. Request to enlarge Kiosk. Gift of 60 Mallard for lake.

30th October 1978. Discussions putting Stable block complex into repair and incorporating new toilet facilities.

January 1979, Stable Block roof collapses.

23rd February 1979 and Friends hold first Annual Dinner at Poole Arts Centre.

26th March 1979, and Walled Garden project completed.

7th May 1979, Friends arrange for handing over ceremony to Mayor with commemorative gates hung at all entrances. Event made more significant by holding first Country Fayre. House used for first time whilst daylight held as no electricity, for entertaining official guests.

21st May 1979 Greenhouses restored. Bert Allen agrees to start growing and selling plants. Contractor whilst making safe Stable block inadvertently did more damage to the structure, and slates and lead disappeared.

30th July 1979 Agreement to establish a Liaison Committee, comprising 4 Councilors and 4 Officers of Friends of Upton Country Park. Agreed 4 rooms to be available to public in house.

27th August 1979 First Country Show and entertainment day.

24th September 1979 Friends agreed to buy a mini tractor for use in the Park. (Red called Doris after Mayor Doris Webster.) A second toilet block now installed "in the bushes" on south lawn.

28th January 1980 a new Sundial erected on the lawn.

13th March 1980 First meeting of Liaison Committee

31st March 1980 Greenhouses now fully operational.

24th November 1980 and 11 Soay sheep are housed in the Walled Garden.

13th February 1981 Launch of Upton House Restoration Fund in Wessex Hall at the Arts Centre.

18th May 1981. Friends spend £798 as the first installment towards the electrical work in the House.

26th July 1981 House opened to the Public for the first time.
Messrs Leeming and Hardy had redecorated Drawing Room and Study.

26th October 1981 and Drawing Room carpeted with industrial carpet tiles (brown).
The Caretakers Flat moved upstairs in East Wing paid for by Mayor Fred Harris from his Charity Appeal.
House open from 2pm to 4pm on Sunday's until 19th April 1982 agreed with Council.

30th November 1981 First Chandelier arrived. Cost £2,500, has 48 lights, over 1,000 pieces of Bohemian glass, weighs two and a quarter hundredweight and measures 6 feet by 5 feet 6 inches. Hung in the Hall.

22nd January 1982 Decoration of Library and Chapel completed by Messrs Selby and Harvey.

25th January 1982 and Mackenzie Glass Ltd supplied and fitted a Mirror in the Library, free of charge.

26th April 1982 Messrs Ives restored Marble fireplaces. Carpeting of Library almost completed.

28th June 1982 Electrical installation by Messrs Thompson in the Basement.

26th July 1982 Gift from Kenneth Douie of 5 volume set of Tichborne Trials valued at £35 by Sothesby's but priceless to Friends. Housed in Library.

27th September 1982. Friends purchased 100 chairs for house at £27.95 each. Metal framed, brown cloth seats.

25th October 1982 traded in mini tractor and upgraded tractor at cost £1,900 from monies generated by Greenhouses.

27th November 1982 First "flag day" held for Upton House Restoration Appeal.

10th December 1982 First Edwardian Evening.

25th July 1983 Bournemouth and Poole College of Art students under Mr John Bowen started restoration of Murals in Dining Room (former Chapel).

26th September 1983, and Treasurer pays for restoration of Pig Styes £373.90

28th November 1983 Received from new President, Kenneth Douie, 3 Portraits of Llewelin family (hung in Hall), 2 marble plaques of Llewelin heads, and 2 statuette lamps for alcoves on stairs. These were stolen on night Poole Mayor held a Civic evening at House. Miss Llewellins Scrap Book held in hands of Town Clerk for safekeeping.

30th April 1984 Replaced the Urn on the Ha Ha and purchased the mould for £1,039. Society of Poole Men member Peter Dodd offered to restore gates.

30th July 1984 Friends bought 2 Chandeliers of 18 lights for £497 each, and 1 of 12 lights at £300.

20th May 1985 Friends bought 27 brass Stair rods for £256.50

24th June 1985 Friends paid final figure of £11,946 for first kitchens and room for Friends use in east wing.

30th Sept 1985. The new Stable Block Complex will cost a total of £159,000. The Friends immediately commit £26,000. Work started 8th January 1986.

1st April 1986, and our Appeal for £100,000 makes a 2 page Echo story for the new "Heritage Centre".

29th Sept 1986. Security for Llewelin books in the Library takes a step forward with the "glassing in" of shelves.

29th Sept 1986. Friends invited to view extra 200 acres that the Council acquired from the Llewelin Estate and walkabout on 14th October appreciate acquisition of shoreline and island to prevent further development near Park. Echo comments "Few Councillors took up offer of three mile walk".

23rd February 1987. Friends bought 12 round tables and 60 chairs for new cafeteria in Heritage Centre.

30th April 1987, our President, Gerald Bailey is also Mayor of Poole, and he officiates at opening of new "Countryside Heritage Centre".

4th December 1987 and at Edwardian Evening Councillor Gerald Bailey, now Deputy Mayor, hands over a cheque to the Friends chairman for £6,386 from his Mayoral Charity Fund.

27th June 1988. A replacement arm to a niad on the soft Italian marble fireplace costing £780 was paid for by the Friends.

31st July 1989. Friends pay for 100 fruit trees to plant against inner wall of Walled Garden at cost of £650.
26th Feb 1990. Kiosk demolished and replaced with larger Kiosk out to colonades, with base in brickwork. Would be complete by Easter at a cost to the Friends of £22,000.

At the same time new emergency lights were being put in the Drawing Room and Library at £750, a doorway and a radiator being moved on access to East Wing at £2,084, new carpet and a vinyl washable wallpaper in "Aesthetic style" for £7,945.50.

29th April 1991 Friends paid £1,000 towards replacement trees following gales in January 1990 from proceeds of Summer Show.

29th July 1991, and Friends promote the Park by paying £1,250 for 25,000 coloured leaflets.

25th November 1991. Gazebo to be funded by Friends and Garden Centre agreed at corner of Winter Garden.

27th Jan 1992, and new Kitchens completed in East Wing

27th April 1992 and work commences in Chapel/Dining Room in the House. A little bit of TLC to fire surround which is oiled. Friends also purchase a Ford tractor with front bucket at £7,000 for Park use.

12th July 1992 and Friends Summer Show makes a surplus of £6,500.

7th October 1992 Evening Echo reports "Raid nets priceless antique fireplaces" and we are stunned.

25th January 1993. Denis Bodger steps down as "temporary Secretary" after seventeen and a half years. The Gazebo would cost £6,950

6th February 1993 and a Llewelin Day has the House packed to capacity all day. Philatelic Cover to commemorate birth of Lord John Jestyn Llewelin, book signing, and his ceremonial robes on display.

26th April 1993, and Friends acquire 2 rooms in the basement for storage under lock and key.

28th June 1993 and Council Report on remedial works has risen to £251,690 now to include Fire Precautions (£32,305) and Security (£60,735). Friends agree to pay for Security, Fire Precaution and Door Entry system at the House.

28th October 1993, and Council decides not to renew catering licence at Heritage Centre to outside caterers, but to revamp and run it themselves.

31st January 1994, and Council decide to spend £60k for a new Toilet Block near Car Park. Council advising it was replacing the Wild Life Garden with a Roman Farmstead. Council would also call internal consultants for future House decorating, and English Heritage would have to be consulted.

17th March 1994 and Friends are delighted that news of "Fireplaces Recovered"

16th May 1994 and Friends commit £20k to Car Park, £20k to Toilets.

10th July 1994 and First Wessex Teddy Bear Fair is launched.

28th November 1994. Museums Service took over Countryside Heritage Centre

2nd December 1994. Glass fibre moulds for sections of the Concrete Greenhouses bought by Friends for £3,500 to facilitate repairs.

31st March 1995 and Upton House applies for civil wedding license.

27th November 1995 and death of Denis Bodger announced. A Founder Member and Vice President, he had made a considerable contribution to the success of the Friends. On the 29th April 1996, notice that 2 crabapple trees would be planted either side of path from new toilets towards the kiosk.

20th May 1996 and Friends spend another £720 for a print run of 10,000 leaflets on Upton Country Park.

27th January 1997 and Friends pay £4,338.02 for repairs to Greenhouses.

28th April 1997, and Poole becomes a new Unitary Authority with shake up and re-appraisal of responsibilities. Heritage Centre moves to "Leisure" and Roman Farm remains with "Museums". The Upstairs Gallery in what is now the tea room will accommodate 75 people. Friends start meetings with Leisure Services Working Party on future and maintenance of Upton Park Estate.

26th January 1998. Action arising from Management Plan brings forth a discussion document and public come down heavily against charging for car parking at Upton Country Park. Friends review own Constitution and Membership Fees. Friends put in own computer system.

27th July 1998 and coming legislation for disabled access to Upton House gave rise to an estimated cost of £1,500 for providing suitable ramps.

28th April 1999. Friends buy a photocopier for £2,600.

11th July 1999. Wessex Teddy Bear Fair produces a surplus for the Friends of £2,700.

19th July 1999 and revamped Tea Rooms are opened on limited basis until Kitchens upgraded.

24th July 2000. Friends propose new gates for front of property, should be commemorative of Friends 25th Anniversary.

30th October 2000, and Friends were nominated for a Civic Award for a Voluntary Body of the Year in the Poole area.

19th January 2001 and Chairman Mike Yeomans receives the "2000 Poole Achievement Award" from Mayor of Poole, Councillor Mrs Joyce Jones at Civic Awards ceremony. Following death of Mrs Clara Douie, her son Arthur, had donated to the Friends, a valuable painting of Lord Llewellyn in his uniform as first Governor General of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. This would be restored and hung in the Drawing Room.

The House was redecorated again, this time with drapes in the Drawing Room and the Study, nameplates in gold on mahogany wood over doors in the Hall, and emergency lighting signs reduced in size.

30th April 2001. The Catering contract at the Heritage Centre would be taken over by the Social Services Department, and were keen to liaise with the Friends. Subsequently renamed the Peacock Tearooms.

25th June 2001. Project Peacock, brainchild of Chairman, Mike Yeomans, would start 15th October at a cost of £81,785, and still needed £20k to be found. The Friends had agreed to underwrite to £84k. Site was the old bike shed cum classrooms declared unsafe.

29th October 2001. 11 cycle racks were on order and the Friends agreed to donate £400 towards the costs. The President suggested that the Friends should consider setting up their own Website.

25th November 2001 and we are advised our Anniversary Gates will cost £5,700.

25th January 2002. Phase 2 of Upton House redecorations had found that the cost of works for the Study and Morning Room totaling £11,581.94. The Friends agreed to part fund to £5,700 only. The Friends felt that it was appropriate to remind the Council that a rolling programme of maintenance was still required. Concern was that the redecorated House, now under the direct control of an employee of the Council,

25th February 2002 and Project Peacock was completed and opened. By May, 700 children had used it.

23rd Jan 2003. Funds earmarked for projects included £12,500 for the Walled Garden, and £15,000 for East Wing toilets was increase by £5,000 to include a toilet for Disabled. A double booking, with a wedding, resulted in the Friends losing the chance to put on their August Craft Show with projected considerable financial loss. The Friends fought to retain the services of an additional Park Ranger, and there were 50 applicants for the post.

31st May 2003. The Working Party's choice of carpeting for the main rooms in the House had been fitted at a total cost of £9,945. The Friends paid again.

25th October 2004. Work to install toilets in East Wing due to start work in November. Finished 28th February 2005.

28th April 2005. The now annual Book Sale on Good Friday showed quality and bargains. Another £670 was added to our funds.

27th June 2005. The annual Plant Fair in the Walled Garden brought the Friends 2200 visitors and a surplus of £2,400.

26th Sept 2005 reported that the exhausting but highly acclaimed Summer Show brought in another £6,000.

28th November 2005 and the successful renovation and repair to the Cupola on the House for £2,500. The craftsman was an enthusiast who had done exceptionally well. The Friends had co-operated with the Consultants employed by the Council for the future use of Upton House. Much goodwill has been secured. The Friends agreed to fund a lift for the disabled within the Peacock Tearoom's estimated at £14,500.

30th March 2006 and the Friends Management Committee were invited by the Council Overview Committee to be present when the Consultants presented their Report. Time will tell, whether the Council will find a way forward.

Everything is now geared towards a successful 30th Anniversary Exhibition in the Upper Gallery, to be officially opened by the Mayor of 8th September 2006 and for this to be freely available to the general public for three weeks.

What do the Friends hope to achieve? A greater awareness of our work, a commitment to continue this work by joining as a Friend, for paying by Bankers Order, by offering time in the thousand and one projects available within the Upton Park Estate. By being that Friend who will ultimately take over all positions now held in Trust for the future good of all we hold dear. A Park that provides peace, relaxation, education, enjoyment and dedication. From small beginnings of 30 years ago. Will you take us the next 30 years?