

Selected Extracts from Cowfold Parish Council Minutes, 1895 to 1920

Introduction

Cowfold Parish Council was formed in 1895. (Prior to this, village matters were administered by "The Vestry".)

Minutes of the council meetings rarely record the ebb and flow of the discussions but do provide interesting information on key parish affairs of the day. A number of extracts were made by David Pavitt and are reproduced below.

Extract 1: Street Lighting

20.12.1895 "The subject of lighting the village" was raised but not pursued.

15.4.1896 The Council resolved "that a subcommittee be formed from this Council to investigate and report at the next meeting as to the following: limit of district; rating value of same; cost of putting present lamps into good condition; price of additional lamps each erected complete; and any other information".

8.7.1896 A public meeting had been held on 19th May at which the subject had been discussed and at which "it was unanimously agreed that an effort should be made to collect sufficient money by voluntary contributions to relight the existing lamps and, if possible, add to their number". A committee had been promptly formed which had so far collected or had promised £22-6-0.

19.7.1910 Mr Sprinks told the Council that the public lamps "were about 50/= in debt and in view of the insufficient support accorded, the Lamp Committee proposed that a parish meeting be called with the view of adopting the Lighting Act". It was however decided to "proceed on the old lines for another year".

28.10.1913 Mr Sprinks again told the meeting "of the unsatisfactory state of the funds of the parish lamps which showed a deficit of £6-3-7. A discussion ensued as to the desirability of adopting the Lighting Act". It was finally decided to "ascertain the working of the schemes in adjoining parishes" and report back.

18.11.1913 It was reported that at Billingshurst the Lighting Act had been adopted and that no public scheme was in force at Warninglid or Handcross. After further discussion concerning the Lighting Act the matter was again deferred.

Extract 2: Postal and Telephone Services

- 17.4.1906 "Dr Gravely reported he has interviewed the authorities of the National Telephone Company and they informed him districts have been formed and we are not included and it would be very expensive, probably about £25 for each house to which it would be connected. The matter is therefore considered at an end for the present".
- 21.4.1914 Complaint was made "of the unsatisfactory conditions regarding the first delivery of letters in the southern part of the parish, it being 10am and sometimes 10.15 before the letters were delivered". The Clerk was asked to write to the Post Master General asking for earlier delivery.
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Extract 3: Bye Laws

- 15.1.1896 "In the opinion of the Cowfold Parish Council the Cuckfield Bye Laws submitted by the Horsham Rural District Council for their consideration in April 1895 and partly reported upon are (as urban powers) utterly unsuitable to little country parishes like Cowfold. They further feel that these bye laws will seriously retard legitimate enterprise in the parish and they earnestly ask the District Council to quash them or leave them unused".
- 20.2.1896 The Horsham RDC informed the Council that a proposition was to be made "for repeal of the bye laws now in force in Cowfold Parish" and the Council would be further informed in due course.
- 8.7.1896 The Council was informed by Horsham RDC that the motion to rescind "the bye laws in force in your parish" had been carried that an inspector from the Local Government Board "will come to Cowfold to make personal enquiries".
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Extract 4: Railways

- 20.12.1895 The Council met "to inspect and consider the plan of a proposed railway passing through this parish from West Grinstead to Haywards Heath". It was agreed that "assent to the plan of the railway now laid before them and notice to that effect be sent to F C Mathews Browne and Co, 151 Cannon Street, London EC, Solicitors for the bill for the above-named railway to be submitted to Parliament".
- 20.2.1896 The Council decided to "petition J H Johnstone Esq MP to do all in his power to advance in Parliament the bill for the proposed railway between Haywards Heath and West Grinstead. This Council is [of] opinion that such a railway would be of great benefit to the agricultural district through which it would pass as it would

serve the purpose of a light railway (for which the present government has pledged itself to grant facilities) and would be a great boon for ordinary traffic". During the discussion however some speakers thought "a better line might be had to connect east and west from Keymer Junction to a point further north than the proposed line".

Extract 5: Health

20.4.1910 Mr Gravely told the Council of "the cases of scarlet fever in the village urging the necessity of means being provided to isolate the cases". It was resolved to write to the Horsham RDC and Mr Rigg, their member on that Council urging provision for isolation.

25.8.1914 A Local Distress Committee was in existence and "Mr Gravely informed the meeting that both he and Dr Dickins would give free medical attention in distress cases".

Extract 6: County Rate

15.1.1896 "The new basis or standard for County Rate was submitted to the meeting showing the present rate basis to be £6,662 and the basis as prepared by the Committee appointed by the West Sussex County Council £6,579 which exceeds the present rateable value of the parish [by] £83". [sic] The Council resolved "that objection be raised to the new basis being considerably in excess of the present rateable value of the parish".

20.2.1896 Mr Hoper and the Clerk had attended the appeal against the County rate basis and "found the rate basis to be charged on the imperial rating and not on the rateable value of the parish and were satisfied this parish is not rated in excess of others in West Sussex".

Extract 7: Enclosure

15.10.1901 "A letter was read from F D Godman Esq respecting the inclosure of the green in the centre of the village". The Clerk was requested to write to Mr Godman "thanking him for his letter and informing him the Parish Council have no power to spend money on such green".

Extract 8: Education and Agriculture

- 16.6.1903 Forms had been received “from the West Sussex County Council Education Committee as to technical education” and it was agreed that “the lectures on poultry farming should be continued, a series of which were delivered last season on that subject”.
- 18.4.1905 Dr Gravely told the Council of “a variety of defects as regards the National School in this parish, viz: no water supply, playground in bad state, no shelters for wet weather, no division in playground for opposite sex, desks and school apparatus generally in bad state, the teaching staff weak being no certificated mistress and he moved that this Council urge the School Committee to remedy all or at least some of these defects which was seconded by Mr Sprinks and carried unanimously”.
- 18.7.1905 The School Committee reported that “a certificated mistress has been appointed for the National School and other matters connected with the school complained of at the last meeting as regards water supply, renovating school ground etc are being attended to”.
- 17.10.1905 The matter was discussed again when the Council learned that the interior of the school had been “thoroughly renovated, and the playground improved; Miss Ingram, the new certificated teacher, is giving every satisfaction”.
- 17.4.1906 “The Cowfold Parish Council, recognizing the necessity of keeping boys upon the land, petition the County Council for West Sussex to put into operation during the coming summer the Robson Education Act allowing boys of 12 years of age attending elementary schools to become agricultural half-timers at their parents or guardians desire, thus giving them an interest in rural occupation at the time of life when they more readily adapt themselves to agriculture, than if kept at school entirely until a later age.
- 21.1.1908 Questions were asked “as to the condition of the schools generally and especially with regard to the sanitary condition, also with regard to the contents of the report lately received by the school managers”. Mr King then said that “as regards his own personal opinion the sanitary condition of the schools were not satisfactory, also that he much regretted that the report referred to was very unfavourable”. The managers had asked for an inspector to be sent down. “Some improvement had however been carried out, namely building and shelter, also the playground had been improved and the sanitary arrangements had been seen to, which however could still be improved upon”. Mr Botting “regretted the schools were not satisfactory and in his opinion they would not be so until they were connected to the main drain”. The Chairman said “they had been unable to make alterations owing to the late school master who was shortly leaving at that time”. The school managers were to meet that evening.

- 20.4.1909 Slinfold Parish Council had asked for “co-operation with a view to get the byelaw altered with regard to those children who are unable to obtain the labour certificate being compelled to remain at school till 14 years old”. Co-operation was proposed and seconded.
- 21.7.1915 Following an increase in the education rate the Council resolved “to call the attention of the West Sussex County Council to the constantly increasing rates, especially the education rate, and urgently [an emphasis later added] request the County Council to exercise more control over its Education Committee”. Other rural parishes were to be canvassed and besides sending the resolution to the County Council a “short paragraph” was to be sent to the ‘Sussex Daily News’. [At the following meeting it transpired that many other Boards of Guardians in West Sussex were taking comparable action.]
- 26.1.1916 The Chairman had received letters from the Horsham RDC regarding production of food and from the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries “offering to lend light draught horses to farmers on conditions read out from the letter”. It was decided to exhibit the letters in the Reading Room windows.
- 15.3.1916 The County Council had drawn attention to their advertisement of “advantageous offers of sittings of eggs from pure bred fowls” which they asked the Parish Council to make known in their district.
- 22.3.1916 The RDC had been “requested by West Sussex County Council to obtain parochial information regarding food production, shortage of farm labour arising from the war and also as to prospect of finding women willing to work on the land”. Parochial committees had been suggested and Mr Sprinks thought “Mrs Drabble could give us some information about women labour as [he] understood she had been canvassing under Countess of March’s scheme”. Mrs Drabble said she would report to the next meeting.
- 29.3.1916 Mr Goulburn told the Council that “he had found only one farmer willing to employ women labour; Mr Snodgrass would take two (Scotch preferred) if [they] could milk cows and assist in general farm work. Mr P Jones had not found anyone willing to engage women regularly but might be glad of casual help later on. Mr King said no one seemed enthusiastic but [he] thought women who had had some experience might be useful hoeing mangolds etc. Mr Fowler had not found any farmers wanting women”. On this information a reply would be made to the enquiry from the RDC.
- 22.5.1916 Another Board of Agriculture circular in regard to farm labour for harvesting, referred to employment of “gentlemen on holiday or public school boys” and the question of a reply was left to the Chairman.
- 17.1.1917 Following a further circular “calling attention to serious destruction to grain and other agricultural farm produce caused by rats and sparrows and requesting every

parish in the county to form a 'Rat and Sparrow Club' with a view to destroying these pests". It was agreed that such a club might be formed in Cowfold.

Extract 9: Housing

15.7.1913 "The Chairman addressing the meeting on the dearth of cottages in the district informed the Council that he had ascertained that the proper course in the first place was to communicate with the District Council and it was agreed that the Clerk be instructed to write to the Rural District Council to gather the information necessary as to the proper procedure to take in the matter".

21.10.1913 The Council agreed to ask the Horsham RDC to appoint a small committee to consult with the Council as to the expediency of the RDC exercising their powers under Part III of the Housing of the Working Classes Act 1890 in Cowfold. The Parish Council also wished to emphasise that "the application for cottages did originate with the Cowfold Parish Council".

1.12.1913 Mr Goring's agent offered a site for the proposed workmen's' dwellings at Pear Tree Corner but the Council decided to decline the offer. They discussed making an approach to Mr F D Godman "to ask for a site on his land which would be very suitable for the proposed cottages as being easily connected to the main sewer, thereby obviating the difficulty of drainage which existed on the Capons site". The Chairman said that "Mr F Godman had informed that if the Council failed to come to an agreement with regard to the other sites, he would see if a site suitable could be found". It was agreed that the RDC should be informed "of the course the Parish Council were taking".

17.10.1917 The Chairman had received a questionnaire regarding cottages and the points raised were discussed, in particular, "how many new cottages did we think would be required after the war?" After debating figures of 12 and 6, the number of 6 cottages was decided upon.

15.1.1919 With another questionnaire on cottages the Council decided the answer to 'how many empty cottages' was "none". As to 'how many new cottages required', the Council was reminded "that we stated 6 on a previous form (Oct 1917) but the conditions were now somewhat different". A figure of 12 was suggested but the figure of 9 was finally agreed.

The question of a site was also discussed and Mr King said that "Mrs and Mr Hoper would make a free gift of the acre of land at Capons Farm (which they had previously agreed to sell) to the parish for the purpose of the cottages. He remarked on the greatly increased cost of building" which had been estimated at Cuckfield to be "rather more than double, compared with 1914". The Chairman then said that "Mr F Godman offered a site for the erection of cottages on land

adjacent to the Bolney road; this also would be a free gift and in addition a good road (fit for County Council to take over) would be made at the donor's expense, running from the Bolney road and coming into Henfield road by Mr Roberts". After discussion it was agreed that Mr Godman's site was to "be strongly recommended to the Horsham RDC as a suitable site".

21.2.1919 The Council appointed delegates to a County Council conference on housing to be held in Horsham.

9.7.1919 "A letter was read from the solicitors of the late Mr F D Godman pointing out that owing to the fact that a more suitable site for the proposed cottages had been given by Mrs Hoper, the executors had instructed them to withdraw the offer in order to simplify the position and put an end to the existing uncertainty".

9.3.1920 "The plans of the proposed 8 cottages to be built for the Rural District Council were presented to the Council for their inspection".

Extract 10: Sewage Disposal

16.10.1906 The Council decided to approach the District Council "with a view to getting something done to prevent cattle getting into the sewage farm from the adjoining land as considerable damage has been done on the allotments about which complaints are being made".

25.7.1916 At the suggestion of the Horsham RDC the Council appointed a committee "to act in conjunction with Farm Committee of RDC in the management of our sewage farm". Furthermore, the enfranchisement of the sewage farm properly having been proposed "this Council is fully in agreement with the views and actions of the RDC in this matter and hope they will succeed in obtaining permission to utilize a portion of the money they hold on behalf of this parish to meet expenses of the enfranchisement.

18.10.1916 The RDC informed the Council that "the Local Gov^t Board agreed in principle to the utilisation of the parish money held by the RDC and invested in consols "for enfranchisement expenses". The Board however felt that "this matter should be fully explained and discussed at a meeting of the parishioners of Cowfold".

17.10.1917 A statement of "expenses in connection with the enfranchisement of the sewage farm property" was received.

24.5.1918 The Sewage Farm Committee received tenders "for the grass on Sewage Farm" and accepted one of £15 from the Exas of B Tidey "on same terms and conditions as previous years".

The RDC outlined the powers vested in the Committee, namely “that apart from the spending of money the committee have complete control over the management of the sewage farm except that they must report their proceedings from time to time” to the RDC. The Committee could “manage and collect garden rents” and “arrange the sale of grass and osiers”, at the same time remitting the money collected to the RDC. “At present an arrangement exists with Mrs Woolven to remove the sludge for which she is paid £10 per annum at Christmas”.

- [17.7 ?] 1918 The Farm Committee dealt with “Shrubb’s wages in connection with its new scale for agricultural labour wages. This was discussed and proposed that field wages remain at 25/= per week but it was considered that at certain seasons his time could not fully be occupied on the farm and at such times he should have permission to work elsewhere but under no consideration was farm to be neglected”.
- 23.5.1919 The Sewage Farm Committee accepted Mr Tidey’s tender of £25 for rye grass “subject to the conditions as set forth in the advertised bills”.
- 2.1.1920 Mr N Rowland of Horsham having offered £4-5-0 “for the osiers on the west side of the bed”, the committee accepted the offer.

Extract 11: War, 1914 to 18

See also under Education and Agriculture

- 10.3.1917 The Council considered the National Service Scheme, the RDC having requested “that the Parish should be canvassed with a view to getting men between ages of 18 and 61 to fill up the form offering their services under the National Service Scheme and also ascertain from those who are not willing to fill up the form, the reasons for objecting to do so”. The parish was divided into districts for the canvas.
- 12.12.1917 Leaflets from the RDC Food Economy Committee were discussed. “These set forth the absolute necessity that everyone should exercise the utmost economy, not simply with regard to food but in every way to avoid any waste and save all metal utensils, tins etc and paper that could be made use of”. It was agreed to prepare a circular letter and a house to house visitation for which the parish was divided into four districts.
- 27.3.1918 Dr Dickins, one of the Councillors, having absented himself from meetings of the Council for a prolonged period, explained to the Council “how fully his time, apart from professional duties, has been occupied in making shell caps and how essential he felt it was to do all he possibly could in this respect”. He felt “he must continue is munition work” and trusted the Council would excuse his absence “as long as he was required to make these shell caps” otherwise he would resign.

Extract 12: Old Workhouse and Parish Property

- 13.1.1897 The Council was informed that “the District Auditor gave notice the parish property formerly under the management of the Overseers must be transferred to the Parish Council, according to Section 6, Sub Sect 3 of the Local Government Act 1894”. A committee of management was formed.
- 6.3.1899 Among the items in accounts (which were presented annually) was one for “Insurance of Workhouse - 4^s 6^d “.
- 20.7.1909 It was decided to invite tenders “for repairs to roof and chimney of parish property”. The County Council reaffirmed their ruling that parish councillors (ie Fowlers) could not tender for repair of parish property.
- 21.9.1909 The Council accepted a tender of £24-8-0 from Mr J Roberts for carrying out “the specification of work proposed to be carried out at the Old Workhouse”.
- 19.10.1909 Further work for “strengthening the brickwork in the gables was required and agreed”.
- 18.11.1913 Mr Roberts submitted a tender for £14-15-0 “for the proposed repairs to windows at the parish property” but this being more than the Council wished to expend, the matter was left with the Management Committee.
- 20.1.1914 “The repairs had not been carried out at the windows of parish property yet, the weather being too severe.
- 24.3.1914 Mr Roberts again estimated for the window repairs, the figure being £13-14-0 and this was accepted.
- 18.7.1917 “Repairs to the cottages etc were absolutely necessary – a specification had been drawn up and an estimate received from Mr John Roberts for £12-8-0 which the Committee considered was a fair and reasonable price. Unfortunately there were no funds available to pay for this. “The Council decided to accept the estimate if Mr Roberts would accept payment of “part (say about half the amount) in March 1918 and remainder in March 1919”.
- 9.7.1919 The Council was asked “if the Council would be willing to lease or sell a small portion of the land adjoining the Parish Property, the object being in connection with the suggested Lychgate at corner of Churchyard”. It was decided that “a strip of the parish property land giving 9 feet frontage to Station Road be sold for the sum of £20, all legal expenses in connection with the transfer be added to the purchase price.