
The Long Bridge of
Barnstaple & The Long
Bridge Trust

John B. Cruse 1982

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A c k n o w l e d g e m e n t s

In preparing this account of Barnstaple Long Bridge and the Bridge Trust, I have been greatly assisted by reference to -

The book Devon and Its People by Professor W. G. Hoskins - for details of mediaeval Barnstaple.

The papers and extracts from ancient records of the bridge by Mr. Thomas Wainwright (now deceased), a former Curator of the North Devon Athenaeum.

and in addition to those two great Barumites (now deceased) - Mr. Harry Ashton, T.D., J.P. my predecessor as Chamberlain, for all the help and information he gave me during the years from 1935 up to his death and:

Mr. Bruce W. Oliver, F.R.I.B.A.

Both for material contained in his two valuable papers (1938 and 1946) for the Devonshire Association, and for his many discussions with me in the latter years of his life - which I like to think he enjoyed as much as I did.

The author wishes to express gratitude to the North Devon Athenaeum for kind permission to photograph certain paintings, photographs and drawings in the possession of that body. (The remaining photographs are in the possession of the Bridge Trust.)

John B. Cruse

Introduction

I do not make any claim to being a historian, but I have been encouraged by the Trustees of the Bridge Trust to prepare a history both of the Long Bridge of Barnstaple and also of the management of its funds by bodies of local people over a period of more than seven hundred years.

I suppose that I am the person now best suited to undertake this task, since my thirty six years as "Chamberlain" or "Clerk" to the Bridge Trust have given me the knowledge of where to look for the information. Moreover, I had the privilege of being a partner of the late Mr Harry Ashton (my predecessor as Chamberlain) for several years before I took office, and he passed on to me, not only much information, but a keen interest in the bridge and its history.

It will be seen that I have tried to keep separate the history of the Long Bridge from its management and I hope that the chapters on the latter (more or less in chronological order) will prove of particular interest to those who like reading something of the history of Barnstaple itself. I feel sure that readers will agree with me that those who have controlled this Trust over the centuries have been able to make a great contribution to the prosperity and amenities of this ancient town. (Would that I could still say "Borough"!).

John B. Cruse

Barnstaple, 1982.

Author's Note

The reader may find the following definitions useful:-

Feoff (or Fief)

(noun) Land held
(verb) To grant possession of land.

Feoffer (or Feoffor)

Someone who grants a Feoff.

Feoffee

The person invested with the Feoff.

Feoffment

The gift of a Feoff

The Bridge, its History

At the time of the Domesday Book Barnstaple was one of only four towns in Devon (with Exeter, Totnes and Lydford). In the 12th century it had stone walls built around it to replace the previous earthen ramparts. It had been an ancient fortified town and had repelled several attacks by the Danes, and also by Harold and Lefwine (sons of Earl Leofwine) in 1052, before falling to the Normans on 1068. Although the "Athelstan" Charter of 930 is only a surmise, King Alfred had made it a Saxon Burgh long before 930, and Athelstan established a Mint in Barnstaple. The first Lord of Barnstaple was Judhael of Totnes in 1106, and the first recorded Charter was from Henry II in 1154 (followed by others in later years).

In the immediate vicinity of Barnstaple were the villages of Pilton and Newport, and the Priory of St. Mary Magdalene dated from soon after 1066. The castle mound (crowned by a timber keep) was built in Norman times. About 1086 North Devon was the second richest region of land in Devon - second only to the "red lands" of the Culm and Exe valleys - with arable farming on the low ground but the remainder chiefly cattle farming. The Taw and Torridge rivers had famous salmon fisheries. From Saxon times the great majority of Devon people had lived in the country and earned their living on the land. Barnstaple however had a thriving wool trade with some lead and silver exports, and the shipping in and out of the town was considerable.

As mentioned above, Barnstaple was a walled town and had gates at the north, west, south and east, roughly situated respectively at the north end of the present High Street, the lower end of Cross Street, the south end of the present High Street and the top end of Joy Street. These gates have long since disappeared, but those at the north and south were the largest, with rooms over, the West and East Gates being smaller but with a small guard-room above. Pictorial records of the North Gate and West Gate remain but not of the other two, though a small part of the South Gate is still to be seen in the shop of Messrs Youngs, tobacconists. In the Barnstaple Records reprint by Mr. Wainwright, there is a reference to a Norman road "conjectured and partially traced" running through North Devon, and connecting the north-east parts of the county and the camp at Countisbury with the great one at Clovelly, passing near several other smaller military works. He goes on to say that such a road would necessitate crossing the tidal river or estuary of the Taw at a point where it would be impracticable to ford except at low tide and in fair weather, and "there is great probability that some sort of bridge was built there at a very early period."

There is no documentary record of the building of the bridge at Barnstaple. As Mr Bruce Oliver says in his 1938 Paper for the Devonshire Association: "without doubt through the early history of the town the river was crossed by a ford at or near this point, probably farther downstream at Holland Street, where hard ground runs far out into the river, and the crossing was commanded by the Castle, the outer bailey of which extended to this point. The bridge, when built, must not obstruct the seaborne traffic at the town quays; probably also strategic reasons would require an extra-mural approach up-stream with a causeway skirting the town ditch and approaching the South Gate under command of the town wall."

We do know that the bridge was completed before the end of the 14th century since there is a reference to it in an inquisition dated between 1280 and 1300, but in fact it was probably built by 1200 or even earlier. It must be borne in mind that the construction of the bridge, and the causeways approaching it on either side, would have taken some time. Mr Bruce Oliver took measurements, which are reproduced in his 1946 Devonshire Association paper, which are:-

Length of the bridge	520ft
Length of the town causeway	300ft
Length of the Tawstock causeway	1500ft
Total length	2320ft

The roadway on the west side would have ceased at the bottom of Sticklepath Hill, and a substantial causeway was required therefrom to the west end of the proposed bridge. Similarly, at the town end of the bridge a further causeway was necessary to just short of the South Gate. The former causeway therefore stretched across the saltings of mud and water where Sticklepath now is, and skirted the town wall on the one side (roughly on the line of the present Bridge Buildings) and the open swamp which is now the Square. Mr Oliver tells us that he saw part of the latter causeway uncovered during some road works and it was about four feet below the present surface, about eight feet in width and formed of pitched stones, well worn, with ruts showing wheeled traffic ("pitched" = laid on edge).

So far as the bridge itself is concerned, it was - unlike the bridge at Bideford - built of stone from the beginning, and not (as was Bideford) a timber bridge, later of stone. When a contractor was carrying out works to Barnstaple Bridge in 1910, when much cutting into the interior for repairs and service pipes was involved, no timber of any kind was found. Indeed, there are records of the bridge being repaired in stone in 1311 and again in 1333.

The bridge was of sixteen arches, each with a span of between 18ft. 4in. and 22ft. 6in. (from smallest to largest - each varies slightly). The width of the mediaeval arches from face to face is only 13ft., so that the original roadway can have been little more than 9ft. in width. It is also interesting to note that the bridge was built with a curve in the centre, with the mid-stream part somewhat further upstream than the two ends. This is not obvious from the roadway, and there was a considerable straightening when the railway line to Ilfracombe was built in 1874. The three arches nearest the town have been stated to have been originally of timber and reconstructed in stone in 1589 (then known as the "maiden arches"). Mr Bruce Oliver points out that this is stated in Philip Wyott's diary (the Town Clerk) but, on the other hand, there is a map of 1584 which shows the bridge complete with sixteen arches - all of stone. If these three arches were originally of wood, they could have been as a means of defence of the town, or possibly as a form of drawbridge. The latter might have been for use of vessels going to and from the limekilns on the upstream (east) side. Mr Oliver leans to the view that Wyott's statement can be construed as being that the original foundation of these arches was built on wood or piles, and

that decay of the timber had caused settlement rendering the rebuilding of these three arches in 1589 necessary.

The term "maiden arches" has several suggested meanings, the popular one being that maiden ladies raised some of the necessary money by spinning and teaching. A second meaning is that maidens of the town went down to the river at this point to fetch water. It was even considered by some that "maiden" is a corruption of "midden" or sewer, and that the town drainage emptied into the river at this point!

After this there was little change in the bridge until 1796, when a widening took place. Up to that date the bridge, as mentioned above, had been very narrow - only suitable for pedestrians and pack-horse traffic. There were deep recesses over the cut-waters or chevrons of each pier (where those on foot could avoid being knocked down by pack-horses) and when the bridge was widened in 1796 these piers served as the only abutments for the supplementary arches, about four feet wide on each side. Even when in 1832 there was a further extension by ironwork, they were still found sufficient to support the additional width and weight. This latter widening resulted in the pavements on cantilever brackets, with iron railings, which remained until the latest widening, which did not take place until after the responsibility for the bridge had passed to the Government in 1961. In his reprint of the Barnstaple Records, Mr Wainwright mentions that "in some parts at least the foundation appears to have been on wooden piles, but they are all strengthened or supported externally by piling, which may be seen when the water is low. The original piers still remain, though now recased throughout, and the original pointed inner arches are altogether intact". He goes on to mention that some of the arches have been widened at various periods, causing some irregularities of appearance. The view expressed in these Barnstaple Records that the iron railings adversely affected the character of the bridge has been shared by many others.

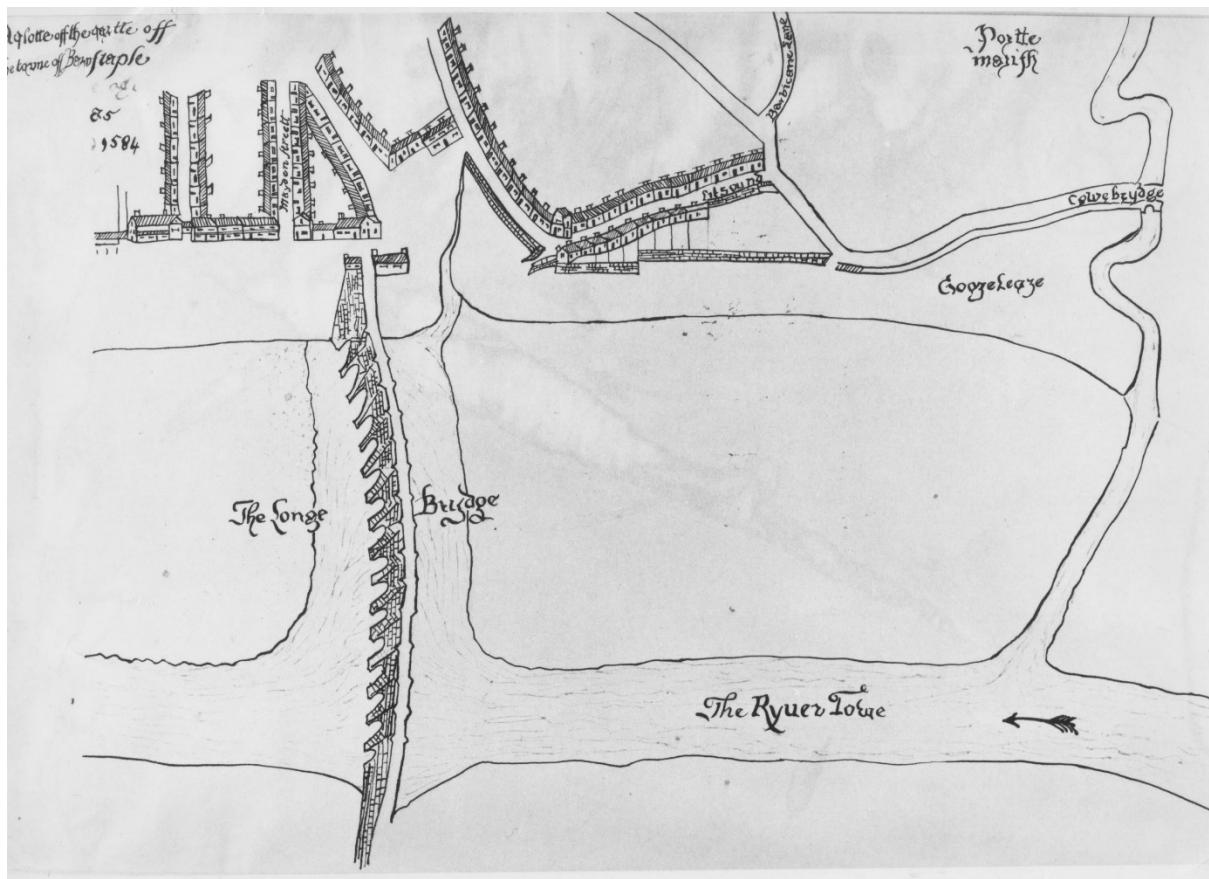
In addition to the widenings mentioned above, there were of course many repairs carried out over the years. In addition there were three other major matters worthy of special note. Firstly in 1873 the London and South Western Railway obtained powers to divert the bridge at the Tawstock end, to make room for an iron bridge to carry the railway line across the river for the Barnstaple to Ilfracombe line. The Company then had to be responsible for the cost of maintaining the whole of the structure (old and new) from the point of diversion (up to and including the fourth pier). This iron bridge was still in place when the Bridge Trust ceased to be responsible for the road bridge in 1961, and has only recently been removed.

Secondly, in 1946 to 1949, the major work was undertaken of giving better protection to the bases of the arches of the bridge. Up to 1946 they had been enclosed with a series of wooden piles, the space between the piles and the arches being filled with pebbles. After a report by the Surveyor, the above - which was not considered to afford sufficient protection from the "scour" of the tidal waters - was removed, and interlocking steel piling was driven to the level of the rock below the bridge, thus forming a steel "case" round each pier. The space between the piling and the arches of the bridge was then completely filled with concrete.

When these works were being carried out, a large quantity of baulks of oak were removed from around the bases of the piers - these had obviously been placed in position several hundred years before. (A small shield and a gavel and stand were made from this oak by Messrs Loosemore & Son, the Contractors, and Messrs Shapland & Petter Ltd., and presented to the Trustees). The oak was offered by the Trustees to various bodies, but it was so hard that it could only be used by the Borough Surveyor for road foundations - very much as for its original use. Thirdly, in 1950, a contract was entered into with the Cementation Co. Ltd. for consolidation by cementation process of the interior of the bridge arches and piers. This entailed the insertion of cement grout under pressure into all the arches and piers, thus ensuring a solid interior of the whole substructure of the bridge. This work was duly carried out during the year.

This completes the story of the bridge, so far as constructional matters are concerned, up to the time when the question of a further widening scheme arose in the 1950'S, and the possibility of transfer of the bridge to the Minister of Transport: this matter is dealt with in another chapter.

As a footnote to this section, it should be mentioned that in 1937 the bridge was listed as an Ancient Monument under the Ancient Monuments Act of 1931.



**Tracing by Mr. Bruce Oliver of a map of Barnstaple dated 1584
(North Devon Atheneum)**

Finances and Management (up to 1800 approx.)

The question of the source of the funds for the initial building of the bridge is as much obscure as the date. The first factual information we have is that Sir Henry de Tracey, Lord of Barnstaple, endowed it with some funds in the 13th century. It could well have been that other local gentry and merchants contributed to the original building cost, since they would clearly have benefited from its existence. The same Sir Henry de Tracey also "bought pardon to the bridge". In the year 1272 he was excommunicated, apparently for a matter connected with the church of Taw stock, but he was later pardoned, and by his buying pardon to the bridge, any persons who then donated funds to the bridge received a blessing from the Church.

The first such Deed of Endowment was in 1303, when Alicia de Ackelane made a grant by way of yearly rent of 3d to the "Long Bridge of Barnstaple for ever out of a certain tenement for her Soul and the Souls of all her benefactors". Other grants followed in regular succession up to the year 1587, being grants of yearly rents, lands and tenements respectively, some of the grants being made to the "Keepers of the Long 'Bridge" - naming them- - others to the "Wardens of the Long Bridge, their heirs and successors for ever", and in others the grant is expressly stated to be for the "reparation and sustentation of the Long Bridge". Two other early recorded happenings relating to the bridge are:-

- (a) In 1302 Thomas le Child ("not of good memory") jumped from the bridge and was drowned.
- (b) In 1306 Sarra la Curlister (girdle-maker) fell over the bridge and was also drowned.

After the death of Sir Henry de Tracey in 1274 the Honour of Barnstaple passed to Geoffrey de Camville (who had married Sir Henry's grand- daughter). It is considered that he was responsible for building St. Thomas's Chapel at the town end of the bridge in about 1319. A cottage next to the chapel, being sometimes said to be occupied by a "toll collector", is thought more likely to have been a "caretaker" since there are no records of any tolls having at any time been collected on behalf of the Bridge Wardens.

At the end of the thirteenth century the care and management of the bridge appeared to be in the hands of the Mayor and Councillors of Barnstaple, who entrusted two of their number as Wardens to act for them, their duties including both carrying out of necessary repairs and other works to the bridge, and also collecting alms and to render accounts to the Mayor and Council. Throughout the 14th and 15th centuries it appears that the Bridge Wardens received a remuneration for their services. Incidentally, on taking up office, they were obliged to take an oath to carry out their duties "well and truly".

From the records, it would appear that the monies collected by the Wardens would have included not only rents of lands and buildings, and legacies and annuities, but also contents of a collecting box on the bridge and collections in Barnstaple and surrounding parishes. A typical schedule of the latter in 1458/9 has been found by Mr. Bruce Oliver, and is shown on the next page:-

Pilton	2s.	Westbokeland	6d.
Westdoune	3d.	Merewode	11d.

Mortho	10d.	Stokerever	2d.
Loxor	4d.	Swymbruge	8d.
Ilfracomb	6d.	Northmolton	3d.
Londekey	6d.	Alvyscote	3d.
Ham(Georgeham)	11d.	Yenstawe (Instow)	4d.
Shyrrewyl	6d.	Clovely	9d.
Arlynton	4½d.	Westlegh	5d.
Bratton	4d.	Were	7d.
Bery (Berrynarbor)	5d.	Northam	9d.
Estdoune	8d.	Atherynton	6d.
Godeleigh	5½d.	Yerne's Comb	6d.
Brampton (Braunton)	6d.	Toryntonmagna	3s
Tawstok	8d.	Parkeham	8d.
Estbokelond	3d.	Chytilhamten	10d.
Fremynton	3s	Barum	7s 4d.
Fyllegh	5½d.	Heanton Ponchard	2d.
Charlys	2d.	Heybuketon (High Bickington)	2d.
Horwode	7d.		

Note: 2s is 2 shillings in pre decimal currency, 7s 4d, 7 shillings and four pence. Respectively 10p and 36.67p in decimal currency.

Though the spelling is amusing, it should not, I suggest, be regarded as being necessarily accurate at that time, since due allowance must be made for the possible spelling inaccuracies of the persons recording the items, and the difficulty of deciphering their writing. I would submit that the really interesting thing is the wide area covered by the parishes having collections, for example Clovelly and Parkham, some twenty miles away, and on the far side of Bideford.

In the same accounts there are shown rents paid by the Bridge Wardens for various tenements (presumably then sub-let), repairs to the bridge and causeways and to various properties owned and let. In addition we find the salaries of the two Wardens and the Mayor's Clerk, and also the following "Anniversary Expenses":-

Bread	1s.
Preacher	1s 8d
The Bedeman	2d
Lights	2d
Ale	2s 1d
Bell- ringing	4d
Oblations	2d
	<hr/>
	5s 7d
	<hr/>

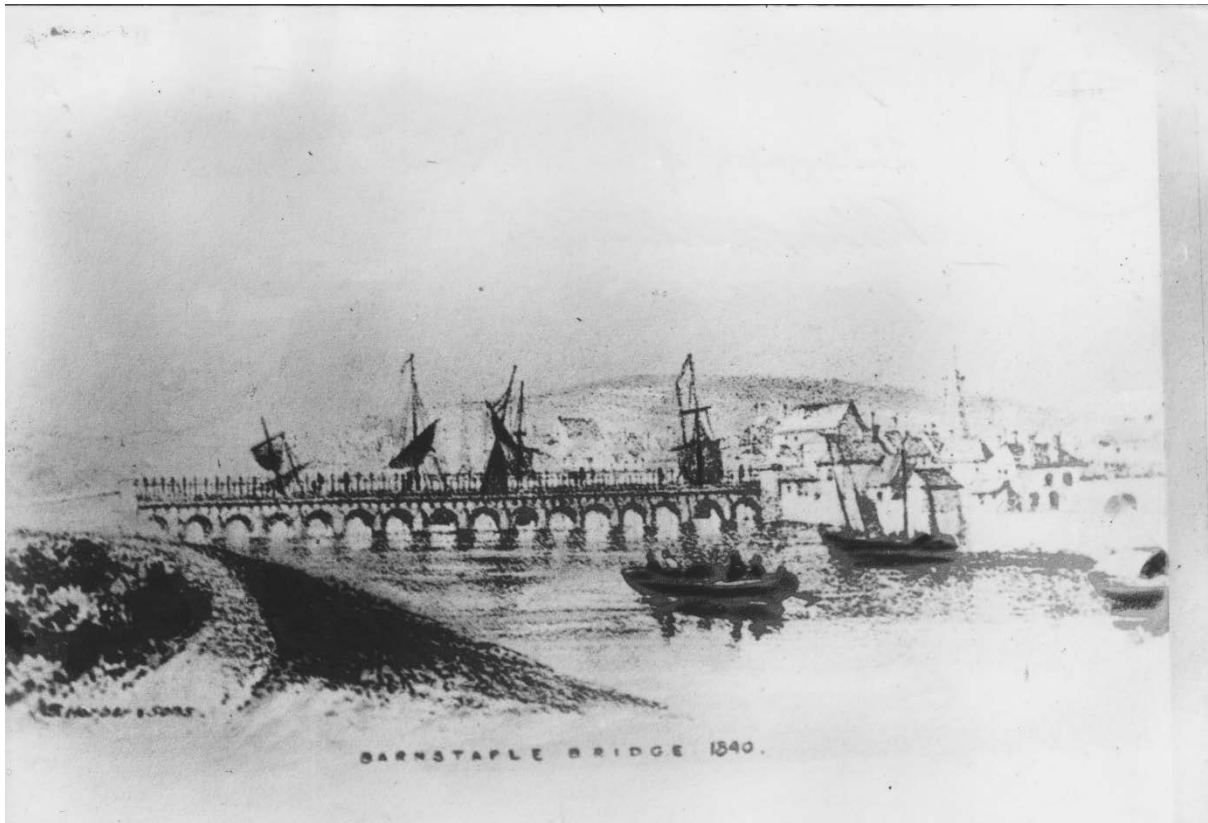
The payment to the Mayor's Clerk would presumably have been for legal work, and the "Anniversary Expenses" were doubtless for an annual celebration. From the proportion spent on the liquid refreshment, it would appear to have been a joyful occasion!

Many ancient documents relating to the early periods of the bridge's history are retained and held in safe custody at the North Devon Athenaeum. These include early endowment deeds, collecting briefs and various accounts and rentals.

Details of various pieces of land given or bequeathed to the Long Bridge in the 14th and 15th centuries, and referred to earlier in this chapter, are mentioned in early documents, of which a few are:-

Feb 10 th , 1330	Beatrice d.Rd. de Piworthi Widow Rd. the Someter of Toriton	Messuage with appurtenances E. side of Maiden Street, N. The Strand
Feb. 9 th , 1369	Simon Colyn	A piece of ground in Lychton having highway N & S.
June 11 th , 1474	John Aps	Tenement in High, subject to an annuity of 8s. to be paid to him during his life and after his death to an annual payment of 4s to the Wardens of the Long Bridge of Bydeford.

Also the "Receivers' Accounts" 1389-1643 show "rentals" and "payments". In the year 1461-62 the rentals were £9 14s.9d. (payments in that year were £9 17s. 0½d.), but the amount of the rents indicated that even at that early stage, the Bridge Wardens were in possession of a number of properties on behalf of the Long Bridge (in that year the wardens were John Pideler and Geoffrey Lycott). In fact the rentals by 1628/9 had increased to £15 1s. 3d.



An old print of Barnstaple Bridge dated 1840



An old photograph showing Bridge Buildings, and the cottages on the left where Bridge Chambers and Bridge End were afterwards built.



*Oil painting of Barnstaple; unsigned, possibly 17th century
(North Devon Atheneum)*



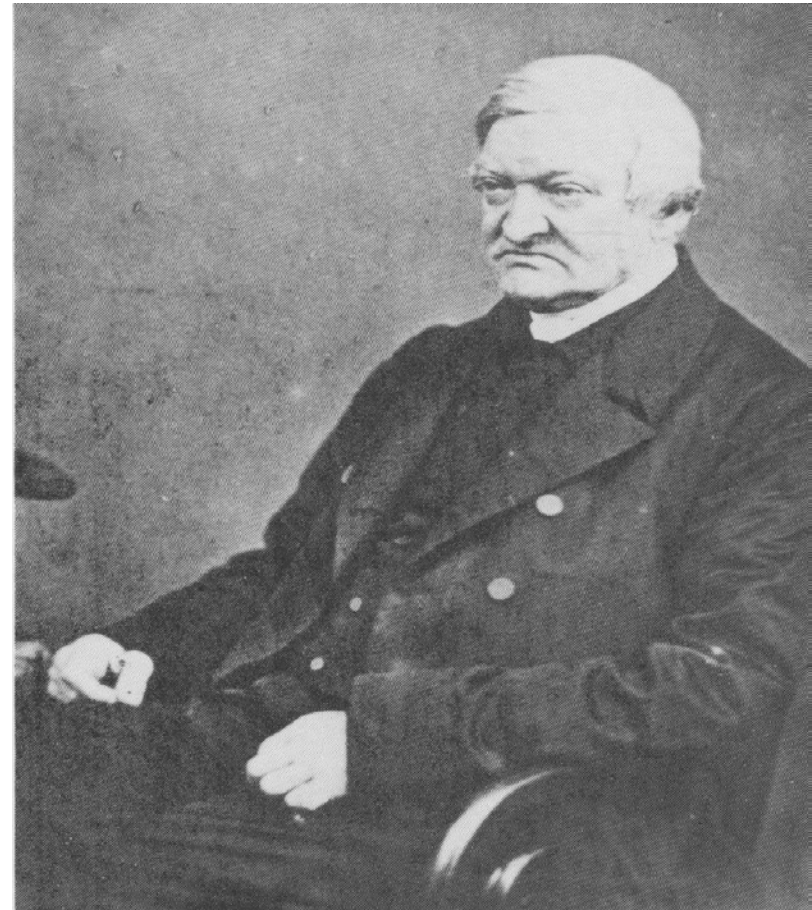
Tawstock end of the Bridge in 1916



*Twon end of the Bridge in 1916 showing the Bridge End Building
(demolished in 1963 after sale to the Ministry of Transport)*



19th Century Watercolour showing the "Maiden Arches"
(North Devon Atheneum)



John Baker
The first Chamberlain of the Long Bridge Charity; appointed 1821
served until 1860.



The Long Bridge in 1960 (upstream side)



The Long Bridge in 1960 (downstream side)



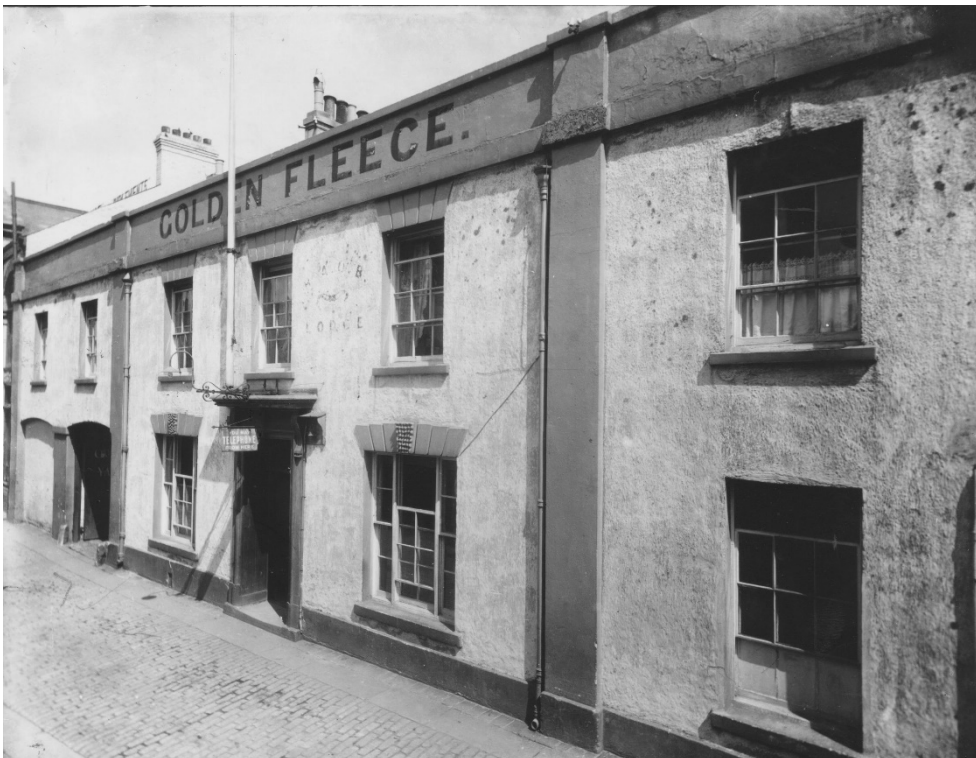
Old photograph showing the High Street properties before the rebuilding of No's. (to 12 by the Bridge Trust in the late 19th century)



Cottages adjoining the Golden Fleece (in 1916); sold in 1922



An old photograph showing Bridge House (but before the rebuilding of Bridge Buildings on the Strand side) and before the commencement of Bridge Chambers and Bridge End



The Golden Fleece (in 1916) built by the Bridge Trust in the first half of the 19th century and sold in 1922.



*Theatre Royal and Dispensary buildings (in 1916).
Build in 1833 and sold 1930*



*23 Boutport Street in 1916; purchased by the Trust in the 19th century
and sold in 1926*

In 1610 the first general Feoffment Deed appears and its object was apparently to concentrate the various properties belonging to the bridge in one set of trustees. The following is a short abstract of this Deed: -

"1610, March 26th: Deed Poll under hand and seal of James Down and John Peard etc., etc., etc Whereby they granted and enfeoffed Pentecoste Dodderidge and Wyllyam Shopleigh of All ... etc., etc., etc. (*Then follows a long schedule descriptive of the bridge property with metes and bounds and tenants' names etc.*) all of which said lands, tenements, rents and hereditaments to be and called and known by the name of the Bridge Lands and heretofore given or granted to and for the reparation supportation and maintenance of the Long Bridge of Barnstaple and other uses. To hold the same to such uses purports and intents as the said premises were so given granted and enfeoffed and further for them at all times hereafter to grant and enfeoff the premises to any other persons residents and inhabitants within the town to the same uses when and as often as they shall think convenient."

(At Appendix C will be found extracts from a few Feoffment Deeds)

The nature of the connection of the Mayor and Burgesses of the Borough of Barnstaple with the general government of the bridge appears to be that in early times they took an important part in its management, and two Burgesses were regularly appointed as Wardens, their accounts being audited at the Mayor's Audit Courts up to (probably) the mid-19th century. The nature of the connection was very frequently disputed and (probably in 1882 under the Municipal Corporations Act) when the question came to be settled, the Bridge Trust was decided to be neither a part of the Corporation nor a Municipal Charity, and the management was thenceforth left solely in the hands of the Feoffees of Bridge Lands.

From 1610 onwards' there were 'numerous deeds of feoffment to new feoffees, in form almost exactly similar to the one quoted above, the number of feoffees varying from 12 to 22. Some of the old leases and counterpart leases relating to the bridge property were granted by the "Mayor and Keepers of the Long Bridge with the consent of the Commonalty", some by "the Elder Wardens of the Bridge with the consent of the Mayor" and in 1617 a lease was granted by the "Mayor, Aldermen and the 16 Feoffees of the Long Bridge". From then on the leases continued in that form until the end of the nineteenth century when the Feoffees alone granted them.

I am closing this chapter at about 1800 because from just after the commencement of the nineteenth century the Feoffees began to keep fuller records. We can take it that, for the period up to 1800, income was derived from rents, donations and other sources, and payments for repairs to the bridge and properties owned were made therefrom, together with other small items of running expenses. From the totals of rents received, we observe a substantial increase from £13 in 1677 to £83 in 1784, and a further increase to £ 137 in 1791. This suggests that the Feoffees were actively engaged in purchase of property during this period, We can also obtain support for this assumption by the fact that receipts were exceeding payments in most years during these periods, thereby giving surpluses which could be used for investments in land.

From the next chapter it will be noted that the records of the early 1800's show clearly that the Feoffees of the Long Bridge had become a substantial body financially, and the additional records available enable a more detailed account to be given of their activities.



***A conjectural sketch (probably by Bruce Oliver) of the Town End of the Bridge, the first
Guidhall and St Thomas' Chapel c 1539***

Finance and Management (1800-1900)

The first Minute Book of Feoffees' Meetings commences in 1817 with one set of Minutes, and further sets in 1818 (or 1819) - neither dated as to day and month-with further Minutes on 18th October 1820, 22nd May 1821 and 27th November 1821. We cannot be sure that these are the full record as at the meeting on 3rd December 1822 it was unanimously resolved: -

"That it is highly expedient that a Minute Book of all the proceedings and Acts of the Trustees of the Long Bridge of Barnstaple at their general meetings should be kept and recorded - that one of the meeting do act as Secretary on the occasion and that the proceedings of the day be signed by the Chairman. Resolved further that on any meeting convened after due notice (7 days) in writing specifying the business whereon they are called, the majority of the Feoffees do constitute a legal Meeting and that on a Chairman being appointed in the case of any division of sentiments of any subject if equal in numbers, the Chairman has the casting vote which shall determine it.

Resolved that a new Cash Book be procured and that from this period all receipts and payments be therein daily and regularly entered.

Resolved that a Bridge Chest be again resorted to and kept in the Guildhall, having three locks, wherein shall be kept the Minute Book, Books of Account, Bonds and other securities and all other things appertaining to the Trust and that the keys be kept by the three Seniors of the Trust - Mr. Glass as Treasurer; Mr. John Roberts; Capt. J. May R.N."

No apology is made for quoting these minutes in full since they give a clear indication of the lack of complete records up to that time. It is interesting to note that the first Chamberlain (Mr. John Baker) was appointed in 1821. (See Appendix A)

Some of the above-mentioned minutes from 1817 to 1822 are of interest:-

- (a) In 1817 Messrs. Glass, Roberts and Capt. May (the only surviving Feoffees) "did then associate with them by a new Feoffment Deed ... the nine senior members of the Corporation" (whose names are given).

This illustrates the method by which the Feoffees maintained their numbers.

- (b) In 1818 (or 1819) there is Minute that £300 was advanced to the Town Council on temporary loan to meet the expenses of proceedings in the House of Commons on petition of a disappointed Candidate for the Borough wherein the rights and privileges of the Freemen were at stake. What this was about we do not know, but it is interesting that the Feoffees had £300 available to lend to the Town Council (on Bond with interest charged).
- (c) In October 1820 £180 was lent to the Corporation, on application of the Mayor "setting forth the increased embarrassment of the Corporation in defending the rights of the Borough against 'the attempts and machinations of enemies in the House of Commons to disenfranchise the

Borough for the nefarious acts of a few worthless Freemen proved guilty of bribery and perjury before the Bar of the House and to defeat which it is expedient to be heard by Counsel at the Bar of the House of Lords which will incur heavy expense and praying further temporary assistance." Again no details are known but this is further financial assistance by way of loan to the Corporation (again by Bond with Interest).

- (d) In May 1821 the question was raised of aiding the funds of the Committee appointed by a Town Meeting for carrying into effect the rebuilding and widening of Pilton Bridge and Causeway "now in a delapidated and foundrous state"; It was resolved 'that as the funds of this Trust are by the present good management in a very flourishing state' the sum of £ 100 be subscribed towards completing this public work.

The meetings of the Feoffees at this period were being held (by permission of the Town Council) at the Old Guildhall (on the corner of the Strand and Maiden Street - where the Commercial Union Assurance Company now have their offices). In June 1837 the meeting place was changed to New Bridge House (North Devon Dispensary) in Boutport Street, which continued until 1873. The Trustees then moved to the Board Room at Bridge Chambers, which is still their meeting place.

It is clear that the "Bridge Lands" had, by the mid 1800's, substantially increased, both as the result of land being given and bequeathed to the Feoffees for the "reparation supportation and maintenance of the bridge" and also by the Feoffees having bought various pieces of land, old cottages etc. and built good properties thereon - some still owned.

To assist in such projects (and for work on the bridge itself) the Feoffees raised funds as necessary by means of borrowing on Bonds, at interest and under Seal of the Long Bridge, from individuals in the area. This form of borrowing continued from 1840 to 1900 approximately.

In the year 1836 the Town Council formally required the Feoffees to hand over the Trust to the Town Council. (This appeared to be because, about this time, the Feoffees had become reduced in numbers because of deaths, and they had proposed to appoint new Feoffees, some of whom were not members of the Town Council, to bring the body of Feoffees up to full strength). The Feoffees declined to do this, and after further correspondence the matter appears to have been dropped.

Whether any revival of this matter was thought to be imminent is not known, or indeed whether the increasing importance of the Feoffees in the town as landlords caused some disquiet, but on 13th January 1866, Mr. Cadwallader E. Palmer - the Chairman of the Feoffees and a local solicitor - produced and read to the Meeting of Feoffees an "important report", and it was then resolved that: -

"It is the opinion of this meeting that the business of this Trust has been ably and faithfully discharged by the Old Trustees in past years and that the thanks of the New Trustees and the Public are due to them for their services, that the Statement read by Mr. Palmer be recorded on the Minutes and communicated to the Newspapers published in Barnstaple."

We then find affixed in the Minute Book a newspaper cutting giving the report in full. As indicated above, there is nothing in the minutes to give any clue as to the reason for the Report, but it gives a remarkable amount of information, and therefore a slightly edited version is given below:-

"It does not appear from any documents now in our possession when or under what circumstances the first or original Feoffment was executed and the first Feoffees appointed .."

He then goes on to mention a Feoffment as old as 1610, and then quotes the full history of Feoffments from 1772 to 1836 showing how, when necessary, the surviving Feoffees had, as empowered, enfeoffed new Feoffees at their discretion. He then continues ...

"We learn from these deeds and the one recently executed, the Trusts upon which we are enfeoffed with, and have now vested in us a large property, namely 'for the reparation supportation and maintenance of the Long Bridge of Barnstaple'.

"This is a very simple Trust so far as the mere maintenance and support of the Bridge is concerned but as the income arising from the property is far beyond what is necessary for that purpose, the legitimate and judicious laying out of that income and the proper management and improvement of the property committed to our care, requires serious consideration."

He continues by claiming that the Feoffees have fully carried out these duties, and have acted "boldly" by ...

"Instead of granting building leases for long terms of years of our old and dilapidated property to speculators and builders at very small or nominal rents, perhaps to be returned into our hands at the expiration of the leases little improved in value, we have been the restorers and rebuilders of our own property, reaping the benefit of our expenditure in an increased rental."

Mr. Palmer then claims that the Feoffees have gone far beyond the above and gives details as follows of their actions (to improve the bridge approaches and improving the town generally): -

"We purchased the old dilapidated and unsightly buildings in the Square called the 'Black Horse' where the West of England and South Wales Bank now stands, which then formed an awkward curve projecting into the Square, and likewise some property adjoining, all of which we pulled down and placed the buildings back, thereby greatly improving the approach to the bridge, and we completed that fine row of houses now known as the Bridge Buildings; I say completed because the house now occupied by Mr. Curds called the Bridge House was built about six years before."

He goes on to say that this was generally approved by the public - as it still is to this day - and that it was a good step financially for the Trust. He points out that rents in 1821 were £300 and that after paying for widening and strengthening the bridge (in 1832) at a cost of £4,000 (and as the bridge itself produced no income, most of this had to be borrowed), the income in 1866 had risen to £716, with only approximately £1,000 owing. The properties bought, sold or improved during this period (1821 to 1866) are stated as follows:-

Built: Row of houses (Boutport Street) nearly opposite Vicarage Street.

Purchased: Property in the Square (mentioned above) and erected Bridge Buildings.

Built: Two houses in High Street (Nos. 9 and 10) occupied by Williams (Ironmonger) and Moore - where the Boot Inn previously stood (with some further land purchased).

Built: The (Golden) Fleece in Tooley Street with all its stabling and out- houses and some cottages in the same street.

Built: (Presumably additions to) part of house in Joy Street occupied by Mr. Pridham.

Sold: A small cottage and garden at Combe Martin; a house in Joy Street; a very small tenement in Maiden Street; a small portion of the Fortescue Arms (Hotel) and a few other small pieces of land.

Mr. Palmer then deals with the Officers and General Management of the Trust, and says:-

"We have a Treasurer, a Chamberlain or Steward, a Solicitor and Committee of Management. The Treasurer is the Chairman of the Trust. He calls all general meetings. He receives from the Chamberlain all the income, and pays through him all bills that have been examined by the Committee and ordered to be paid. He has hitherto held the situation for an indefinite period, there having been only three Treasurers during the last fifty years. The last Treasurer was Mr. Bremridge, who resigned in November (1865) and Mr. Cotton, Mr. Fisher and myself then consented to act until the present meeting. The Chamberlain is the Steward of the Trust and collects all the rents, and it is his duty to examine and report upon the state of the repairs and superintend their execution under the direction of the Committee."

Mr. Palmer gives some details of the salaries of the Chamberlain and Solicitors, and then continues:-

"The next and most important part of the Trust is the Committee of Management. The number, I believe, has generally been five, exclusive of the Treasurer, who is ex officio a member, but does not preside. The Committee meets once a month, examines all accounts and orders to be paid, inquires into the state of the repairs of the Bridge and property belonging to it, and if deemed advisable accepts the same; in fact on it devolve all the active duties of the Trust."

We should perhaps now note some other matters of interest, in addition to those detailed by Mr. Palmer, up to the date of his report.

It is observed that in June 1842 a contract was placed with the Gas Company to light the lamps on the bridge (at £3 per lamp per annum - but later increased to four guineas).

From 1838 onwards the Trustees agreed to dine together. This continued for some years, but in 1859 it was agreed that the dinner be not held but £20 given instead to the Committee for decorating the

bridge and approaches on the occasion of the Bath and West of England Agricultural Society Meeting in Barnstaple.

In 1862 the sum of £25 was donated to the Albert Memorial Clock Fund.

It is also of interest to note that the use of the title "The Bridge Trust" was first used in the Minutes of February 1845.

Finally, before proceeding on to the years after 1866 we should note the construction of two important buildings at the south end of Boutport Street in 1833. The Trust then owned seven cottages - known locally as "The Seven Drunkards" - presumably because of their condition! - and in that year the Bridge Trust erected the North Devon Dispensary building on part of the site and a Company built the Theatre Royal on the remaining part, on a building lease.

As has been mentioned in the chapter on the bridge structure, the railway to Ilfracombe necessitated a bridge across the Taw, with a diversion of the Long Bridge at the Tawstock side. The Trustees had in 1870 opposed this, but later (in 1874) the work took place. However there were protracted negotiations with the Railway Company on a number of matters: firstly, the Trustees had claimed compensation for the loss of their waterside rights caused by the railway bridge. This claim was settled by payment of £190 as late as September 1875. There was also lengthy argument as to the works to be carried out by the Company to divide their line from the roadway, and also as to their continuing liability for the part of the Long Bridge diverted. Eventually it was decided (in 1877) that the L. & S. W. Railway should pay £35 per annum as their liability towards the bridge roadway and paths diverted by them, and (in 1884 - after a legal action) that the Company should keep and maintain in good and substantial repair the whole of that portion of the bridge which had been diverted or altered by them (i.e. the substructure).

Whilst the discussions with the Railway Company had been proceeding, much had also been happening at the other end of the Long Bridge. Before going into this in detail it should be explained that, up to the 1800's, there had been cottages at both sides of the town end of the bridge - referred to in the records as "cottages on the bridge". These were demolished by the Trustees when the works at "Bridge Chambers" and "Bridge End" were carried out.

Dealing first with the former, the Trust had in 1870 purchased from the Town Council the Ship Inn and Cottages, with a view to building what we now know as Bridge Chambers, and Mr. R.D. Gould, the well-known local architect, was engaged to prepare plans. The building, to comprise "a Hall and Chambers" was entrusted to Messrs. Hunt & Seccombe of Exeter, and the work continued over 1872 and 1873. During this period much discussion took place as to its occupancy, but finally the hall and rooms were let for the County Court and also for use by the "County Bench" of Magistrates, the Trust having furnished the rooms accordingly. It was also agreed that the hall should be available for meetings and auction sales. The offices were let to various firms of solicitors and other tenants, including the Inland Revenue, the Water Company and a photographer. This was quite an ambitious project and the Trustees found it necessary to sell some properties to help defray the cost (as well as some borrowing on Bonds). The properties sold in 1871 were:-

Dwelling house in Anchor Lane (now Market Street)	to J. Youings
Dwelling house in Holland Street	to W. Bale
Dwelling house in Holland Street	to S. Sanders
Dwelling house in Litchdon Street	to T. Wadham
The Fortescue Tap - Well Street	to E. Petter
The North Molton Inn etc., Bear Street	to Bible Christians
Three dwelling houses in Newport	to S. Joce

The "Cottages on the Bridge" on this side were at the same time demolished, and this enabled an improved access to the bridge - also see below regarding the upstream side.

There now followed a further reconstruction. In February 1876 the property of Mrs. Carter at the Bridge End was bought by the Trust. Parts of the land (and the cottages on the bridge) were cleared to widen the approach to the bridge and also further land was ceded to the Town Council to improve the layout of the Square. Mr. R. D. Gould was again employed to prepare plans for a suitable building to harmonise with the Bridge Chambers and to comprise a house (or chambers) fronting the river, and a smaller house with shop facing the Square. (These were completed by 1878, and remained in the same form until sold to, and later demolished by, the Ministry of Transport in the early 1960's).

Meanwhile, in 1876, the Trust had purchased "Miss Thorne's House", on the south side of the new Bridge End buildings. Some years later it was sold to Mr. W.F. Rock, but "reserving the drainage and watercourse rights through and under, access thereto and all other existing rights, liberties and easements." Mr. Rock then donated this building to the Rock Trust for use as the North Devon Athenaeum. In 1882 the North Devon Dispensary building was sold to that body, and at the other end of Boutport Street the Trust had - during the mid-19th century - acquired a number of properties in the area opposite Vicarage Street. There were several houses - some quite large - which were let for some years and improved from time to time. There were also various lands to the rear. In 1869, after some trouble with the owner because of nuisance, a tan yard was purchased (and converted to a less objectionable use) at the far end. By 1874 these properties were referred to as a "block of buildings" and in 1885 the house formerly occupied by Mr. Cobley was rebuilt to form the offices now occupied by Toiler, Oerton & Balsdon - Solicitors.

In the same year two houses in the High Street (Nos. 11 and 12) lying between the Trust's property - now the Midland Bank - and Church Lane, and the shop and house (now occupied by Brighton, Gay - Estate Agents) were built.

Shortly afterwards - in March 1887 - the premises for many years occupied by "The Literary & Scientific Institution" were advertised for sale by public auction. The Town Council was anxious to have this property as a School of Art for the town, and so the Bridge Trust bought the property and exchanged it with the Town Council for two houses and premises in the Strand lying between Bridge House and Maiden Street; this, together with the purchase of a cellar in Maiden Street, enabled the Trustees to complete the Bridge Buildings block much as it is today.

The style and beauty of this building is something of which the Bridge Trust can be justifiably proud, presenting as it does a dignified appearance to those approaching the town from the Exeter and Taunton directions.

In May 1892 the Committee of Management reported that "being dissatisfied with the manner in which the Bridge and Bridge Hall and Chambers were kept" they had appointed Mr. & Mrs. W. Bird as resident caretakers, with accommodation in a second floor flat in Bridge Buildings. The office of resident caretaker continued after that time until only about ten years ago.

Little mention has so far been made of the theatre in Boutport Street, it having been leased up to 1893. Further pieces of land having been acquired (for dressing-rooms etc.) it was decided to reconstruct and restore the theatre. By 1896 this was completed and we are told that the improvements included "tip-up chairs" for the dress circle and cushioned seats for the upper circle. The gallery also had an iron bar fitted along the front! From then onwards for some years the Theatre was run by a Committee of the Bridge Trust, with the Assistant Chamberlain as Theatre Manager.

We thus arrive at the end of the 19th century, with the Bridge Trust owning the following properties:-

Property

Tenant (1905)

High Street

No.	9 House and Shop	Mr. Higgs
	10 House and Shop	Mrs. Williams
	11 House and Shop	W. Dalling
	93 'Message' (later 'Horace Mann shop)	Miss. L.B. Lilley

Bouport Street

	*Theatre	
No.	*23 – Dwelling House	Curry's Trustees
	109	Toller, Son & Oerton
	110	Mrs. L. Sloley
	111	Pearl Life Office
	112	Mrs W. Maldram
	113	Miss. Inkson
	Bonded Stores, Green Lane	G.W. Dawe
	*Wharehouse, stables etc., Green Lane	F. Gratton

Tuly Street

Property

*Stores

*Golden Fleece Hotel and Cottage adjoining

*Cottage

Bridge Buildings (Block)

Office and Shop

Two Offices

Two Offices

Offices 1st & 2nd floors

Bridge House

Dwelling House – No. 4

Dwelling House – No. 5

Two Dwelling Houses – Nos. 6 & 7

Caretakers Rooms

***Bridge End (Block)**

House and Shop

House

Bridge Chambers

Hall – Magistrates Court

Offices (2)

Offices (4)

Offices (6)

Offices (2)

Offices (2)

Offices (2)

Offices (1 and Stores)

Offices (5)

House, shop etc.

Trustees' Meeting Room

Tenant (1905)

Hunt & Son

Mrs. Vicary

W. Symons

Alexander Lauder

B.T. James

J.C. Southcombe

A.E. Hopper

G. Pitt

W.L. Baron

G.W.F. Brown

O.J. Nicklin

-

A. Richards

Brewer & Son

Devon County Council

Surveyor of Taxes

A.F. Seldon

Ffinch & Chanter

Crosse, Day & Wyatt

Bencraft & Son

Building Society

Water Company

Pitts Tucker & Sons

Vickery Bros.

-

Those marked * have since been sold but the remainder are still owned in 1982 (except for a small part of the stores in Green Lane recently sold for road improvements).

It will be seen from the foregoing schedule of properties that the Trustees had been carrying out their object of "the concentration of their properties and the improvement of the approaches generally to the Bridge", the quotation being from the Report to the First Meeting of the new Feoffees on 15th June 1899.

It so happens that 1900 is a suitable date to conclude a chapter and start a new one, as the Trustees had by then widened the bridge, and thereafter continued to maintain the structure in good order since the 1832 widening. They had also by then concluded the negotiations with the Railway Company regarding the diversion of the Sticklepath end, there having been protracted arguments as the extent of the liability of the Railway for both surface and substructure maintenance.

Also the Trustees had carried out a wise policy with regard to their properties as described in this chapter, and had by now come to own a substantial amount of good quality buildings, bringing in a very satisfactory rent income.

There had, however, in the latter years of the century been doubts expressed as to the authority of the Bridge Feoffees to issue Bonds for money borrowed, and give security for Bank borrowing, and indeed, as to their powers generally. It had been contended that the Feoffees were Trustees under the Charitable Trusts Acts of 1853-1894 and that they should therefore be under the control of the Charity Commissioners - thus having no power to sell or mortgage the properties except under the provisions of a Scheme applied for in pursuance of the above Acts.

A Brief was prepared in 1900 for submission to Counsel for Opinion as to whether the Bridge properties were subject to the provisions of the Charitable Trusts Acts, and as to the powers of the Trustees, but in the event, the Opinion was not sought and correspondence with the Charity Commissioners continued, as will be described in the following chapter.

Up to about 1900 the Feoffees had been using the Bridge Seal on documents such as Bonds, and particulars of this Seal will be found at Appendix B. It is still retained and prized by the Trustees.

Finance and Management: 1901 to 1920

The first matter of report in the 20th century is that in 1901 Mr. Harry Ashton succeeded his father (Mr. Richard Ashton) as Chamberlain and also continued to act as Theatre Manager.

New Feoffees had been appointed on 1st November 1898 to fill the vacancies created by those who had died since the previous Feoffment, and the new body went carefully into the procedures for the administration of the Trust.

At a meeting in May 1901 it was resolved that certain of the Trust's properties be offered for sale, in order to reduce the bonded debt of the Trust (in 1899 this was £6,800 on bonds and there was a further £2,200 due to the Bank). However nothing further materialised on these proposed sales, and the resolution was later rescinded.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, correspondence was taking place with the Charity Commissioners. (In 1901 they had been supplied, at their request, with copies of the Trust's Accounts and the latest Feoffment Deed.) In December 1902, Mr. Bowyer, Assistant Charity Commissioner, visited Barnstaple to meet the Feoffees at a special meeting. He explained that the purpose of his visit was to ascertain the precise objects of the Trust and whether there were any other uses beyond the maintenance and repair of the bridge. He was given full information as far as possible and finally stated that he would report to the Charity Commissioners accordingly.

In August 1903 a letter was received from the Charity Commissioners stating their view that no other Trust existed other than for the support and maintenance of the bridge, and that the Trust was a Charitable Trust within the jurisdiction of the Charity Commissioners. Having pointed out that this decision resulted in the Bonds issued by the Feoffees not being legally valid, and leases granted being irregular, the Commissioners went on to offer to establish a Scheme for the future regulation of the Charity, which would rectify matters under the Charitable Trusts Acts 1853-1894.

The Feoffees accepted the position, and by early in 1904 had approved a draft Scheme to be submitted to the Charity Commissioners for approval.

At this stage a technical point arose in that the Feoffees, in submitting the draft Scheme for approval, had sealed it with the Bridge Seal, but the Charity Commissioners pointed out that the Bridge Trust was not a Corporation and the application should be signed by a majority of the present Feoffees. The Minutes of 14th April 1904 go on to record that:-

"The Feoffees having regarded themselves as a Corporation the Form had been sealed with the Trust's Seal and signed by the Chairman, but it was now resolved to comply with the request of the Commissioners."

The Scheme of the Charity Commissioners was duly sealed on 11th July 1905 and the title of the Charity was now "The Long Bridge Charity" and in the Scheme were provisions for the vesting of lands etc. in "The Official Trustee of Charity Lands", the appointment etc. of Trustees, regulations for meetings and

proceedings of Trustees and management of property. The Scheme went on to deal with the "Application of Income" under the following headings:-

(a) **Expenses of Management etc.:**

Costs of maintaining properties and management of the Charity, as well as yearly instalments and interest on any loans, to be the first charge on the income.

(b) **Maintenance of the Bridge:**

Subject to (a) the yearly income or a sufficient part thereof to be applied to the support and maintenance of the bridge.

(c) **Residue of Income:**

Any balance of income not applied under (a) and (b) to be applied to repayment of borrowing (on bond or otherwise). Any remaining surplus to be remitted to the "Official Trustee of Charitable Funds" for investment.

(d) Consent also given to the Trustees to raise moneys, on mortgage or on security of the Scheme, to repay any sums borrowed - no such borrowing over 30-year period.

(The above is a precis only of the relative clauses of the Scheme.)

The Scheme concluded with general provisions, including a regulation to the effect that no Trustee should receive any remuneration, or be interested in the supply of work or goods, at the cost of the Charity, and that no future Co-optative Trustee should take any interest in any property belonging to the Charity, otherwise than as a Trustee for the purposes thereof. Thus no Co-optative Trustee could in future be a tenant of the Charity.

In this Scheme it is interesting to note that the Charity Commissioners had taken care to continue the association of the Town Council with the Trust. Provision was made (after the initial period) for there to be fifteen Trustees, comprising one ex officio Trustee (being the Mayor of the Borough of Barnstaple), six Representative Trustees (to be appointed by the Town Council) and eight Co-optative Trustees (appointed by the Trustees at a Special Meeting). It will be noted that the non-Council Trustees had a majority on the Board.

Although it can only be a matter of conjecture, one gets the impression that the Bridge Feoffees, having for so many centuries managed the affairs of the bridge - and very successfully at that - were somewhat apprehensive at the prospect of handing over the ultimate control to the Charity Commissioners. If there were such fears, they were in fact groundless, as the Charity Commissioners - over a period of over 75 years - have always avoided unnecessary interference, whilst at the same time being available to give advice and guidance whenever requested by the Trustees.

Whilst these matters of the governing and administration of the Trust were proceeding, the ordinary work of the Trust had to be continued, and one matter which arose in the year 1905 is noted below for the interest and perhaps amusement of present-day readers. Considerable concern was felt at the likelihood of damage to the bridge by traction engines crossing the bridge, and eventually two boards were placed, one at each end of the bridge, stating:-

"NOTICE

To Owners, Drivers and Persons in charge of Locomotives:

Locomotives in passing over and across Barnstaple Long Bridge must not exceed a speed of two miles per hour, as provided by the Locomotive Acts. Any person found exceeding such speed will be prosecuted under the said Acts.

The penalty for driving at a speed more than two miles an hour is £ 10.

The length of this Bridge is 253 yards. It therefore must not be driven across by Locomotives in less time than 4 minutes 19 seconds.

By Order H. ASHTON

Clerk to the Barnstaple Long Bridge Trust."

I am pleased to confirm my predecessor's arithmetic!

At the same time that the Bridge Feoffees were corresponding with the Charity Commissioners concerning the situation of the Bridge Trust, it had come to the notice of the Feoffees that a general enquiry by the Charity Commissioners was to be carried out in Barnstaple into local Charities generally, and in December 1903 the Chairman and Vice-Chairman were appointed a Sub-Committee to meet the Commissioners if required. Later (in November 1905) the Charity Commissioners held the Enquiry into the Charities in the Borough and the Bridge Trust was requested to attend. No further report is recorded, however, so we must assume that the Bridge Trust's new Scheme covered all necessary matters concerning this Charity.

Again, in July 1904, the Local Joint Committee for Secondary Education wrote to the Feoffees to ask for a meeting to discuss "financial arrangements" and suggested representation on the proposed Board of Governors of the contemplated Secondary (Grammar) School (in Barnstaple). Evidently there had been some previous unofficial approaches to the Bridge Trust, but the Chairman and Vice-Chairman having met the Education Committee reported back that they had explained that no steps could be taken in any way to commit the Feoffees until the new Scheme of the Charity Commissioners was in being. This matter is further referred to later in this chapter.

A further "landmark" was reached in 1906 when the Trustees decided to have the bridge lit by electricity instead of the gas lighting that had been in operation for many years. At about this time the National telephone Company was given permission to carry their cable across the bridge, in a pipe through the brackets supporting the pavement on the north side of the bridge.

In 1910/11 a programme, based on a report by the Borough Surveyor (Mr. Y. Saunders), was carried out for substantial repairs and alterations to the bridge roadway. By this time there were both water and gas pipes under the roadway, and these were re-laid as part of the works. Both the Water and Gas Authorities contributed their shares of the costs of the works.

The Theatre, during the early 1900's, had continued to be run by the Trust, with the Clerk as Manager, and it had been the policy to let the Theatre free of rent (or at a nominal charge) for use for charitable purposes. In August 1910, the Theatre Committee reported an application for the use of the Theatre for "Cinematograph Entertainments". The Trustees saw no objection to this in principle, and it was then let not only for theatrical performances but also for use as a "Picturedrome". In December 1911 the then tenant (Mr. Tresise of Barnstaple) applied for permission to allow smoking, which was agreed, subject to:-

"No smoking being allowed at the Matinees or in any part of the Gallery excepting the seats behind the central iron rail, and that prominent notices be exhibited, strictly prohibiting spitting (!)"

On 21st February 1911 the Trustees formally received the official copy of the Supplementary Scheme dated 13th January 1911 which varied the 1905 Scheme, which is referred to earlier in this chapter. This was a short document varying the earlier Scheme by permitting the Trustees, after paying out of annual income the expenses of management and the maintenance of the bridge, to apply any residue of income in the order shown, to:-

- (1) A yearly payment of not less than £240 towards repayment of amounts owing from the Charity, whether by bond or otherwise.
- (2) A yearly payment of not more than £150 during a period of 30 years from the date of the Scheme, on or towards the discharge of that portion of the cost of the purchase of a site in the Borough of Barnstaple and the erection thereon of a Secondary School which had been accepted as a burden on the Rates of the Borough.

Any residue after the above was to be applied in one or more of the following ways:-

- (a) Cost of extraordinary property repairs
- (b) Further discharge of debts (bon or otherwise)
- (c) Making good previous deficiencies in the sums of £150 under (2) above.

This was to be known as the Long Bridge Educational Foundation, and in September 1911 three Trustees were appointed to the Governing Body of Barnstaple Grammar School. Annual payments of £150 were made for eight years, but on 3rd May 1921 a "final" contribution of £121 14s. 8d. was paid, for the period up to 31st March 1920, after which the Devon County Council had decided "to raise no special Rates in respect of capital expenditure for higher education" and thus the burden on the Borough Rates, in relief of which the Bridge Trust payments were made, thereupon ceased.

Reverting to the ordinary business of the Trust, the Clerk - Mr. Harry Ashton - had been ill for a considerable period in 1911 to 1913 and his Clerk - Mr. T.H. Tresise - was appointed Deputy Clerk during Mr. Ashton's absence.

During this period there had been some cases reported of traction engines (belonging to Fair Showmen and local farmers and businessmen) crossing the bridge at more than the permitted speed. Where possible the owners had been written to, and the Police were asked to assist in this matter.

In 1912 a Properties Committee was appointed to view the Trust's properties and report necessary repairs. This practice has continued up to the present time and illustrates the importance which the Trustees have always accorded to this aspect of their duties.

In December 1913 a Sub-Committee was appointed to consider the advisability of "raising the sidewalks on the bridge, so as to admit the possibility of raising the roadway by putting a thicker coating of metalling thereon". However, in 1914 it was decided to engage a qualified engineer (Mr. Mott of London) to report in more detail on the bridge, and this report was presented at the Trustees' Meeting

in October 1914. It stated that, considering its great age, the condition of the bridge as a whole was excellent. Mr. Mott went on to say that, judging from the condition of the piers "they have probably been carried down to a rock foundation, and it is no doubt due to this that the bridge has endured so long." He recommended an examination of the cut-waters and remedial work as necessary thereto, and also said that, unless it was urgently necessary for public convenience, he did not recommend a widening scheme - which would have to be on the upstream side because of the railway bridge - and the old structure would then be completely lost to view.

He reported favourably on the strength of the cantilever brackets, but recommended that the tie rods under the roadway should be improved, in addition to raising the footpaths, lowering the camber of the roadway, and inserting deep cast-iron curbs. As the Post Office would shortly be requiring a telephone cable, and as any work on the piers would have to be postponed until the New Year, the whole matter was deferred. In 1915, the Town Council having agreed that the Borough Surveyor could assist in the carrying out of the work, tenders were obtained and the raising of the footpaths proceeded. At the end of 1915 repair work to the bridge cut-waters was also carried out.

The First World War having commenced in 1914, the Trustees at their September Meeting granted permission to the Caretaker (Mr. A.W. Downing) to enlist, and for his wife to act in his place. Mr. and Mrs. Downing had been appointed Caretakers in 1911 when they were given the rooms at Bridge Buildings free of Rates, at a rent of 4s. per week. Their duties were quite extensive, and included:-

Sweeping the bridge daily.

Acting as caretakers of Bridge Chambers, lighting and extinguishing the passage lights daily, opening the Chambers at 7 a.m. and closing them at 10 p.m. (6 p.m. on Sundays).

Acting as caretakers of the Bridge Hall and Trustees' Room, and cleaning the Chambers and Hall as necessary.

Acting as caretakers and cleaners of the Theatre and acting as cloakroom attendants for dramatic entertainments.

and

Any other duties by order of the Chairman or Clerk.

In October 1914 the 6th Battalion The Devonshire Regiment was given permission to use the Bridge Hall for lectures (but not for P.T. as this would disturb the occupants of the adjoining offices!) and in 1915 the free use of the Hall was given for medical examinations and attestation of Navy and Army recruits.

In August 1915 the Clerk (Mr. Ashton) was granted leave of absence from his duties as Clerk (and Manager of the Theatre) during the continuation of the War, Mr. R. E. Watts being appointed Temporary Clerk and Theatre Manager. The Clerk (as Lt.-Col! Ashton) was in charge of the Recruiting Office in Barnstaple.

At the previous Meeting the Trustees had recorded their feeling of pride that the Chairman during the previous year (Dr. J.R. Harper) had been discharging his military duties since the beginning of the War, and thus had not been able to attend meetings.

An interesting transaction took place in 1915, being the purchase of a small piece of land in Vicarage Street at the rear of 23 Boutport Street - owned by the Trust and then let to Chaplins. This small transaction involved the first conveyance to "The Official Trustee of Charity Lands", in whom all the property of the Charity was now vested by virtue of the Scheme of 1905. In fact this land was sold (with 23 Boutport Street) in 1926.

There is a further item in this period which will be of interest, particularly to those who have seen a large framed map of Barnstaple on the wall of the Boardroom in Bridge Chambers. Up to that time this was a copy of the original map made in 1772, but the Clerk discovered the original (in November 1914) in a local Solicitor's office and purchased it for 105s 6d. The original was then framed for the Boardroom and the copy given to the Town Council for exhibition in St. Anne's Chapel in the Churchyard.

The Trustees considered in 1915 the question of insuring the properties of the Charity against war risks, but decided against it. Later in the War, however, they did insure the bridge against aircraft damage.

In 1915 a fire occurred in the offices of Toiler, Oerton & Balsdon, Solicitors, at 109 Boutport Street. This must have been of a fairly serious nature since the insurance claim was in excess of £300 (a large sum in 1915)'

Once again the Theatre must be referred to, since the Trustees had in May 1916 decided to let it, and in July the tender of Mr. W. J. Cooke (a local man) was accepted. It appears that the Trustees retained the right to give permission for use of the Theatre free, or at a nominal charge, for performances in aid of charities.

In December 1917 Mr. George Loosemore was appointed to "give a general oversight to the properties of the Trust", examining a portion of the property each month and reporting on their state of repair. He was to be paid an annual fee for this work. In later years his son - Mr. W.J. Loosemore - was appointed to this office, and his grandson - Mr. D.G.S. Loosemore - took over on the death of his father, and is still holding the office.

In September 1918 the Trustees expressed some anxiety as to whether the bridge pavements would be unduly laden with spectators watching the launching of the first concrete boat by the British Construction Company. However, in December of that year the Trustees' concern was switched to the concrete barge which was lying across the river, and which they feared might switch the currents and damage the sterlings of the bridge. Although the Admiralty Salvage Department was reported to have the work of salvage in hand, in January 1920 it was stated that they had abandoned the wreck, and suggested that the Town Council (as Harbour Authority) were primarily responsible. This is the last we hear of this rather sad affair.

Immediately after the end of the War, the lease of the Theatre was assigned by Mr. Cooke to Mr. Albany Ward of Weymouth, who was then permitted to surrender the lease. After tenders had been advertised for, Mr. Ward was granted a new lease from Christmas 1918. At this stage the title "Theatre Royal" was first used. The right of the Trustees to grant the use of the Theatre for an agreed number of occasions for charitable purposes was continued, and the tenant was permitted to use the Theatre for "theatrical, cinematograph or concert" purposes. He was required to redecorate and modernise the interior.

It should be mentioned that in November 1920 the Chairman reported that Mr. H. Ashton - the Clerk - was to be elected Mayor of Barnstaple. Whilst the Trustees considered that he could continue to act as Clerk so long as he disclaimed his Ex Officio Trusteeship, it was considered desirable to verify this with the Charity Commissioners. (The confirmation from that body was duly received).

As a final matter up to 1920, consideration had been given to the possible purchase of some cottages and a yard at the rear of 9 High Street, and the purchase was completed in July 1919. Plans had then been prepared and approved for alterations and extensions to No. 9. The Charity Commissioners were somewhat doubtful as to the wisdom of the alterations "in view of the present high cost of building" but the Trustees evidently satisfied the Commissioners that the works would be advantageous to the Charity, as the request for borrowing sanction was approved, and an order made for the purchase. In September 1920 the property was let to J. Hepworth & Son Ltd., and comprised an improved shop and rooms over, with cottages at rear. (The latter were condemned as dwellings some years later, and then let as stores, and afterwards as offices for the North Devon Labour Party).



Boutport Street property as in 1916 (built by Trustees in 19th century)



***Bridge Chambers – as completed in about 1873.
This photograph was taken in 1916***



Another view of 1916 of Bridge Chambers – note Vicary's Photographers on the corner.



A 1916 photograph of Bridge End (building completed by the Trust in 1878); demolished after sale to the Ministry of Transport.



Another 1916 photograph of Bridge End (from the river side), which also give a good view of the piling protection of the river wall and bridge arches.



A 1916 photograph of Bridge Buildings – much as today but with no traffic.



A 1916 view of the Trust property in High Street – Hepworths (Clothiers), the “London City & Midland Bank” and Dallings (Tobacconists & Hairdressers)



93 High Street in 1916, then occupied by “Horace Mann” which was sold by the Trustees in 1959.

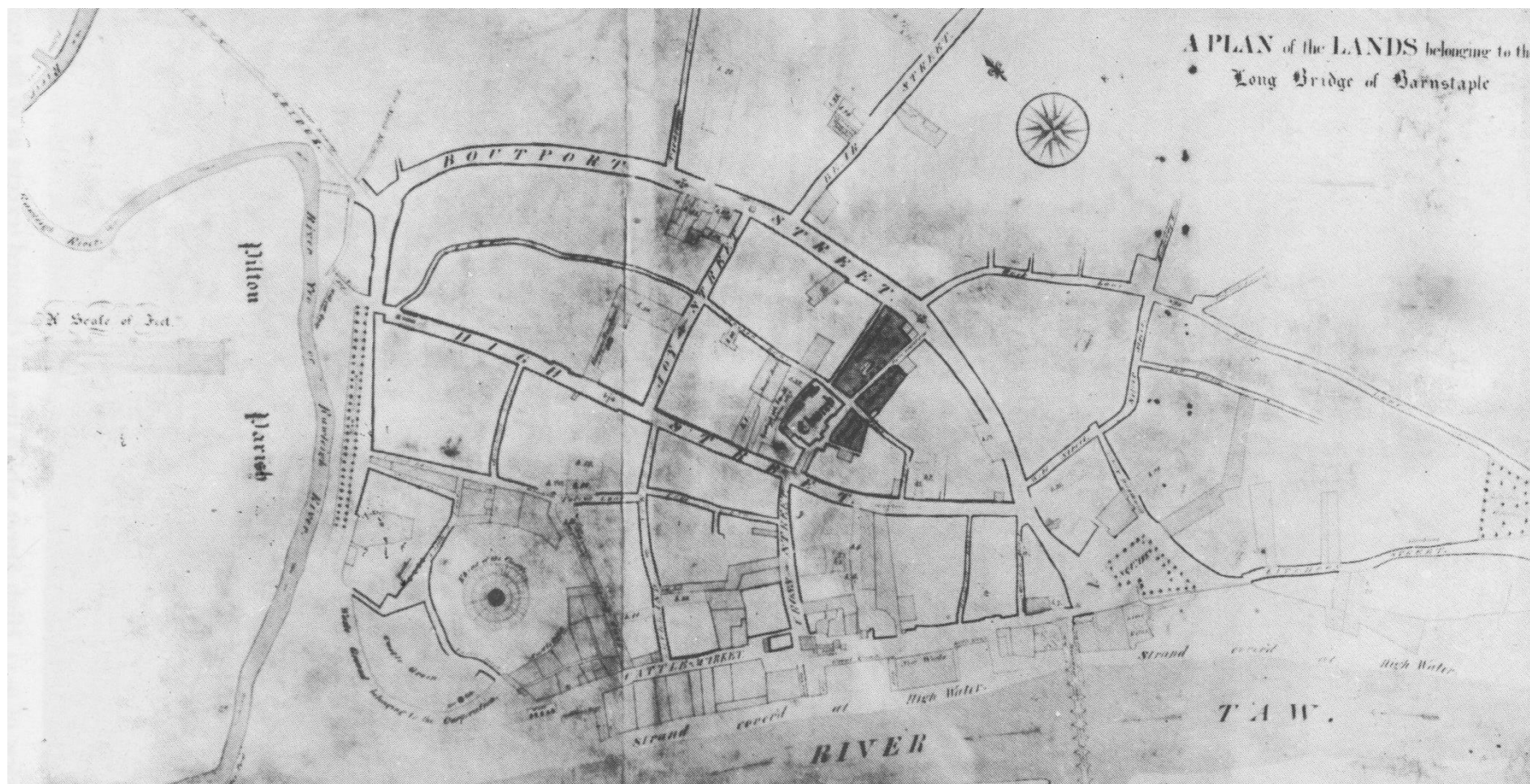


The

“Bonded Stores” in Green Lane, owned by the Trust since the 19th century; recently sold (1980’s) to Devon County Council for road widening of Bull Court.



1960 view of 9-11 High Street which has not changed (except as to the tenants of Numbers 9 & 11) since 1916 – see previous photograph.



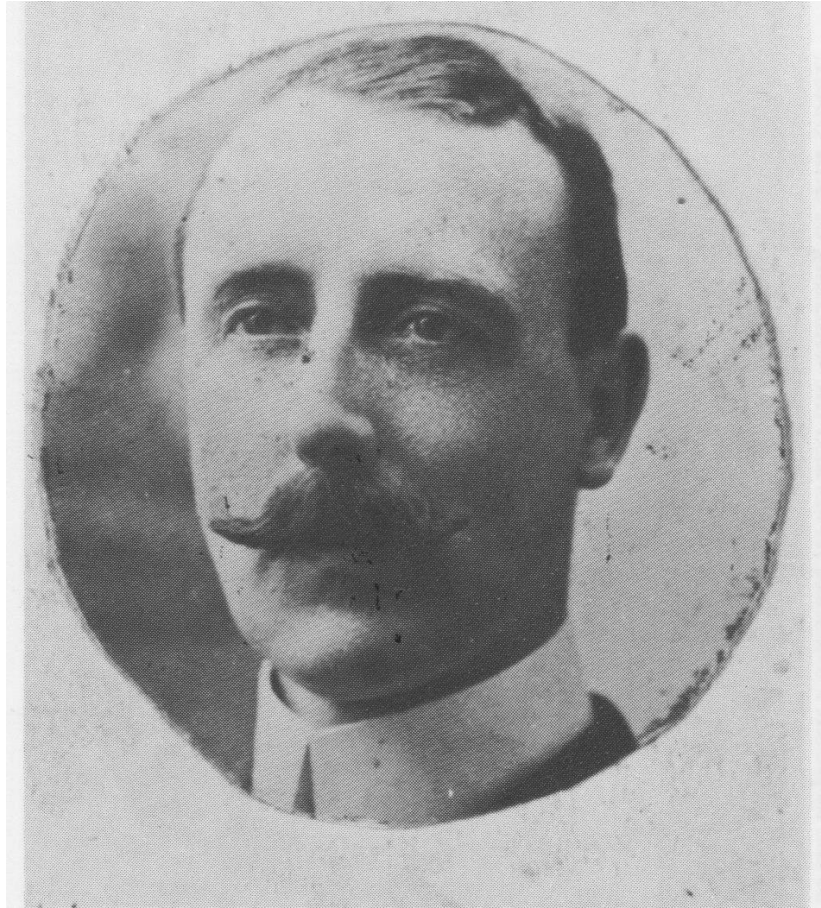
The 1772 map of Barnstaple showing the Trust's properties. Much reduced the original (approx. size 3ft by 6ft) which hangs in the Trust Board Room.



Nos. 109 to 113 Boutport Street in 1960. There is little change from 1916 – see earlier photograph – and little change to the present except the disappearance of the adjacent Poltimore Arms and the widening of Bull Court.



Bridge Buildings in 1960 – with little change since the 1916 photograph, except as to the tenancies of some of the properties.



Harry Ashton – appointed Chamberlain in 1901 and served in that office until 1945.



John Byron Cruse – The present [in 1982] Chamberlain, appointed 1945

Finance s and Management: 1921 to 1945

This period opened with the Trustees carrying out a number of improvements at the Theatre Royal, mainly on emergency exits. The procedure whereby Mr. Loosemore as Overseer made monthly reports to the Trustees on necessary property repairs was obviously of great advantage, and enabled them to deal promptly with defects. Necessary repairs to the bridge were also carried out in 1921 both to the sterlings and the bridge ironwork. The latter, as well as the painting of Bridge Buildings, was carried out by direct labour, in order to provide work for some of the large number of local unemployed at that time.

The Bridge Hall was being regularly let for auction sales and this continued for many years. In February 1922 the Golden Fleece and cottage adjoining were sold, with the consent of the Charity Commissioners, and early in 1923 the adjoining stores in Tuly Street were also sold.

Also in 1922 it was decided to resurface the bridge with asphalt and the work was entrusted to the Western Trinidad Asphalt Co. Ltd. of Cardiff.

In November 1923 a resolution was passed by the Trustees - "That no Trustee be eligible for Chairmanship until he has sat under the Chairmanship of all who were Trustees when he was elected" and this resolution is still in force". Though it sounds relatively simple, it needs careful research by the Clerk before preparing the "Order of Succession" for the information of the Board.

In February 1926 the property No. 23 Boutport Street with land at rear was sold. The premises fronting on Boutport Street were occupied by Chaplin & Co. Later in the same year a store and warehouse in Green Lane were also sold.

In October 1928 attention was drawn to the fact the 1905 Scheme of the Charity Commissioners referred to a "Clerk" whereas hitherto this Officer of the Trust had always been designated "Chamberlain". On writing to the Commissioners a reply was received dated 17th October 1928 stating that:-

"No sanction of the Commissioners is required to the proposal that the Clerk should be called the 'Chamberlain'. There is nothing in the Scheme of 11th July 1905 to preclude the Trustees from using this title."

It was therefore resolved by the Trustees to revert to the title of "Chamberlain". (However, the 1961 Scheme - the current one - refers specifically to John Bryon Cruse (by name) as the "Clerk".)

Reverting once more to the Theatre Royal, the tenants (now Albany Ward Theatres Ltd.), after protracted negotiations, in 1930 made an offer for sale to them of the Theatre and contents. (An adjoining property known as the Kingsley Private Hotel was for sale at the same time.) With consent of the Charity Commissioners, the Trustees accepted the offer for sale, and thus the long connection of the Bridge Trust with matters theatrical came to an end. The purchasers then demolished the old

theatre (and buildings adjoining) and erected a cinema (known then as the Gaumont Palace) in its place.

In 1931, Mr. R.M. Stone (County Surveyor- North Devon) prepared a report on the bridge. Although he made an exhaustive' inspection, he found the general condition to be good. The small repairs he recommended were then agreed to be carried out under his supervision. This was the beginning of a long association of Mr. Stone with the Trustees, who found his expert reports and advice of the greatest possible value.

In the year 1932, the Trinidad Asphalt Co. were again employed to resurface the bridge roadway. This was only ten years after the previous resurfacing, which gives some indication of the traffic using the bridge even fifty years ago.

In 1935 substantial repairs were found necessary to the river wall and front wall at Bridge Chambers, involving considerable underpinning and six buttresses on the river wall, and this was carried out by tender forthwith.

At about the same time it was agreed to have the bridge roadway made less slippery by pre-heated chippings rolled into the asphalt surface. It was, however, an instruction to the Contractors that the work must be done so as to avoid the King's Silver Jubilee Celebrations and the Devon County Show. For the former, it was decided to floodlight the Long Bridge with the houses at Bridge End and Bridge Chambers. Afterwards the Borough Electrical Engineer was thanked by the Trustees for arranging the illuminations so well. (The illuminations were used again on the occasion of the Coronation in 1937.) The question of resurfacing occurs again in this chapter.

In the year 1935 it was reported that boys had been found damaging the Bridge Trust Boat. This had been bought some years before for use in inspecting and working on the bridge piers and arches. The report stated that when spoken to they made use of foul language. Two of them were summoned and fined four shillings each plus two and sixpence each towards the damage (with fourteen days to pay!)

It is rather surprising to see that the Clerk was instructed as early as December 1935 to ascertain the cost of insuring the Bridge Trust properties against damage by hostile aircraft. In fact he reported in January 1936 that Insurance Companies did not undertake such cover (but apparently they did in 1915 - see previous chapter).

At the beginning of 1937 the Trustees were greatly concerned about the inadequacy of the bridge to carry the greatly increased traffic, particularly in the Summer Season. The question of the necessity for a new bridge was gone into, and discussions took place with the County Council, the Ministry of Transport and the Charity Commissioners. However, in April 1937 notice was received from the Office of Works that the bridge was to be designated an Ancient Monument and this body were then also involved. Although one can only conjecture on this, it appears that the national situation precluded further steps being taken on the matter of a possible new bridge at that time.

What did arise regarding the bridge, however, was that the asphalt gritting scheme was decided to be abandoned in favour of the roadway being re-laid with concrete. In September 1938 the work was entrusted to Messrs Pollards of Taunton and completed by March 1939, when the Trustees expressed "great satisfaction" with the work.

We must now leave the bridge to note a matter regarding some property in Pengelly's Court (behind the High Street) which the Trustees learnt was for sale. This comprised land and cottages in Pengelly's Court, together with Nos. 7 and 8 High Street which adjoined No. 9 High Street, owned by the Trust. At that stage (April 1937) the Bridge Trustees did not feel able to consider the purchase, but in the following year a number of problems arose between the Trust and the owners of Pengelly's Court as to rights-of-way, and discussions continued into 1939 when Nos. 7 and 8 High Street (shops) with Pengelly's Court at rear were purchased by the Bridge Trust with the consent of the Charity Commissioners.

In February 1939 the Overseer - Mr. George Loosemore - died and his son Mr. W. J. Loosemore was appointed in his stead. As will have been seen in Chapter IV, George Loosemore was appointed in 1917 and had therefore rendered twenty two years of valuable service to the Trustees.

A pleasing matter was reported in March 1939, when a workman carrying out work at Bridge Buildings had found a packet containing £99 in £1 notes, which he handed in. The Trustees passed the money over to the Police to be forwarded to the Estate of the late tenant of the property, and the honest workman received a £10 reward.

When in 1939 the Mayor of Barnstable (Alderman C.F. Dart) visited Barnstable, Massachusetts, U.S.A., he was provided with some information regarding the Long Bridge "with an illuminated inscription on the cover". Whilst the Bridge Trust has a photograph of the inscription, I can find no trace of a copy of the contents, but presumably this was the Paper prepared by Mr. Bruce Oliver for the Devonshire Association in 1938. At all events, a letter of thanks was received in September from the Chairman of Selectmen of Barnstable.

At the first meeting after the outbreak of war, the Trustees decided to get in touch with the Chief Constable of Police at Exeter to ask if he could "suggest the best means to be employed for the protection of the Bridge", and a reply from the Police was reported at the next meeting to confirm that the bridge was to be patrolled at night.

Also on 1st September 1939 the Devon County Surveyor informed the Clerk that the County Council were arranging to repair any of the bridges in North Devon if damaged by air raids, if those responsible so desired. The Trustees accepted the offer with thanks.

In February 1940 it was reported that, after the recent severe frost, ice was packed against the bridge piers so high that the water was "ponded" back. Some immediate work was ordered but most of the necessary work had to be postponed, to be carried out in the summer months; this was duly done.

The Trustees were very anxious to make their contribution to the War effort, and asked the Charity Commissioners in 1940 if they could lend the Government £500 free of interest for the duration of the

War; later in the year they asked to be allowed to give £500 to the "Spitfire" Fund. Both were refused by the Charity Commissioners, but later the Trustees were able to make investments in 3% Savings Bonds 1955/65 from realisation of some holdings of 2% Consols.

In 1940, the tenant of 112 Boutport Street vacated the property, when it was requisitioned by the Town Council to accommodate evacuees. Also, in the same year, the Town Council asked for consent to take over "condemned" cottages at 3, 5, 6 and 7 Pengelly's Court, to be reconditioned and used to house evacuees. This was agreed and it was noted that, after the War, their status would revert to "condemned".

Mr. Ashton, the Clerk, stated in January 1941 that he wished to resign on grounds of ill-health, but in February he was prevailed upon to withdraw his proposed resignation on it being agreed that he bring his Clerk (Mr. Watts) to meetings to assist him, and to deputise for him at any meetings which he was not able to attend. On the 4th February 1941 the Trustees further resolved that:-

"Mr. J.B. Cruse, Chartered Accountant, who is Mr. Ashton's partner and now on Military Service, be appointed Assistant Clerk with a view to his appointment as Clerk when he is demobilised from the Army."

Mr. Ashton consented to this arrangement, and so my connection with the Bridge Trust began, though, as stated later, it was nearly five years before I was able to commence duty.

Once more we turn to the Bridge and we find that in 1941, Army lorries had on several occasions mounted the footpaths and broken gully-covers, and the local Military Commander had promised to do all in his power to prevent this recurring. Further problems arose due to R.A.F. trailer lorries. These caused traffic jams and resulted in buses - at considerable risk - mounting the footpaths. These problems continued, and in 1943, notices were erected warning vehicles not to mount the footpaths "as they are supported on brackets only". In addition, the Army, by Southern Command Order of 28th January 1944, laid down that vehicles over 7ft. 6in. wide were only to cross the bridge when traffic had been halted at the other end. It must have been a relief to the Trustees to receive confirmation from the Borough Surveyor in June 1944 that there were no signs of the bridge having suffered any damage from military traffic.

As previously mentioned, Mr. Harry Ashton had wished to retire in 1941 on grounds of ill-health, but had been prevailed upon by the Trustees to continue. However, in July 1945, he wrote to say that after forty four years' service, he was unable, owing to age and ill-health, to continue his duties as Clerk. This was accepted with great regret, and a tribute to Mr. Ashton's long and devoted service was recorded. Mr. R.E. Watts (who had been appointed Acting Clerk in 1944) was appointed Temporary Clerk, and in September a letter was recorded from "Major J.B. Cruse, Assistant Clerk to the Trustees, to say that he hopes to take up his duties on 1st November next." On my release from the Army I was present at the Meeting on 4th December 1945, and it was then resolved:-

"That Mr. J.B. Cruse be appointed Chamberlain to the Barnstaple Long Bridge Charity with effect from 1st December 1945."

and thanks were expressed to Mr. R.E. Watts for his services as Acting Clerk. Incidentally, I have always been pleased that the resolution appointing me refers to "Chamberlain" and not "Clerk", and this of course is quite in order - see the Charity Commissioners' letter referred to earlier in this chapter.

The year 1945 closed with three matters relating to the bridge which are referred to in the Trustees' Minutes of December. The first two relate to maintenance: Mr. R.M. Stone and Mr. Loosemore had made an inspection of the bridge and repairs were recommended to several sterlings and piers, and also to a retaining wall. These were ordered to be carried out and at the same time it was agreed to buy a sturdy 14ft. boat for use in bridge inspections and repairs. As the previous boat had been bought many years previously for less than £5, it had given very good service.

The next matter concerning the bridge was of major importance. The Trustees were advised that, by virtue of the Trunk Roads Bill at present before Parliament, all bridges carrying trunk road traffic were to be vested in the Ministry of Transport, and the liability of owners for improvement, maintenance or repair to become extinguished. However, the Bill also provided that the owners would have to pay to the Minister a sum representing the value to the owners of the extinguishment of their liability (to be assessed). At the next Meeting of the Trustees I reported that I had studied the Bill and had consulted the Chairman; a letter asking for advice was agreed and despatched to the Charity Commissioners. The outcome of this and further developments are dealt with in the next chapter.

Finance and Management: 1946 to 1961

Before resuming the account of the happenings arising from the Trunk Roads Bill, it is of interest to mention that in January 1946 I was asked by the Trustees to look into the question of records generally with a view to the preparation of a booklet on the Barnstaple Long Bridge. At the following Meeting I reported the discovery of some data prepared by Mr. Ashton, which would be useful as a nucleus, but the Trustees decided that action on this matter would be "deferred for the time being"!

To revert to the Trunk Roads Bill, a reply was received from the Charity Commissioners advising communication with the Ministry of Works. This was done and that Ministry stated that the Ministry of War Transport was examining the possibility of a new bridge which might take some time to consider. The latter Ministry then asked the Trustees for information as to the present upkeep arrangements and financial position of the Trust. Meanwhile, however, our Member of Parliament (Brigadier Peto) had sent the Trustees a telegram advising immediate action to try and get the bridge exempted from the new Bill, and I was authorised to go to London forthwith to see Brigadier Peto and the Ministries concerned, as necessary. I left for London and saw our Member at the House of Commons. We then went to see a Mr. Lintern of the Ministry of War Transport. It was agreed that a proposed amendment to the Bill would be put forward in the House of Lords (the Bill having already been through the Commons). The Minister of War Transport agreed to recommend acceptance of the amendment, and the bridges of Barnstaple, Bideford and one other were duly exempted from the provisions of the Trunk Roads Act 1946 (Clause 16). The Trustees thanked Brigadier Peto for his invaluable help in this matter, and were also kind enough to record their thanks to me. Thus the bridge was to stay in private ownership - in fact for a further fifteen years.

During 1946 and thereafter the work of encasing the bases of the piers of the bridge with steel piling was carried out under the direction of Mr. R.M. Stone (County Surveyor of Barnstaple). His expert knowledge was of great value to the Charity - he being a Bridge Engineer of wide experience. These works took a long time to complete, not only due to restriction of working hours because of tides but also due to licenses having to be obtained at that time for purchases of steel piling. The work was in fact completed in 1949.

Early in 1948 the Trustees learnt with great regret of the death of Mr. Harry Ashton on 24th January in that year. He had been Clerk to the Trustees for 44 years up to his retirement in 1945, and that record of service is unlikely ever to be equalled. He had of course followed his father as Clerk to the Trust and in addition he had given great service to Barnstaple both as Councillor and Alderman and also as a Justice of the Peace for many years. He had also done a great deal to preserve old Barnstaple history - it was he who had been responsible for discovering the ancient Tome Stone (in a dump) and having it installed at Queen Anne's Walk.

Towards the end of 1949 the question of repairs to the bridge by the Cementation Co. Ltd. was considered. After discussions, and with the assistance and advice of Mr. R.M. Stone, the Trustees decided in early 1950 to order the necessary work, which involved the insertion of cement grout under

pressure into the bridge arches - as mentioned in Chapter 1 - and this work was completed before the end of 1950.

After Mr. A.W. Downing, the Caretaker since 1911, died in 1948, his widow continued as Caretaker of Bridge Chambers until she resigned in 1950; Mr. J. Lewis was then appointed to the post, and he in turn was to perform many years of service.

In early 1950 the Trustees decided to sell Nos. 7 and 8 High Street and Pengelly's Court which they had purchased in 1939. During the War years the empty and condemned cottages in the Court had been used by the Town Council to accommodate evacuees, but this use had now ceased and the cottages reverted to their "condemned" status. Various complications arose but when the "right-of-way" problem was cleared in late 1950 the matter proceeded further, and the sale was eventually completed in September 1951.

Once again we must revert to matters concerning the bridge. Since 1950 the Western Area Traffic Commissioner (Sir Arnold Musto) had written to the Trustees, following their letter to the Ministry of Transport expressing anxiety, that the new maximum vehicle widths of 8ft. could cause danger because of the width of the bridge roadway. In fact this was only just over 16ft and the Trustees envisaged the possible consequences of vehicles mounting the footpaths - which were of course only on cantilever brackets. Sir Arnold later visited Barnstaple to meet the Trustees, and he proposed to recommend to the Ministry of Transport that they should erect warning notices to wide vehicles at each end of the bridge, and also consider the possibility of widening the bridge.

After a meeting in Barnstaple in April 1951, attended by Mr. Pidgeon of the Ministry of Transport, Mr. Rowe of the Devon County Council, the Trust Chairman (Mr. C.H.P. Lake) and myself, the Trustees decided at their next meeting to write to the Ministry of Transport stating that they were in favour, in principle, of bridge widening if satisfactory financial arrangements for grants etc. could be made; at the same time they asked the Ministry to accept liability for damage to the bridge and third party claims due to the use of the bridge by the wide vehicles now to be permitted, and to indemnify the Charity generally against all claims. The Ministry promptly replied refusing to accept any responsibility or give any indemnity in connection with use of the bridge by wide vehicles, but said that they were still investigating the whole question of what steps could be taken to deal with the problem. In July 1951 the Ministry wrote again stating that in 1946 the Trustees had agreed to carry out any work needed to meet the demands of future trunk road traffic. The Trustees strenuously denied giving any such wide undertaking, but suggested a joint conference of the Ministry of Transport and all other interested parties to try and find a practical solution to the problem. There they rested for the time being, to await the reply of the Ministry.

On a somewhat lighter note, the Trustees called a Special Meeting on 25th September 1951 when Mr. Chester A. Crocker, Chairman of Selectmen of Barnstable, Mass., was presented with a suitably inscribed gavel and stand fashioned from oak taken from the bridge piers in 1948. He was afterwards entertained to lunch. Later a letter was received from Barnstable thanking the Trustees for the gift, and confirming that it was to be used at their meetings.

In May 1952 I became Mayor of Barnstaple but I did not avail myself of the privilege of becoming an ex officio Trustee for that year, and I was thus able to continue to act as Clerk to the Charity. A long-outstanding matter with regard to properties was 112 Boutport Street. This, as has been mentioned earlier, had been requisitioned by the Town Council in 1940 to house evacuees, but it was not de-requisitioned until 18th July 1952. Compensation was agreed and paid by the Barnstaple Town Council, but the work necessary to put the building back into satisfactory condition cost the Trust far more than the compensation figure. Eventually the property was let to the North Devon Hospital Management Committee from Lady Day 1953.

Meanwhile, correspondence had been continuing with the Ministry of Transport on the subject of the Bridge. In November 1952 the Ministry had said that "the present is not a propitious time" for putting forward a scheme for widening, to which the Trustees replied that they considered that the time had come for action on this matter. A further meeting with a Ministry official took place in March 1953, at which representatives from the Police and Devon County Council were also present: the Trust representatives stated that they considered the only practical solution was to widen the bridge, as distinct from building a new one. The next happening was a meeting at the offices of the Ministry of Transport in London on 20th May 1953, the Vice-Chairman (Mr. J. Harley Brindley) and I attending from this Charity. At this stage the idea was favoured for the erection of guard-rails at the pavement edges of the Bridge to protect pedestrians, and also to prevent vehicles mounting the foot-paths. After a further visit by officials to Barnstaple, Mr. Stone was asked to prepare drawings and prices for guard-rails. Other possibilities put forward later were:-

- (a) Widening the roadway on one or both sides at the expense of the footpaths, or
- (b) strengthening 2ft of each footpath adjacent to the kerb to take a wheel load of 3½ tons, or
- (c) widening the superstructure with reinforced concrete to produce a 20ft carriageway and two 5ft footpaths, or
- (d) widening the bridge in masonry in its existing form to provide a 22ft carriageway and two 6ft footpaths.

After very careful consideration and with the benefit of Mr. Stone's advice, the Trustees replied in September 1953 that they could not support any of the first three proposals, and stating that they considered (d) to be the only practical course. They also offered to contribute a proportion of the cost of widening (subject to the permission of the Charity Commissioners) and to maintain the widened structure. (Meanwhile, the question of guard-rails continued to be discussed - possibly as a temporary measure - but there was some opposition on the grounds of danger to cyclists and, in the event, this proposal never came to fruition.)

The Charity Commissioners wanted to know about the Trust's financial suggestions, so I went to London to give them full particulars of these and the present situation. As a result, the Commissioners advised the Ministry of Transport that they would be prepared to authorise the Trustee's proposals. Pending further developments, it had now been agreed that warning signs (lit at night) should take the place of

the proposed guard-rails, and these signs were duly erected by June 1954. Although the Ministry of Transport had given an indication that the Trustees' proposals would form a satisfactory basis for settling the financial details, they were not in a position to proceed with widening, and the Trustees could only await further news. In the meanwhile they continued to carry out many necessary repairs to the bridge.

During the long period of negotiation regarding the bridge, the Trustees had been giving consideration to the possibility of selling No. 93 High Street, the only separate single property now owned by the Trust. The tenant did not wish to renew his lease which was due to expire in 1959 and, with the authority of the Charity Commissioners, the property was eventually sold in April 1959.

Feeling that no progress was being made regarding a widening of the bridge, a further letter was written to Brigadier Peto, M.P., to ask if he could intercede with the Ministry of Transport. It was pointed out to our Member that the original proposal for Barnstaple was an entirely new bridge upstream, approached by a road across Rock Park, but this was opposed by strong public opinion which supported the widening of the Long Bridge. Brigadier Peto readily agreed to help, and I met him at the House of Commons on 26th October 1954. I had given him a "brief" before my visit, and we were able to have an interview with the Minister of Transport on that day, when I was in-vised to address him and answer his questions. He agreed to consider the alternative proposals but could make no promises. Our M.P. put down a "Question" in March 1955, but the reply gave no hope of any early action. However the Trustees were anxious to do everything possible and I was again asked to see the Charity Commissioners and this I did on 14th April 1955. They completely endorsed the actions of the Trustees in their submissions to the Ministry of Transport. It should be emphasised that both Devon County Council and Barnstaple Borough Council were thoroughly in favour of a widening of the Long Bridge at an early date.

Time passed until 30th March 1957 when a letter was received from the Ministry of Transport stating that the manner of the proposed widening of the Long Bridge had been agreed with both the Ministry of Works (Ancient Monuments Branch) and the Royal Fine Art Commission, and asking if the Trustees would consider transferring the bridge to the Minister of Transport under the Bridges Act 1929, on terms to be agreed. The Trustees felt that, as it was the considered opinion of the Devon County Council, Barnstaple Corporation and this Charity that widening of the bridge was essential to the interests of the Borough, and as it now appeared that the Minister of Transport would be prepared to proceed fairly soon with a widening scheme if control of the bridge passed to him, it was their duty to ask the Charity Commissioners for approval to accede to the transfer.

It goes without saying that the Trustees found it hard to come to this decision after some 700 years of ownership of the bridge in the hands of themselves and their predecessors, and particularly after successfully resisting transfer under the Trunk Roads Act 1945. I went to London on 9th April 1957, when the Charity Commissioners gave approval to the Trustees notifying the Minister of Transport that, in view of their anxiety to ensure that the interests of the local inhabitants and all other users of the bridge should be furthered by the widening, and having public safety very much in mind, they would

agree to a transfer to the Minister on terms to be agreed. There were a number of legal, financial and other matters to be considered by the Ministry, but on 31st July 1958 a letter was received from the Ministry of Transport agreeing to "accept a transfer of the Long Bridge purporting to be made under Section 2 of the Bridges Act 1929, subject to financial arrangements to be agreed". Some more time went by, so that it was not until February 1959 that a meeting took place at the Bridge Hall, Barnstaple between the representatives of the Ministry of Transport and the Trustees. This was a useful meeting, and then in April 1959 I went to the Charity Commission's offices to discuss financial matters, and thereafter the proposals for financial contributions were put forward in respect of:-

- (a) Extinguishment of the Trustees' liability to maintain the bridge
- (b) Contribution towards widening costs - the former to be paid on transfer date and the latter on completion of the widening.

These were accepted and, finally, the Scheme of the Charity Commissioners was made (dated 4th April 1961) and the Agreement with the Ministry of Transport (and subsequent Vesting Order) duly completed.

By virtue of the Charity Commissioners' Order of the 4th April 1961, the title of the Trust reverted to "The Bridge Trust"-having since 1905 been "The Long Bridge Charity". I say "reverted" because prior to 1905 the title "Bridge Trust" was used and indeed it was only in official documents between 1905 and 1961 that the new title was used. In Barnstaple generally, and even by the Trustees - other than in official matters - it was always referred to as "The Bridge Trust"!

In May 1961 the Ministry of Transport needed to buy the Bridge End property from the Trust in connection with the widening scheme. Legal and technical matters however delayed completion of the sale until early 1963.

At this stage, when the bridge had been transferred from the control of the Trustees, it should be mentioned again that they had received invaluable technical advice from Mr. R.M. Stone, the County Surveyor in Barnstaple, who had acted as their Surveyor on bridge matters since 1946 (See beginning of this chapter). When he retired in December 1958 his place was taken by Mr. J. Rowe who continued to act until the taking-over of the Bridge in 1961.

Despite the vast amount of work involved on matters concerning the bridge, the Trustees had of course to continue their duties relating to the properties. The only matter of special importance to mention up to 1961 was that in April 1960 the Devon County Council gave up their tenancy of the Bridge Hall and Ante-room which they had had ever since the building of Bridge Chambers in the 1870's. During the whole of the 90 years or so the Hall had been used both as Court Rooms by the County Council as well as by the Trustees for casual lettings for auction sales etc.: this was the principal venue in Barnstaple for such sales. As in 1960 there appeared to be no requirement for the Hall, it was then let, with appropriate alterations by the tenants, for use as solicitors' offices.

Because the Scheme of 1905 from the Charity Commissioners had become redundant as to its objects relating to the application of income, it now of course became necessary for a new Scheme to be made.

The Bridge Order of the Ministry of Transport became effective on 1st November 1961, and details of the proposed new Scheme had been the subject of discussion between the Charity Commissioners and the Trustees. The Scheme was in fact sealed on 6th November 1961. The details of this Scheme will be dealt with in the next chapter.

The Bridge Trust: November 1961 to Date

This chapter will record the activities of the Bridge Trust, on taking on its new functions after the responsibility for maintenance of the Long Bridge had been transferred to the Ministry of Transport in 1961. Firstly it should be mentioned that formal application was made in early 1962 to the Charity Commissioners for the Charity to be registered under the new Charities Act 1960, and the registration was effective on 30th March 1962. The major initial matter was of course the new Scheme of the Charity Commissioners, sealed on 6th November 1961, and remains the governing document of the Trust up to the present time. Under this new Scheme the Trustees are to consist of:-

10 Co-optative Trustees	Persons residing or carrying on business in the "area of benefit"
5 Nominative Trustees	Persons appointed by the Borough Council of Barnstaple
1 Ex-officio Trustee	The Mayor of the Borough of Barnstaple.

The "area of benefit" was defined as the Borough of Barnstaple and immediate neighbourhood - but as there now is no Borough, the Town Council appoints the Representative Trustees, the Town Mayor is the Co-optative Trustee, and "the area of benefit" is taken as the former Borough area and immediate neighbourhood.

Rules are laid down for the appointment etc. of trustees, meetings and proceedings of trustees, and the management of properties (called "lands" in the Scheme). In addition, rules are laid down for the "application of income". The latter can be briefly summarised as follows:-

The income is first to be applied in paying for repairs and other outgoings on the property of the Charity, and for all expenses of management. A minimum annual sum is to be invested in an Extraordinary Repairs Fund, and subject to the above-mentioned payments, the Trustees are to apply the income in making - for the benefit of the inhabitants of the "area of benefit" (Barnstaple and immediate neighbourhood) -

Grants for public purposes Provision of amenities

Gifts for poor inhabitants Grants to charities (with object being relief of poverty)

Grants to charities (with object of public purposes)

(There are certain restrictions laid down in the Scheme for the Trustees to observe in the making of grants which of course must be strictly observed.)

The properties of the Charity have not varied since the sale of Bridge End - with the exception of a few small sales of land - and thus the present properties comprise the "Blocks" as follows:-

9, 10 and 11 High Street

109 - 113 (inclusive) Boutport Street (with stores at Green Lane)

Bridge Buildings - from the lower end of Maiden Street to Nos. 6/7 Bridge Buildings

Bridge Chambers

The Trustees strictly observe the provisions of the Scheme in giving first priority to maintaining the properties in first-class condition, and the Blocks are repainted externally every six years.

Grants are made for the most part in March each year and a wide variety of worthy purposes is supported. A Committee meets each February to make detailed recommendations to the Annual Meeting of Trustees, although some additional grants are made from time to time during the year.

The Trustees do not consider grants to individuals, but they allocate a sum annually to an Almoner for the help of deserving individual cases.

In the period from 1963 to 1981 a total of about £95,000 has been paid out in grants.

The first general matter to report is that in February 1963 Mr. D.G.S. Loosemore was appointed Overseer in place of his father Mr. W.J. Loosemore, this being the third generation of the Loosemore family to act in this capacity (as mentioned earlier).

The sales of land mentioned above in fact comprised three pieces of land at Bridge Chambers in 1964, 1966 and 1977 (to enable the pedestrian access from the Strand through the subway under the bridge to be completed), and land adjoining 113 Boutport Street in 1979 (in connection with the proposed widening of Bull Court).

In 1972 Mr. J.I. (Jack) Lewis died, having been Caretaker (and later Cleaner) for a total of more than 25 years, following the tradition of long service of the Charity's employees.

As from January 1974 the Trustees appointed Mr. R.B. Blatchford, F.C.A. as Deputy Clerk to the Charity and he still continues in that office.

Though the Trustees still meet in the Board Room at Bridge Chambers - as they have done for over 100 years - the offices of the Charity were at Queen Anne Chambers for many years, but after a brief period at Bridge Buildings, they have now moved to 21 Joy Street. Thus we draw to a close this story of the management of the Bridge Trust (with some variations in its title) for a period of some 700 years, and it is fitting to draw attention to two remarkable facts:-

- (a) During the whole of this long period the affairs of the Long Bridge of Barnstaple - and latterly of the Charity which continues since the care of the bridge was handed over - has been in the hands of Barnstaple men (latterly with women also) who have carried out their duties faithfully and well. and, apart from the very early days, without any payment for their services. And
- (b) For many centuries the Feoffees and Trustees have acquired property in Barnstaple, and effected rebuilding and improvements which have been a lasting benefit to the appearance of

the town of Barnstaple. Readers will doubtless find of interest the Record of Chairmen of this Charity from 1812 to date, which will be found at Appendix "A".

Appendix A

A Record of Chairmen of the Long Bridge Trust from 1812 to date.
(No record exists prior to 1812)

1812-1835	N. Glass	1907	H. Barrett
1836-1857	E. R. Roberts	1908	G. C. Davie
1858-1865	R. Bremridge	1909	A. E. Hopper
1866	C. E. Palmer	1910	C. E. R. Chanter
1867	J. R. Chanter	1911	G. T. Andrew
1868	W. Thorne	1912	S. Harper
1869	W. Thorne	1913	W.J. Cooke
1870	T. W. M. W. Guppy	1914	J. R. Harper
1871	H. Dene	1915	J. Smale
1872	J. N. Harding	1916	F. A. Jewell
1873	R. W. Cotton	1917	C. A. Youings
1874	Rev. H.J. Bull	1918	W. E. Pitts Tucker
1875	Rev. G. I. Wallas	1919	H. Barrett
1876	C. H. Gamble	1920	F. W. Hunt
1877	J. M. Miller	1921	A. Perrin
1878	T. W. M. W. Guppy	1922	G. C. Davie
1879	J. N. Harding	1923	G. T. Andrew
1880	Rev. H. J. Bull	1924	C. E. R. Chanter
1881	C. H. Gamble	1925	W.J. Cooke
1882	J. M. Miller	1926	J. R. Harper
1883	T. W. M. W. Guppy.	1927	J. Smale
1884	J. N. Harding	1928	W. E. Pitts Tucker
1885	C. H. Gamble	1929	A. R. Reavell
1886	J. M. Miller	1930	F. W. Hunt
1887	T. W. M. W. Guppy	1931	F. Chanter
1888	J. N. Harding	1932	F. Elliott
1889	J. M. Miller	1933	J. O. Jones
1890	C. H. Gamble	1934	W.J. Cooke
1891	W. H. Toller	1935	J. R. Harper
1892	J. M. Miller	1936	J. Smale
1893-1900	C. H. Gamble	1937	J. C. Dixey
1901	E. Dennis	1938	W. E. Pitts Tucker
1902	A. Lauder	1939	F. W. Hunt
1903	J. G. Hamling	1940	Geo. Garnish
1904	W. E. Pitts Tucker	1941	H. C. Jonas
1905	W. E. Pitts Tucker	1942	A. N. Oliver

1906	F. W. Hunt	1943	Geo. Nicholls
1944	W. P. Gammon J. R. Harper, C.B.E.	1963	F. Karlake
1945	J. Smale	1964	J. H. Brindley
1946	J. C. Dixey	1965	W.J. Gammon
1947	C. F. Dart	1966	Major E. R. Chanter
1948	H. S. Youings	1967	Col. J. N. Oliver, C.B.E.
1949	C. W. Brannam	1968	G. Casey
1950	C. H. P. Lake	1969	C. W. Courtney
1951	S. Harper, M.B.E.	1970	Mrs. M. Hughes, B.E.M.,J.P.
1952	J. Smale	1971	K. G. W. Saunders, O.B.E.
1953	J. H. Brindley	1972	B. I. G. Thomas
1954	F.J. Cater	1973	F. A. Dunning
1955	E. R. Chanter	1974	F. Karlake
1956	W. H. Wilkey	1975	J. H. Squire
1957	C.F. Dart	1976	R. G. Chugg
1958	H. S. Youings	1977	Major C. Chichester, D.L.
1959	W.J. Thomas	1978	D. H. Gubb
1960	C. W. Brannam	1979	G. Casey
1961	R. Brough	1980	C. W. Courtney
1962	R. Brough	1981	A. J. Huxtable
		1982	L. H. Ellway

**Record of Chamberlains of the Long Bridge Trust from 1821 to date
(No Chamberlains were appointed before 1821)**

1821	John Baker
1860	John King Marsh
1866	Charles Edward Northcote
1877	Richard Ashton
1901	Harry Ashton
1945	John Bryon Cruse



The ancient Seal of the Long Bridge of Barnstaple in the County of Devon

Appendix B

The Seal of Barnstaple Long Bridge

This ancient Seal, though not now in use, is greatly prized and treasured by the Trustees of the Bridge Trust.

"It is of bronze, circular, and nearly three inches in diameter. The device is very deeply cut, and consists of a bridge, of which six arches are shown with balustrades and a river flowing below. At one end of the bridge is a Chapel, with steeple and belfry, in reference to the Chapel of St. Thomas, which stood at the foot of the Bridge. At the other end a cross, foliated in running pattern, bearing a staff, from which floats a long pennant, with symbol of a cross on it. In the centre, between the bridge and pennant, a spread eagle. The legend is "SIGILLUM LONGI PONTIS VILLE BARNESTAPOLIE IN COMIT DEVONIE"

The date of this Seal is not known, but it is previous to 1400, and is a fine specimen of die-cutting." (The above is an extract from The Western Antiquary of Devon and Cornwall Notebook edited by W.H.K. Wright, F.R.H.S.; Volume III - April 1883 to April 1884.)

"Bridge Trust: the Seal of this body is the largest official seal in use in either Devon or Cornwall. It is circular, 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ inches diameter. The device is a bridge with six arches and water below. At the dexter (right hand) end of the bridge is a Church with a steeple; at the sinister (left hand) end a Calvary cross ornamented with a kind of running leaf pattern, and bearing a staff, from which floats a pennant charged with a cross. Between the cross and Church an eagle displayed. Legend:

SIGILLUM : LONGI : PONTIS : BARNESTAPOLI : IN : COMIT : DEVONIE"

(The above is an extract from the Report and transactions of the Devonshire Association for the Advancement of Literature and Art - Sidmouth: July 1873)

It will be seen that there is a slight difference in the above legends: that of the Western Antiquary is correct.

Appendix C

Extracts from Feoffment Deeds of the Long Bridge Lands between the years 1610 and 1898 were made by Mr. Thomas Wainwright in about 1901 when he was Curator of the North Devon Athenaeum. They are far too long to reproduce in full here, but the following notes may be of interest:-

1. The first extract is dated 26th March 1610. Among the Feoffers and Feoffees mentioned are Thomas Horwoode, Pentecoste Dodderidge and the Mayor Willyam Shapleigh. There are listed 33 items of lands and/or buildings (together with 9 rent charges).

Two items taken at random are:-

"Messuages, landes, tenements and garden with the appurtenances in Boutporte in the tenure of William Palmer."

"Tenement and garden with the appurtenances in Bare Streite in the tenure of John Gyll."

2. Other schedules follow and on 2nd October 1729 we have an extract where the two surviving Feoffees are John Webber and John Phillips as Feoffers, with Richard Newell (Mayor) and five others as Feoffees.

The properties scheduled are 35 in number plus 9 rent charges. Again two specimen properties are:-

"House barn and Close of land in Newport late in the tenure of Nicholas Oliver late of Joseph Fraine now of Wm. Deane."

"Four little houses at the end of the Long Bridge, three of which are almshouses and one in possession of John Bridgman."

3. After further listings there is an extract dated 6th July 1836. Here the Feoffers number eight and the Feoffees no fewer than seventeen. The list now includes the occupations of those mentioned, and we have included in the Feoffers:-

Nicholas Class, Comptroller of Customs and
Edward Richards Roberts, Collector of the Customs

Within the Feoffees there appear:-

Charles Cutcliffe the Elder-Surgeon and
Cadwallader Edward Palmer-Attorney (who also appears elsewhere as Chairman of the Trustees)

The number of items listed comprises 35 properties and 12 rent charges. Two items included

are:-

"Tenement and gardens at Southgate, parts of the Fortescue Arms formerly in the tenure of Hugh Stevens, then of Thos. Lewis now of Joseph Andrew Pearce."

"That newly erected building, the Dispensary, standing on the remaining portion of the site of the said seven tenements."

4. There follow further listings and the final one is on 1st November 1868 with six Feoffers including:-

W.H. Toller, R.W. Cotton, J.M. Miller and twenty Feoffees including four of the Feoffers, who include:-

W.E. Pitts Tucker, W. Penhale and W.C. Rafarel.

The properties listed number twenty four (plus seven rent charges etc.) and these of course include the Bridge Buildings, Bridge Chambers, Theatre, and properties in High Street and Boutport Street as well as Green Lane and the Golden Fleece and other property in Tuly Street.