

Bridgwater Pageant, 1927. MS minute book, Blake Museum, Bridgwater

[**Editorial Note** The idea of the Pageant evidently came to being at the end of 1925, soon after the Muchelney Pageant in the summer of that year. By that time work was already in hand to set up the Blake Museum (which opened in April 1926, and to celebrate granting of the borough's first Charter. (The ceremony happened in June 1926). The first minute in this book mentions previous minutes being signed, so an earlier minute book has existed. Implies this dealt with the Charter Day celebrations. Mayor Deacon whose mayoralty covered all three events was the instigator of the Brighter Bridgwater movement, designed to boost the town's self-esteem and trade.]

<No page number>

Members of the Committee (as appointed)

His Worship the Mayor (W Deacon, esq, [Pharmacist])

Mr M Page [Local Historian]

Mr T. B. Dilks [Stationer and Printer and Local Historian]

Mr C Trenchard (Hon Sec) (Resigned this post 2/10/26) [Headmaster, Dr Morgan's County School for Boys]

Miss G. Nicholls [Headmistress, Bridgwater County School for Girls]

Mr and Mrs Millican [From the Art School]

The Rev D. McArthur (resigned 16/9/26)

Rev C. E. Seamer [Of Shapwick]

Mr H. Corder [Seedsman and local historian]

Mr H. M. B. Ker, [Deputy Mayor]

Mr W. Raymond [Writer]

Mrs Seamer

The Rev S. Berry, [Seymour Berry, Vicar of Saint Mary's, Bridgwater]

Dr Bird [Medical inspector for school children]

Mr E. Babbage

Mr F. Welland (Asst Hon. Sec.)

Mr J. Woodward [Headmaster, Eastover Council School]

Mr I. Maggs [Headmaster Eastover Parochial School (St John's)]

Mr A. Wevell [Headmaster, Central Council School (Wembdon Road)]

Mr W. Barnett [Headmaster Albert Street Council School]

Major C. Trevilion (Pageant Master)[Land owner of Mildnay, nr Langport]

The Mayoress, Mrs Deacon

Mr F. Parr [Retired Borough Surveyor]

Mr Boltz [District Secretary, Transport and General Workers' Union]

Mrs Palmer [Headmistress, Albert Street Council School]

Miss Roberts [Headmistress, Mount Street Church of England Girls and Infants school]

Miss Sawtell [Headmistress, Eastover Council School]

Mr H. N. Gedye (Hon. Treas.) [Manager, Lloyd's Bank (Fox's Branch) Fore Street]

Major Tamlyn

Mr P. Sturdy (Hon Sec) [Owner of Sydenham House where the event was held.]

Mr I. J. Morgan (Business Manager)

The Rev F. Paine

Mr C. Byers

Pageant Minute Book p2

Mr A. B. Marchant
Mr Beckett
Mrs Wallace

< 1 >

Sub-Committees

Libretto

Mr T. B. Dilks (Convenor), Miss Nicholls, M. Page, C Trenchard, The Rev. Seamer

Finance:

The Mayor (W Deacon Esq). H. N. Gedye, the Hon. Sec, & Business Manager

Music

Dress

Site or ground Mr F Parr (Convener) Mr Byers (resigned see minute on p 36) Mr Bishop
[Borough engineer]

Publicity Mr Page (Convener) Mr Byers, Mr Dilks

Officers on Committees (ex officio) The Chairman (W Deacon esq), Major C Trevilion
(Pageant Master) I. G. Morgan (Business Manager) H. N Gedye (Hon.Treas) P Sturdy [and]
F Welland (Hon Secs)

<2>

Gangers

<3>

Meeting 1 Oct 1 1926.

<5>

Proposed episodes

The following were for the time being retained as a provisional programme:

- 1 Prologue Spirit of the Bridge attended by the Spirits of River, Quantocks and Sea
- 2 King John Signing the B'water Charter (2 scenes)
- 3 Wat Tyler I (The Riots)
- 4 Funeral of Sir Hugh Luttrell
- 5 The Fair introducing Return of the sailors from the Armada battle
- 6 Admiral Blake in 3 episodes (A) Boyhood, (B) Early Manhood, probably merging with The Siege of Bridgwater, (C) The Signing of the Will.
- 7 Battle of Sedgemoor
- 8 The Hustings
- 9 The Procession of Trades

Gangers

The question of finding people for this role was left to the Chairman and Hon Sec who were to report back

<6>

Dress Committee

To be six members

Music Committee

Not at this stage – to await the completion of the Libretto

<7>

Meeting held 15 October 1926

Pageant ground

Discussion about getting the hay-making done first

<8>

Episodes and gangers

Episodes

1 Prologue

2 King John and the Charter

3 Wat Tyler and the procession of guilds

3a Funeral Procession of Sir Hugh Luttrell

4 Fair on return of the Armada men

5 Admiral Blake Scene I At Oxford

inc Barbary coast Empire trade II Aged 35

Inc Whip and Broom and his will III Admiral

6 Monmouth and Sedgemoor

7 Hustings

8 Trades Procession

Gangers (provisional)

Miss Nicholls

Mrs Wallace and Mrs Hailes

Mr Welland

Mr Corder

Mr Woodward

) Mr Cecil Babbage

) and

) the Theatrical Club

Mr Hailes and Mr Trenchard

Mr Marchant

Mr Boltz

<9>

The discussion on episodes 3 (Wat Tyler) and 8 (Trades procession) was inconclusive but it was finally agreed to cut out of the programme the Siege of Bridgwater.

Libretto Committee

Discussion on the difficulty of hearing and speaking in the open air and suggested that a central figure, as for instance the Spirit of the Bridge should be the introducer of each episode

Dress Committee Miss Guppy proposed as convenor

Advertisement

Lecture on the topics of the Carnival to be held in the Town Hall proposed.

<10>

Meeting of the committee held 5 November 1926

Finance

Discussion about abandoning the proposal to invite Royalty to open the Pageant.

<11>

Dress Committee – deferred

Legal advisor – the Town Clerk appointed

Grounds committee – to meet to lay out the ground

<12>

Gangers

Mr Woodward for No 4, Fair and the return of the Armada men

Mr Cecil Babbage for No 5 Admiral Blake

Mr Trenchard for No 6 Monmouth and Sedgemoor
Nos 2, 7 and 8 gangers discussed but not approved

<13>

Meeting held on 19 November 1926

Minutes

Proposal to invite a member of the Royal family to open the event was rescinded.

Grounds Committee

Discussion on scenery, Site meeting to be held the next day.

<14>

Advertisement

Discussion about billboards along the roads and railway adjoining the site.

Gangers

Mrs Wallace approved for Episode 2, King John

Messrs Sturdy, Dilks and the Mayor to appoint gangers for episodes 7 and 8. The name gangers is not attractive but nothing better was suggested [NB In the printed programme the gangers were called marshalls.]

Bridgwater beyond seas

Foreign towns named Bridgwater invited to send particulars of their towns and industries. Their mayors invited to become Hon Patrons.

<15>

Openers

List of proposals for people who could be asked to open the event – Vice Chancellor of Bristol University, The Lord Chancellor, Bishop of Bath and Wells, The Dean of Wells, The Marquis of Bath, as the County Lieutenant, Earl of Bridgewater. Major Cely Trevilion's opinion to be sought

Dress Committee

Miss Trimby, Miss Guppy, Mrs Bennett, Mrs Hooper, Mrs Deacon, Mrs Wallace, Miss Nicholls be appointed the dress committee. Finance Committee to authorise any purchases.

<16>

Industrial advertising

Inconclusive discussion about allowing local firms to have booths on the pageant ground showing their wares.

Libretto

Enquiry about No 4 Libretto.

<17>

Meeting held on 3 December 1926

Minutes

Borough Treasurer added to the Committee.

Ground committee

Meeting held at the pageant ground.

<18>

Seating

Three blocks of stands of raised and covered seats, the lowest being four feet above ground and the highest about 8ft 6in, accommodating 1000 people at a cost for hire and erection of £190. There would be 3 rows of 86 seats uncovered in front of the stands. These three stands to be arranged with entrances some 10ft wide at the narrowed ends between them and they would be arranged as a segment of a circle. Standing places and un-numbered seats probably at either end.

Dressing tents area proposed at both the East and West ends but needs discussion.

As for Scenery, Sydenham Manor could form the background for about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the stage area. The centre would be a representation of the old arched Bridgwater Bridge with possibly the old gate house at its West end strong enough to support actors and perhaps horses in procession.

Need for ample provision for actors approach and exit.

<19>

Parts of the adjacent orchard might be made accessible and light bridges could cross the Rhine at the back of the stage area. Grass to be let for feeding and not hay, so no problem about access on the day.

<20>

Libretto of the Spirit of the Bridge completed.

Dress Committee

Letter to the press appealing for help. Awaiting the complete libretto, also word of the needs of the gangers. Suggest that meetings are held weekly to action the work. While desirable for everyone to provide their own costumes, those who could not would be helped.

<21>

Gangers

Episodes 7 and 8 gangers not resolved. Suggests that episode 8 has 2 gangers. Sub committee to sort out.

Patrons

Hon Patrons to be called Patrons. They should open each day

Marquis of Bath as Lord Lieutenant of Somerset
The Lord Chancellor
Bishop of Bath and Wells
Col W. H. Speke High Sheriff
Vice Chancellor of Bristol University

The Dean of Wells to write the foreword for the programmes.

The Pageant was to be described as being 'Under the patronage of ...'

<22>

Bridgwater beyond the Seas

List of 14 towns to be written to mentioned

Note paper

Headed notepaper to be produced

Advertising committee

To be renamed the Publicity Committee. £150 thought to cover the cost. Trades association to offer space on their press adverts also Church magazines. Railway posters. Mayor proposes mentioning it during wireless talks he is to make in May.

<23>

Meeting held 22 December 1926

Letter from the Dean of Wells

Letter of support received from the Dean.

Proposed Taunton Pageant

<24>

Very extensive discussion about this. Originally planned for July 1927. Major Cely Trevilion had told them it was not possible, so it was to be delayed until June 1928

Episodes 8 and 9

The agents of the two political parties would be responsible for 7 (The Hustings) and Mr Boltz for 9 (Trades)

<28

BBC

The BBC were willing to allow a short talk about a week before the event and were anxious to broadcast at least one of the episodes.

Title

To be called "The Bridgwater Pageant". "Sedgemoor" to be brought into the posters and

advertises as much as possible.

<p27>

Date

Resolved "That the Pageant be held on Wednesday (evening), Thursday (matinee), Friday (evening) and Saturday (matinee and evening) with a dress rehearsal on Tuesday evening June 21 1927. Time not fixed.

Finance

No information yet available about preliminary expenses. Proposed interviewing Mr Morgan to see what the Muchelney Pageant had set aside for this.

<p28>

Meeting held on 21 Jan 1927

Patrons

All the patrons listed above had accepted

Report (Business)

Report of interview with Mr Morgan of Ilminster about the Muchelney Pageant

<29>

Libretto

Book almost complete The Masque and four episodes were finished. Medieval interlude and the final, procession had no libretto, leaving only two episodes to finish.

<30>

Meeting held on 26 January

Patrons

Letters read from all the patrons accepting

<31>

Advertising budget

Estimated to amount to £150

Libretto

Virtually complete

Pageant Master's address

Gangers charged with recruiting men, women and children. He would approve the main players

<32>

Mr Percy Whitlock offered to compose the music. It would be necessary to have strings as

well as brass instruments, and also a choral society of adults to give volume to the singing. Suggestion that a Property Master be appointed soon.

Hon Treasurer's report

<33>

Account of interview with Mr Morgan and the need to have Pageant office with a telephone. Advertising cost of £150 should not increase without the approval of the Finance committee.

Business Manager Appointed

Mr J. G. Morgan of Ilminster appointed

Town Meeting

Town Meeting to be convened

Emergency Committee

The Chairman, Hon. Treasurer, Hon Secretaries and the convenors of the Libretto and Advertising committees to form an emergency committee.

<34>

Executive committee Meeting held 18 February, 1927

Offices

The National Omnibus Co. placed at room at Cornhill over their waiting room at the disposal of the Pageant committee

Telephones

<35>

Until the phone was installed, calls could be put through the office at Lloyd's Bank, and a new Phone number put in the forthcoming directory

Meetings

Tuesday evenings at 6.00pm to be kept free for committee meetings.

Mr Trenchard

He will remain ganger for the Sedgemoor episode, and appoint a deputy. He will let Miss Nicholls have as large a number as possible of his schoolboys for her episode. These boys to be as good singers as possible and that he will rehearse these boys in singing only.

Mr Morgan

The Cornhill office should be opened from 25 April and Morgan's clerk be in attendance from 10.00 am. Mr Becket to loan 12 chairs and a few forms.

<36>

And a table from the Town Hall for the office. Also to buy a typewriter for £2.00 The Mayor undertakes to buy this from the Pageant Council for £1 10 0 at the closing of the office. The Advertising Committee to provide a board with "Pageant Office" painted on it to go outside.

Grounds Committee

Main stand to be straight not curved in segments. 1000 seats with rows of uncovered seats in front thereof 500 seats and a block of seats roughly at right angles to this on the east, (528 seats) and west (320 seats) ends of it. Total 2348 seats. This seating will cost £300. The proposal that the 4 rearmost rows of seats of the east and west blocks of seats should be raised is not approved as being too costly for the probable price of the tickets.

<37>

Decided that prices of all tickets be finally decided by the Finance Committee.

The Borough Engineer kindly offered to superintend the parking facilities.

Certificates

All accounts to be certified by Mr Morgan for payment, and payment made by the Hon Treasurer.

Tea

Contracts to be let to a caterer who is to supply teas on all afternoons both for public and performers

Mr Parr

He described his plans for the Bridge and the Hustings and Hospital scenery. Unable to afford to build the bridge to be available for use by a procession. But the scale and idea approved.

<38>

Letter to Patrons and donors

Letter to be drafted and sent to selected people

Trustees

Bank suggests that Trustees be appointed to whom the guaranteeing patrons will be liable. The Bank will lend up to 50% of the money guaranteed

Note Paper

Headed notepaper to be produced

<39>

Meeting held on 1 March 1927

Office

The Pageant office on Cornhill would be opened on 15 March, and Mr Morgan or Mr Prentice be in attendance every Tuesday or Friday for the next 6 weeks. The office phone number is Bridgwater 239.

Motor Park

Mr Bishop, Borough Engineer appointed Hon Motor Park Controller

Cost of Costumes

Costumes to be mostly paid for or hired by the principle characters.

<40>

Band

Mr Tout of Christy's Military Band appointed Pageant Band Master, Mr Wood to be Master of the Orchestra.

Choir

Central choir discussed. Mr Docksey [Organist at Saint Mary's] elected to the Pageant Council

Photo Rights

Finance Committee to report on the photo rights. The Somerset Society to be got in touch with.

<41>

Minutes amended about the number of school boys to be in the Prologue (As large a number as possible instead of 50)

School grounds for rehearsals

School playgrounds to be used for rehearsals after hours. (Both council schools as well as the Secondary Girls School)

Visiting the pageant ground

Mr Sturdy said any gangers were welcome to visit the Pageant grounds at any time.

Oxen for the Lutterell Funeral

Suggestion that Hagon Suet Oxen might be borrowed for this.

<42>

Music

Mr Tout would undertake to provide wind instruments for the orchestra, if Mr Wood will provide the strings.

Report

Report on the press reports

<43>

Meeting held on 22 March 1927

Reports

Various reports read – Music; Rehearsals in school grounds; Libretto; Luttrell episode; Photographs

<44>

Public meeting

Meeting to be held in the Town Hall the next day to give account of the progress of the event so far, with details of finances etc

(Provision of costumes)

All the chief performers pay for their costumes as far as possible. The crowd pay for the materials of dress. Should individuals be unable to, Gangers will make arrangements. The making up of all the costumes to be done by the dress committee.

Cost of seats

<45>

10/6 seats to be available at all performances

Covered Main Stand seats 5/-

Side stands 2/6 reducing to 1/6 and 1/-

Total £1160 for 1600 seats in the main stand

£147 for 424 seats in the side stand.

Discussion conclusion: 10/6 seats and the number elastic.

Letter to Bridgwater beyond the seas

14 letters to be sent, also asking for banners

<46>

Transport Committee

Transport committee to be formed comprising managers of the GWR and S&DJR local passenger and goods departments. Local manager of the National Omnibus Co, the two Chief Constables, Mr Bishop [Borough Engineer]

Bristol Committee

Bristol Committee to be formed to interest the University, Schools and Societies and to arrange excursions.

Builders committee

Proposed that local builders and builders' merchants be approached to supply materials at cost. Matters to be left to the Grounds Committee.

<47>

Gaol Bells

The Museum Committee to be asked for the loan of the Gaol Bells for the Luttrell scene.

Gangers' Convening Cards

These were approved with the addition of the performance dates

The Art School's Co-operation

The Art School to be responsible for the design and provision of the props. They will assist Mr Parr on the scenery. Gangers to apply to the School for their requirements.

New Member

Mr Duckworth added to the Committee.

<48>

Meeting held 12 April 1927

Transport Committee

Report made but no details given

Publicity Committee

Posters to be produced for the big towns – performance times needed for them. Large hoarding at the entrance to Sydenham Manor. Publicity budget still set at £150

<49>

Tents

Prices being obtained for the hire of tents

New Member

Mrs Cely Trevilion joined the Council

Performances

Dress Rehearsal Monday 20 June

Performances on the evenings of Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday. and Saturday. Afternoon performance on Thursday.

The evening performances would start at 6.30pm, and the afternoon one at 3.00pm

[**Editorial note:** Nowhere in the Minutes is mentioned the Pageant Church Service, held at Saint Mary's on 19 June.]

Preliminary Booklet

A small booklet was proposed to be produced, listing dates, times, episodes, synopsis, to be sent out with prices and a seating plan.

<50>

Suggestion that parties of 30 and upwards could have reduced prices. Finance Committee to decide.

[Episode length]

Discussion about the length of the episodes and if they should be cut. Decided they should all be cut equally, if necessary.

[Stage entrances]

Mr Parr's scheme for the entrances to the arena had the approval of the Pageant Master

3rd Party Insurance and tax

The Business Manager asked to see to this.

<51>

H. M. Customs and Excise had been informed about the pageant. Any profits to be given to Charity, and a great part of the expenses were being paid by the performers . Mr Byers to continue with the negotiations.

Contractors

One contractor to have a stall and sell on the stand. Refreshment tents for the public and performers. To be put up for tender in Bridgwater and district. Prices to be published and teas sold only before or after each performance. All to be arranged by the Finance Committee. Intoxicants if any to be in a separate tent. One ice-cream [each??, tent??] to be allowed. To be arranged by the finance committee. One Tobacco stall ditto

<52>

Booklet

Booklet to be compiled by Messrs Dilks, Page, Sturdy, Byers and the publicity committee. To contain a foreword, complete libretto, list of Patrons, Donors, Gangers, Committee and Council and if possible 1 photograph of each episode. Price to be 1/- . Advertisements to be considered

Village Campaigns

Motor advertising campaign through the villages to be considered.

Scenery

Mr Parr showed coloured sketches of his latest scheme for the back scene of the arena - Inn, Cottage, The Hospital, Castle Gate, and Bridge. Discussions to be held with the Art School about painting the scenery. An offer had been received from a professional scene painter to assist.

<53>

Costumes

Arrangements to be made for the hiring of costumes for the Principals.

[**Editorial Note:** Not minuted, but the newspaper reports state that they were supplied by Clarksons, of London]

Gang expenditure

Mr Gedye [Treasurer] wished to know how much each gang wished to spend.

Typing

The A. B. typesetting bureau of 2 Taunton Road offered to undertake typing for the Pageant

Mrs Millican [Art School]

Her husband asked that acknowledgement should be given for her work on designing the properties, horses' ribbons etc..

<54>

Meeting held on 7 June

Mr Morgan [business manager]

He reported that contracts had been let with Messrs Bryer for the Stand and other buildings to Mr Parr's drawings and specifications – Stand £190, other buildings £72 14 Total £262 14. To include dismantling and removal from the ground. Messrs Tottle for the erection of the scenery ready for the painter Mr Parr's drawings and specifications. To include removal from the ground £138 4s.

<55>

The Art school were unable to paint the scenery in the time available, so Mr H Harvey's offer of doing it for £25 was accepted.

Mrs Wilce of the Orange Cafe will provide tea for the public and performers if the Council provide two tents, chairs and tables and will give a percentage of the profits.

The sole right to take and sell photographs was granted to Mr Palfrey and he will give a percentage on the sales.

Sale of Tobacco and Ice Creams not yet decided

Mrs Luckes will have sales of sweets and chocolates and will hand over a percentage.

No sales of any of the above during the episodes

Booklets

<56>

It was decided that the Pageant Committee would not produce a booklet – it should be left to private enterprise, and that photos of the Pageant Master and Mr and Mrs Deacon should be the only ones in the booklet.

Seat Prices

Gangers to issue a limited number of tickets at 1/6 each for their friends.

Donations received £205, Guarantees £500, advance ticket sales to date £259

<57>

Suggested that performers wear badges on their costumes. Reduced price tickets for members of the Dress Committee.

Mr Sturdy was not going to make a claim for rental loss on the field – Letter of thanks to be sent

About 40 people from the Poor Law Institution were to be guests of the Committee

<58>

[Illuminated Cross]

Messrs Pine had offered to make and fix an illuminated cross for the Epilogue. Vote of thanks.

<59>

Meeting held on 27 July 1927

The Mayor in a graceful speech summed up the results of the pageant. It had been very successful indeed. The weather during all the performances except the last half hour of the last one had been good. The press notices most encouraging and the Mayor cordially congratulated all who had taken part in the Pageant and had worked since its inauguration 20 months ago [**Editorial note:** i.e. since December 1925]. Thanked all, specially mentioning the *Bridgwater Mercury*. He then called upon Mr Gedye, the Hon. Treas. to read the financial statement.

Thanks were expressed to Messrs J and A Sully, the Hon. Accountants.

Total receipts	£1865 10 4
Total expenditure	£1365 5 10
Credit balance	£500 4 6

The Mayor

He explained the draft proposals for the distribution of the balance, saying that no payments would be made for some months

<61>

Accident

An accident was reported between two performers (a cyclist and a motorist). The latter had no third party insurance. After some discussion it was agreed that £15 would be paid to the injured party if no legal action was taken.

Mr Morgan

Agreed that an honorarium of £50 be granted to Mr Morgan (The Business Manager) for his services.

<62>

Christy's Band.

A donation of £10 awarded to the band's uniform fund, additional to the £15 expenses already paid.

Pageant Master

A donation of £30 awarded to the Pageant Master for charities of his choice.

<63>

St John's Ambulance

Letter read from them saying they had attended 17 minor incidents and suggesting a contribution to their funds and the Women's V.A.D. Also a letter read about the Y.M.C.A.

Distribution

The Finance Committee propose that donations to the following be made.

Bridgwater Hospital		£15
Ditto Mayor's Fund for supplying and fixing a shadowless lamp in Theatre to complete the fund		£60
The Mary Stanley Home	Ker £50	£75
Infant Welfare		£20
Tuberculosis after care committee		£20
British Legion local branch		£20
National Institution for the Blind, local branch	Ker £10	£15
Blake Museum exhibits fund		£20
St John's Ambulance Uniform fund	Ker £20	£10
V.A.D. not regarded as a charity		
Pageant Sunshine Guild	Ker £70	£50
Plus any residue		
Total perhaps £115		

[**Editorial note.** The total was in fact £305]

<64>

Pageant Sunshine Guild

The Mayor outlined his scheme to form a fund to which Pageant performers shall make a small annual subscription and have one annual re-union. The fund to help towards the [clothes] outfits of children sent to hospitals or homes; to help outfit children who gain scholarships; to form a panel of local motorists to take sick, convalescents and children for rides or back to their homes on discharge from hospital..

The Finance Committee's draft proposal for the disbursement was proposed with the recommendation it was accepted en bloc. Mr Ker suggested some amendments [**Editorial note:** shown on the previous page] which were adopted.

<65>

It was agreed that the Pageant Council should be disbanded and re-formed as the Pageant Sunshine Guild Council and to take over the balances and liabilities of the Pageant Council.

Presentation to the Mayor and Mayoress

They were presented with a leather-bound volume containing the Libretto of the Pageant, lists of Donors and Council, Gangers, a reprint of *The Times* criticism of the performance, and of the Pageant Service in Saint Mary's Church and some thirty photographs of the episodes. [**Editorial Note.** This volume is in the Somerset Studies Library at the Heritage Centre, Taunton.

<66>

The Mayor expressed his thanks and the proceedings terminated.

[**Editorial Note.** The rest of this volume comprises the minutes of the Sunshine Guild between 6 December 1927 and 17 December 1929]