

Dover's Town Clerks in the Aftermath of the Knockers

Samuel Ronald Holden Loxton (part 1)

Martyn Webster

After seventy five years (1860-1935) the end of the reigning dynasty of Dover's Town Clerks, through three successive generations of the same family, was going to be some act and challenge to follow. The Knockers had seemed impregnable but their time had come.

Between 1935 and 1974 (when the role was disbanded) there were three more Town Clerks in Dover.

1935-1944:

Samuel Ronald Holden Loxton (1902-1977)

1945-1969:

James Alexander Johnson (1908-1997)

1969-1974:

Ian George Gill (1938-2017)

It must be remembered too that each of these in common with their predecessors was entitled to occupy the roles of Borough Coroner as well as being Solicitor, Registrar and Seneschal to the Cinque Ports Federation thereby presiding over the installation of Lords Warden of the Cinque Ports. The Cinque Port roles could go beyond their time as Town Clerk as in the case of Reginald Edward Knocker who, as his predecessor to office, superseded Samuel Loxton during his time as Town Clerk as for the installation of Lord Reading of Willingdon as Lord Warden in 1938. Of these three Town Clerks James A Johnson presided over two more installations, that of Sir Winston Churchill in 1949 and Sir Robert Menzies in 1966, then Ian George Gill over that of H.M. Queen Elizabeth, Queen Mother in 1979.

First into the fray as new Town Clerk in the post Knocker era was Samuel Loxton (1902-1977) known almost throughout his

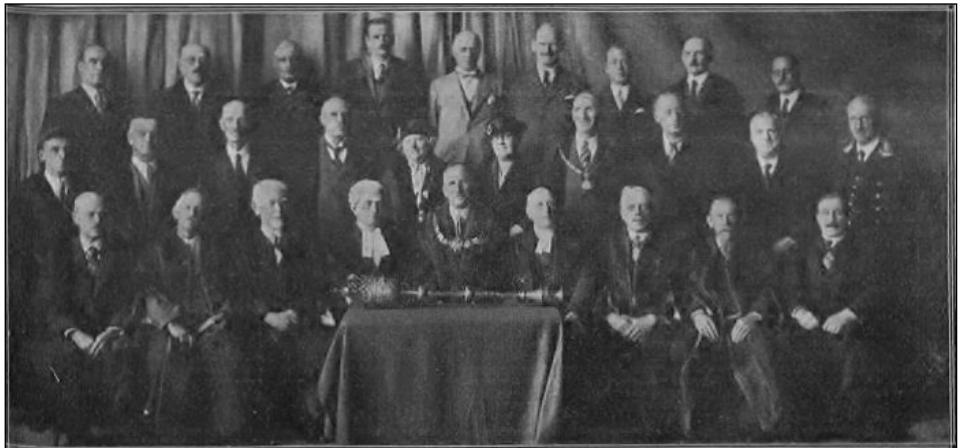
office as Mr S.R.H. Loxton. He had been born on 22nd November 1902 at Cannock, the son of a solicitor. Little can be learned about him during his nine years tenure beyond what was reported in the Dover Express upon his appointment and then his departure. Least of all are any photos of him yet to be identified with one exception. Nonetheless from this is what we know: Samuel Loxton first came to Dover in January 1930 when appointed as assistant solicitor and Deputy Town Clerk under Reginald Edward Knocker. He was 27 years of age at the time and was an M.A. of Oxford in law having previously been educated at Harrow. He served articles with his family firm Messrs Loxton & Co at Walsall in Staffordshire and was admitted as a solicitor in 1928. He had considerable experience in the URBAN District Council of Cannock, Staffordshire as senior partner of the firm of Messrs Loxton and Co being clerk to the Cannock UDC. The whole term of his office at Dover was conducted at Brook House to where the Town Clerk's office had moved from 69 Castle Street.

On his departure from Dover at the age of 42, at the end of 1944, by which time he had been awarded O.B.E. in 1941 for his war service in civil defence and food supply, a farewell celebration was held for him by the Corporation in the Town Hall on the evening of 29th November. He was presented with an antique grandfather clock together with a cheque and a beautiful illuminated album containing the names of 133 subscribers. The text of the message contained in the album was as follows:

"In extending to you our sincere congratulations on your appointment as Town Clerk of Shrewsbury we the undermentioned officers of the Corporation of Dover, members of the Civil Defences Services and the staff of the Dover Food Office desire on your departure from Dover to record our genuine regret at your relinquishment of the office of Town Clerk of this Ancient Cinque Port and Borough which you have held with distinction since October 1935. During the past nine years which have included the most momentous in the annals of the Town you have carried out your duties in an extremely able manner and at all times have evinced a keen and sympathetic interest in the welfare of the corporation officers of every grade and department".

During his time at Dover Samuel Loxton and his family resided at Court Hill House at the bottom of Whitfield Hill just on the corner to the left of the modern roundabout where an estate of flats now stands. The 1939 National Register (in which he himself was the local organizing force) described him as the local registration officer, solicitor, Town Clerk and also an A.R.P. warden.

He died at Shrewsbury 10th August 1977 aged 74 years.



THE MAYOR AND CORPORATION OF DOVER.

The photo taken by Mr. C. S. Harris on Tuesday of the Dover Town Council, in order that it might be sent to be hung in the municipal buildings at Dover, Delaware, U.S.A. The occasion was also noteworthy for the fact that the Town Clerk (Mr. R. E. Knocker), who is retiring at the end of September, after holding the office for 28 years, was attending his last official engagement. Reading from left to right, the members are:—

Back Row.—Mr. W. Ransom (Committee Clerk), Councillor W. L. Law, J.P., Councillor J. Walker, Mr. S. R. H. Loxton, M.A. (Deputy Town Clerk), Mr. W. Boulton Smith, M.Sc., M.I.C.E. (Borough Surveyor), Dr. A. D. McMaster, M.D., D.P.H. (Medical Officer of Health), Mr. S. Hambrook (Borough Accountant), Councillor Major J. Martin, and Councillor A. T. Goodfellow, J.P.

Middle Row.—Councillor R. L. Eckhoff, Councillor P. Kennett, Councillor J. P. Pish, Councillor Colonel F. E. G. Skeg, Councillor Mrs. Boyten, Councillor Mrs. Langley, Councillor Major W. Donald, M.C. (Deputy Mayor), Councillor W. E. Austen, Councillor G. Gore, Mr. J. R. Chapman (Town Sergeant).

Front Row.—Councillor Captain F. R. Powell, Alderman H. E. Russell, J.P., Alderman C. J. Sellens, J.P., Mr. R. E. Knocker (Town Clerk), the Mayor (Alderman G. M. Norman, J.P.), Councillor W. G. Elson, M.A., R.D. (Mayor's Chaplain), Alderman R. J. Barwick, J.P., Alderman A. H. Dawes, and Councillor F. H. Moorecroft, J.P.

Alderman A. J. Pearce, Councillors J. R. Cairns, H. A. J. Ryeland and G. E. Took were unavoidably absent.

Dover Mayor and Corporation