

Mill Street Housing Society Ltd

1931 - 1996



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The Beginnings

After the First World War, a Speech was delivered by His Majesty King George V at Buckingham Palace, from which a quotation appeared in the Programme for the laying of the Foundation Stone of the first King's Road property on the 1st June 1932:-

"It is not too much to say that an adequate solution of the housing question is the foundation of all social progress. Health and housing are indissolubly connected. If this country is to be the country which we all desire to see it become, a great offensive must be undertaken against disease and crime, and the first point at which the attack must be delivered is the unhealthy, ugly, overcrowded houses in the mean street, which we all of us know..."

Mr Alfred Edwards' response to this problem in Dorchester, which he had observed at first hand since establishing the Mill Street Mission (at the age of 19) in 1905, was to found the Mill Street Housing Society, thus creating only the sixth Housing Association in the country. The Foundation Stone Ceremony's Programme also served as a Prospectus for potential donors and subscribers, from which the following is an extract:-

"This Society was registered on the 16th October 1931. Subject to the necessary finance being forthcoming, it proposes to build houses or flats at the lowest possible rents. As is well known, there is still a great need for healthy accommodation among those who cannot afford the rent of the excellent houses provided by the Council. The Society will also endeavour to improve, where possible, any existing premises, if capable of acquisition on reasonable terms, and fit to be reconditioned. Where these are overcrowded, they can be re-let to smaller families, provided alternative accommodation is available for larger ones..."

"It is frankly admitted that the proposals may not be deemed to constitute a commercially attractive investment, but it is felt that there are sufficient people who are acutely aware of the evil effects of bad housing and who may be willing to thus assist in relieving this state of affairs..."

The remainder of this Brochure describes and illustrates some of the principal events and achievements in the 65 subsequent years. The Society currently owns 87 dwellings, with a value for insurance purposes of over 4 million pounds.

Presidents:-

Col. Sir Robert Williams, Bt.	1932 - 1943
Sir Philip Williams, Bt.	1943 - 1958
Mark Williams, Esq.	1958 - 1969
Mrs. Mark Williams	1969 - 1991
Maurice Edwards, Esq.	1991 - date

Chairmen:-

Mrs. Thomas Hardy	1932 - 1937
Mrs. A.R. Cave	1937 - 1945
Miss E.A. Williams	1945 - 1968
William Tilley, Esq.,	1968 - 1969
Henry Longman, Esq.	1969 - 1984
Major Willoughby Hayes	1984 - 1988
Maurice Edwards, Esq.	1988 - 1990
Sir Philip Williams, Bt.	1990 - date.

Secretaries:-

Alfred Edwards, Esq.	1931 - 1951
Maurice Edwards, Esq.	1951 - 1987
Messrs. Edwards & Keeping	1987 - date.

Architects:-

Sydney Jackson, Esq.	1931 - 1956
Messrs. Jackson & Stark	1956 - 1965
Messrs. John Stark & Partners	1965 - date.

Managing Agents:-

Matthews & Matthews	1956 - 1988
Symonds & Sampson	1988 - date.

Front cover photographs:-

Top left. Mr. A.H. Edwards, The Society's Founder in 1931, and Secretary from its inception till his death in 1951.

Top right. The original Mill Street Mission building, the influence of which inspired the foundation of the Housing Society.

Centre. A 1930's scene showing the Society's first six houses in King's Road, and (in the right background) the first four Hardy Avenue properties, all as originally built with flat roofs and a turreted appearance.

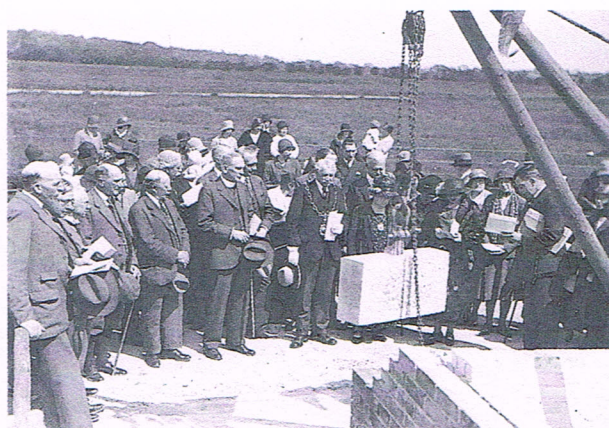
Bottom. The Opening of Edwards Court in 1993, performed by the Society's President, Mr. Maurice Edwards (right), accompanied by the Chairman, Sir Philip Williams, Bt.

Significant Dates in the History of The Mill Street Housing Society, Ltd.

1931 The Society was founded by Mr. Alfred Edwards, as an extension of, but separate from, his work with the interdenominational Mill Street Mission, which he had established in 1905 to cater for the spiritual and material needs of Dorchester's poor.

Mrs. Thomas Hardy, J.P., agreed to become the first Chairman, with Mr. Edwards as Secretary and a Committee of six.

Invitations for wellwishers to subscribe to the proposed work of the Society were issued. Among the options offered were outright donations, the purchase of £1 shares, or 2.5% Loan Stock.



Mrs. Thomas Hardy, Chairman of the Society, lays the official Foundation Stone of the first King's Road houses on the 1st June, 1932.



A Mill Street scene pre-dating the Society's existence. The Mission building is in the thatched terrace on the left, and Churchills' Roller Mill is visible in the right background.

- 1932** The first four three-bedroomed houses were built in King's Road, Mrs. Hardy laying the official foundation stone on the 1st June. It was a condition of the building contract that a certain percentage of the workforce should be drawn from the unemployed of Dorchester. Colonel Sir Robert Williams, Baronet (erstwhile M.P. for West Dorset, 1895 - 1922) agreed to become the Society's first President.
- 1933** Six three-bedroomed houses were built in King's Road.
- 1934** Eight three-bedroomed houses were built in Hardy Avenue.
- 1935** The Society became one of the founder-members of the National Federation of Housing Associations.
- 1936** Seventeen old cottages in Mill Street were purchased, and modernization began.
- 1938** Four self-contained flats were built in Hardy Avenue.
- 1940** Churchills' redundant Roller Flour Mill was purchased at the entrance to Mill Street, and conversion into nine self-contained flats and one shop began.



Three views of The Old Mill, Fordington:

Above: As it appeared in use, pre- 1940.

Below: As it appeared after the 1940 conversion. The photograph post-dates 1946, as the Society's Nos. 1. & 2. Holloway Road (converted from the stables) are visible on the left.

Below right: As it appears today, following the 1987 extension and modernization.



- 1941** A further cottage in Mill Street was purchased and renovated.
- 1942** The Old Vicarage, Fordington, one time home of the Rev. Henry Moule and his family, was purchased and converted into five flats.
- 1943** Nine more aged cottages in Mill Street were purchased.
- 1944** A house in Charminster was purchased.
- 1946** Stables in Holloway Road, adjoining the Old Mill, were converted into two houses.
- 1947** A further house in King's Road was purchased.
- 1948** Six more houses were purchased and extensively renovated: Nos. 25, 26 & 27 Mill Street, Nos. 37 & 38 Mill Street, and No. 60 High Street, Fordington.
- 1948-9** The Society was entrusted with the building of five houses from the proceeds of subscriptions to the Dorset Regiment's War Memorial fund. Two regimental houses were built in Sherborne, one at Upton, one at Broadmayne and one in Dorchester.
- 1949** Alterations to the earliest Kings Road and Hardy Avenue houses involved covering their original flat roofs with the pitched roofs visible today.
- 1950** Two more houses in Mill Street were purchased.
- 1951** The Society's Founder, Alfred Edwards, died. His son, Mr. Maurice Edwards, became Secretary to the Society.
- 1952** Planning started for a systematic redevelopment of Mill Street.
- 1953** The title deeds of the Dorset Regiment War Memorial houses were formally transferred by Deed of Gift to the Society. The Regiment has ensured continuing responsibility by exercising a right to nominate one ex-officio committee member ever since.
- 1954-6** A general programme of modernization and improvements to many of the older properties was undertaken.
- 1958** Five cottages at the eastern end of Mill Street were sold to Dorchester Town Council as part of its comprehensive redevelopment in that area.



- 1959** The Fordington Old Vicarage flats were modernized.
- 1960** A further eighteen cottages in Mill Street were sold to the Town Council as its redevelopment of the area proceeded.
- 1961** A second Regimental War Memorial house was built in Dorchester, with the proceeds from the sale of the Broadmayne house.
- A house in Glyde Path Road was sold.
- 1962** Planning permission was granted, and a contract signed, for the erection of 12 self-contained flats, in three blocks, at the western end of Mill Street, to be known as Mill Stream House.
- 1964** Mill Stream House was completed and formally opened by Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for Dorset, Colonel Sir Joseph Weld.
- 1967** Plans were put in hand to demolish Fordington Old Vicarage and replace it with twelve self-contained flats and a communal area, in three blocks, to be known as Fordington Hill House.
- 1972** Fordington Hill House was completed and formally opened by the Mayor of Dorchester, Councillor Leslie Phillips.



Fordington Hill House, built on the site of the former Vicarage in 1972.

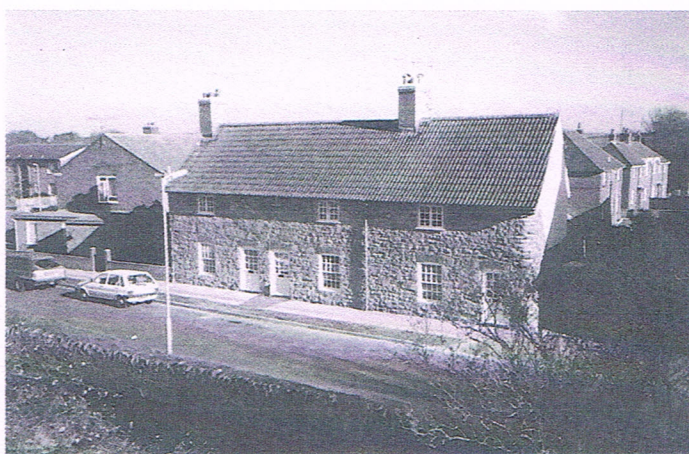
- 1973** Nine garages were built on land in Holloway Road, opposite The Old Mill.
- 1978** The four flats in Hardy Avenue were substantially improved and enlarged.
- 1982** Plans were put in hand for an extensive enlargement and modernization of The Old Mill, to create 17 self-contained flats.
- 1984** Substantial funds were made available to the Society by the Housing Corporation on a long-term mortgage.
- 1987** The rebuilding of The Old Mill was completed, and it was formally re-opened by the Director of the National Federation of Housing Associations, Mr. Richard Best (of Godmanston). As well as an external plaque tracing the history of the mill, the opportunity was taken to incorporate the stained glass First World War Memorial window from the original Mill Street Mission.



Two views of Nos. 25 - 27 Mill Street:

Above: As it appeared when purchased in 1948.

Below: As it appears today, after the careful restoration of this Listed Building.



- 1989** A programme of extensive modernization of all the King's Road and Hardy Avenue properties began.
- 1990** The entity of the Mill Street Mission was formally dissolved. Ownership of its last remaining asset, No. 15, South Walks Road, consisting of two self-contained flats, was formally transferred to the Society by Deed of Gift.
- 1991** To comply with Housing Corporation requirements over possible conflict of interests, Mr. Maurice Edwards ceded his voting right in a committee post, and was elected President of the Society.
- 1993** Three aged properties in Mill Street were demolished, and seven three-bedroomed houses, in two terraces, were built on the vacated site. Now known as Edwards Court, they were formally opened by the Society's President.
- 1995** With the generous co-operation of the West Dorset District Council, the Society's last properties to carry actual Mill Street numbers, Nos. 25, 26 & 27, were extensively renovated.

From funds in hand, the last of the 1931 2.5% Loan Stock was repaid to the heirs of the subscribers.