

T C (Chris) COKES

1914 to 1995

OF THE PEOPLE AND FOR THE PEOPLE

Chris Cokes was born and lived in the West Wight all his life (apart from the period of World War II when he was a Battery Sergeant Major in the Royal Artillery). Wounded at Dunkirk he spent some years in Sheffield for specialist treatment and invaliding from the Service. He returned to the West Wight just prior to the end of WWII and settled in Weston Road in Totland.

It wasn't too long before Chris became interested in village affairs. He became known by local residents whilst caring for the Turf Walk and thus, after listening to what was being said about Totland he decided to attempt election to the Parish Council. Chris was co-opted onto Totland Parish Council in 1963 and elected as Chairman in 1966, an office he held for 28 years. In 1967 he was elected a Yarmouth Harbour Commissioner, a post he held for 27 years. Chris was elected the Ward of Totland's County Councillor in 1978, a role he proudly held until 1993. He was particularly proud of his appointment as Chairman of the Social Services adoption and fostering committee, a chairmanship he held for 8 years. A further role he relished was that of Local Education Authority Governor of Totland County Primary School, appointed in 1978 he served as chairman of that governing body until 1992. Chris was made the first "Honorary Freeman of the Ward and Parish of Totland" in July 1993.

Chris was known by all villagers and, as a Parish Councillor, was available to them 24 hours a day. Chris could constantly be seen pushing his mower around Totland, cutting little strips of grass scattered around the village, tending the rose bed at the roundabout and, voluntarily, undertaking many other tasks in an effort to keep Totland a tidy and pleasant village to live in. He was proud of his personal involvement with the Turf Walk, and later with its extension which was acquired during his Chairmanship of the Parish Council. In his honour the piece of ground acquired behind the War Memorial was named **COKES GREEN**.

He was rightly proud of the acquisition, after some 20 years of negotiation, of Turvills Field as an open space of meadow land available to the Parishioners. Other involvements included the supervision of the Recreation Ground, the rebuilding of the sea wall and esplanade in 1993 and the provision of Housing Association homes in the Avenue and Princes Road. After the storm of 1987 Chris obtained and planted an avenue of horse chestnut trees the length of Summers Lane to replace the elms destroyed both by the storm and by Dutch elm disease.

His lifelong regard for all serving men was demonstrated by his association with the Isle of Wight Rifles, the British Legion and the Royal Artillery Association.

Chris Cokes was undoubtedly "Of the people and for the people" and his dedication to both the people and the environs of Totland bears this phrase out.