



Top Consell de Formentera official Alejandra Ferrer and heritage chief Raquel Guasch were on hand today as a plaque went up to commemorate the rechristening, ninety years ago today, of Sant Francesc’s Plaça de la Constitució. On 14 April 1931, six weeks after proclamation of the Second Spanish Republic, decision-makers at the local plenary assembly agreed to change ‘Plaça de la Constitució’ to ‘Plaça de la República’.

Today, municipal archivists and the Formentera Department of Heritage have uncovered meeting minutes from 1931 in which members of the municipal council approved the renaming.

President Ferrer believes the Second Republic-era document can shed light on an important chapter of Formentera’s past. She described it as “a curious and thrilling find from a hugely significant period for democratic and social growth. On Formentera in particular, islanders hailed improvements in education and progress towards a more egalitarian society, and agitated for a government not subordinate to power holders on Eivissa. Trade unions and local civic organisations of the day were extremely active as well. We hope the efforts of our archivists keep illuminating the secrets of our past. It’s crucial we continue to recuperate this historical memory”.

Councillor Guasch said the moment underscores the “values, the true pillars of democracy —freedom, justice, equality, education and secularism— that permeated the Second Republic”. She insisted, “We must remember the historical moment when the aspiration for modernity was cut short by a coup, war and dictatorship under Franco”. And Guasch praised “the recent work by the archivists that resurfaced this document”, and highlighted a fragment now available for viewing.

Name change

The rebranding had been proposed by a man named Pedro Juan Ferrer. A sailor and a member of the Aliança Republicana party, Juan was Formentera’s first deputy mayor when the republican town council was formed on 19 April 1931. (The island’s mayor was Joan Colomar Escandell.) Self-taught in the systems of thought and anarchist praxis of social organisation, Juan was described by teacher Vicent “Blai” Serra Ferrer as one of the “authentic anarchists”.

“Plaça de la Constitució” had been so baptised in 1812. On 14 August of that year, a royal decree set out that “the main square of all the towns in Spain henceforth be called ‘Plaza de la Constitución’”. The designation appears in assorted documents until 19 May 1931, when the square became ‘Plaça de la República’ until the end of the Spanish civil war. Accounts of the new name under Franco are elusive, although some documents do refer to a “Plaza de la Iglesia”. In 1981, at a full-house gathering of Formentera’s municipal authority, socialist councillors led a successful push for “a commemorative plaque in the Sant Francesc square reading ‘Plaça de sa Constitució’, the plaza’s name for many years now”.

4 June 2021

Communications Department

Consell de Formentera