

HYPHE CIVIC SOCIETY

Minutes of the 72nd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING Held in the Town Hall on Tuesday 9th MAY 2017 at 7pm

The Society's Chairman, Christopher Melchers, welcomed those present (about 50) to the Society's 72nd Annual General Meeting. He thanked everyone very much for giving up their free time to attend the AGM and stated that their support was very much appreciated.

The Chairman announced that the Civic Society's President, Doug Amans was indisposed and had given his apologies. In the President's absence the Chairman invited the Society's Vice-Chairman, Crispin Davies, to undertake Doug's duties. The Chairman commented that as well as dealing with the usual formalities of an AGM, the Committee would try to tell the members what we have been doing on their behalf during the last year and give those present the chance to tell the Society what they would like us to do in the coming year.

The Chairman then introduced a surprising and delightful presentation led by Mrs. Sonette Schwartz, Principal of Brockhill Park Performing Arts College, and her colleagues Jonny Hobbes (student) and Luke Haisell (teacher). The College is trying to establish closer links with the town and they explained some of their ideas as well, including two of the College's business ventures such as a now viable farm and farm shop. How little we knew about this wonderful resource on our doorstep!

THE AGM

Apologies for absence were received from 19 members.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Minutes of the previous AGM were approved by a show of hands and signed by the Chairman. There were no matters arising.

TREASURER'S REPORT – Alan Joyce

The Treasurer stated the balance sheet for the year shows an excess of expenditure over income of £1013.95. This is also reflected in the drop in the level of reserves. He then went on to explain any significant differences between this and last year's accounts.

INCOME

General Donations: Last year the Society received 3 donations totalling £463 whereas this year there were only 2 totalling £196, both from members, and £74 from the Christmas open evening, together with smaller donations from members at subscription time.

Interest: The Virgin Charity interest rate has been maintained at 1% which is still a very competitive rate for non-personal accounts.

Gift Aid: The level of refund has been maintained. The annual membership subscription is eligible for gift aid. The Society encourages members who are tax payers and who have not already signed a gift aid declaration to do so.

Publications: The drop in level of publication sales was due to the complete sell-out by last October of our publication 'Echoes from the Sky' by Richard Scarth. We had hoped to carry out a reprint but the copyright is held by Richard's widow. She had, in the meantime, been approached by Peter Osborne, an independent bookseller & author, who undertook to revise, expand and update the publication which she accepted. He has an in-depth knowledge of the Sound Mirrors and has partly written about them in his book on the history of Biggin Hill. The treasurer has been in regular contact with him, and he has now published the book, and has kindly given the Society a copy for our archives. This will be available to all our members to loan. Anyone wishing to loan the copy should contact the Treasurer. The balance comes from the sale of our other Society publications, usually on display at the Talks evenings.

EXPENDITURE

Society Subscriptions: The Civic Voice and Kent History Federation increases covered both the 2016/17 and 2017/18 which were paid in advance.

Society Donations: Only 2 donations were made - £64 to the Hythe Festival Company and £50 to the Royal British Legion to include the Remembrance Day Wreath.

Talks Fees: These continue to vary year on year but still are within the allocated annual budget of £1000.

Insurance: The increase is in line with general increase in premiums.

Administration: The main increase was due to printing costs for the Society's revised Constitution and distribution to all members following guidance from the Charity Commission. In addition a switch was made for the printing costs for the talks programme circulated to all members, from the Newsletter budget to the Administration budget. The other administrative costs are those incurred by Committee members for general stationery and stamps etc required for Committee business.

Website: There was an increase to renew the domain name and also expenses incurred by the website designer which had not been claimed in previous years.

Holman's Field Plaque: This was the cost involved in replacing the plaque, which had been vandalised.

Guided Walks Leaflets: Printing costs to replenish the stock of guided walks leaflets.

Reserve Accounts: These accounts have been set up for specific purposes. We now seek occasional funding from HTC, SDC and KCC for these projects in addition to donations given by local businesses.

The Treasurer thanked David Carter for his examination of the annual accounts and for his valuable advice. The Treasurer also thanked the Newsletter distributors for their efforts to collect the subscriptions early,

MEMBERSHIP - Alan Joyce

784 individuals – a reduced figure as unfortunately we lost members through deaths etc.

TREES – Alan Joyce

The planted hedgerows mentioned in previous years are continuing to thrive with some natural damage and vandalism. Replacements will be planted in the late Autumn. The Society has assisted in providing advice to a number of members re tree problems and has liaised accordingly with the SDC Arboriculture Officer.

CYCLING – Alan Joyce

Cycle Shepway Committee (CSC) representations to Shepway District Council and subsequently Kent County Council Highways, for a coastal cycle path from Folkestone to Dungeness are now being actioned and will be developed in Phases. **Phase 1** from Folkestone to the Hythe Bay Fish Restaurant has commenced to improve the safety, particularly along the Sandgate Seafront. **Phase 2** A route survey is being carried out by KCC, from the Fish Restaurant to The Redoubt. Clearly the major issue is the Ranges. Discussions with the MoD, agreed in principle, are to fence screening and adjustment of the fence further from the road on the section of the A259 from the Martello Lakes development to the Redoubt. Funding is now provisionally approved and work is due to start in 2018.

ST. LEONARDS CHURCHYARD – Alan Joyce

The joint Society / PCC team, as well as other volunteers, has continued regularly throughout the year to carry out ongoing maintenance work. More people are needed to join the work force. We publicise the work days in advance - usually a Wednesday morning. The hedgerow planted in November 2012 is thriving.

EATON LANDS – Alan Joyce

The Society and Hythe Environmental Community Group (formerly Transition Hythe) are continuing discussions with HTC about a community orchard.

ARCHIVES - Alan Joyce

The overhauling of the Society archives and cataloguing our library of books and research material is ongoing. The intention is to list the catalogued items on the History Group website, so that all Society members can access the material which we have started listing. This will take some time to be completed.

PLANNING MATTERS – Crispin Davies

The main issues in the last 12 months have been the continuing saga of Princes Parade, a proposal for a new town at Otterpool Park and the continuing review of the Shepway Local Plan. In the coming 12 months the Society will have the same concerns again plus a review of the Shepway Core Strategy.

Princes Parade: In February 2017 Shepway Cabinet endorsed an officer report to continue to work towards submission of a planning application for the development of Princes Parade for a leisure centre (swimming pool, a fitness studio, car parking but removing the sports hall), 150 houses on a smaller overall footprint, a larger area of public open space and an enhanced promenade area. The planning application is expected later this year. The Society's policy is to totally oppose any development on Princes Parade. This must remain as open space and with public access which is currently denied. If this site proves undevelopable for whatever reason then the proposed leisure centre should be built on either the Smiths' medical site or on a site at Martello Lakes.

Otterpool Park: In December 2015 Shepway DC purchased Otterpool Manor farm as an investment. In March 2016 the Government invited expressions of interest for new garden settlements. Shepway DC submitted Otterpool Park in mid June 2016. In mid November 2016 Government gave the go-ahead for Otterpool Park with a financial grant towards preparatory work. There was a public consultation opportunity in early December 2016. The second round of public consultation was to have been in May but has been postponed because of the forthcoming General Election. The Committee has insufficient information to come to any conclusion on Otterpool Park and how it may affect Hythe over the next 20/30 years. So we have asked the Council Leader to come and put the case to members.

Shepway Places and Policies Local Plan: All planning authorities must have up to date policies. The lack of an up to date Local Plan with at least a 5 year supply of identified housing sites gives a strong advantage to developers. In October and November 2016 there was a consultation period for the Preferred Options stage of the Local Plan. HCS made about 10 comments after it had heard the views of members at a specially arranged meeting addressed by the Head of the SDC Planning Policy Team. The next stage is expected later in 2017.

Shepway Core Strategy: To reflect local changes and national guidance Shepway DC is now carrying out a review of the 2013 Core Strategy. The Core Strategy is the overarching, long term plan for the district to 2026. The policies in this plan have formed the basis for the Local Plan, deciding planning applications and guiding public and private sector investment decisions. Consultation on the Core Strategy preferred options is expected early in 2018 with adoption in 2020.

Planning Applications: The Committee continues to monitor all planning applications in Hythe - about 230 per year. The Society does not make many comments to Shepway DC as it is largely concerned about major and significant proposals and not minor changes to existing buildings – except in the Conservation Areas.

The Committee will provide you with the opportunities to comment on policy issues over the next 12 months and expects to arrange meetings for members on the Submission Draft of the Local Plan, on the planning application at Princes Parade, on Otterpool Park and on the Core Strategy. The Committee continues to value members' views on the future of Hythe.

NEWSLETTER AND WEBSITE - Joyce Carter

Newsletter: The format and content of the newsletter continues to receive positive feedback from the Society's members. Feedback is always welcomed and if members have a suggestion for an article you would like in the newsletter please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Website: Since the 2016 AGM there have been over 4,500 unique visitors to the website and, on average, 20 enquiries/emails are received each month from the website. These enquiries include newsletters from other societies - for example Civic Voice, or from members advising of a change of email address. The Society has members emailing in to advise the Society about potential planning issues and, quite often, challenging requests for local information from members of the public and other websites. A Kent blogger recently wrote asking if the Society could look at a short film from the Imperial War Museum and confirm that it was of Hythe and not Hastings as the IWM had classified it – after some detective work our History Group was happy to oblige!

To keep up with the way people are using the internet via their smart phones and tablets as well as on PCs a small sub-committee is working to redesign the website to make it more user friendly on a smaller screen. With the help of Ron Greenwood the Society hopes to have the new site up and running later this year – watch this space!

GUIDED WALKS - Sally Chesters.

A record year for guided walks with a total of 461 people taking part. Numbers were, of course, enhanced by Hythe Festival week when six walks took place with an attendance of 218 walkers. There were 385 individuals over the season and 76 in five parties – East Kent Trefoil Guild; Kent Active Retirement Association; Chatham Heart Group; the Lark Laners and the National Grid Retired Members Group. Our group of guides once again did an amazing job in bringing our town to life with energy and enthusiasm. John Woodward has now retired after many years as one of our more erudite guides and a big thank you goes to him for all his support. If you are interested in Hythe's history and enjoy talking to people, then please consider becoming a guide. We can guarantee you an interesting time.

HYPHE IN BLOOM – Sally Chesters

The planters in prospect Road last summer were much admired, as were the planters in the High Street through both the winter and summer seasons. Longacre Nursery did a wonderful job with the watering and the whole town looked colourful and well-cared-for during the whole of the summer season. Our daffodil bulb planting programme continues, with more bulbs placed at the entrance to Green Lane and in St Leonard's Churchyard. Members of the HIB volunteer group have joined with Saltwood Village Society to form The Friends of Sandling Station. In this guise, we have done a huge amount of work at the station, cutting back overgrown shrubs and putting in new plants. Southeastern have covered the cost of the new plants and are delighted with what we have achieved so far. Lots to do though, so please join us if you can – it is very satisfying. Thanks, again, to our wonderful team of volunteer planters and waterers. We are always looking for more volunteers so, if you would like Hythe to continue looking as colourful as it does, please come along and join us – a tap and a car are the only things required. Thanks, too, to Hythe Town Council, Gopak, Charlier Construction and Lawrence and co estate Agents for their financial support and thanks, too, to Waitrose for, yet again, allowing us to participate in their green disc scheme. Thanks to The Hythe Brasserie, Hendricks Chocolate Shop and the Old Town Barber Shop for their contribution in kind.

TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS – Sally Chesters

This time last year work had almost been completed on Mackeson Square and now the Society hopes you agree that the works have transformed this once rather dull and dark area of the town centre, transforming it into a space much enjoyed by all who sit and read or eat an ice cream there. It remains only to install the promised interpretation board covering the history of the Mackeson Brewery and we shall be finished. We still await KCC to plant a new tree in the square to replace the two which were removed on the edge of the pavement.

The signage to the new Tourist Information Centre at the RHDR is still in progress and we hope will be completed within the next few months.

In November, we were very disappointed to discover that our new map in the car park at Aldi had been badly damaged by a moving vehicle and this will be removed, refurbished and replaced as soon as we can raise the funds to do so. This year we have turned our attention to two old, out of date maps in the town which needed updating. One located on the seafront has been removed, sandblasted and awaits new paint, at which point it will be installed in Portland Road car park. The other, in Red Lion Square, will be repainted, then both will have new maps affixed, similar to the others around the town. This will bring the total to 11 maps.

If there are any projects you think would enhance the town in any way please let the Society know as we should be happy to progress them with you.

TALKS - Ian Hill

Ian has recently taken over the organisation of the talks team from Valerie Mercer who we thank most sincerely for her work in both this area and that of the events we organise. There has been another well supported season of talks with attendances averaging about 70. On the memorable occasion when Chris Shaw told us the history of the Shorncliffe military establishment his audience was well over 100. Particular thanks go to Betty Black, Valerie Mercer and John Keeffe for sharing the duties of selecting and arranging the talks and hosting the speakers. Both Valerie and John are standing down from the Team. Ev Joyce has stepped forward so we need one more volunteer. Next season's programme is nearly finalised. Thanks go to our regular audience for their continuing support and we hope that they enjoy our choices for next season.

EVENTS - Betty Black

Betty has taken over Valerie Mercer's role of event organising. Arrangements are being made for a summer outing to Chelsea Hospital in July and the autumn lunch will be held at the Hythe Bowls club in October.

HYTHE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP – Anne Petrie

Anne and the members of this group are pursuing their work with great enthusiasm. This work currently includes research into the Deedes Family, historical graffiti in St. Leonards Church, local maps, the history of Portex, WW1, and local archaeological discoveries.

LEGAL MATTERS – Chairman

In Mike O'Sullivan's absence, Chris Melchers explained that although Mike is unable to continue as Vice-Chairman he is willing to stand for re-election as a member of the Committee and provide the Society with the benefit of his wide legal knowledge. This is very valuable in guiding many of our decisions.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – Christopher Melchers

The Chairman stated that he had the support and benefit of a very dedicated team of officers and Committee members and he is particularly proud of the many areas of life in Hythe to which the Society has been able to make a positive contribution. There are still too many uncertainties – such as Princes Parade, Otterpool Park, the infamous M20 Lorry Park – to enable the Society to be too self-congratulatory. Recent successes including the restoration of Mackeson Square, the installation of nearly a dozen town maps, the continued recognition of good building design and the spirit of service to the community through our awards, have been well worthwhile.

The Chairman was also particularly proud to receive, on behalf of the Society, a donation from the Venetian Fete Society which served to recognise our continuing contribution to Hythe as well as the help which many members give to the Venetian Fete. The Society also achieved a small but worthwhile contribution in terms of the return from KCC Libraries of an historic picture of Hythe painted in about 1810 which disappeared from the library in 1974. KCC had the painting nicely re-framed.

The Chairman mentioned again the good cooperation between ourselves and the Save Princes Parade group. The Society will continue to work in partnership to try to prevent the loss of this land to development.

The Chairman thanked John Keeffe who is retiring this year. John was elected to the Committee as our archivist at the 2007 AGM having been co-opted some time before. He undertook this work with great enthusiasm, beavering away in the very small space that the Society has at Oaklands and succeeded in making it infinitely tidier and thus paved the way for our plan to ultimately publish a full catalogue. John also served on the Talks sub-committee. John has been a member of the Committee for more than ten years and it was a pleasure to announce that, in accordance with our constitution, he is now an Honorary Life Member. This was followed by a round of applause.

The Chairman then thanked all our other members for their continuing support and encouragement, to commend the unstinting work of the Committee and the many volunteers and assure you that, if re-elected, the whole Committee will continue to do its best for Hythe.

INCREASE IN SUBSCRIPTIONS: As the Society's regular expenditure has been increasing year on year and the annual subscription has remained at the same level for the last 10 years expenditure is outstripping income. Therefore the Treasurer proposed, seconded by the Chairman, that the annual subscription be increased from £8 per household to £10 per household with effect from 1st April, 2018. This proposal was **agreed unanimously** by those present.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR

Christopher Melchers, Chairman, announced the election. He stated that he was standing down as Chairman and proposed that Crispin Davies be elected as Chairman. This proposal had been seconded by the Committee and was **agreed unanimously**. Crispin Davies took the chair and thanked everyone present for electing him Chairman. He then gave a big thank you to Christopher Melchers as the outgoing Chairman and thanked him for his chairmanship of the Society over the past 6 and a half years. On behalf of the Committee and members the Chairman then presented Christopher Melchers with a handsome painting of Hythe by Hilary Scoble in recognition of the Committee's appreciation of his excellent work as Chairman.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Vice- Chairman: The Chairman was delighted to propose Christopher Melchers as Vice Chairman. There were no other nominations. He was seconded by the Executive Committee so that Christopher's experience and expertise was not lost. This was **agreed unanimously**.

Treasurer and Secretary: The Chairman announced that Alan Joyce and Mary Hunter respectively had been proposed by himself and seconded by the Executive Committee. There were no other nominations. Both were **elected unanimously**.

ELECTION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

The following persons were proposed by the Chairman and seconded by the Secretary: Betty Black, Joyce Carter, Sally Chesters, Ian Hill, Valerie Mercer, Mike O'Sullivan, Anne Petrie, Michael Tubman and Jane Twist. All were willing to serve. There were no other nominees. It was **unanimously agreed** that all those listed were elected.

The Chairman pointed out that there were 3 vacancies on the Executive Committee and appealed to any members in the audience or otherwise to volunteer for what would be an interesting role.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no previously specified other business.

It was mentioned that yet another 2 charity shops were to be opened which is unbalancing the number of charity shops to independent traders. The Chairman commented that, perhaps, it was better to have charity shops than empty shops. Brin Hughes expressed his thanks for all the work carried out by Society members. Ashley Tanton mentioned a cycle route across Hythe Green.

CLOSING REMARKS

The Chairman reminded those present of various future activities and for members to feed back any ideas and thoughts on any topics for meetings affecting Hythe.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Signed.....
Crispin Davies, Chairman

Date: Tuesday 8 May 2018