

HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

(Registered Charity Number 283177)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2020/21 YEAR

The best laid plans of the Society to celebrate its 75th anniversary were curtailed by the covid-19 pandemic restrictions on face to face meetings. The Society gradually learnt new skills – Zoom!

President Elect

Your Executive Committee will be proposing Christopher Melchers, the immediate past Chairman, as President to the Annual General Meeting (via Zoom) on 11 May 2021.

Vice Presidents

Hilda Scarth, the only Vice President, resigned during the year as her ties with Hythe have diminished over the years. Your Executive Committee will be proposing both Roger Neaves and Mike Umbers as Vice Presidents to the Annual General Meeting.

75th Anniversary

The Society celebrated its 75th anniversary on 1st February 2020. On the day itself a fully subscribed quiz night was held at the Tin Tabernacle. An anniversary booklet called "Our Time in Hythe", with a foreword by our Patron Lord Boyce, has been published and distributed free to members. Then covid-19 struck and all further events were postponed until 2021.

From January 2021 onwards a working group has supported the Executive Committee with preparations for a series of events which hopefully can be held during the period 13th-22nd August - subject to social restrictions. The plans include: a 'Heritage Hythe' poster display across the town at many locations featuring past photographs and accompanying historical information where the Society is working in partnership with the Hythe Business and Tourism Association as a significant number of the locations are shops and businesses; heritage trail walks with route information leaflets; a High Street display and information stand; a music concert in St. Leonard's Church in partnership with the Friends of St Leonard's Church; a special Hythe-focused evening talk also in St Leonard's Church; and, all supported by dedicated Heritage Hythe pages and material (film footage, etc.) on the Society's website.

Membership

At the end of March 2021 there were 712 members compared with 768 a year previously. 76 members resigned, died or moved away 20 new members joined. Remember, the larger our membership the greater our voice!

Finances

The Society's thanks go to Dave Carter for "examining" the accounts in line with Charity Commission guidance. The annual accounts show an excess of expenditure over income of some £900. The "examined" accounts are enclosed within this annual report together with detailed comments from the Hon Treasurer on the reverse of the accounts.

During the year all Nationwide Building Society accounts, including those for the Hythe in Bloom and Town Centre Projects were transferred to Barclays Bank as the Society was advised by Nationwide that it was in the process of closing all Treasurers Trust accounts. This has enabled the Society to undertake most of its transactions by free bank transfer which has been of benefit during the covid-19 pandemic.

The Society received a bequest of £100 from its Vice President – Hilda Scarth. All income tax payers can make their annual subscription subject to Gift Aid and, consequently, the Society benefitted by over £550.

Talks and Events

Sadly, because of the covid-19 restrictions, the Society started this year by cancelling talks, the Helpers' Party and the Christmas Social Evening. However, after Christmas the Society decided to try to present the talks remotely via Zoom and details of how to "log on" were emailed to members.

The first talk via Zoom was on 9th February. Andrew Ashton spoke about Banksy, the famous (or infamous) street artist, and it was a fantastic success. About 35 members were anticipated but, in fact, there were 68 "screens" with over 80 members present. The March talk was by Imogen Corregan on The Searchlight Girls of WWII. Another success! Thank you to all who mastered Zoom.

Newsletter

The newsletter was produced bi-monthly and, although many members receive electronic copies, grateful thanks go to those who distributed the printed copies. The Society thanks the new team of Jill Ayling and Kim Murton for their joint editorship of the newsletter.

Hythe Local History Group

The Local History Group has not met since February 2020 and although it has recently started to meet via video conference, the continued closure of archives and libraries has seriously impacted on the ability to carry out any meaningful research.

However, members have continued to work on some individual projects, drawing on previous investigations. These include a history of Beachborough and the manors of Newington and Cheriton (on the Group's website); a history of the hospitals of St Bartholomew & St John in Hythe (book available from Lawrence Estate Agent); and, a history of Saltwood (Volume 1 now in preparation). Sadly, covid-19 restrictions have delayed the publication of a history of the Deedes family in Hythe.

The Group has also photographed all the grave markers in St Leonard's churchyard to complement the catalogue made of them some years ago and the Group is now in the process of uploading the descriptions and photos to www.findagrave.com

Individual members have contributed to the posters being produced for the anniversary celebrations in August 2021 and queries continue to be answered about history and heritage from members of the public.

Archives

The overhauling of the Society's archives and cataloguing the library of books and research material is ongoing. The intention is to digitalise these so that Society members can access these materials.

Guided Walks

There were no guided walks in 2020 due to the covid-19 pandemic. Unfortunately, covid-19 restrictions have resulted in the 2021 season starting in July rather than June. Fingers crossed!

Hythe in Bloom

Some difficult decisions needed to be taken in 2020 owing to the covid-19 situation at the time of placing the order for plants. The closure of Longacre Nursery – the long-term supplier of our plants – in March meant that a new supplier was given the opportunity to make their mark in Prospect Road.....and they did. It looked amazing and was much admired.

A huge thank you to all our sponsors who, despite the difficult economic conditions at the time, all supported us as usual. Thank you to Hythe Town Council, Lawrence and Co Estate Agents, Gopak and Charlier Construction for their continuing support which was appreciated even more than usual. Thanks, too, to the volunteer waterers who kept the Town Square looking good.

In addition to providing floral displays in the town, 2020 saw the Hythe in Bloom volunteers- and others- working hard to support FHDC to keep many of the flowerbeds in the town weed free. FHDC was short of

casual labour over the summer- and beyond- and the volunteers did an amazing job of weeding and tidying the wide borders next to the canal and the area next to the pelican crossing in Prospect Road. This work continues and now includes the sensory bed at Oaklands which will be partly re-planted in the autumn.

Town Centre Projects

The Cinque Ports interpretation board which stood on Marine Parade blew down in 2019 has been repaired and replaced. Funding was provided by the Society, Cllr Lesley Whybrow's FHDC Ward Budget and Cllr Rory Love's KCC Member Grant. The new panel is a handsome addition to the promenade.

Trees

The Society has continued to assist in providing advice to a number of members and non-members. Currently, as part of the 75th anniversary, HCS is jointly working with the Hythe Green Preservation Society to plant 25 trees in the western corner of Hythe Green. This remains in the planning stage.

St Leonard's Churchyard

The joint Society /PCC team, as well as other volunteers, has continued throughout year to carry out the maintenance work. This remains ongoing every Wednesday mornings from 9am onwards.

Eaton Lands

The Society and the Hythe Environmental Community Group (formerly Transition Hythe) have obtained permission to plant a Community Orchard. Tree planting took place shortly before the first covid-19 lockdown but the wildlife hedge planting was delayed until March 2021. The project to develop information /educational boards with the help of pupils from Brockhill Academy has been put on hold.

Cycling

KCC Highways published a further consultation paper about extending the cycle path alongside the A259 Dymchurch Road from Martello Lakes to the seawall at the Dymchurch Redoubt.

Publications

The Society published "Our Time in Hythe" for the 75th anniversary and published a completely new leaflet. During the first covid-19 lockdown the Society produced "Open Hythe" – a listing of the shops and services that were open during the lockdown that was widely distributed. 9 editions were produced as more and more shops and services adapted to the lockdown.

Website

The website had an average of 548 visitors each month. This is an increase from 475 a year ago.

Planning

In the last year the "Places and Policies Local Plan" has been published and the "Core Strategy" was examined by an independent Government Inspector. This means that the District Council has an up to date policy framework against which to make decisions on planning applications.

This year saw the Executive Committee comment on 13 significant planning applications to the District Council. The Society has a practice of commenting on applications that affect a significant geographical area, that affect the Hythe Conservation area or are likely to create a precedent in that particular location. In deciding upon applications the District Council needs to take into account both National Planning Policy guidance and its own Development Plan. Not all the Society's comments were accepted!

Because the proposed Otterpool development is outside the Society's "area of benefit" the Executive Committee can only comment on its concerns about the effect that Otterpool will have on Hythe rather than the proposed development itself. The Society remains concerned about the future of the High Street.

The long running saga of Princes Parade continued throughout the year. Opponents lost a High Court decision leaving FHDC free to continue with its development plans. The Society remains of the view that

the best long term solution is for Princes Parade to remain as open space but with full public access and the new leisure centre to be built at Martello Lakes – the original proposed site with planning consent.

Hythe Triangle Community Garden

Having helped the trustees of the Triangle move the project forward it is pleasing to note that one member of the Executive Committee is now a trustee in an individual capacity and not on behalf of the Society.

Thanks

The Society would like to thank all the sponsors of its activities, newsletter distributors, planters, waterers, guides and all organisations that work with the Society to make Hythe a better place to live.

Chairman's Report

I would like to sincerely thank all members of the Society's Executive Committee, particularly the Hon Treasurer and the Hon Secretary, for all their hard work over the last year. I have been fortunate in the last year to have had the support of a wonderful group of volunteers who contribute so positively to the Society and to the community life of Hythe for the benefit of all. During the year David Hammond stepped down from the Committee to spend more time with his business during the covid-19 pandemic. There remains much to be done and there are challenges ahead – not least how Hythe returns to a new normal after the covid-19 pandemic.

I would like to express my thanks particularly to Committee members and members of the Hythe Local History Group who, led by Paul Naylor, have devoted many, many hours preparing for the delayed 75th anniversary celebrations.

We will continue to work in partnership with other organisations such as Hythe Town Council, Hythe Environmental Community Group, Saltwood Village Society, Hythe Green Preservation Society, Hythe Business and Tourism Association and the Hythe Triangle Community Garden to provide opportunities to encourage and boost community life in Hythe.

The covid-19 pandemic gave rise to "Open Hythe" – a listing of shops and services open during the first lockdown – but put paid to many of our activities in 2020/21 including the Annual General Meeting and our Talks programme. The Charity Commission has advised charities that, in the covid-19 situation, flexibility is allowed in arrangements for Annual General Meetings. The Society has experimented, successfully, with Zoom for our Talks programme – a learning curve for all.

I would like to thank you and all the other Society members for your continuing support and encouragement; to commend the Committee to you for its unstinting work and enthusiasm; and, to thank all our volunteers who make the Society the success it is. I do assure you that the Society will continue to do its best to make Hythe a better place for us all.

Crispin Davies (Chairman)

April 2021

Officers at 31 March 2021.

Patron: Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL

President Elect: Christopher Melchers

Vice Presidents Elect: Roger Neaves and Mike Umbers

Chairman: Crispin Davies
Hon Secretary: Mary Hunter

Vice Chairman: Betty Black
Hon Treasurer: Alan Joyce

Executive Committee:

Jill Ayling	Sally Chesters	Ian Hill	Christopher Melchers	Kim Murton
Paul Naylor	Anne Petrie	Sally Starbuck	Michael Tubman	