

HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

(Registered Charity Number 283177)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2019/20 YEAR

First of all I must report the sad passing of our President, Doug Amans, on 19 September 2019. Secondly, a happier event – the celebration of the Society's 75th anniversary on 1 February 2020.

President Elect

Your Executive Committee will be proposing Christopher Melchers, the immediate past Chairman, as President to the next Annual General Meeting. In the meantime the position remains unfilled.

75th Anniversary

The Society celebrated its 75th anniversary on 1st February 2020. Several events were planned to mark the anniversary year:

- On the day itself a fully subscribed quiz night was held at the Tin Tabernacle.
- A "summer event" was planned. This will now happen in summer 2021.
- An anniversary booklet called "Hythe in our Time" will be published in late autumn 2020 with a foreword by our Patron, Lord Boyce.
- An autumn quiz is planned for Saturday evening 3 October 2020. Postponed to February 2021.
- 75 trees will be planted.
- An end of the anniversary year quiz in February 2021 is planned.

The Covid-19 pandemic has interrupted the Society's anniversary year. Therefore your Committee will extend the year into summer 2021 to allow the summer event to be held 12 months late!

Membership

At the end of March 2020 there were 768 members compared with 752 a year previously. 65 new members joined but 49 were lost over the year for various reasons.

Membership Group

The objective of this group is to look into ways to make the residents of Hythe more aware of the Society – particularly the younger generation and all those who may not have heard of the Society. To this end:

- The Society purchased an "advertorial" in Hythe Life magazine resulting in 10 new members.
- The February quiz resulted in 2 new members that evening.
- There is a new membership leaflet in the midst of production.

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 just under £1,700. The "examined" accounts are enclosed within this annual report.

The Society received a bequest of £500 from its past President – Doug Amans – and a donation of £150 from the Hythe Venetian Fete Society. All income tax payers can make their annual subscription subject to Gift Aid and, consequently, the Society benefitted by over £550.

Talks and Events

Once again the "Talks' Team", led by Vice Chairman Betty Black, arranged a programme of talks which were all well received by members with the story of "Goldenhurst" and its celebrity occupants (Noel Coward to Julian Clary) and the talk about The Bayeux Tapestry were particularly popular. Unfortunately, our last three talks had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our Christmas Social Evening at the Hythe Sports' Pavilion was a great success with seasonal music from the Saltwood Hand Bells group and a display of 20 water colour paintings by Tony Amess to celebrate the Millennium.

The team planned a Summer Outing to Sir Winston Churchill's home at Chartwell. Unfortunately this event had to be cancelled due to insufficient interest. The Executive Committee encourages your views on such outings – are they important to you or should the idea of a Summer Outing be curtailed.

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 David Hammond for his editorship of the newsletter which is in addition to his normal day job.

Hythe Local History Group

- In May the Group celebrated its 5th anniversary with a birthday party at the Lads' Club. John Osborne, the initiator of the Group, sent a video greeting from his home in California!
- The publication of research into the Deedes family in Hythe has been delayed but publication is expected in 2020.
- Plans to digitise the archives with the help of Smarden Local History Group have been postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- A book "Hythe and Saltwood Remember 1914-18, The Fallen" was published.
- Two Group members have commenced a review of the Conservation area and will be meeting with Hythe Town Council and the District Council to discuss the way forward.
- At St Leonard's church all the medieval graffiti has been photographed, recorded and can be viewed on the Group's website at www.hythehistory.org.
- Celebrations of the 850th anniversary of St Thomas Becket's murder - 2 showings of the 1964 film "Becket" & an open day at Saltwood Castle - are on hold due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Research into Hythe buildings of interest continues with results being added to the website.
- The trustees of St John's and St Bartholomew's Hospitals have commissioned a history of the hospitals.

Archives

The overhaul of the Society archives, library of books and research material is ongoing. In the longer term these will be digitalised so members can access the material more easily.

Town Centre Projects

Financed by County Councillor Martin Whybrow, a second side to the map outside Hythe Bay Fish Restaurant has been provided making the map much more visible and useful. The refurbishment of the Cinque Ports information board on Marine Parade has commenced.

Hythe in Bloom

2019 was another glorious year for Hythe in Bloom with the planters in Prospect Road looking, arguably, the best ever. The normal supplier, Longacre Nursery, has now closed and an alternative supplier is being sought for 2020. Hythe in Bloom is sponsored by Hythe Town Council, Waitrose, Gopak, Lawrence and Co Estate Agents and Charlier Construction. A big thank you to the sponsors, volunteer waterers and planters whom we could not do without.

Trees

The Society has continued to assist in providing advice to members and non-members and has liaised with the District Council's Arboriculture Officer when appropriate.

Guided Walks

The number of walkers in 2019 was well down on 2018 and stood at 183. It was also down on 2017 -a more suitable year for comparison given no Festival week- which saw 215 walkers take part. The volunteer Town Guides continue to do a great job and we have a good number of them at present.

St Leonard's Churchyard

The joint Society/PCC team plus other volunteers have regularly continued throughout year to carry out the maintenance work. More volunteers are welcomed!

Eaton Lands

With the agreement of Hythe Town Council, and in partnership with the Hythe Environmental Community Group, 15 fruit trees were planted by some 20 volunteers in the new community orchard. Funding of £935 was provided by a grant from District Councillor Doug Wade. The planting of a mixed wildlife friendly hedge had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A grant of £2,000 from the Orchard Farm Community Project and the involvement of Brockhill School will enable provision of interpretation boards for educational purposes.

Cycling

Phase 3 of the coastal cycle path from Folkestone to Dungeness from St Leonards Road to Reachfields is on hold while Phase 4 along the A259 to Martello Lakes has been partly completed.

Publications

The Society reprinted "The Last Days of Hythe Harbour" and published "Hythe & Saltwood Remember 1914-18, The Fallen".

Website

The website had an average of 475 visitors each month. This figure is similar to the previous year.

Planning

This year saw the Executive Committee comment on 11 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!

The District Council was busy in reviewing its Development Plan in 2019/20 – both its "Core Strategy" and its "Local Plan". The major changes in the Core Strategy were an increase in the housing target (set by Government) and the inclusion of Otterpool Garden Town. The Society was particularly involved in the "Places and Policies Local Plan" both by submitting written comments on draft documents and by appearing in person at the "Examination in Public" held in front of an independent Inspector appointed by the Government in May 2019. The final document has yet to be published by the Inspector.

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 is especially concerned about the future of Hythe High Street.

Hythe Triangle Community Garden

The Society was approached by the Hythe Triangle Community Garden trustees to assist them move the project forward. Some of the Executive Committee undertook a “due diligence” exercise on the trustees vision and the Executive Committee offered alternative ways in which the Society could assist.

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 positively to the Society and to the community life of Hythe for the benefit of all. During the year the Executive Committee has been boosted by the recruitment of Jill Ayling and Paul Naylor. 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.

We will continue to work in partnership with a number of other organisations such as Hythe Town Council, Hythe Environmental Community Group, Saltwood Village Society, Hythe Green Preservation Society, Hythe Business and Tourism Association and Hythe Triangle Community Garden.

The Covid-19 pandemic has put paid to much of our activities in 2020 including the Annual General Meeting normally held in May at the Town Hall. The Charity Commission has advised charities that, in the Covid-19 situation, flexibility is allowed in arrangements for Annual Meetings. The arrangements for the Society’s Annual Meeting are set out below.

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

Report and Accounts agreed by the Executive Committee on 21 July 2020.
