

HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

(Registered Charity Number 283177)

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2021/22 YEAR

The aim of the Society is to protect and celebrate the past, respond to current activities in Hythe relevant to the Society and to play its part about the future of Hythe so that residents and visitors alike can appreciate the best of Hythe.

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. These 2021 events were:

Heritage Hythe - Over a three-week period during August 2021 the Society held its special 75th Anniversary events, albeit one year later than originally planned. The 'Heritage Hythe...On This Site' trails proved extremely popular with members, residents, local businesses and visitors, so much so the initial two-week display period was extended by a further week. About 400 persons visited the High Street Information Stand, pleasingly there many compliments, a healthy sale of HCS publications and a good number of new members joined the Society. The two events at St Leonard's Church also proved popular despite the social restrictions at the time. Thanks to Vice President Mike Umbers for his informative talk about the Grand Redoubt (followed up by a special visit to the Redoubt in December) and to the Ashford Youth Jazz Orchestra for performing at the sold-out closing concert.

A Book of the Posters - Due to the popularity of the 'On This Site' displays and the many requests for these (over 200 individual posters) to be published in a book, the Society continues to work on publishing an e-book for later this year, hopefully by the summer. The opportunity to include some additional material is being taken! If this again proves popular a limited publication of a hard-copy version will be considered.

Photographic Archive in Association with the Kent Photo Archive (KPA) – The Society's archive contains a large quantity of photographic material, including several thousands of negatives bequeathed to the Society in the late 1990s by the late Jack Adams, a former professional photographer in Hythe. With the aim of making this material more accessible to members and others, the Society has combined with the KPA on a project to scan as much of this as is reasonable to achieve. The KPA is a small voluntary group and has volunteered to scan our material with a view to it being published on both the KPA website and our own. So far over 2,000 images are scanned with another 1,000 in the pipeline. The next stage is to catalogue the scans and make them ready for upload.

GOVERNANCE REVIEW

As a small registered charity it is important that the Society keeps its formal arrangements (the Constitution) under review to ensure that the Society at least meets the minimum expectations of the Charity Commission. During 2021/22 a comprehensive review has been undertaken. A revised draft Constitution is published with the agenda for the 2022 Annual General Meeting. The revisions update our formal arrangements and follow the recommendations of the Commission.

MEMBERSHIP

At the end of March 2022 there were 741 members compared with 712 a year previously - an increase of 29. During the year 67 members either resigned, moved away or died but the Society recruited 81 new members. 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 £600.

Our balance sheet for the year (next page) shows an excess of expenditure over income of £601.86, just under £300 less than last year. The gradual removal of the Covid-19 restrictions has had an impact on this year's outcome. Your attention is drawn to:

Income:

Subscriptions - The increase was mainly due to new members recruited at the Society's Hythe Heritage display stand in August.

Talks and Walks Donations – The increase was due to Covid-19 relaxations.

Interest - The interest shown in last year's account was from our Nationwide Account which was closed during this year.

Publications – The increase was largely due to the sale of publications at the Society's Heritage Hythe display stand in August.

General Purposes Fund (GPF) - The increase was partly due to inter-bank transfers of £3009.70 from the Society's Hythe in Bloom Account to the Main Account. Please refer to the Expenditure GPF Account. Also the Heritage Hythe Project receipts of £1197, and FHDC member ward grants totalling £300, and donation from Colebrook & Sturridge of £150.

Expenditure:

Talks fees - The increase was partly due to the talks by Zoom and the subsequent relaxation of Covid-19 rules enabling talks to resume at the School.

Rent / Hall Hire - Increase was due to talks resuming at the school hall.

Publications - The main cost of £300 was the publication of "The Deedes Family in Hythe, Kent 1580 – 1800" written by Chris McGonigal, a Society member, and involved with the Society's Local History Group.

General Purposes Fund - Bank transfers referred to above under income.

Presentation Awards - Increase costs for awards given to the Salvation Army and Hythe Community Hub for their excellent work helping Hythe residents during the Covid-19 lockdown periods.

Heritage Hythe Project - The overall expenditure exceeded income by £260.64.

Hythe in Bloom and Town Centre Accounts:

Both accounts are restricted accounts. The funds for these projects are raised from HTC, F HDC, KCC and from donations given by local businesses.

TALKS AND EVENTS

The Society had chosen its speakers for Autumn 2021 with great care only booking those who would agree to speak via Zoom. As October drew near the Covid-19 infection rate was still falling and we were able to start back at Hythe Bay School - our usual venue.

From the feedback received the Society knows that many members enjoyed the Zoom talks - sitting on your settee with a glass of wine! Even the occasional dog barking or phone ringing with those who hadn't "muted" properly seemed to add to the occasion.

However, as Christmas approached the dreaded virus was spreading rapidly and it was decided to cancel both the Christmas Social evening and once again present the January talks via Zoom. But fortunately since February there has been a return to face to face talks at the school.

As usual the talks have covered a huge range of topics, from "1066" to "The Festival of Britain" and a look behind the scenes with some very amusing film excerpts from "TV's Golden Years".

Attendance has been slightly lower than in the past as many members were still apprehensive about mixing in numbers. But the Society is sure that you will find next year's programme both interesting and

informative. Remember sometimes a talk that you don't really think is your cup of tea could well turn out to be one of the most interesting. So don't judge a talk by its title and come along anyway.

NEWSLETTER

The newsletter continued to be produced bi-monthly and, although many members receive electronic copies, grateful thanks go to the volunteers who distributed the printed copies. The Society thanks the new team of Jill Ayling and Kim Murton for their joint editorship of the newsletter. It gets better with each issue!

AWARDS

Following the 2021 Annual Meeting Outstanding Service Awards were presented to both the Salvation Army and the Hythe Community Hub for their excellent work helping Hythe residents during the Covid-19 lockdown periods. A Civic Award was presented to the architect, developer and occupants of the two pairs of semi-detached houses at Grey Walls in Albert Road.

PUBLICATIONS

During the year the Society published "The Deedes Family in Hythe, Kent 1580 – 1800" written by Chris McGonigal who is a Society member.

HYTHE LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

The Local History Group is now meeting in person again but has changed our meeting venue. The long, steep staircase at Oaklands meant that the location was not accessible for anyone with mobility issues and we now have the use of the Choir Vestry at St Leonard's church. This has easy, flat access and the bonus of being in a suitably historic building.

Members have been continuing, where possible, with their research during the pandemic and Mike de la Mare has published the first volume (of an eventual four) of his history of Saltwood. The Group has also contributed to the new self-guided walk booklet for Hythe and enjoyed a very interesting presentation on the Horton family of Hythe.

Members took part in researching & delivering Heritage Hythe Week in August and Black History month in October 2021.

The Group has also responded to a large number of queries via the website and through direct contact with HCS and St Leonard's church. These included questions on Eastbridge House, Marine Parade, Cade Cottage and Brick Kiln House. Most recently the Group dealt with an enquiry from the British Titanic Society about a memorial in the church.

Covid-19 continued to thwart some of the Group's plans, but we are planning a group visit to Richborough in September 2022.

ARCHIVES

The overhauling of the Society's archives and cataloguing of the library of books and research material is ongoing. The intention is to digitalise the catalogued items so that Society members and others can access the material more easily. At the moment a team from the Kent Photo Archive are digitalising the photos held in the archive.

GUIDED WALKS

Owing to the rolling Covid-19 situation guided walks began again in July 2021 - rather than June - and were reasonably well supported given the circumstances. The Society entertained 158 walkers on Thursdays and had one party of 18 Rotarians making a total of 176. Interestingly, there were only 183 walkers for the full season in 2019, so not a bad result.

A big "thank you" to the Town Guides, as always, for their great work enthusing about our town.

HYTHE IN BLOOM

Another wonderful year for Hythe in Bloom (HiB) with the displays in Prospect Road attracting many compliments and a return to normal service in the High Street with troughs full of flowers there too.

HiB continue to suffer from the closure of Longacre Nursery in 2020 as HiB now pays more than twice as much to our new supplier for the railing baskets in Prospect Road. HiB is able to weather the storm through the generosity of Hythe Town Council and our commercial sponsors – Lawrence and Co, Gopak and Charlier Construction. Long may that continue!

The Tuesday morning gardening volunteers have continued to support FHDC which still seems to be short of staff. The main focus of work in 2021 was Mackeson Square, the wide borders by the canal and Wakefield Walk. The Princess Diana Sensory Garden at Oaklands and the bed adjacent to Blue Shield Insurance in Prospect Road received particular attention with some replanting taking place in both to great effect. Plants for the former were funded by Cllr Doug Wade's FHDC's ward budget and the latter by Boyd Garrard of Blue Shield.

A huge thank you, as usual, goes to all the volunteers who show up every Tuesday, to those who come when required and to those who water the High Street so enthusiastically during the summer months. The Society and Hythe residents, as well as visitors, appreciates their voluntary work.

TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS

The Committee identified a number of past residents who, by their considerable achievements, are felt to warrant an English Heritage style blue plaque. Work continues on establishing how best to organise the procurement and installation of suitable plaques. It is hoped that this project will be completed – if only in part – by this time next year.

TREES

The Society has continued to assist in providing advice to a number of members and non-members. As part of its 75th Anniversary activities the Society contributed 3 semi-mature trees for the Hythe Green Wood – an initiative by the Hythe Green Preservation Society.

EATON LANDS

The Society and the Hythe Environmental Community Group (formerly Transition Hythe) had planted a Community Orchard with a single line wildlife hedge. In April 2022 the hedge was widened into a double row as suggested by the Kent Wildlife Trust which last year had carried out a survey of the whole of Eaton Lands.

The project to develop information/educational boards with the help of pupils from Brockhill Academy had been put on hold because of Covid-19 but a preliminary meeting was held in April 2022 to move the project forward. This will be developed after the Easter holidays in 2022.

CYCLING

As mentioned last year work on the proposed widening of the pavement as a cycle path along the A259 to the Redoubt commenced and has reached the area close to the last 300 metres where considerable work will be required to complete the path. At present this work is on hold.

WEBSITE

The website continued to be popular with members and visitors alike despite some of the material being somewhat dated. This issue is being addressed.

PLANNING

The Society and its Local History Group is becoming increasingly concerned at the lack of progress with the FHDC's Conservation Strategy which has been at a draft stage for over a year with no signs of completion.

This year saw the Executive Committee comment on many 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 a 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 comply with statutory policies and are, therefore, accepted!

Because the proposed Otterpool development is outside the Society's "area of benefit" the Executive Committee has only concerned itself with the effect that Otterpool will have on Hythe rather than the proposed development itself. There is potential benefit to the High Street from additional development at Otterpool – at least until the proposed "district centre" at Otterpool is developed. The lack of parking in Hythe could be a limiting factor to the High Street benefitting from the additional development. The Society remains concerned about the future of the High Street.

The long running saga of Princes Parade continued throughout most of the year. FHDC obtained consent from the Secretary of State for Transport to "divert" the road to the north of the site alongside of the Royal Military Canal. This diversion was essential to the siting of the leisure centre and for the development in general. Clearance of the site commenced in the second half of the year. Despite this progress the Society remains of the view that the best long term solution would have been 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.

THANKS

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

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 community life in Hythe. In September Ian Hill, a long serving member of the Executive Committee and a strong supporter of the Society, passed away. He is hugely missed by the Committee. We were fortunate to co-opt both Keith Miles and Jo Scott to the Committee during the year. There remains much to be done and there are challenges ahead – not least how Hythe is returning 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 and leading 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.

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.

Your Executive Committee commends the annual report for 2021/22 and the accounts for 2021/22 to the annual meeting.

Crispin Davies (Chairman) on behalf of the Executive Committee

May 2022

