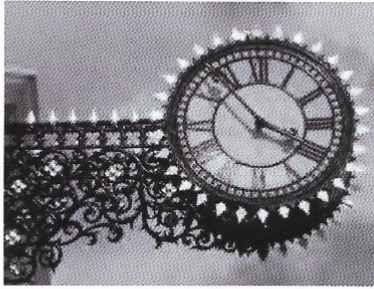


HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

OUR TIME IN HYTHE



Seventy-fifth Anniversary Edition



HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

OUR TIME IN HYTHE

Seventy-fifth Anniversary Edition

FOREWORD BY OUR PATRON

Hythe Civic Society is one of the oldest and largest Civic Societies in the country and, down the years, it has been responsible for many constructive initiatives which have helped to create and preserve features of this historic and attractive seaside town and one of the premier Cinque Ports. As Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports I have many points of contact with Hythe – not least of which is being an Honorary Freeman - and recognise the unique features which contribute to making it one of the pleasantest towns in South Kent. A 75th birthday is a fitting occasion to express my sincere appreciation of the voluntary efforts of the members of our Society and to wish all many more years of success.

Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL

INTRODUCTION

1st February 2020 marks the seventy-fifth Anniversary of the formation of Hythe Civic Society (HCS). Originally named The Hythe Citizens Union it has grown over seventy-five years from 20 members to its present total of 750 - one of the largest in the country.

In 2005 we circulated a review of our first 60 years and the intention of this publication is to remind our members of some of the more interesting events and the achievements of our community over the last 75 years during “Our Time in Hythe” The chosen format is to deal first with the events of the last fifteen years in some detail and then reproduce the main items of the first 60 years for the benefit of readers who do not have access to our earlier booklet. Many of the items are edited versions of HCS Newsletter articles.

CONTENTS

	Page
HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY	2
THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS	
1. Your Society	3
2. Outcome of issues pending in 2005	5
3. Buildings and Amenities	5
4. Community Events	7
5. History of Hythe	8
6. Looking to The Future	15
THE FIRST SIXTY YEARS	16
HYTHE CIVIC AWARDS	22
PUBLICATIONS and OFFICERS OF HCS	24

Editor: Christopher Melchers assisted by the Officers and Committee Members – June 2020

HYPHE CIVIC SOCIETY

Our objectives are:

- To promote high standards in planning and architecture
- To inform the public about local geography, history, natural history and architecture.
- To secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest.

To achieve these:

- Our committee meets monthly to monitor all local Council proceedings and, with the help of our Planning Officer, review development applications in detail.
- We maintain a large archive of historical documents and pictures, consulting and exhibiting these whenever it is appropriate.
- We organise guided town walks, regular talks on topics of both local and general interest and group visits to places of interest, all of which are open to non-members.
- We formed and support Hythe Local History Group and Hythe in Bloom.
- We are closely involved with and provide/have provided volunteers for The Hythe Festival, Hythe Venetian Fete, Hythe Business and Tourism Association and the Farmers' Market.

To communicate with and inform our members:

- We deliver to our members a bi-monthly Newsletter which includes items of interest to all members.
- We publish books and pamphlets on topics of current and historic interest.
- We have our own website, www.hythecivicsociety.org
- Our Local History Group publishes the results of its work at www.hythehistory.org

The Society's Management

Under the Patronage of Admiral of the Fleet the Lord Boyce KG GCB OBE DL, The Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, the Society is run by four Officers and a Committee of up to twelve members who are elected at each Annual General Meeting.

The 75th Anniversary Year ended on 31 March 2020 and at that time the management team was:

Officers:

Chairman	-	Crispin Davies
Vice Chairman	-	Betty Black
Secretary	-	Mary Hunter
Treasurer	-	Alan Joyce

Committee:

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

THE LAST 15 YEARS

1. Your Society

The last fifteen years have proved to be quite demanding in terms of the number and potential impact of development proposals that have had to be considered and, in many cases, argued against in the spirit of what the Society believes its members support. Many of these are reported below. In addition the Society has increased its active participation in the Hythe in Bloom initiative and started a new Local History Group. For the officers and committee members this represents added commitments and we are always keen to co-opt new volunteers to help us improve our town even further.

Hythe in Bloom (HIB)

Established in 2004, Hythe in Bloom began as a partnership between Hythe Civic Society and the Hythe Chamber of Commerce. The town's 'Health Check', initiated and funded by SEEDA highlighted the fact that local residents enjoyed the floral displays distributed around the town and would like to see more of them, so, as a result, two volunteers from the Society Committee took on the task of organising the project. Sixteen years later, HIB is still going strong – now fully under the auspices of Hythe Civic Society - providing colourful floral displays in Hythe during summer and winter to make our town an even more attractive place to visit and to enjoy.

Through the generosity of our sponsors we plant and maintain all the troughs in the High Street during both summer and winter; we provide funding for the railing planters in Prospect Road (and not a lot of people know that!) and cover the cost of watering them throughout the summer season.



Spring in Prospect Road

Our thanks go to the many supporters of Hythe in Bloom: Folkestone and Hythe District Council; Hythe Town Council and Hythe Civic Society. Thanks also to our commercial sponsors: Gopak; Charlier Construction; Waitrose; Lawrence and Co and also to Twenty Four restaurant for their contribution in kind.

Above all, we should not forget the magnificent team of volunteers who plant, water and feed the pots in the High Street throughout the summer season: without their efforts the town centre would not be the wonderful, colourful place it is today.

Formation of Hythe Local History Group

HCS used to have a strong local history group and, after canvassing opinion fairly widely, a dozen or more people came together for the inaugural meeting on 9th April 2014 of our new Local History Group, initially chaired by John Osborne. Following John's return to the U.S.A. the Chair was taken over by Anne Petrie. There are now over thirty active members who have between them completed a number of very different projects. A presentation on the history of Westenhanger Castle in 2017 was very well received and research has been undertaken on several historic buildings. The results can be found on the Group's website: www.hythehistory.org

The website also has details of research into the tramways of Hythe, the origins of place names, archaeology at 'Centuries', Canon Newman Hall, St Leonard's churchyard and medieval graffiti as well as some oral history interviews. One group member has published a history of Portex, 'Made in Hythe' and the Group also followed up its 2018 WW1 commemoration and exhibition with a book about the fallen of Hythe & Saltwood (available from HCS). A history of the Deedes family in Hythe is in the pipeline as is a history of Hythe's ancient hospitals.

Eaton Lands

This fine open space, lying between Hythe and Saltwood and donated to the town by the Deedes family, in the 1920's, has been significantly improved over the years, partly through HCS initiatives. In 2008 a grant of Lottery funds of £9,300 and £5,200 from our local Councils made up the bulk of a £16,000 renovation programme, improving access and pathways, adding information panels and a selection of trees and wild flowers.

As a result in 2012 the site was given a Silver Award in the Kent Wildlife Gardening Competition.

More recently, the Civic Society and the Hythe Environmental Community Group jointly submitted an application to plant a small community orchard on one of the badly overgrown former allotment sites on Eaton Lands. This was approved by the Trustee (Hythe Town Council) in November 2017. Subsequently the Project received a grant of £1750 from Affinity Water Community Engagement Programme to clear the site of self-sown sycamores, brambles and nettles. This took much longer than anticipated, but in October 2019 the project was granted £935 from the District Council Ward Budget Member Grant Scheme courtesy of Cllr. Doug Wade, Hythe Town Mayor, to purchase 15 Kentish fruit trees (10 apple, 3 pear, 2 plum) and associated equipment. Planting took place on 1st February 2020, with the help of 24 volunteers from both Groups, the Eaton Lands Allotment Society, and other members of the public who had seen local publicity. The Group subsequently purchased 135

mixed wildlife friendly small hedging plants to be planted around the two open sides of the site. Unfortunately COVID 19 has meant we have had to postpone the planting until further notice they are currently heeled in. The intention is also to plant some Damson and Morello Cherry saplings, and fruit bushes. The Group will also be working with the Bumblebee Trust to set up bee hotels.

This project has received a grant of £2000 from Kent Community Energy. This is intended to provide funds for any further planting but mainly to develop information/interpretation boards for educational purposes, involving Brockhill School and Saltwood Primary School and also local disadvantaged groups. Over the past three years, the Society has been working with Hythe Town Council and the Bumblebee Trust to enhance the management of the wildflower meadow including sowings of patches of wildflower seed, provided by the Bumblebee Trust, and it is hoped to continue this over the next few years.

Mackeson Square

First mooted by the Society in 2010, work began, in earnest - and was completed- in 2016. Over several years, the Oriental Plane at the centre of the square had made the area dark and unattractive and provided a popular spot for anti-social behaviour. Seeing an opportunity to improve this corner of the town, the Society organised a public consultation and, working with Kent CC and SDC*, produced a design for a light, bright, park-style open space and this now provides a welcoming entrance to the town and a perfect place for residents to enjoy the sunshine.

*Shepway (now Folkestone & Hythe) District Council

Jubilee Benches

2012 saw the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. As a fitting celebration two mosaic benches were commissioned to stand in the Town Square. Designs, reflecting many aspects of Hythe life, were produced by local schools, Age Concern and Hythe Youth Club and the cost was covered by our then County Councillor, the late Chris Capon MBE. The Society was the coordinator of the project.



The Unveiling of the Benches in December 2012

Farmers' Market

In 2004, during the SEEDA* Market Town Health Check, research showed that the people of Hythe were keen to have a Farmers' Market. The Society's representative on the SEEDA* Committee, along with two others, took the idea forward, found a suitable venue, sourced a number of stalls and a very successful market was established. After ten and a half years as organisers, the founders stepped down and the market is now run, equally successfully, by others.

*South East England Development Association

Information Panels

In 2014 we were instrumental in the installation of the first of 10 new information panels comprising an attractive new map of the town with helpful information. This initiative was designed to help visitors realise that Hythe is more than just a beach and a car park and make use of the shops and restaurants that they would otherwise miss.

Green Gym

In 2015 we joined in the campaign for the provision of a Green Gym which was successful and exercise machines can now be found in the grounds of Oaklands in Stade Street.

2017 saw the opening of our own **website** www.hythecivicsociety.org which serves us and our membership in numerous ways. It includes our programme of events, the latest Newsletters, notices and useful information as well as opening us up to the wider world. This aspect helps to focus interest from many parts of the world from people interested in finding out more about the town, its history and facilities. It averages over 900 "hits" every month.

HCS Talks and Guided Walks have continued throughout the period and have been enjoyed by hundreds of residents and visitors alike. The talks cover a wide range of topics of both local and general interest and are attended by some 60 to 100 members and non-members twice monthly from October to April. Guided Walks, led by trained volunteer members, take place Thursday mornings during the Summer and give participants a good idea of the history and townscape of Hythe.



Our Patron, Admiral Lord Boyce receiving the Freedom of Hythe from the Mayor, Cllr. David Owen and the Town Clerk, Mrs Judith McCormick on 13th August 2012

2. Outcome of 2005 Issues

Without doubt, the then current Local Plan proposal for the commercial and residential development of the old **Nickolls Quarry** site at West Hythe (now called Martello Lakes) was set to have a major impact on the Town. The site, in total 60 hectares (148 acres) will comprise 28 hectares of residential dwellings at a recommended minimum density of 30 per hectare across the whole site. Six hectares of land in the north-west corner will be devoted to new industrial development. The existing open water area (17 hectares) will be retained and enhanced for water sports and fishing and 3.6 hectares of open land on the eastern side of the site is allocated to public leisure and recreational use.

HCS commented upon the apparent lack of on-site amenity provision and community facilities. Only 0.5 hectare is currently allocated to the “local centre” and this will include public open space and “possibly a retail shop, post office and community hall.” We expressed our concerns over where the residents of 800+ new homes would find shops, doctors, schools and parking all of which are under pressure in Hythe as it exists today.

Since then all the approvals were obtained and the early years saw thousands of tons of topsoil trucked onto the site to mitigate part of the flood risk. Building has now commenced with about 100 3-storey houses completed to date.

That Local Plan also proposed the leisure and recreational development of **Range Road (Fisherman’s Beach)** for “improved sea access for boats and related facilities subject to amenity, environmental and highway considerations. Nothing came of it and the land was ultimately sold for private housing development (see below). As it would have been a possible site for the much heralded new swimming pool it was, perhaps, another lost opportunity for the people of Hythe.

The “**Old Police Station**” in Prospect Road was also scheduled for re-development. The initial application was for a four storey block of residential units which would have dominated the conservation area skyline from many points of view. HCS was among many objectors to this scheme and the site still awaits a revised plan.

Finally, the **Sports Centre**, which included a replacement swimming pool, had been a really hot topic for at least two years and looked, in 2005, almost certain to be built on the South Road Sports Field site. But, once again, hopes were dashed and the Council went on to consider Nickolls Quarry – which did include a site for a swimming pool – and The Green. The latter was eventually rejected because of the covenants attached to the original gift of the land. For at least five years the site on Princes Parade has been promoted by F&HDC which owns the land east of the golf course- see below.

Fifteen years ago we mentioned the 1995 installation of a **Beach Nourishment Scheme** which had been undertaken to protect the sea front promenades from storm damage. Almost all the year, shingle is carried eastwards along the shore by the prevailing currents eventually exposing the promenade and adjacent properties to serious damage. It is good to note that regular implementation of this scheme, moving shingle back to the western end of each section, has been successful in keeping the area largely free from the storm damage that used to be a regular feature.

3. Buildings and Amenities

The main way in which HCS tries to exert its influence on behalf of members is through scrutiny of all significant planning applications and making appropriate submissions to our Councils. Here are some of the more important issues of the last 15 years:

A development plan for **Princes Parade** first surfaced as early as the 2005 Local Plan as a Council proposal for 100 houses. HCS submitted objections based on the uniqueness of the site between the sea and the canal, the fact that the Government Inspector had already ruled that any development there would spoil the environment and that it would result in “Hythegate” a continuous urban sprawl along the coast.

Since 2005 this site has been the subject of several proposals of swimming pool/leisure centre/private housing and road diversion proposals gradually increasing to 150 houses, a hotel and leisure centre. There was a short interval in 2015 when a planning application was made to build the pool on The Green. Fierce opposition to this arose and after lawyers examined the covenants attached to the original gift of the land to the town yet another expensive non-starter was abandoned!

Throughout, HCS has consulted its members and accordingly opposed any development here save for low-key improvements to convert it into a public open space. HCS would prefer a new pool on the existing South Road site which is most accessible for Hythe residents and school children but would not oppose the use of the Martello Lakes location.

A pressure group, “Save Princes Parade”, has had widespread support, including from ourselves and has fought the plan through to a Judicial Review. At the time of going to press the judge has ruled against the application and the campaigners are considering an appeal.

In 2007 there was heightened interest in the **Lydd Airport** development. One of the promoters, Mr Deir, addressed our AGM with details of the plans and the benefits that he thought would accrue to the area. HCS’s view was that we had a legitimate interest on account of a potential increase in low flying aircraft over the town and were generally opposed to it for this reason as well as a firm belief that Manston Airport would be a much more economic proposition for an

additional South Eastern Airport. Shepway Council eventually granted planning permission for a runway extension and airport buildings but, a decade later, no significant progress has been made. However it remains a potential threat for the future of the area and, if successful, could result in serious increases in road traffic for which no mitigation plans exist.

In 2008/9 the **Imperial Hotel** development project was launched by the hotel's new owners, G S E Ltd. In a welcome departure from normal practice they publicised draft plans and consulted with local residents before submitting a formal application. HCS was concerned that such a large project could be approved for such a beautiful site and a group of local residents formed an opposition action group. HCS raised formal objections on the grounds of loss of green space and proximity to the historic canal. This helped to get the project reduced somewhat in size and the "affordable" flats by the canal were removed in exchange for an adjustment to the developers S106 agreement. However, the project was finally approved in 2012 and the development was completed and sold quite quickly.

A little later in 2009 **Sainsburys** applied to build a supermarket on the Military Road site formerly occupied by Portex and, for over 100 years, by the Small Arms School. HCS believed that some major commercial development on this site was inevitable and therefore, seeking to minimise the probable disadvantages, we wrote to Sainsbury's, and the local authorities expressing some doubt as to whether Hythe can support four supermarkets; suggesting improved screening from the road; asking for a similar parking regime to Waitrose and for enforceable restraint from adding further competition to the small High Street newspaper and clothes shops, cafes and restaurants.

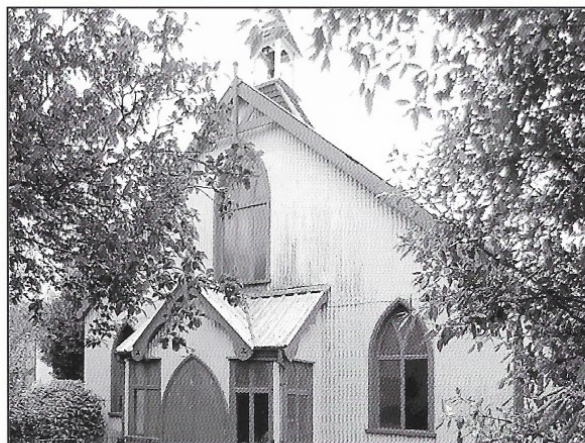
We said in 1996, when the Prospect Road store was first considered, and again in 2009 *"To survive we must share Hythe with more people. We have so much to offer, in such pleasant surroundings. Tell them all, You'll like Hythe"*: The fact that, although much changed, our High Street still survives may well be because we have accepted that the footfall associated with the major retailers does have some positive effects on remaining local outlets and the plea for similar or improved parking arrangements has been honoured.

In June 2010 Shepway D.C. submitted plans for the development of 90 "high quality" housing units, later reduced to 69, and new facilities for the fishermen at **Fisherman's Beach** which was 50% owned by the Council. HCS had serious misgivings about some aspects of the plan including road access and the fact that the Council would make some £2.25 million from sale of the land, none of which would be dedicated to Hythe which was losing the chance of a beneficial development such as a site for the much-needed swimming pool. We argued that with the Princes Parade site also at risk Hythe would end up losing both of these premier seafront locations to developments

which only benefit SDC in the very short term and deny us and future generations the attractions and facilities that all good seaside communities should be able to enjoy.

By June 2013 the redevelopment plan for the beach could be said to have reached the end of Phase 1 with the completion of the new fishermen's huts, the conversion of the "new" lifeboat station to house Griggs Fish Shop and the demolition of the previous shop and store, creating a much tidier appearance. In the meantime strenuous efforts were being made to have the area declared a "Town Green" (the urban equivalent of a "Village Green") and a public meeting in the Town Hall was attended by a panel of KCC Councillors. After consultation with the public they launched a Public Inquiry and evidence was produced to establish 20 years of public use of the land right up to its original Northern boundary. The declaration was ultimately made by KCC and as a result the beach is now protected in perpetuity and part of the planned development site was restored to public use.

In 2010 the Parochial Church Council decided to close the **"Tin Tabernacle,"** (St. Michael's Church, Stade Street) and merge its ministry with that of the Methodist Church on the other side of the canal. It is one of a number of pre-fabricated public buildings made in the 19th and early 20th centuries following the British invention of galvanised corrugated iron in 1828. The number of "Tin Tabernacles" built also reflects the missionary efforts of the Anglican Church which, at the time, was in competition with the Nonconformist movements.



The Tin Tabernacle

As far as St. Michael's is concerned it was built at a time when Hythe was growing very quickly; scores of houses were built on the south side of the Royal Military Canal – Victoria Road, Albert Road, Ormonde Road, Park Road – to which working class families were attracted to move because of their modest rents. The Church saw a need to provide services for this influx and, for a time, 'mission type' services were held in the school. The vicar pursued his idea of building a church for those who were unable to attend St Leonard's, and this was made possible by two generous gifts: an offer to pay for the building by a

former vicar, the Reverend F.T. Scott, and the provision of a site that was given by the Watts family. In 1893 matters moved swiftly. An appeal for funds to furnish the church met with a generous response. The ‘iron’ church, as it was referred to in those days, was ordered and erected within months.

HCS member, Patricia Cooper, launched a petition, with over 800 signatures, to try to ensure that it would be preserved in a way that will continue to serve the community and it was eventually privately purchased, refurbished and equipped as a general meeting room available for hire by many diverse groups – an excellent continuation of its service to the community. In 2014 the building was awarded the Capon Shield (see below) to recognise the contribution to preserving the townscape.

Also, in 2010 the town was most grateful to the Football Association for a generous grant towards the new Sports Pavilion in South Road which was opened by the Mayor, Cllr. Keren Belcourt. The new building, pictured below, has changing rooms, facilities for the referees, a lift, a meeting hall and storage space and is a most welcome addition to Hythe’s amenities.



South Road Sports Hall

Plans for the conversion of **St. Leonard’s C. of E. School** into several small houses were approved and have resulted in an attractive group of properties which fully respect the original architecture. The school opened in Stade Street in 1851 and was converted after over 150 years service following the transfer of pupils to the new building in Cinque Ports Avenue. The Victorian building was a successor to the first National Schools housed in an Elizabethan building in the High Street shown below and which opened in 1814.



By 1848 the school had moved to the old “poor house” in Stade Street and the new headmaster, Mr Edward Palmer, quickly prepared plans for the new building

which was opened by no less a person than the Archbishop of Canterbury. The school had three classrooms each large enough for 160 children! The Boys’ classroom was separated from the Girls’ and the Infants’ by the master’s house. Parents were required to pay four (old!) pence per week! If the total fees exceeded £30 per year the excess was added to the master’s salary. Edward Palmer retired in 1875 after 26 years as Master. He was succeeded by George James who, in the course of two marriages had 16 children – clearly determined to ensure that there would always be enough pupils!

The Town Hall Clock: In 2012 this iconic clock had been out of action for many months until, thanks to an anonymous donation, repairs were put in hand. Although the Town Hall itself was probably completed in 1794 the Clock was a later addition - in 1871. Rufus Segar’s drawing has featured as our Newsletter’s masthead since issue No 74, back in 1997.

Eventually the generous donor was revealed as our late president, Doug Amans, in yet another example of the appreciation he held for our town.

4. Community Events

The Hythe Festival, first held in 1994, has become an established biannual feature of social, cultural and sporting life in the town in years when there is no Venetian Fete. It was conceived in 1992 when a Committee was set up by Cllrs. Arthur Kensett and Maurice Maisey to see what could be done to liven up the High Street and attract business and visitors. In their first few meetings the Committee set the basic principles which, among other things, provide that it should be run by an entirely voluntary organisation; be spread over 9 or 10 days including the first Saturday in July (traditional day for the High Street Fair); include something for all age groups and as far as possible be free. As the aim was to help businesses in the area their sponsorship would be a key funding resource as well as contributions from the two Councils.

Events are held in and around Hythe. The aim is to showcase local talent in art, music, drama, floral design and poetry, encouraging these to thrive and expand. Partners include the Brockhill School of Performing Art, JAM on The Marsh and the St. Leonards Music Festival. You can find out more about its history, sponsors and programmes on its website – www.hythefestival.co.uk

The Hythe Venetian Fete

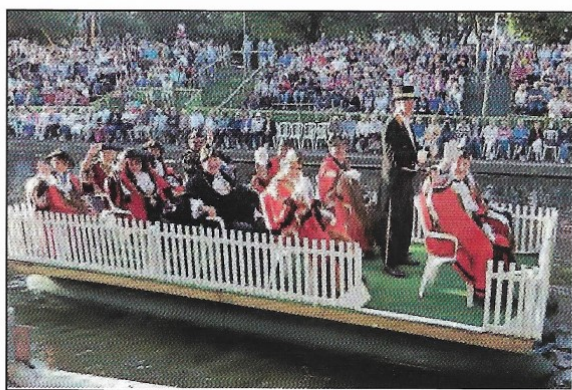
In contrast to the Hythe Festival, The Hythe Venetian Fete has been a major feature of our social life for over a century. In August 1890 Edward Palmer suggested canal illuminations and a procession of decorated boats and when he described the event in his *Hythe Reporter* he actually called it a Venetian Fete. There were fireworks, 8 or 9 boats took part and £180 was raised for Town Band funds – not a small sum in those days! In 1894 the Cricket Club took on the organisation of a

Fete as part of the Cricket Week and, despite the collapse of Ladies Walk Bridge in 1895 when too many spectators gathered there, continued to put it on until 1914. After the war the Fete did not resume until 1927 when the Chamber of Commerce took it on. Another gap of 3 years, due to "lack of support from the Council" led to the formation of a committee of townsfolk who organised a most successful Fete in 1934. Coaches brought crowds from Ashford and the Marsh and the invited Mayors arrived by Barge.

After the 2nd war the Fete resumed as a bi-annual event and, apart from 1980 when Prospect Road was being re-aligned, has flourished to this day.

During the last 15 years the Fete has continued to go from strength to strength mainly due to the generous financial support of commercial sponsors. The *Hythe Venetian Society* relies on the continuing voluntary efforts of the organising committee together with the hundreds of voluntary helpers, including HCS members, on the day. Their assistance is greatly appreciated. The firework display has become more and more spectacular and has been described as the best in Kent. This again is thanks to local commercial sponsorship.

The uniqueness of the Fete, especially the attendance, on a float, of the fourteen Mayors of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports, still draws thousands of spectators.



The Cinque Ports' Mayors arrive by Barge - 2019

The Twinning of Hythe

The Twinning Association was founded in 1978 by a group of forward-thinking people who realised that our future was linked to Europe. After considerable research Poperinge & Berck-sur-Mer were chosen and the Twinning Charters were signed in 1981 and 1983 respectively.

The connection with Poperinge is via Toc H and Lord Wakefield, who was a great benefactor to Hythe. Toc H was started there at Talbot House and used by him to set up a rest centre for officers. When the house came on the market in about 1929, Lord Wakefield bought it and presented it to Toc H.

Berck-sur-Mer was chosen because of its many similarities to Hythe as well as the fact that Portex had set up a factory there.

The aim of the Association is to foster friendship between the peoples of our twin towns and to

encourage activities, hospitality and exchanges by encouraging other groups and organizations, particularly among young people, to make contacts with their counterparts in the twin towns.

Volunteering

A strong feature of life in Britain today is the amount of voluntary work that many people are prepared to do. No less so in Hythe and HCS has been associated with a number of efforts including the complete restoration of St. Leonard's Churchyard, the maintenance of Eaton Lands and the planting of bulbs and trees in numerous locations.

The churchyard was a major undertaking and included the clearing of large quantities scrubby bushes and undergrowth and skilled monument restoration by retired stonemason, Colin Homewood and his family.

5. History of Hythe

HCS has always given prominence to articles and exhibits which inform the town about the history of Hythe. We are publishing below some of the articles written for our Newsletter during the last 15 years, which we hope will show what an interesting and historic town we share.

Martello Towers The Ministry of Defence has a significant budget for the conservation aspects of its enormous estates covering both natural history and historic buildings and in 2006 we were indebted to the author, Nigel Sharpe, for permission to reproduce these extracts from his article for the M.O.D. on the restoration of the Martello Towers on Hythe Ranges:

"The inspiration for these towers went back to 1794 when the Royal Navy was sent to capture Corsica from the French. They were completely frustrated by a single tower with one gun located at Mortella Point. Manned only by just 8 or 10 men it held out against two warships with 106 guns, only surrendering when the rest of the island fell. Our commander, Sir John Moore, was so impressed that he made detailed notes of the design – probably mis-spelling the name in his diary. He influenced the government to authorise the building of 74 such towers, each equipped with a single gun, around the Essex and Kent coastline. They were located such that any approaching ship would be within range of at least two guns! Although the British victory at Trafalgar in 1805 effectively countered the French threat of invasion, building continued until the network was completed in 1810.

Within the Hythe Ranges area, two of the original eight towers are still standing. They are both Scheduled Monuments but are not in use for military purposes. Exposed to the elements with stormy seas often breaking around their lower walls they were beginning to show the scars of damage that would inevitably lead to eventual collapse. English Heritage put them on their "Buildings at Risk Register" and cooperated closely with the Defence Estates team to scope the work required to repair the brickwork.

The Army Training Estate paid for the programme of repairs, resulting in the repair and replacement of the outer brickwork skins in 2005/6. A local builder was used and modern bricks, closely matching the originals were obtained. Once the scaffolding was removed the tower was revealed in its former glory – a fitting 200th birthday present”

The Great Flood, New Years Day, 1877, was recorded in the Borough Minutes and Muriel Sharpe made a copy which was saved and sent to the Newsletter by Tim Lawrence.

“It was high water here about 12 o’clock and at nine o’clock the water was already up to the Parade and Seabrook walls. The wind was blowing strong from the South, South-West. The wind increased and at noon was blowing a whole gale. The sea broke completely over the Parade with the greatest body of water coming over from Sutherland Fort to the Stade and from the end of the Seabrook wall, 1300 feet from Fort Twiss towards Sandgate. About 600 feet from the end of this new wall the sea made a complete breach a full 91 yards wide in the front and 16 feet deep. It also poured over the low part of the wall immediately West of the Canal outlet at Seabrook. This and the water from the West side of the Stade soon flooded all the meadows between Hythe and Sandgate, flowing over the South bank of the canal with great force, carrying away the footbridge at Ladies Walk and the Carriage Bridge beyond the Barracks and forcing the water up the old sewers (which still flow into the canal) into the streets. The water rose to within 18 inches of the top of the North bank of the canal, flowing over the roads at the bridges, up Market Street (now Red Lion Sq.) to Mr Mackeson’s, half way up Bank St., up Marine Walk St. into the High Street and through Theatre St..

The sea flowed at its height for about three hours and the water then went rapidly away.

Among the depths recorded were:

Mr. Porter’s house on the Parade – 5ft. 6in.

Twiss Fort Houses – 4ft. 6in.

Stade St. opp. The Hope Beer House – 5ft. 9in

On 30th January another extraordinarily high tide overflowed the beach to the West of the Parade and between the Seabrook wall and Sandgate and again flooded the lands up to the South bank of the canal but, the sea being very quiet and still, no damage arose from it”. Another major storm was experienced in 1913 when serious damage was done as seen in this photograph –



The nearest Martello Tower is the one now on West Parade! Old Gas Works in the Background.

“**Hythe Salutes Men of Duty and Service**” was the title of the highly praised exhibition that HCS mounted at the 2010 Hythe Festival. Curated by Dr. John Woodward and John Keeffe it was re-formatted into an illustrated booklet.

One of the subjects was **Lionel Lukin**, the inventor of the unsinkable lifeboat, who was born in Great Dunmow, Essex in 1742 and died some 92 years later here in Hythe. Little is known of his early life, but he worked in London as a coachbuilder and achieved considerable fame in this field as he became Master of the Worshipful Company of Coachbuilders. It was probably this expertise that led him to become an acquaintance of the Prince of Wales, later George IV. His inventions were many, including adjustable beds for invalids, a rain gauge, a ventilating stove for sailing vessels and also a life-saving raft. Yet it is for his pioneering work on creating a self-righting lifeboat – “unimmergible” he called it - that he is best remembered.

Lukin did not set out to design a lifeboat. He devoted his earlier attention to a boat that would ‘neither overset in violent gales, nor sink if they should be filled with water.’ The principle he employed was projecting gunwales with cork interiors combined with watertight containers in bow and stern and further cork blocks to increase buoyancy. An iron false keel also helped to keep the boat upright. He took out a patent for his idea in 1785 and tried to persuade the Royal Navy that his modification should be fitted to ships’ boats.

Later, Lukin changed course and promoted his invention as suitable for a lifeboat. Many other people also claimed to be the first to invent such a vessel, especially as a series of appalling sea disasters had led to the launch of a competition for the best design. These included Henry Greathead, a boat builder from South Shields, which Lukin declared to have “all the essential principles of safety, precisely according to my patent.’ Greathead was paid more than £1000 by the government, but Lukin received nothing! He followed this disappointment by constructing a lifeboat for the Suffolk Humane Society in 1807 which was the first sailing lifeboat – others had relied on oars – and she was credited with saving 300 lives during her 43 years of service. Although others ‘cashed in’ on Lukin’s ideas, there is little doubt that he was the first to tackle the basic problems of lifeboat design.

In 1824 he retired to Hythe, became active in the affairs of St Leonard’s Church and was buried in the graveyard there in 1834 aged almost 92. His gravestone, still standing near the West Door, records at his requested:

“This Lionel Lukin was the first who built a lifeboat and was the original inventor of that principle of safety by which many lives and much property have been preserved from shipwreck and he obtained for it the King’s Patent in the year 1785.”

Samuel Plimsoll – The Sailor’s Friend

From an article by the late Joyce Carter

Another benefactor of sailors, with local connections, has been immortalised by the writer and broadcaster Nicolette Jones in her critically acclaimed book, *The Plimsoll Sensation: The Great Campaign to Save Lives At Sea*. She was the co-ordinator of the Folkestone Plimsoll Memorial Campaign.

Samuel Plimsoll was born in Bristol in 1824 and as a child moved to Sheffield and then for a while to Penrith in Cumbria. Leaving school at sixteen to support his mother and five younger siblings, he started work as a clerk in a brewery. He had a chequered career but never forgot the suffering he had seen of the sailors who were forced to work on unseaworthy ships and the fact that an estimated 500 lives a year were lost unnecessarily at sea because of overloaded and neglected ships.

He joined the Liberal Party and in 1868 became the MP for Derby to help his campaign for legislation to protect seaman. As part of this he published *Our Seamen* in 1873 documenting the scale of the problem and gave a copy to every MP. He was particularly critical of the 1871 Merchant Shipping Act which, incredibly, made it difficult for sailors to leave a ship if they found it to be unseaworthy; they were obliged, subject to imprisonment and fine, to complete the voyage once they had signed a contract.

In 1871 alone 856 ships went down within 10 miles of the British coast in conditions that were ‘no worse than a strong breeze’. Plimsoll called for a loadline to be marked on the side of a vessel to show how deeply it can safely sit in the water and for an inspection of ships for seaworthiness. However, he had little support from his fellow MPs, many of whom were ship-owners and made more profit if their ships were overloaded.

Under pressure from the house in 1875, the Prime Minister, Disraeli, deferred his Merchant Shipping Bill yet again. Plimsoll was furious and caused chaos in the Parliament when he lost his temper calling his fellow MPs ‘villains’. The public supported Plimsoll to such an extent that Disraeli was forced into rushing through the bill to save his own skin.

It’s interesting to note that when the Plimsoll Mark was originally introduced ship owners could put the mark wherever they wanted to on their ship, leading to one disgruntled Bristol Ship-owner to put the mark on the funnel! It wasn’t until 1890 that a fixed Plimsoll Line was instituted by the President of the Board of Trade. At first the line was only applied to the ships that came into British ports and it took years for other countries to adopt it. Amazingly it wasn’t until 1929 that it was adopted by the USA and only then for their international voyages. It took another 6 years before they applied it to domestic shipping.

Plimsoll spent the last years of his life in Folkestone with his second wife Harriet who was also active in his campaign for sailors. He laid the foundation stone for Folkestone United Reformed Church and after his

death in 1898 was buried at St Martin’s Church, Cheriton, in sight of the sea at Seabrook, which he loved.

Elizabeth Bowen, the writer, who spent many of her formative as well as her later years in Hythe, was born 120 years ago and her life was recently celebrated in a biography by Victoria Glendinning (paperback re-issued by Phoenix). She was born of a union between the Colley and Bowen families, both members of the “*Anglo-Irish Ascendancy*”. Her father unfortunately developed regular periods of mental illness which led to her mother, who had some relatives in this area, bringing her here from Ireland at the age of eight. She always retained a love of the town and some of her youthful experiences here are reflected in her novels. Her mother died when she was just thirteen whereupon she was brought up by a series of aunts. Possibly she never fully recovered from this trauma, telling a friend that the worst event of her life had occurred when she was thirteen and her fiction abounds with orphaned children. She attended Downe House, the girls’ school then recently established in Charles Darwin’s former home.

After some time at art school in London she decided that her talent lay in writing and began by writing short stories. She quickly came to the notice of the literary establishment, making strong friendships with members of the Bloomsbury set and Rose Macaulay helped to get her first book *Encounters* published in 1923. She also mingled with younger authors from the Oxford background that she entered soon after her marriage to the education administrator, Alan Cameron. They eventually set up home in one of the Nash terraces overlooking Regent’s Park where *English Heritage* has placed one of their “blue plaques” on the wall of 2, Clarence Terrace where they lived from 1935 to 1952.. Handsome, perhaps, rather than beautiful, she soon became one of literary London’s brightest hostesses while writing numerous novels, travelling widely – with regular Summer visits to Ireland – and enjoying as many parties as possible! She returned to live here in 1963 and bought a small modern house in Church Hill, changing its name to *Carbery*, after the long-lost Colley family mansion in West Ireland. Her father’s family had a comparable seat, called *Bowen’s Court*, also razed to the ground after Elizabeth had sold it in 1959.

Her somewhat racy lifestyle tended to conceal her sincere religious beliefs – indeed when the Church of England introduced the “Alternative Service” in the late 1960’s she tried to initiate a protest movement together with the author of an opposing article in *The Times*. In the end she contented herself with dropping a copy of this into the letter box of Hythe’s “excellent but deluded” vicar and worshipped thereafter at a nearby village church that had retained the 1662 service.

Her work was widely recognised. She was awarded the 1969 James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *Eva Trout* and Doctorates in Literature from Trinity College,

Dublin (1949) and the University of Oxford (1952) as well as the CBE (1948).

After the grandeur of her earlier life *Carbery* in Church Hill, now bearing an HCS blue plaque, must have seemed a rather modest home but, nothing daunted, she continued to entertain her friends on a grand scale – checking them in to The White Hart, dining there with them and even leaving a pile of coins in their rooms to feed the meters of the gas heaters!



Elizabeth Bowen

Copyright: Prof. Jane Miller

In 2013 we marked the 70th anniversary of the loss of **H.M.S. Hythe**, a Bangor class minesweeper, off the Algerian coast on 11th October 1943 while part of the flotilla dedicated to the defence of Malta. She was sunk by a U-boat with the loss of her commander and 63 crew members. Thirteen survivors were rescued by her sister ship HMS Rye.

Hanging in the Council Chamber in the Town Hall is the white ensign from the stricken vessel which was acquired in a most unusual way - the late David Irwin, long-time HCS member, was playing golf far from home and his partner for the round told him of his acquisition of the bullet torn ensign during 1942 when, as a young signalman on the bridge, he watched with dread the daily waves of enemy bombers savaging the island of Malta. Rationed to a mere seven rounds of ammunition a day he could only record the losses of many allied merchant and naval ships.

After David made clear his connection with the town his partner was quite willing to donate his souvenir to Hythe and on October 10th 1997, the eve of the 55th anniversary of her loss, the ensign was broken out by the Mayor attended by service organisations and a Guard of Honour of Invicta Sea Scouts.

"Our" HMS Hythe was not, however, the first ill-starred vessel to bear the name. In 1914 the SS *Hythe*, a cross-channel ferry of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway was requisitioned by the Royal Navy, converted to a minesweeper and became HMS Hythe. While in later use as a troop carrier, she was run down by HMS Sarnia off Cape Helles in the Dardanelles on 29 October 1915 and sank with the tragic loss of 155 lives.



HMS Hythe

'Centuries' - What a difference a star makes!

This ancient house on the corner of Bartholomew Street and Church Hill, was re-graded by English Heritage from Grade II to Grade II*, the highest level of any building in Hythe, save only the parish church. It is now one of only seven domestic buildings in Kent built before 1300 AD and, incredibly, seems to have been in virtually continuous occupation throughout its long history.

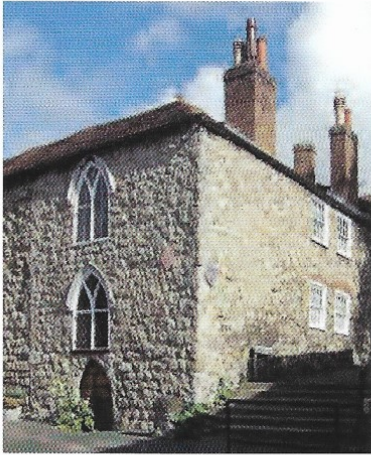
The south-east part of this building (the site of the excavation work) probably dates from the C13 when it was owned by the Noble family of merchants. It has an undercroft for storage or trade with living accommodation above. It was the birthplace of a member of this family, Hamo de Hethe (c.1270-c.1357) and his parents. Hamo became Bishop of Rochester and in 1336 Edward III granted a license to him to found a House for Poor People at Hythe in Honour of St. Andrew "upon the spot where we, aforesaid Bishop of Rochester, and our ancestors first saw light, situated in the parish of St. Leonard in the aforesaid town". This alms-house was for ten persons of either sex, one of whom was to be master. The master and poor persons were to be appointed by three wardens and no leper was to be received as there was already another hospital in Hythe (*St. John's Hospital in the present day High Street*) dealing with that condition. On 10 May, 1342, Bishop Hamo obtained another licence to found a hospital for thirteen poor persons on his own soil in the town of Hythe The south-west part of the building probably originated around this date.

In 1685 the inhabitants of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in Saltwood, which the research implies was also founded by Bishop Hamo in 1336, were transferred to this site and the building was then known as St. Bartholomew's Hospital. The main entrance from Bartholomew Street leads into a through passage with, to the right, a large room, originally the communal room of the almshouses, with a wide fireplace with a 1687 iron fireback.

In 1837 the Charity Commissioners reported that the hospital of St. Bartholomew was under the control of three wardens. There were four in-brothers and eight in-sisters, besides one out-brother called the wood-

reeve. Each alms-person received £5 quarterly. In 1949 all the residents moved to St. John's Hospital at 150 High Street, Hythe and the building became privately owned.

The property was bought by Lionel and Dora Osborne, active members of HCS, who produced a pamphlet recording what was then known of Centuries'. Their son John took up permanent residence in 2009.



“Centuries – the original 13th Century Building – the Undercroft is behind the Brown Door

Extensive investigation of the undercroft floor revealed numerous artefacts including pottery shards, a small silver penny dated 1280, two lead musket balls, a small bronze disc pin and a pottery sieve. Dr. Ben Jervis MIFA was able to date some of the pottery shards from Roman through Saxon to High Medieval periods suggesting that an even earlier dwelling had existed on the site. Further finds included an intact iron sickle, a long iron knife blade and an iron chisel together with a small wrought iron cannon ball, two stoneware spindle whorls, possibly Raeren (an important pottery-making area in medieval Belgium) and some items of bronze jewellery.

Suffragettes in Hythe

One fine afternoon in August 1908, the people of Hythe were treated to a sight none of them had seen before. A green, horse-drawn caravan rolled into town and parked in the yard of the Red Lion Inn. Written in large white letters on its sides were the words “Women’s Freedom League” and “Votes for Women”. Anyone who read a newspaper would know that some women were demanding they should have the vote but this was the first time they had brought their message to the town. The occupants of the caravan were Mrs Charlotte Despard, a widow in her sixties, and two young women, Alison Nielans and Miss Henderson. When a suitably large and curious crowd had gathered, Mrs Despard addressed them, followed by Miss Nielans, explaining why it was so important for women to be enfranchised. The onlookers asked questions and appeared impressed with what they heard, but when Miss Nielans asked them if they were in favour of votes for women, she heard a unanimous “No!”.

The Prime Minister in 1909 was Herbert Asquith, a man strongly opposed to women’s suffrage, and the WSPU lost no opportunity to harass him. At the beginning of September, Asquith was staying at Lympne Castle, his weekend retreat. Three suffragettes accosted him as he left Lympne Church after Sunday morning service and later shouted “Votes for Women” at him as he played a round of golf at Littlestone. They then made their way to Hythe, where a rowing boat awaited them. As the light faded, they rowed west along the Royal Military Canal until they were below Lympne Castle. Asquith and his wife were dining there with guests. The women, encumbered by long skirts, climbed the steep, muddy slope up to the castle, found the dining room window and threw two stones through the glass, shouting “That is what the women of England think of you”. They then scrambled back down the hill to their waiting boat and made their escape.

In 1910 a WSPU branch was started in Folkestone and Hythe. Two of its members, Georgina Cheffins and Eva Lewis followed their leaders’ instructions and avoided the 1911 census enumerator because “if women don’t count, neither shall they be counted”.

In May 1911 the cause received a boost when the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Earl Brassey of Hythe (whose yacht “Sunshine” was often anchored in Hythe Bay) announced that he supported women’s suffrage. Another local supporter was the wife of the Commandant of the School of Musketry, Cecilia Congreve. The WSPU were ratcheting up their militant tactics and in March 1912, Georgina Cheffins was arrested after breaking eleven windows at Gorrings department store in Buckingham Palace Road during a mass demonstration. She was sentenced to four months in prison, which she spent in Holloway. She went on hunger strike and was forcibly fed.

In July 1912 the National League for Opposing Women’s Suffrage held a meeting in Hythe. It was chaired by Councillor Henry Strahan, supported by his wife and Lady Ruggles-Brise, the wife of the new commandant of the School of Musketry. The thrust of the argument against women’s suffrage was that it would weaken the British constitution and the Empire and make women less “womanly”. A branch of the League had been set up in Hythe, organised by Mrs Baldwin of “Tynwald”. But the women’s groups paid no heed.

In December 1912, Hythe’s new MP, Sir Philip Sassoon, told them he was in favour of votes for women. Five months later, Hythe Town Council gave permission for the women to hold a public meeting in the Grove and in July the town welcomed walkers taking part in the Suffrage Pilgrimage to London. A meeting was held in Red Lion Square and attracted a large crowd. When war broke out in 1914, all the campaigning groups stopped their activities and many of their members devoted themselves to war work.

When peace came, certain women got the vote. The first person in Hythe to cast a vote in the 1918 General Election was a woman, Thomasine Rhoda Maycock, who ran her own wallpaper business in the High Street. She was waiting at the polling station before dawn!

Mackeson's Brewery

Henry and William Mackeson, sons of a wine seller from Deal, bought Hythe brewery in 1801, though records show it had been established since at least 1669 when it was owned by James Pashley. Henry was about thirty and William two years younger and they had just inherited their father's estate.

They immediately started extending and improving their new acquisition. In 1802 they bought more land at auction and bricks from London. The bricks were landed on the beach at Hythe and hauled up to the brewery, an operation which, because of the tides, had to be carried out at night. Henry, at least, was rather anxious about the expenditure and the consequent lack of liquidity, but the gamble paid off. Hythe was on a war footing in expectation of an invasion from across the Channel and more and more soldiers were arriving each week, many of them occupied in building the Martello Towers and the Royal Military Canal. Soldiers are thirsty men and the expansion was necessary to keep up with the rise in demand.

The town benefitted, too. In 1804 Henry and William brought extra spring water to the town conduit, and paid for more piping at a cost of a hundred and eighty pounds. By the time William Mackeson died in 1821, the brewery owned over twenty public houses stretching from Ashford and Appledore to Sandgate. All these, together with brewery, house, shares in Folkestone harbour, horses, carriages, sacks, cottages and land were valued at £43,841 7s. 6d some £3 million today. The buildings occupied a large site at the west of the town, now filled by a car park, Mackeson Court retirement accommodation and The Maltings apartment block. The site also included workers' cottages and a bonded warehouse.

The business was inherited by Henry's son, Henry Bean Mackeson, born in the town in 1813 and his son, another Henry, inherited it in 1894. At around this time the brewery converted a public house in Bartholomew Street into family accommodation for its employees, naming it prosaically, Brewery Buildings.

The product which made Mackeson's a household name was their milk stout, first brewed in 1907 but launched with a clever advertising campaign in 1909. It was, they claimed, a tonic, suitable for invalids and nursing mothers, claims which lasted into the 1970s with the slogan 'Looks good, tastes good and by golly it does you good!'

During the First World War, so many male workers were called up that the business struggled and had to adapt. By the end of 1915 they were advertising for women to drive their horse vans and once it was

accepted that women were safe in motor vehicles, their petrol lorries. In 1917 the cellars under the brewery were converted into an air raid shelter and in 1918 the Mackeson family gave two acres of brewery land for use as war time allotments.

In 1920, the Mackesons sold their shares in the company to H & G Simonds Ltd of Reading, though the brewery name was unchanged and the family remained on the board of directors. Simonds was itself later acquired by Whitbread, who continued brewing in the town until 1968.

The Mackeson family, meanwhile, had played a significant part in the life of Hythe, acting as mayors, churchwardens, and justices of the peace. In the twentieth century, they took a great interest in Hythe Cricket Club and provided the ground on which they played. In 1945 Harry Ripley Mackeson was elected as the MP for Hythe and served in that capacity until 1959. He was created a Baronet 'of Hythe in the County of Kent' in 1954. The title is held today by his son, Rupert.

Mackeson's Milk Stout is now a 'ghost brand', available but unsupported by advertising and called just 'stout' for legal reasons. But it still carries the milk churn trademark on the cans.

World War One was commemorated by HCS in several ways including the publication of a six page supplement to the Newsletter showing how Hythe fared during the war. The following items are from this supplement:

A Garrison Town

In those first few months of the war Hythe was becoming a very important town for the troops that were sent for training in the area. The soldiers soon became part of everyday life in Hythe, attending the local churches, going to the Picture Palace and taking advantage of the social clubs being organised for them in the town. The local shops were benefiting too from the increase in trade and the pubs were reported as doing a roaring trade! The Town Council was very keen for Hythe to take advantage of the recruits' spending power and was looking for ways to instigate a motor service from the camps into the town.

On September 20th on a bright but windy day the troops at the Shorncliffe Camp were visited by Lord Kitchener. It was an impressive sight, with 20,000 new recruits training. The Military Correspondent for the Hythe Reporter said that watching the drilling was a 'grand and inspiring sight - this makes one feel more than anything that it is not a soldier's war but a people's war'. And he urged the people of Hythe to go to the camp themselves the following Sunday and see what was going on there and to take with them some of the Belgian refugees from the town 'to cheer them up' and see the calibre of men preparing to rid their country of 'the hated invader'.

In early December 1914, 600 men from the Army Service Corps were being billeted in Hythe's empty properties. 200 men were sent up to Sir Charles Wakefield's mansion at the top of Blackhouse Hill with others being accommodated in the old Jackson's shop in the High Street, Moyle Tower and Eastbridge House. The town's stabling was requisitioned for the Corps' 150 horses. In 1915 forty thousand Canadians came to the area; many died in France and are commemorated at the Military Cemetery at Shorncliffe.

Seven Soldier Sons

The following was reported in The Hythe Reporter (H.R.) of 12 September 1914 "*Quite a remarkable record has been created by the family of Mr and Mrs R Dray of Albert Road Hythe. They have now seven sons serving in the British army, the two youngest- Fleetwood and Bert- having joined this week. Of these, no less than six are in the Buffs, the seventh (Richard) being in the R.F.A (Royal Field Artillery)*"

A couple of months later they had a letter of commendation from H.R.H. King George V. It is amazing to note that as well as his seven sons Mr Dray also had six nephews, two brothers and one grandson in the Army. An incredible record by any reckoning!

The First Death

At the beginning of 1914 the British Army had a reported strength of 710,000 men, including reserves, of which around 80,000 were regular troops ready for war. Lord Kitchener believed that the regular army must not be wasted in immediate battle, but instead used to help train a new army with 70 divisions.

As we have seen in the H. R. all those men of Hythe who were recruited to Kitchener's Army were listed in the paper's *Roll of Honour* and were always referred to as heroes. This was of course in large part to encourage those men who hadn't yet 'answered the call' and it must have been with a heavy heart that on the 12th of September, barely one month since war was declared, the paper had to report the first of those heroes to die. Pte. Fred Dawes was wounded on the front and shipped back to Portsmouth where he died of his wounds on his 27th birthday. However, he was not a new recruit, he had been a regular soldier with the Royal Engineers for eight years.

There is a memorial in St Leonard's Church dedicated to the Officers and Men of Hythe and inscribed: *'To the honoured memory of all Hythe Officers and Men who died for their country in the Great War - Father Into Thy Hands We Commend Their Spirits'*.

The First Refugees

In August 1914 Germany invaded neutral Belgium and Luxembourg in an attempt to capture Paris quickly. Many civilians fled the war zones to safer parts of Belgium and many went to the Netherlands (which was neutral), about 300,000 to France and over 200,000 came to Britain.

By October there were 148 families listed as refugees billeted in Hythe from across all social classes. The H. R. in November reported on a meeting of these Belgian Refugees at the Swan Hotel called to discuss the issue of the rent they were being charged. The article suggested that if the town was to retain the 'best classes' of Belgians as a good advertisement for Hythe, the landlords should consider reducing the rent they were charging the refugees, many of whom were unable to get their money out of Belgium. However, many of the refugees were reluctant to leave Hythe to accept the offer of reduced or even free accommodation inland as they were 'in love with the town' and Hythe, for them, was like 'another Belgium.'

Alfred Winnifrith, who used to run a small private school in Hythe (*The Prospect House Academy*) retired here in 1913 at the age of 70 and worked tirelessly to relieve the suffering of the refugees, teaching over 100 of them to speak English. For this he was awarded the *Medaille du Roi Albert* by the King of the Belgians. He also organised comfort parcels to be sent to Hythe prisoners of war and for several years after the Armistice the grateful recipients held a reunion at Prospect Lodge. He and his wife, Mary, and their work are commemorated by a brass plate in St. Leonard's church.

Spies in Hythe

In pre-war Britain the growing military threat of Germany created a climate in which popular spy novels thrived and so it was hardly surprising that when war broke out spy mania gripped the country.

A teenager, Dorothy Dann, living in St. Leonards Road, later wrote in her memoirs* that she was walking by the ruined Martello tower (now on the ranges) when she saw a couple sitting down and studying a map. Apparently they were so startled to see her that they emitted an expletive in German. After a brief, polite, conversation she left, telling them that she was going home for dinner. In fact she ran back to the coastguard lookout and told the captain and they waited until the returning couple came into sight. The captain then followed the couple at a discreet distance some way along Dymchurch Road where he stopped them and asked to see their papers. He then accompanied them to the police station. Later that evening he saw Dorothy and praised her initiative telling her "you ought to be feeling pleased with yourself". A few days later she read in the newspaper that a couple had been found guilty of treason and shot at the Tower of London. She was unable to find out if they were "her" spies but, naturally, had mixed feelings about the whole incident.

**Quotations from "Dorothy from Hythe in Kent" by Dorothy Thomas (nee Dann) & Ruth Johns by kind permission of their literary executors.*

World War Two Many centenaries of WW1 coincided with the 75th anniversary of WW2 campaigns. This article reminds us how it really was "Frontline Hythe"

Hythe in The Days After D-Day

By Denise Rayner (abbreviated)

The rejoicing at the success of the Normandy landings on D-Day, 6th June 1944, was soon overshadowed, for the inhabitants of Southern England at least, by the onslaught a week later of the V1 flying bombs known as "doodlebugs". At first, no-one knew what they were. In fact, they were lightweight monoplanes about 25 feet long each carrying 2,000 pounds of high explosive. The flames shooting from their exhausts whilst in flight created the initial impression that they were ordinary aircraft which had been hit and were about to crash. One thing quickly became clear – while they could be heard, there was nothing to worry about but the time to take cover was when the engine stopped. The explosion came after a few seconds silence and the results of the blast could be devastating.

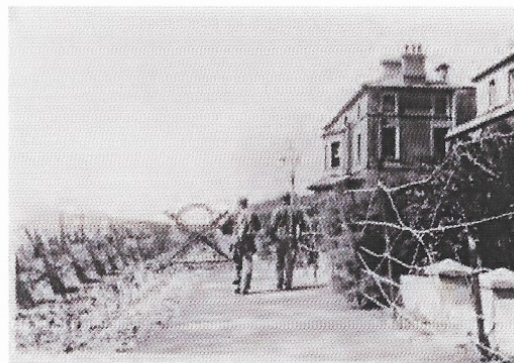
The doodlebugs were launched along metal ramps pointed towards England and Kent experienced the first attack on 13th June 1944. Instructions were to stop the doodlebugs reaching London, the defences being provided by barrage balloons, anti-aircraft guns and fighter planes. Some fighter pilots soon evolved the technique of sending them off course by tipping their wings with the wings of their own planes. As a result, although many were brought down in the sea, a large number crashed on land. Kent received the most but Sussex also suffered considerably.

By mid-July, the batteries of heavy and light guns stretched from St Margarets Bay almost to Newhaven and were employed to shoot down the doodlebugs over the coast causing many to explode locally. Hythe's worst incident came on the afternoon of Tuesday, 15th August. A doodlebug was hit over West Hythe, swerved and exploded at the junction of Twiss Road and Earlsfield Road. Five people were killed and another five seriously injured. A few days earlier, a doodlebug was hit and exploded above Hythe Railway Station. Tudor House in Cannongate Road caught the full force of the blast and its owner was killed as she attempted to reach the shelter. Other houses in the road were badly damaged. The Princes Terrace and Dymchurch Road area suffered considerable damage from doodlebugs destroyed in the air.

The doodlebugs were not the only weapons now threatening Hythe. At the end of June, the town was included in districts in which shell warnings would be given. Previously the cross-Channel shelling had not affected Hythe. The only child to die in Hythe as the result of enemy action was 12 year old Alfie Atkins. On Friday, 11th August, during the school holidays, he was one of three children pushing their cycles up Station Road when he was struck by a shell splinter – probably from an anti-aircraft gun rather than a German shell. His two friends were injured. Many

people who had left the town when invasion seemed likely in 1940 had returned as air raids became infrequent but now a large number left again. At the end of August 1944, many schoolchildren who had returned from Wales were re-evacuated to the West Country – 40 from Hythe went to Liskeard, in Cornwall. On 9th September, a headline in the local paper proclaimed "Now You Can All Come Back". It was premature as German guns on the French coast were shelling the Channel ports by night and day. One demolished "Highlands" a four storey house in Station Road at the top of Mill Passage and the elderly woman who lived there was killed. The Borough Surveyor, Mr John Plim, was badly injured when the building collapsed during a rescue attempt.

By the beginning of October, all the German long range guns had been captured by the Allies. The main flying bomb attacks ended in September though Kent still suffered a few until March 1945. Hythe and the other coastal towns were spared the deadly V2 rocket. Even in the hectic summer of 1944, there were signs of a return to normal life. In the early days of the War, Hythe had become a prohibited area and no "outsiders" were allowed in. At the end of August 1944, the ban was lifted for British carrying identity cards.



Marine Parade during WW2

6. Looking to the Future

There are, right now, significant challenges facing our community which are likely to become quite problematic over the next few years. Some of the most serious are:

The effects of the major developments at **Otterpool**, **Nickolls Quarry**, the **Portex Site** and the continuing trend to convert large single-family houses into blocks of flats – ultimately over 10,000 houses with some 30,000 more inhabitants on our doorstep will create both opportunities and problems. Certainly increased footfall in the High Street should help to sustain local shops and there will be opportunities to develop, say, a local cinema and community centre. The downside is that a very much stronger public transport system, far more road capacity and parking will be needed – perhaps putting the present extent of the South Road sports fields or the Imperial Golf Course or even The

Green in jeopardy. The proximity of so many more families will, in summer at least, put huge pressure on the sea-front and Princes Parade – hence our opposition to the current plans for the latter.

Sandling Station may come up for closure as Otterpool develops and Westenhanger becomes much busier – especially if HS1 trains are persuaded to stop there.

An Aging Population in Hythe itself will beg the question of sufficient supply of care homes and facilities.

M20 Lorry Park Although, strictly speaking, outside Hythe itself, HCS was very concerned about the impact that this “panic” proposal for curing the problem of lorries queuing on the M20 by opening a 40 acre park for over 3000 lorries at Stanford would have on our environment and access roads. We proposed that the problem could better be solved by spreading the lorries among more numerous sites and using computerized methods of calling the lorries forward based on the mobile phone system.

Although the project has been put in abeyance it could easily be resurrected when the effects of Brexit are fully apparent and we stand ready to add our voice of protest to those of our neighbours.

Heritage Preservation, in the face of all the above demands, will be vital but F&HDC does not have Conservation or an Enforcement Officer.

The Triangle at St. Leonard’s Road. This small piece of land, surrounded by a ragstone wall was, historically, an animal pound in which stray animals and sheep awaiting auction could be kept safe. It is one of only a few remaining in Kent and, after it had been acquired for development purposes, local residents raised over £27,000 to ensure its preservation. The current situation is that the trustees of the charity which now owns it – The Hythe Triangle Community Garden R.C. 1163141 – are seeking ways to ensure that it has a safe future and HCS is supporting their efforts.

THE FIRST SIXTY YEARS

EARLY DAYS

Hard-won Experience & Widening Interests

The Hythe Citizens’ Union (forerunner of Hythe Civic Society) was formed in 1945 and in its first five years pressed for more openness in Council matters but found an active role only in conserving old buildings, rather than helping to make new housing projects more palatable. The Committee strove hard for a Master Plan for the development of Hythe and the appointment of an architect.

Attempts to preserve good examples of old buildings were partially successful but after three years’ effort, in

March 1949, very restorable cottages near the bottom of Church Hill were razed to the ground. The Borough Council’s own scheme to preserve the Almshouses and Yeoman’s House there fell through and Yeoman’s House was demolished.

Mercifully the fight in which the Society shared to save the old Almshouses was successful and they were reconditioned and converted into flats — now “Centuries”,

In addition to housing and town planning, the founders of the Citizens’ Union charged themselves with organising lectures, exhibitions and local history study, as well as social events to increase membership

The Town and Country Planning Act of 1947 transferred a wide range of local planning powers to the County. The Boundary Commission of that time wanted to merge Hythe with Folkestone but was dissolved in 1949, allowing us to retain Municipal Borough status for another 25 years.

1950 - 1960:

Deflected and Then Disheartened

From 1950 the HCU’s planning interests appear to have waned except for concern about the Kent County Council development plan and, in particular, the early proposals it incorporated for a vastly wide new Prospect Road, to slice along The Grove. By the late 1950s, with its population still increasing by less than one hundred per year Hythe may have seemed to be returning to a backwater. Its noisily busy era of weapons training on the Ranges had quietened. Its railway station had closed back in 1951. As Newman’s little bus nipped up to Sandling Station, (no longer The Junction), passengers’ thoughts may have been on the lessons Britain had learned at Suez, but more likely on the electrification of the railway, and the ending of 3rd Class compartments

In April 1956 the Society staged its first Old Hythe exhibition at the Town Hall. A wonderful collection of exhibits was assembled from the Archives, from many Hythe residents and local societies but perhaps most from the treasures of Mr. Frederick Horton whose home (two houses in Dymchurch Road) was a museum in itself.

It was in 1956 that the Town Bridge into Stade Street was rebuilt, and handsomely done, 16 years after its destruction by a German bomb and temporary replacement by a Bailey bridge.

But from about 1957 the HCU activities were much reduced for a number of reasons and membership had dwindled. Came the ignoble day, seen as inevitable by some, in March 1960 when a proposal was made that the organisation which had started with such brave hopes fifteen years before should be wound up.

“Not so!” — cried a dozen stalwarts led by Christine Lester. These few members were strongly against the idea, especially as, following the recent launching of the Civic Trust, amenity societies were springing up — not dying. From that a very small nucleus of officers was elected and a new membership roll started and very gradually numbers mounted. Registration with the Civic Trust, the formation of a History Group, a programme of lectures and films for alternate winter months followed. Attempts were also made to beautify the landward side of Princes Parade (then a rubbish tip).

1960 - 1973

More Confident, More Competent

HCU membership in 1960 was down to under twenty. Lean times but eager people! The population of the Borough, in contrast, passed the 10,000 mark the following year and was about to benefit from the considerable upsurge in industrial and residential development in south-east Kent. The first swallow was seen in the start of building of the nuclear energy reactors at Dungeness. 1964 - 1965 was the year that gave a new pattern and impetus.

New civic issues were looming, newly arrived residents were taking close interest and the HCU was in vigorous mood. Changing the name of the Society to the Hythe Civic Society to bring it more into line with the other amenity societies and to prevent the misunderstanding that apparently existed in some quarters, where it was thought to be political, was unanimously agreed. During the next two years attention was given to a listed building survey, the possibilities of trees on the Green, derelict land in the town, direction signs, Ministry of Transport enquiries, and a request was made for a map of Hythe at Prospect Road car park. Membership numbers continued their slow steady climb and in 1967 reached 100.

Now, with its much more comfortable name, the Civic Society also took on the role of watchdog for small civic shortcomings which, uncorrected, so quickly lead to irate citizens. Street flooding, inconvenient bus times, dogs' mess, storm shingle on the promenade, uneven footpaths - not for nothing did a committee member become known by impatient colleagues as Pothole Pat! The positive encouragement from today's District Council for residents to visit its website with their grouse was not known in the late 1960s. Soon a sub-committee was set up to channel these public niggles to Borough or County Council.

However, the big issue in 1967 was at the seafront where patchy development threatened exploitation of the corner of South Road and Marine Parade. The danger came from an unexpected source. Greater London Council proposed to build ten-storey block of

flats to house old people from the capital. From both the human and architectural angles this was felt to be a great mistake. Other sites, less exposed and isolated, were available and such a structure would be completely alien to the town. A public meeting was called and well supported, the press took up the case and representations made by the Society were widely approved.

Hythe residents living inland from the seafront remain incurious about the English Channel except when their attention is drawn to it by storms or worse. In 1962, at the height of the Cold War crisis over Cuba, they threw nervous glances at the Russian trawler fleet ominously anchored in Hythe Bay. It was one night in 1967 that a single, huge explosion shook Hythe and shattered windows such as at Eldridges, the drapers. An unladen oil tanker, the Texaco Caribbean, had blown up quite close to shore. Days later another ship hit the wreck and sank. Then a third was involved. Soon afterwards the free two-way shipping was disciplined into one-way lanes farther out to sea, leaving Hythe observers with only a distant view of grey silhouettes - always heading westward.

The Society's first Newsletter appeared in 1968, a monthly close-typed page of foolscap, written by the Secretary, herself, until May 1972.

Also, in 1968 Hythe's keenly felt disagreement about the Small Arms School buildings on Military Road blew up. The Society drew up plans for a residential development that would retain the attractive fronts of the Georgian army buildings. Hythe Borough Council, however, was trying hard to replace the job availability which was about to be lost to the town when the Small Arms School moved to Warminster and that once pre-eminent job provider, Mackeson's Brewery, was to close for ever. The case for the preservation of the School's listed buildings went to a public enquiry and had much valuable support including that of the Duke of Wellington and of Lord Clark of Saltwood Castle, who appeared in person as a witness. Nevertheless the case was lost and development went ahead. The Society had no opportunity to see until matters had progressed too far. Hythe Borough Council had achieved some job restoration with the new Seaboard area offices and maintenance depot on Military Road and the housing needs in the Folkestone and Hythe Plan had been helped by the building of rented dwellings on the other half of the site with a satisfying lawn area beside the main road.

Down at the sea front the lack of an overall plan still displeased the Civic Society but the Borough Council was determined that, at least, Hythe should have the much-needed attraction of a swimming pool. For that, however, a new and nearly terminal problem loomed.

The Local Government Act of 1972 was intended to abolish the Borough Council, so that any decision to

provide a swimming pool in Hythe would be made by the new District Council, if at all. The Town Clerk sensed the urgency and moved very quickly. The swimming pool, which other powers had planned to build elsewhere along the coast, came to Hythe, to the town's lasting benefit. For these and countless other services during his twenty years as Deputy and then Town Clerk, James Nowell had conferred upon him the Honorary Freedom of the Borough of Hythe — a rare honour, indeed.

As the '60s gave way to the '70s there were other modest improvements to leisure life. Hythe and Saltwood Sailing Club built its own clubhouse and dinghy park on Marine Parade. The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Light Railway was refurbished to take advantage of the growing international interest in rare steam railways. Above the town, the Sene Valley golf course was created to join in the rapid development of that sport. For cerebral exercise the attractive new Hythe Library had been opened in 1962.

1973 - 1980

Hythe's Changing Appearance and the Hythe Tree Campaign

The new Chairman in 1974 reflected the interest in their adopted town of senior managers from the new industry and commerce of Southeast Kent. Ron Collins was then Technical Director of Letraset at Ashford. He sought to broaden the Society's civic involvement; soon he formed a separate Local History Group and started the now widely known Guided Town Walks, with members as leaders. The Newsletter was given fresh impact by the new editor Dr Michael Fairhead and then his wife Libby.

1978 was the 700th Anniversary of the charter given to Hythe by King Edward the First. It was celebrated by the Society with the active work of Tony Amess and his Local History Group in mounting an appropriate exhibition.

Returning to our Elizabeth II days, Seeboard issued an invitation, an olive branch, to the Civic Society Committee. A visit to the new electricity headquarters on Military Road included the ceremonial planting of a tree, in which the hosts' latter-day opponent, Lt Col Drake-Brockman, took part as the Civic Society's President.

In the mid-1970s, along the Military Canal north bank and Ladies Walk, the magnificent elm trees, 160 years old and 80 feet high, became, all at one time, victims of the Dutch Elm disease sweeping across Britain. The consequences were to occupy Ron Collins, as Chairman and as founder of the Hythe Tree Campaign, for many years to come. The town's trees had been causing some private concern for a while but it was that startling disappearance of the elm crowns, green above the rooftops, which was to shock Hythe people

into recognition of the problem. District Council landscape funds were tightly stretched by the felling and clearing of the huge trees right through from West Hythe to Seabrook. The Civic Society established a tree fund, an exhibition was held, and the townsfolk responded magnificently raising no less than £15,500 in the first four years for new trees. A Tree Record was made by Ron Collins for the donors' names and the plantings carried out by Shepway workers.

Many other changes were in the air in Hythe around 1980. The Prospect Road widening was at last done, much less drastically than the early plans thanks to local opposition. Housing developments at Turnpike Camp on London Road, initially planned too densely, and at Reachfields and on Seabrook Road gained approval from the Society. The South Eastern Gas Board's plan for industrial or caravanning development on its' land by West Parade was successfully opposed. The new town centre supermarket plan had, however, gained a warm welcome.

1981 - 1991

Gaining from Many Skills and Working Them Hard

Membership numbers had risen rapidly in the late 1970s. From the acclaimed 320 in 1972 the total cruised past the 500 mark in 1976, and, as always, windfalls of new names were enrolled during the Society's exhibitions. In the eighties membership remained generally above 600. The experience among other societies of a savage fall-out of members had been kept at bay.

Through Alan Stirk's reign as Chairman, May 1981 to summer 1985, the regular flow of planning applications and amenities shortcomings continued to occupy members and the Committee. But two relatively large projects loomed which were both akin to the Chairman's experience as Chief Executive of the Kent River Authority.

The Hythe Sewage Disposal Scheme was a major new undertaking in advance of which many protagonists and experts lined up differently on the various aspects. It was to be a number of years (1988) before the new system's piping, treatment and long sea outfall were completed. After early representations to the Southern Water Authority the pumping station and covered tanks were moved to the west end of Range Road and, another early proposal, a storm sewage outfall at Seabrook, was abandoned.

In those days increasingly loud rumbling thunder was heard on that most contentious subject, pedestrianisation of Hythe High Street. However, the Society's planners were themselves more concerned with the future of Princes Parade. One project there, to become known as Hythe Marina, but incorporating nearly 600

dwellings was given serious attention but was eventually abandoned.

More distant environmental concerns began to demand attention in the mid-1980s such as the first attempt to build a holiday centre in West Wood, Lyminge and the Channel Tunnel, which, of course, was seen from the outset as a dramatically huge development. However, rather like the M20 and the proposed high-speed Channel Tunnel railway across Saltwood parish, these major planning applications are almost too much for a town society to pursue. It became usual for societies to comment via their affiliation to national organisations such as the Council for the Protection of Rural England or, on broad strategy matters, the County Council.

In earlier years contact meetings had been held with neighbouring societies similar to our own but this was not often fruitful and for local matters the link that became most used, often effectively, was that with the Town and District Councils. For the mammoth projects such as the Channel Tunnel it was found that good work could be done with Councils in mitigating the immediate problems of construction traffic or local pollution.

In complete and splendid contrast to these environmental concerns came, in June 1986, the opening of Brockhill Country Park. Stretching from the doorstep of the town at London Road to Brockhill Lake and Slaybrook, this development by Kent County Council has proved to be a delight and a significant permanent asset for Hythe and Saltwood as well as for visitors from afar. An added benefit was that it removed uncertainty about the future of Brockhill valley land, thus ensuring for Hythe a close perimeter of countryside from The Roughs right round to Shorncliffe.

Hythe — Living History was the title of a new and most successful exhibition at the Town Hall in the summer of 1986. Master-minded by the Civic Society, it invited all the town's organisations to take part in a show of their present skills and their histories. Perhaps the most talked about exhibit was the art of Tony Amess. Ten of his prints were bought by the Civic Society for future display. Kit Beal, then the Newsletter editor, commented that the exhibition confirmed "a rather special feature of Hythe, the way so many people and organisations join together to support a co-operative venture". How strange, therefore, that Hythe, having lost its Institute and its large Church Hall in the 1960s has been unable yet to build its own Community Centre. From 1988 Civic Society interest was renewed when a working group began beavering away at this unmet need as a campaign for it was re-started by a few Councillors. At the AGM in May 1989 our Chairman, gave out the results of an official Town Poll, responded to by some 1,300 citizens, on the question of "Does the Town Still Need a Community Centre?" The weak majority in favour, 4 to 3, was seen by members as a travesty, the subject having become loudly identified with breaking

covenants and building on the Town Green; which latter was voted against by 3 to 1. The Town Council was hampered by wanting to build on its own, free land near the town centre. The next suggestion was for a site between the Cricket Ground and the recreation fields at Wakefield Walk.

The Civic Society, very unusually, urged its members to collect a town petition against this location and, in 1991, a list of nearly 900 names was handed to the Mayor. Despite this mass-vote approach the Town Council valued the Civic Society's co-operation and this led to the Society issuing a questionnaire to potential future users of a Community Centre. Responses from 42 organisations were collated to provide a well-based set of proposals for the Council.

1992 - 1995

By now the Hythe Tree Restoration Campaign appeal had resulted in the extraordinary benefit to Hythe of a vista of handsome young trees on public land across the town. The first Newsletter of 1992 reported a presentation to Ron Collins for his 12 years work leading this major achievement. It also tracked the progress of other "visible improvements" in the town such as at the Scanlon and Duke's Head bridges and the Town Hall facelift and found itself concerned more closely than ever with the High Street "pedestrian priority" scheme. That wording, not "traffic-free", described the unworkable mix of delivery lorries, priority cars and walkers first experimented with by Kent County Council in 1992. Nearly 100 members attended an emergency meeting to agree the Civic Society stance. The years-long debate, and a totally changed two-year traffic experiment, continued with a reducing level of acrimony, until late in 1994. HCS was represented on the Kent CC Advisory Liaison Panel and by this and every other means helped materially in gaining today's arrangements. These are much better than the first proposal and seen by many as an acceptable compromise.

In the continuing liaison with the District and Town Councils the improvement of the newly named Town Square (owned by Shepway DC) seemed a promising proposal to incorporate with the new traffic system. The High Street, as with nearly all small towns in England, had already lost many shops with a range of staple goods. Valiant efforts from Chambers of Commerce and town centre managers have not reversed the trend. In Hythe this diminishment became further apparent, despite the strongest protests from the Civic Society and many others, in the downgrading of the Post Office from purpose-built premises to half a shop.

In a different vein, during 1994, the Society brought to reality a long-nurtured wish to add to civic enjoyment by publishing members' writing. Design and printing

techniques since the microchip have revolutionised the industry and aid small ventures. Written to celebrate its 200th Anniversary, Denise Rayner's story of **The Town Hall of Hythe** appeared. Her entertaining account was complemented by illustrations from Rufus Segar, another member. Local craftsmen and companies were also commissioned for Geoffrey Roberts' book **Hythe Walking** that caught the growing interest of Hythe people in the town and its hinterland of today.

In 1993, the date September 23rd was "a milestone" in the words of Councillor Baxter who was leading Town Councillors' efforts towards a **Hythe Community Centre**. A site had been found to lease on Shepway's Prospect Road car park and the Town Council had £500,000 from earlier land sales to put towards the project. Yet again the project was frustrated – this time by Shepway's decision to use the site for a supermarket.

At Princes Parade on the Seabrook seafront, the proposal for a **Hythe Marina** was withdrawn early in 1995. This was, not least, because the Department of National Heritage wanted to preserve the Royal Military Canal - now a Scheduled Monument. The future of the Canal and the land alongside at Seabrook, which Shepway owns, will continue to exercise the minds of councillors, residents and developers for a long while yet. The welcome new coastal defence groynes and shingle replacement will probably not alter the parameters of their study.

Very near Hythe town centre, but on a much smaller scale, the Civic Society was an eager donor to **Hythe Cricket Club** when it set out to secure the freehold of the Ground. The neighbouring South Road recreation field belongs to Hythe Town Council. In earlier years part of this area was sold for building the neo-Georgian residences off Twiss Road but today Council thinking favours keeping the remaining two-thirds for public use.

The recession of 1991 — 1994 caused a big drop in the number of property planning applications for the Committee to consider. But there was a new, compelling, reason to think of the Civic Centre and County Hall. The Local Government Commission proposed to abolish the County Council. As a possible outcome, in Hythe's case, a merger was proposed of Shepway District with Ashford Borough as a unitary authority. The Government provisionally concluded, after all, that there should be no overall change in Kent to the structure laboriously put into place after the 1972 Act. The fact that a costly, irrational reorganisation of the whole county was not, in the end, made was due to sane consultation patiently conducted and carefully responded to by the likes of the Civic Society all over Kent.

1994 saw the centenary of the **Catholic Church**, first opened in 1894 after strenuous efforts by the Augustinian Father Selley – who held a mass for soldiers in the town in 1891 - and his successor Father O'Gorman who completed the structure in a mere 11 months. During WW2 women of the congregation ran a rest room providing tea & coffee every evening for service personnel – particularly popular on Sundays when the NAAFI was closed.

1995 - 2005

Probably the liveliest issue in June 1995 was the proposed **Community Centre**. With no other hall in Hythe capable of seating more than 100 people the need for this building was widely accepted and, indeed, the town council had voted in 1992 to build the centre, using the Prospect Rd car park site.

HCS set up a working party to coordinate the views of 28 organisations that would be interested in using the building. Among the most important aspects was the location – the corner of South Rd & Ladies Walk was recommended. Subsequently the Town Council met several times and consulted the group of users while HCS polled its members and all then came out strongly in favour of a site on The Green. A planning application for this scheme was rejected by Shepway DC on the grounds that open spaces in towns should be preserved. A referendum in October then showed a significant majority (1290 votes out of 1684) against any community centre. Sadly, in our opinion, the following years have not provided any further development of this project and we remain one of the few towns of any size without a decent sized centre for social events.

On a happier note, the threat of a major housing development on **Eaton Lands** was defeated, largely due to pressure from the Eaton Lands Preservation Society (ELPS). As a result the Charity Commissioners appointed Hythe Town Council (HTC) as Trustee of the area to maintain it for recreation purposes. In 2001 ELPS merged with and now forms part of HCS. HTC has since improved Eaton Lands with a wild flower meadow, some new trees, a grassy area for games and re-surfaced footpaths.

Shopping in Hythe experienced an eventful period. In July 1995 Iceland opened its doors and HCS's hopes that this heralded a return to a town centre shopping culture was borne out in 1997 by the partial re-development of the Prospect Road car park by Somerfield. Several efforts were made to promote the use of their former High Street site for social purposes - possibly a community centre and/or a surgery. Many think this was a lost opportunity but it led to the arrival of a branch of Aldi, further increasing the choice of shops in Hythe. Subsequently, in 2000, Waitrose took over the Prospect Road store.

In 1996 it was proposed to build a 24-bed **Pilgrims Hospice on Newington Meadow** on the North Side of Station Road. Although in favour of a hospice for

Hythe, HCS felt that this site was unsuitable both in terms of vehicle access and because the site provides direct access to land of high landscape value. In 1997 the plan was re-submitted for a site in London Road, welcomed by HCS but strongly opposed by local residents and it was eventually built in Ashford.

Hythe Congregational Church which had stood on the corner of Sun Lane and High Street since 1868 was finally replaced in 2000 with a small housing development. In Victorian times the site was called Walnut Tree Yard and we were pleased to note that the new development has restored this name.

HCS was active in criticising the initial plans for a **New Surgery** to be built at Oaklands in Stade Street not least for the lack of dedicated car parking. However it has proved to be a modern, high quality facility which was badly needed by the community.

In a bid to provide more amusements for the younger generation, HTC decided to build a **Skateboard Park** on the site of disused allotments south of the Tennis Club. Problems with the quality of its construction restricted its use for a while but HCS welcomed it as a useful new amenity.

In 2000 the **Sustrans Cycle Route**, a £200M Millennium Project, announced that one of its first paths would pass through Hythe on its way from Dover to the West Country. Rather perversely they opted to use Ladies Walk for one section – several accidents and near misses happened there and HCS lobbied for a safer route through the town which was eventually agreed via Marine Parade.

Hythe Cricket Club has continued to play a role as one of our town's major sporting amenities but was subjected to a most cruel arson attack in October 2003. The historic pavilion was razed to the ground and many irreplaceable souvenirs of the sport were lost – including the bat and ball used by Percy Chapman in the victorious, 1936, Test Match against Australia. It is really pleasing that the replacement is a modern replica of the original building.

A major investment to restore the **Royal Military Canal** was made in 2001/2. As well as dredging a long section to maintain effective drainage a number of rather striking statues and interpretation boards were erected. Somewhat ridiculed when it was first built in 1804-9, it is worth noting that nearly 135 years later Hitler's planners assigned a whole regiment of Paratroops to seize the bridges!

The Hythe Tree Campaign officially came to an end in September 1999. Proposed and funded by HCS in 1979 the campaign had the object of improving the treescape of Hythe following the devastating loss of the fine avenue of mature Elm trees that lined the canal banks. A committee was founded by agreement between the Local Authorities, HCS, Rotary and others, ably led by Ron Collins.

Throughout the decade attention focussed on **The Green** in several contexts, namely: lighting improvements; more trees and playgrounds; the possibility of a "top coat" of silt from the canal dredging; and as a possible site for a community centre and/or a sports centre. HCS has supported some of these, as it would like to see more use made of this large, well-sited open space. However, it is governed by two covenants, which apparently prohibit any buildings. 2003 saw the 150th anniversary of the first deed under which the Horton family donated the land to the community. The Green Preservation Society celebrated with a number of environmental improvements and mounted an exhibition of The Green's history in the Library during the 2004 Hythe Festival.

The **Methodist Church** celebrated its centenary in 1998. The dedication on 13 May 1898 was attended by over 400 people, including the Mayor and Corporation and other VIP's and they "adjourned for tea" afterwards to the Hythe Institute – probably much needed as contemporary reports speak of a long sermon and many speeches! Built of both Bath stone and local ragstone it has an ornamental spire and a schoolroom on the east side. In 1988 a hall in matching style was added on the west side. Methodism was first recorded in Hythe in 1805 through the influence of "godly soldiers" holding services in Red Lion Square. Growing over the years in rented rooms and halls the congregation built its first church, on this site, in 1845 but it was "plagued with problems" leading to rebuilding from scratch.

The bronze **Drinking Fountain**, now in Red Lion Square, also reached its century having been unveiled by Lady Watkin on 12 May 1896. The fountain was provided by Thomas Judge to celebrate his mayoralty though, sadly, he died only 7 weeks later, still a young man. It was originally built into the wall in front of Dr. Fagge's property just east of the Town Hall. In 1908 this site was rebuilt by the London County & Westminster Bank and in 1913 the fountain was mounted in the wall of Mackeson's brewery until its demolition. Although no longer connected to the water supply it remains an interesting survival from the Victorian era.

In 1997 Hythe Town Council prepared and published an **Appraisal** of the town which set out a comprehensive description including the results of a very detailed analysis of a questionnaire replied to by as many as 5334 residents. A mine of information as to what we all use and do and want around our town, it has been used to help decide planning and social issues faced by our elected representatives. HCS participated extensively in its production and believes (in vain!) that it should be repeated every decade.

Remembrance Service The 1995 remembrance service marked the 50th anniversary of the victory in the 2nd World War. A most moving occasion that was

marred by an act of gross vandalism shortly afterwards when the angel with a ship statue on the War Memorial was stolen. (It was subsequently found in the canal after permanent repairs had been made, is now in the Council Chamber and bears a wreath on Remembrance Sunday). The Mayor (Cllr. Eileen Bailey) raised a fund to improve the area and voluntary donations (including £50 from HCS) quickly exceeded her target of £1000. The new memorial was dedicated on 12th May 1996.

Being all too aware that 1914-18 has not proved to be "the war to end war", the new memorial includes the additional words: "And in memory of those who lost their lives in wars and conflicts since".

In 1997 we marked the Remembrance with the famous quotation from "In Flanders Fields" by the much-

decorated Canadian Army Doctor John McCrea (1872-1918). We learnt in 1999 that his medals were auctioned and purchased for £177,000 by a Chinese immigrant to Canada and presented to the McRea Museum in Guelph, Ontario in grateful thanks to his new country.

**Illustrations have been
reproduced by kind
permission of
Mrs Janine Umbers
(Front Cover)
Mrs Monica Thomson
HCS Archives**

HYTHE CIVIC AWARDS

OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARDS

In response to a request by one of our members to honour any Hythe citizen who has rendered outstanding voluntary service to the community, the Society introduced a special Award in May 2000. It was intended that this Award should only be made occasionally and to the most deserving of citizens. It takes the form of a framed scroll, suitably illustrated with the Hythe Town Seal. Recipients to date have been:

Mr Ron Collins (2000) & Mr John Davies (2001)

Dr. Berkeley Hill & Mr. Maurice Maisey (2002)

Mr Ronald Stokes (2003) & Mr Doug Amans (2005)

Cllr. Chris Capon (2008) & Mr Richard Carroll (2011)

Lt Col Mike Umbers and Cllr John Schoner (2013)

Dr John Barham and Mrs Sally Chesters (2015)

Mr Ashley Tanton and Mr Andy McGuire (2016)

Rev. Desmond Sampson and Mr Alan Joyce (2018)

BLUE PLAQUES

The Society also recognises residents of Hythe who have made an outstanding contribution to the wider community by installing commemorative Blue Plaques on their houses. The following lives have been celebrated in this way

Don Thompson – 1960 Rome Olympics Gold Medal – 50km.Walk – 28 North Road

Elizabeth Bowen – Novelist - "Carbury" Church Hill

Ronald Ward – Architect – Martello Tower, West Parade

CAPON SHIELD

To encourage the use of the highest standards, Hythe Civic Society makes an annual review of property and amenity developments in the town and awards a Certificate and Wall Plaque to those it feels have contributed positively to our townscape and social amenities. Sometimes, unfortunately, it is impossible to find a suitable project to recognise in this way but occasionally we are pleasantly surprised and make more than one award!

The recipients are recorded on the Borough Shield which was presented to the town by Cllr Chris Capon MBE after whom it is now commonly known.

The awards are presented at the A.G.M. in the Spring of the following year and the following is a list of those made since their inception in 1975:

1975 Carriage Trade, High Street	1997 Bowls Club
1976 2, High Street (<i>Portex Ltd</i>)	1998 Kent Cottage (since redeveloped)
1977 Bayle Pottery	2000 Wellington Mews
1978 The King's Head (<i>Dining Room</i>)	2002 Villa Maria, Seabrook Road (<i>P. Williams/Marist Sisters</i>)
1979 Local History Room at Oaklands (<i>Hythe Town Council</i>)	2002 Skateboard Park, Lucy's Walk (<i>Hythe Town Council</i>)
1980 The International Stores (<i>Alleman Ltd and Cheney & Thorpe</i>)	2003 Judith Cottage, Bartholemew Street (<i>Derek & Claire Moran</i>)
1981 Blue Shield Insurance Building (<i>W.G. Garrard & Co</i>)	2006 Restoration of the Old Auction Rooms, Marine Walk Street (<i>Mrs Annie Morris</i>)
1982 Sutherland House, Stade Street	2007 Oaklands Health Centre (<i>Amenity Award</i>)
1983 143 & 143a High Street (<i>P. Rumley</i>)	2007 Old Auction Rooms, Marine Walk St.
1984 Nicola's San Marco	2008 The Howey Apartments, Seabrook Rd. (<i>Pentland Homes</i>)
1985 Tramway Stables, Rampart Road (<i>Cheney & Thorpe</i>)	2010 Hythe Lawn Tennis Club, New Clubhouse Hythe Cricket Club, Rebuilt Clubhouse after Arson Attack
1987 United Reformed Church, East Street (<i>Wate, Irwin Associates, Architects</i>)	2011 The Sports Pavilion (<i>Hythe Town Council</i>)
1988 Hythe Tree Campaign	2012 C of E School Re-development, St. Leonard's Road 1-3 High St. Re-development of Mackesons Brewery Office
1989 67 High Street, Shop Front (<i>Mr S.H. Wood of Harry Wood & Son</i>)	2014 Tin Tabernacle re-furbishment and preservation of public use. (<i>John & Kay Keesing</i>)
1990 Tile House, Mount Street (<i>Mr D.Dodd, DVL Properties</i>)	2018 Tram Shelter, Princes Parade (F.H.D.C.)
1991 The Water Mill, Mill Lane (<i>Mr & Mrs A. D. Marston</i>)	2019 Canon Newman Hall – Conversion to a residence (<i>Jules & Lore Boyd</i>)
1992 Surgery, 116 High Street (<i>Drs Foster, Lefevre & Montgomery & Mr D. Irwin</i>)	
1993 6 & 8 Bank Street (<i>Hawkins Baker Design / Douglas Estates</i>)	
1994 84, Stade Street (<i>Colin A. Morgan & Co, Solicitors</i>)	
1995 Red Lion Court (<i>Barwicks</i>)	

HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST TO MEMBERS

PUBLISHED BY H.C.S.

Our Time in Hythe	-	Geoffrey Roberts (1995)
Hythe Events	-	Brian Doorne (2005)
Last Days of Hythe Harbour	-	Maurice Young & Janine Umbers
Flood, Fire & Sudden Death*	-	Denise Rayner
Hythe Police Station	-	Diana Spencer
History of Hythe Town Hall*	-	Denise Rayner
Memories of Hythe in World War II*	-	Hilda Scarth
Hythe Celebrities	-	John Woodward & John Keefe
A Saltwood Miscellany*	-	Mike Umbers
About St. Leonard's	-	Mike Umbers
Parish Pot-Pourri*	-	Mike Umbers
Hythe & Saltwood Remember 1914-18 – "The Fallen"	-	Edited: Anne Petrie

PUBLISHED BY OTHERS

Remember Hythe High Street 1902-92	-	Rufus Segar
Echoes from the Sky	-	Dr. Richard Scarth & Peter K Thomas

*Out of Print but available to members on loan from the HCS Archive

OFFICERS DOWN THE YEARS

CHAIRMEN

1945-47	Rev. E A Newman
1947-49	Gen. A L Forster
1949-60	Mrs M Mallorie
1960-62	Mr C T Sanford
1962-65	Mr E S Booth
1965-72	Lt Col Drake-Brockman
1972-74	Mr A Hollinghurst
1974-81	Mr R B Collins
1981-85	Mr A G Stirk
1985-87	Mr J W Sutton
1987-90	Mrs K M Beal
1990-96	Mr R H H Stokes
'96-2012	Brig. J Holman
2012-17	Mr C J Melchers
2017-	Mr C Davies

SECRETARIES

1945-48	Mr H H Bristow
1948-60	Lt Col B Moss
1960-72	Miss C E Lester
1972-73	Mrs E Hollingshurst
1973-74	Mrs H Lovatt
1974-75	Mrs V Ryves
1975-77	Mrs C M Spinks
1977-78	Mr R B Collins
1979-86	Mrs K Godding
1986-89	Mrs M Green
1989-90	Mrs M Jenkins
1991-95	Mrs A M Bilsland
1995-98	Mrs M Irwin
1998-05	Mrs P Cooper
2005-06	Miss Christine Sterling
2006-	Mrs Mary Hunter

TREASURERS

1945-71	Mr E T Jury
1972-73	Col J R Johnson
1975-77	Mr B R V Woods
1977-82	Mrs E Allan
1982-91	Mr J A Winterton
1991-95	Mr G Everett
1995-08	Maj M H R Thomson
2008-	Mr Alan Joyce

PRESIDENT

2010-19 Mr Doug Amans

PRESIDENT ELECT

2020 - Christopher Melchers

VICE PRESIDENT

Mrs Hilda Scarth

LIFE MEMBERS

Kit Beal, Hilda Scarth,
Mike Umbers, Sally Chesters,
Ian Hill, Alan Joyce, Alan Whipp,
John Keefe, Christopher Melchers,
June Orrell, Jane Twist,
Penny Holman, Monica Thompson

HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY PROJECTS



Design and Installation of nine Information Panels in the Car Parks



Regeneration of Mackeson Square

HYPHE IN BLOOM IN RECENT YEARS

