



# HYTHE CIVIC SOCIETY

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE 2022/23 YEAR

It was with deep sadness that the Society learned of the death of its Patron, Lord Boyce - Warden of the Cinque Ports, on 9 September 2022. He is missed by the Society and many, many others.

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

Following approval of an updated Constitution at the 2022 Annual General Meeting, the Society has received approval from the Charity Commission and has commenced putting into effect its various new requirements. One such requirement is the presentation to this AGM of a three-year Forward Plan, which highlights proposed activity to help meet the Society's principal charitable objects (our purposes) and ensure that we remain effective as a local community organisation. Work will continue throughout 2023 to develop other new policies and procedures required by the revised Constitution.

At the 2022 AGM members agreed to changes in both the constitution and accompanying notes. The constitutional changes subsequently were agreed by the Charity Commission. There are now 4 aims of the Society and the annual report reflects those aims.

### **Charitable Objective 1 - Promoting High Standards of Planning and Architecture in Hythe**

#### **Planning Applications**

The Society has a practice of commenting on applications that affect a significant geographical area, that affect the Hythe Conservation area or are likely to create a precedent in a particular location. In deciding upon applications the District Council needs to take into account both National Planning Policy guidance and its own Development Plan. Sometimes the Society finds itself at odds with statutory national and local policies!

Because the proposed Otterpool development is outside the Society's "area of benefit" (the civil parish of Hythe) the Executive Committee has only concerned itself with the effect that Otterpool will have on Hythe itself rather than the proposed development as a whole. There is potential benefit to the Hythe retail traders from additional development at Otterpool – at least until the proposed "district centre" at Otterpool is developed. The lack of parking in Hythe could be a limiting factor to the High Street benefitting from the additional development. The Society remains concerned about the future of the High Street. Undoubtedly the development of Otterpool over a period of 30 years will have a profound effect on Hythe as we know it.

The long running saga of Princes Parade continued throughout the year. FHDC obtained consent from the Secretary of State for Transport to "divert" the road to the north of the site alongside the Royal Military Canal. This diversion was essential to the siting of the leisure centre and for the development in general. Clearance of the site commenced in the second half of the year. In very early April 2023, a few days before "purdah" descended on FHDC activities, the site gained detailed planning consent. However FHDC came to the conclusion that the approved scheme was too expensive to proceed in light of increasing costs and energy prices and agreed only to continue with work that would enable the consent to be kept alive in perpetuity. Subsequently an offer to purchase and develop the whole site was received by FHDC. As a result of this offer the FHDC

Leader asked for an officer report on all available options to continue with the development. This report is awaited.

Despite this progress the Society remains of the view that the best long term solution would have been for Princes Parade to remain as open space but with full public access and the new leisure centre to be built at Martello Lakes – the original proposed site with existing planning consent.

### **Hythe Civic Award**

Regretfully there were no nominations for outstanding design submitted this year.

## **Charitable Objective 2 - Informing the Public of the Geography, Heritage, History, Natural History and Architecture of Hythe**

### **Talks**

This year we changed the format of our talks program. We planned one talk per month from Sept. to June instead of two per month over a shorter period and the feedback from our members is that you prefer it. So, until you tell us otherwise we shall continue with one talk each month.

Our Queen died early in September and it was decided to postpone our first talk due to be held a few days later. We know that some members felt that this was a mistake, but no one can please all of the people all of the time and we hope that Stuart Bligh will be able to speak to us on Maritime Kent in the coming year.

As always our talks in 2022-23 have been varied, interesting and well attended and promise to end the season in grand style with The History of The Red Arrows.

When planning our talks we always try to include some speakers that we know you have enjoyed in the past and some new ones that have been recommended to us. But our aim is always to please you, our members, so your input is always welcome. Please chat to the stewards at the talks, tell us what you think about our talks' programme, the speakers you want to hear again (or not as the case may be) and perhaps suggest someone you have heard elsewhere. Or you can always comment via our website.

### **Exhibitions and Events**

The Society was pleased to have a stand at the return of the Venetian Fete in August 2022. Although the weather leading up to the first Fete procession was dreadful, our stand had a reasonable number of visitors who complimented the Society for its work and the display of many photographs from our archive collection presented on the stand.

### **Preparation for the May Photographic Exhibition at the Hythe Library**

Although the exhibition itself is not until this May, much work has been undertaken in the last few weeks and months to prepare the material for display. The exhibition runs for most of May and is in two parts. We hope Members will find time to visit the Library during May and see first-hand the result of just some of the work to scan and digitise material within the archive. If the exhibition is well-received consideration will be given to making this an annual event.

### **Guided Walks**

A rather disappointing year for guided walks....but perhaps it was the heat? There were just 118 walkers on Thursdays and no parties of walkers in 2022. Of those 118 a third were local people but there were also visitors from Europe, USA, Canada, Australia and even Thailand! This compares poorly with figures for 2021 when there were 158 walkers: that, too, was disappointing but we put it

down to our emergence from Covid. In 2022, who knows? A big thank you to the Town Guides, as always, for their great work.

### **Blue Plaques**

The “Blue Plaque Project” rumbles on with lots of work going on in the background regarding planning consent, listed building consent, permission from the owner, style and so on. We had hoped to have at least one plaque in place by now but, disappointingly, that is still some time away. And the costs of the plaques have increased significantly following the loss of our original local pottery.

### **Publications**

“A Walk Around Historic Hythe”, an important addition to the Society’s publication list, was published in July – a guided walk in a book. So popular has it been that the initial print run was sold out in no time and a second reprint is in sight. We have in mind an audio version of the book, downloadable to a mobile phone, but that is still in the planning stages.

### **Charitable Objective 3 - Securing the Preservation, Protection, Development and Improvement of Features of Historic or Public Interest in Hythe**

#### **Conservation Area**

Last summer, the Society was invited by the Right Worshipful Mayor of Hythe to join him in painting the street furniture in the High Street. A group of around ten Society members undertook the task (with gusto) and, as work had to be suspended during the cold weather, it is hoped that it will be completed by the end of the summer.

#### **Local History**

The History Group continues to meet on the second Wednesday of the month in The Choir Vestry at St Leonard’s church and this year we have been pleased to welcome some new members. We have had several presentations this year reflecting our varied interests. Paul Naylor reported on the ongoing work that he and Iris Pearce are undertaking in cataloguing the HCS photographic archive. Dr Andrew Richardson, an archaeologist, talked about the Lossenham project. Debby Jones gave a fascinating talk on the history of Avenue House.

In summer, to resolve an on-going (but good natured) historical difference of opinion, we held The Great Roman Roads debate. It was a fair fight which ended in a draw.

As always, we have helped HCS members and others from Hythe and beyond with their historical queries. House histories figure large as do – rather oddly – enquiries from people who believe that their ancestor was a mayor of Hythe. We have now placed a list of incumbents on our website to help them. Other questions have been about the former burial ground off London Road; the history of the toll road; the bandstands on the canal banks; the building of Hillcrest Road; and a wartime radar station on the Roughs.

We have been out and about, too, with members visiting the archaeological dig at Lympe and having a guided tour of Bilsington Priory.

Ongoing projects include the re-organisation of the archives and the revival of the Oral History team. The group is also involved in the organisation of two historic photograph exhibitions at Hythe Library and the production of an accompanying booklet on the Hortons of Cold Harbour House.

## **Archives**

Indexing and re-ordering of the archives continues. The archives are held in a small room in the Town Council offices at Oaklands and are available for use by members and the public by prior appointment.

## **Digitisation of photographic negatives**

Over 2022, we continued to work in partnership with the Kent Photo Archive on the conversion to digital format of the large 'Jack Adams' collection of negatives, which were bequeathed to the Society in 1999. With the fantastic support of the KPA volunteers, we are closing in on having some 4,500 digital images. The KPA is currently presenting about 600 of these on its website for public viewing and plans to increase this number to over 1,000.

## **Amenity Award**

The Committee was pleased to endorse the nomination of the "Open Door Hythe" project at 101 High Street to receive the Society's "Amenity Award" for bringing so many voluntary groups together under one roof – a one stop shop. This is only the second time that an Amenity Award has been made!

## **Charitable Objective 4 - Promoting Civic Pride in Hythe**

### **Hythe in Bloom**

Another great year for Hythe in Bloom with lots of compliments for the Platinum Jubilee colour scheme during the summer. Prospect Road really did look amazing!

Costs rose, once again, but the continuing support of Hythe Town Council and our commercial sponsors – Lawrence and Co, Gopak and Charlier Construction – means that we can carry on with the same level of floral displays for the moment.

The Tuesday morning gardeners continue to meet every week at 9am by the War Memorial and a very satisfying time is had by all. FHDC seems to have great difficulty recruiting suitable staff and they are extremely grateful for our assistance. This year the group has, once again, worked on Wakefield Walk, Mackeson Square, the wide borders by the War Memorial, the Princess Diana Sensory Garden and other small areas. Last year's new planting has come on well, despite last summer's drought conditions, and residents have commented on how good the beds are looking.

A huge thank you, as usual, to all the volunteers who come along every Tuesday, to those who come when needed and to those who water the High Street troughs during the summer months. Thank you also to the group from Napier Barracks who have helped this year when required.

### **Eaton Lands**

The Community Orchard on Eaton Lands, a joint project between Hythe Civic Society and the Hythe Environmental Community Group, continues to thrive. It produced a modest harvest of apples, pears and plums, the second year of planting, all of which were picked by members of the public passing by on the footpath HB 25. Two work days, in February and March, were arranged with a small group of very enthusiastic Brockhill Academy pupils ably led by their teacher Luke. This included laying a pathway of chippings through the middle of the orchard, provided by Stephen Bailey, also adding a variety of wildlife shrubs to the hedgerow. Light pruning has also been carried out. We are still awaiting the designs for the interpretation / information panels being developed by the Brockhill Pupils.

## **Objective 5 - Delivering Effective Operations and Governance**

### **5.1.1 - Valued Communications with Members and the Wider Public**

#### **Newsletter**

We now publish our Newsletter quarterly, as our new website, along with more frequent email information, keeps our members more up to date. We hope it is an enjoyable read, filled with upcoming events, well researched historical articles and planning issues that are important to our members.

We always welcome input and suggestions, including queries and information that may be of interest to you all. Please feel free to contact us with any ideas or facts you think our readers would like to hear about. We have a large archive that we can draw from to aid in research that often leads to fascinating articles and they could start with you.

### **5.1.2 - Facebook**

The Society's Facebook page, now with some 350 followers, continues to be steep learning curve as the use of technology does not easily fit with advancing age! Two tasks for the forthcoming year are to convert Facebook followers into paid up members of the Society and to integrate Facebook and our website.

### **5.1.3 - Website and Members Only Page**

Now that our website has been significantly upgraded, more documents and booklets have been made available to view in digital format. These include: the 2021 'Heritage Hythe' walk trail booklets (five in all), and various booklets from the archive. During early 2023, a 'Members Only' portal has become available, providing access to these booklets and other material which we hope Members will find helpful and interesting – this will include access to the late Rufus Segar's illustrated booklets about Hythe, and 'Forgotten History' stories based on past newsletters from the archive. The upgraded website is wholly due to the work of Bob Bruce – a Society member. Thank you Bob!

### **5.1.4 – Leaflet**

The current leaflet needs to be reviewed and re-printed to allow its use to recruit new members.

### **5.1.5 - Membership**

At 31 March 2023 the Society had a paid up membership of 667 members from 418 households. This compares to 741 members 12 months previously.

### **5.1.6 – Publicity**

Much publicity was received during the year including the front page of the Kentish Express regarding the initial plans for the ex-Aldi site, in Hythe Life, in the Sandgate and Hythe Community Ad Magazine and in the Hythe edition of The Sentinel.

## **Objective 5.2 - Sound Finances**

The outcome for the year shows an excess of expenditure over income of £203.14, a reduction of just under £400 from last year. The examined annual financial statement is below. The significant differences between this and last year's accounts are:

### **INCOME**

Subscriptions - the reduction in membership is reflected in the drop in subscriptions received during the year.

General Donations - The increase was due to a generous grant of £500 from the Drapers Charitable Trust instigated by our late patron Lord Boyce.



Publications - The significant increase was due to the sale of the Society's latest successful publication "A Walk Around Historic Hythe". Some 280 copies have been sold.

General Purpose Fund - A significant drop.

Last year the figure was inflated by funds being incorrectly paid into the Society's main account but subsequently correctly transferred to the Hythe in Bloom account. Also receipts of £1197 from the Heritage Hythe project in 2021. This year the income mainly came from our Open Evening in June.

### **EXPENDITURE**

Talks Fees - The drop primarily is due to lower fees requested by the speakers. The programme of talks reduced from two to one a month, now September through to June excluding December. In addition the September meeting was cancelled due to Covid.

Rent and Hall Hire - The relaxing of Covid 19 restrictions meant we were able to resume with the talks evenings.

Administration - Increase due to the inclusion of £600 Honoraria costs that were previously recorded under the General Purposes Fund.

Publications - Slight increase due to the printing costs of "A Walk Around Historic Hythe".

Eaton Lands - Cost of additional hedging plants and maintenance work.

### **GENERAL PURPOSES FUND**

The cost of the trees purchased for the Hythe Green Woodland project was funded by the £500 donation from the Drapers Trust referred to above in the Income paragraph.

HCS Functions - The relaxing of Covid 19 restrictions allowing the resumption of public meetings .

Hythe in Bloom and Town Centre Accounts - Both accounts are restricted accounts . The funds for these projects are raised from the Hythe Town Council, FHDC, KCC and by generous donations given by local businesses.

### **THANKS**

The Executive Committee expresses its sincere thanks to David Carter who agreed to examine the accounts and has given valuable advice to the Hon Treasurer. Thanks are given to the newsletter distributors for their continuing efforts to collect subscriptions when required.

### **Objective 5.3 - Effective Policies and Governance Measures**

The Society has commenced work on this issue.

### **Our Active Supporters**

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

### **Chairman's Report**

I would like to sincerely thank all members of the Society's Executive Committee, particularly the Hon Treasurer and the Hon Secretary, for all their work over the last year. I have been fortunate in the last year to have had the support of a wonderful group of volunteers who contribute so positively to the Society and to community life in Hythe. The Committee was fortunate to co-opt Bob Bruce who fulfils the role of webmaster.

The Society will continue to work in partnership with other organisations such as Hythe Town Council, Hythe Environmental Community Group, Saltwood Village Society, Hythe Green

Preservation Society, Hythe Business and Tourism Association and the Hythe Triangle Community Garden to provide opportunities to encourage and boost community life in Hythe.

As I end my term of office as Chairman I would like to thank all the Society members for your support and encouragement over the last six years. It has been a privilege and an honour to have been your Chairman and I commend the Committee's nomination of Paul Naylor as my successor. I do assure you that the Society with its new Chairman will continue to do its best to make Hythe a better place for us all.

Crispin Davies (Chairman)

Agreed by the Executive Committee in May 2023

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**Officers at 31 March 2023**

Patron: Vacancy

President: Christopher Melchers

Vice Presidents: Roger Neaves and Mike Umbers

Chairman: Crispin Davies

Hon Secretary: Mary Hunter

Vice Chairman: Betty Black

Hon Treasurer: Alan Joyce

Executive Committee:

Jill Ayling

Bob Bruce (co-opted October 2022)

Sally Chesters

Keith Miles

Kim Murton      Paul Naylor      Jo Scott

Michael Tubman

**Hythe Civic Society is a registered charity (number 283177)**

**Hythe Civic Society is on Facebook**



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