



Hythe Civic Society

NEWSLETTER

No. 228 Summer 2023

www.hythecivicsociety.org



TALKS PROGRAMME

Talks are held on the second Tuesday of the month, from September to June (excluding December) at Hythe Bay Church of England Primary School, Cinque Ports Avenue, Hythe, CT216HS

Doors open at 6.45 pm for a 7.30 pm start Members £2, non-members £4.

Visitors always welcome

PLEASE CHECK OUR FACEBOOK PAGE OR WEBSITE FOR ANY CHANGES

June 13

GUY BARTLETT

The History of the Red Arrows



Our Talks will resume on
12 September with

WENDY FRASER: A Visit to Florence
A stroll round this wonderful city,
exploring traditional crafts,
visiting an artist's studio and a special
museum

THE BARONS by Mike Umbers

It was agreed after George IV's Coronation that in future the Barons would not process, but would stand inside the Abbey to receive the Standards carried in front of the monarch. And so it was at Queen Elizabeth's Coronation. Our Baron in 1953 was Cllr Sir Frederick Bovenschen who was Chair of the Hythe Works Committee. He had been an important Civil Servant (and had the added distinction of which he was most proud, of being on Hitler's post Invasion shortlist for immediate execution), but even so one would have expected the Mayor to attend.

So why Sir Frederick? The shocking reason is that for the first time in Hythe the Mayor was a lady, Cllr Mrs Farmer, and it was unheard of and simply quite impossible for a lady to be a Baron and to hold up a standard! That was 1953 – try telling that to a Lady Mayor today.

Or indeed to Penny Mordaunt MP!



BARONS OF THE CINQUE PORTS ATTENDING
THE KINGS CORONATION 2023

ARCHIVE CORNER

The Memorial to Miss Blackmore (1839-1914)

by Brin Hughes

Visitors who toil up the hill to St Leonard's Church cannot fail to notice the most unusual carved wooden bench standing beneath the churchyard wall to the left of the porch. The bench bears a carved inscription: "In memory of Ruth Blackmore 1839-1914".

Local historian Anne Petrie has researched Ruth Blackmore's background and established that she was born in Wandsworth, the daughter of Charles Blackmore, the co-owner of the Blackmore Bolting Cloth Company, one of Wandsworth's many textile mills, and his wife Mary. Charles died when Ruth was a child leaving his family well provided for, and Ruth did not need to work. Ruth Blackmore was in Hythe by 1891, living in 'Kildare Villa' at 3 North Road with a 15-year-old nephew, Wilfred. She was still living there when she died and was buried in St Stephen's churchyard, Lympne on 14 January 1914. But what is the history of this bench? Fortunately, inside the church is a small wood-framed newspaper cutting:

"Miss Ruth Blackmore was one of the best-known members of our congregation, and all who knew her loved her. She had many friends among the poor, and was always trying to do good, as far as her strength and means permitted. She lived in North Road, just above the Churchyard, and often used to say when she had been climbing up the long and steep hill from the town, that she would like to be able to provide some seat or rest place near the Church. It was quite usual to see people sitting on the steps of the Church Porch for want of a better place.

Miss Blackmore's many friends felt therefore that a memorial to her could not take a more appropriate form than that of a comfortable seat under the trees outside the Church Porch. The Mayor and Corporation willingly gave their consent for the seat to be placed there. It was designed by Mr Lorden, jun, Architect, who is now in China, and the work and carving were executed there, and the result is a most handsome, substantial and comfortable seat, indeed it is almost too good to be out of doors exposed to all weathers, so exquisite is the carving, but the wood of which it is constructed is very hard, and will get harder by exposure: it is what is known as Canton Larchwood, and will in a few years turn black like ebony – it is very dark already. The stone legs supporting it are cut out of Soochow granite.

In the centre of the back is a carving which represents the figure of Mercy attended by two children. She is standing on a lotus and holds an infant in her arms which she is feeding from a long shaped flask or bottle. The top rail of the back of the seat is carved with the different Chinese emblems of immortality, and the characters, reading in the Chinese manner from right to left, are "ee lu te ping", meaning "One road great peace". The arms of the seat in some cases contain carvings of the mythical "Flo Lo Bird". Supposed to be an immortal bird which never settles on the earth. It is the emblem of gentleness, and the Chinese say that it only appears for a moment at the birth or death of some good person, and then flies away again.

There are some other carvings representing Chinese myths. At each end of the back of the seat are the two lions of Justice and Truth, beautifully and fantastically carved out of the hard, solid wood. The lion on the left holds a fretted ball in his paw, and that on the right has his paw on the head of a young lion. In the mouths of both the large lions are small round balls, which are loose, though too large to admit of their being pushed between the teeth, and are thus firmly guarded in the mouth: how did they get there? Were they cut out of the solid wood and left when the lions' mouths were carved? The whole of the seat is very handsome, and the fantastic carvings very quaint and interesting. It is to be hoped that the public, for whose benefit this resting place is provided, will preserve it from all harm or disfigurement out of respect for the good woman in whose memory it is erected, and in gratitude for her kindly thought for them, which has now been brought to such a splendid practical result."

Sadly, vandals stole the two large lions by sawing them off the back.



The bench in its present state



The bench as it was with the lions' heads

Through the Lens Exhibition (3 – 30 May)

At the time of writing, our 'Through the Lens' exhibition at the Hythe Library was ongoing with four days viewing remaining. It has been very well received, with many positive comments completed.

Part One was dedicated to the work of Jack Adams, a former Hythe photographer with a shop in the High Street (1954-1982). We knew little about Jack although he had been a society member and had served on the society's committee. We were therefore delighted to be contacted by his son John, who had visited the exhibition.

John informed us that it was he who made the gift of his father's vast collection of negatives to the Society in 1999, following Jack's passing in 1998. John added that his father had worked as the photographer aboard cruise ships and as a portrait photographer in Selfridges after the war, before coming to Hythe. His time towards the end of the war was working on scrutinising aerial photographs looking for the V2 launch sites – a colleague sitting next to him found them!

Part Two was dedicated to the display of photographs by Benjamin William Horton of Hythe, in the late 1800s. The display contained rare images of Hythe and elsewhere. We were delighted to host a small reception for members of the Horton family to thank them for their donation of the glass plate negatives. Hythe's new Mayor, Councillor Anita Jones, attended and made a presentation of copies of Anne Petrie's new work 'The Hortons of Cold Harbour House' to David and Geoff Horton. Also present were our friends from the Kent Photo Archive. Many people have asked to see more photographs, therefore we hope to have another display next year.



Reception with members of the Horton family and the Kent Photo Archive

THE SOCIETY'S ANNUAL MEETING

On 23 May over 50 members were present to hear Society member Jim Martin talk about his attendance at the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla. Jim attended in his capacity as the Right Worshipful Mayor of Hythe and the Speaker of the Confederation of Cinque Ports – both posts he has now relinquished. He remains a Coronation Baron of Hythe for his lifetime.

There were some changes in Society personnel. Christopher Melchers stood down as President and was replaced by Mike Umbers. The post of Chairman changed too with Crispin Davies standing down and Paul Naylor becoming Chairman. After 16 years Mary Hunter stood down as the Society's Hon Secretary, receiving the Society's Outstanding Service Award in a mark of gratitude for her long service.

For only the second time in the Society's history, the Amenity Award was presented to "Open Door Hythe" – the community hub at 101 High Street. The award was presented by the Society's new Chairman, Paul Naylor, to the Revd Michael Darkins on behalf of the project. Below from left to right, John Langman, Paul Naylor, Linda Langman and the Revd Michael Darkins. John and Linda Langman nominated Open Door Hythe for the award.



Mary Hunter

PRINCES PARADE

Following the recent District Council elections the new administration is a coalition of the Green Party, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrat Party. At the statutory Annual Meeting of the District Council the new Council Leader, Cllr Jim Martin, said that "Princes Parade is saved". No further details about the remediation of the site or the location of a new leisure centre is known at this stage.

OTTERPOOL

On 4 April there was a special meeting of the District Council's Planning Committee when the planning application for the Otterpool development was granted consent.

HYTHE IN BLOOM

The Tuesday gardeners continue to work their magic around the town and are currently working on the wide borders next to the War Memorial and the Forth Bridge that is Wakefield Walk: by the time you read this we are optimistic that we shall have reached the end...and shall be back to the start again.... Thank you to all the lovely people who stop for a chat and to admire our work – it is much appreciated.

We meet every Tuesday at 9am at the War Memorial and can guarantee you a very satisfying morning.... Do join us.



HYTHE TOWN GUIDED WALKS

The Guided Town Walks organised by the Society started again on 1st June and continue until the end of September. The walks start with a brief history of the beginnings of Hythe, followed by a gentle stroll around the town where you will pause at places of interest and hear about their history. After an hour or so, the walk finishes at St Leonard's Church where walkers can enjoy a guided tour.

The whole event is very light hearted and participants can be assured of an informative and easy way to spend a couple of hours. The walks take place every Thursday, meeting at the Town Hall in the High Street at 10.30am. Cost £3 per person (Crypt £3). No need to book.



Registered Charity No 283177

COMMITTEE

Chairman: Paul Naylor

Treasurer & Membership:

Alan Joyce

Acting Secretary: Crispin Davies (07804 695828)

Newsletter Editors:

Jill Ayling and

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Newsletter Distribution:

Michael Tubman (01303 267373)

JAM ON THE MARSH 4-16 JULY

JAM on the Marsh returns to Hythe and the Romney Marsh with an array of exhibitions and performances. Celebrating its 10th season, enjoy some of the biggest names in jazz, classical music, opera, theatre and the visual arts.

Full details and tickets can be found at www.jamconcert.org

CONCERTS AT ST LEONARD'S CHURCH

Wednesday 14 June, 12 noon

Marilyn Harper – Organist, Christ's Chapel, Dulwich: **Bach, Byrd, Whitlock & others**

Saturday 24 June, 7.30pm

Folkestone Choral Society: **'The Full English' – Summer concert of music by British composers**

Monday 3 July, 7.00pm

Ashford Youth Jazz Orchestra

JAM on the Marsh 10th Festival:

Saturday 8 July

11.00am 'A morning in Paris' – an exploration of Messiaen with Tom Bell organ

3.00pm 'An afternoon in Paris' – John Frederick Hudson & Cyrill Ibrahim *four hands, one piano*

7.00pm 'An evening in Paris' – JAM Sinfonia; Hanna Hipp *mezzo-soprano*; Nicholas Cleobury *conductor*

Sunday 9 July, 10.30am

Festival Eucharist with Delaware Chorale

Thursday 13 July, 7.00pm

'America meets Britten': Delaware Choral Scholars; Simon Hogan organ; Paul Head *conductor*

Sunday 16 July, 3.00pm

Sounds Baroque - Julian Perkins: **'An afternoon of Baroque favourites'**

For further details and ticket booking information for other Concerts, please visit www.friendsofstleonardshythe.org.uk.

RESTORATION OF ST LEONARD'S CHURCH CLOCK FACE

The project to raise funds for restoration of the dial and hands of the clock on the tower of St Leonard's Church has been successful, with more than £12,000 now received or assured to enable work to proceed. This is thanks to the very kind generosity of many local donors, various grants (notably from Friends of St Leonard's Church, Hythe Town Council, Hythe Institute Fund and The Tory Family Foundation) and also a legacy bequest. We now await approval from the Diocese for the work to be carried out and then for the specialist clockmaker firm Smith of Derby to schedule the work into their programme. This will involve removal of the dial and hands, transport of the items to Derby for restoration (including application of gold leaf) in the firm's workshop, and subsequent return of the restored dial and hands to the church for reinstallation. The opportunity will also be taken to separate the driving tubes, remove corrosion, re-polish and correctly lubricate them. The gearing will also be serviced as necessary for correct operation.

Our Priest in Charge and Parochial Church Council are deeply grateful for the very generous and positive response to this fund-raising appeal.