

HASTINGS & ST. LEONARDS SOCIETY

Promoting Our Heritage and Civic Pride

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Report from Open Meeting

An Open Meeting of the Hastings & St. Leonards Society was held on Friday 19 October. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce a campaign by Councillor Margi O'Callaghan to bring the Bayeux Tapestry to Hastings, and to discuss a proposal to work on an application for UNESCO World Heritage Site status for an area of Hastings and St. Leonards. Several groups concerned with local heritage, and also a number of individuals interested in the topics, attended the meeting, with Amber Rudd MP and the High Sheriff of East Sussex, John Moore-Bick, also present.

It was announced early this year that authorities in Normandy are allowing the Bayeux Tapestry to be displayed, on loan and therefore temporarily, in a suitable and appropriate place in England in the near future. Cllr. O'Callaghan is looking for support from the community to have the Tapestry brought to Hastings. To bring this about a suitable building needs to be found, in which the Tapestry will be secure and meet all conservation requirements. No decision about where this may be has yet been made. Amber Rudd confirmed at this meeting that she has been involved in discussions with Normandy about the prospect of the Tapestry being loaned to Hastings, if all requirements can be met. Ms Rudd further mentioned that the MP for Battle is also interested in having the Tapestry displayed in that town. Cllr. O'Callaghan asked for volunteers to take the campaign to bring the Tapestry to Hastings forward, and there was significant support for this.

Julia Hilton gave a presentation on the process for applying for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, and this was followed by a general discussion. To be considered for World Heritage Site status, justification of outstanding heritage value is foremost. The application process involves a great deal of work and expense, but UNESCO status would benefit tourism, provide employment opportunities and provide a positive way of protecting the heritage and natural environment in the town (via the National Planning Policy Framework).

Hastings Borough Council has indicated that support for a UNESCO application would be given, but it will be necessary for most of the work to be done by volunteers and the bulk of the funding for the application to come from outside grants. However, it has been seen that national funding organisations are willing

to support work on UNESCO applications. In the long-term, a successful application should open up further funding opportunities to maintain, promote and improve the World Heritage Site. Most especially, it was agreed at this meeting that something needs to be done to protect the very significant historic environment of Hastings and St. Leonards, and to promote that extensive heritage around the world.

Julia stressed that the process for the application would be very time consuming and would require a team of volunteers drawn from the community, especially persons with funding application experience, research skills and knowledge of local heritage. The example of Chatham Dockyards' UNESCO application, which has stalled at the UK 'tentative list' stage since 2012, was given. Despite the amount of work and expense involved and that the bid may ultimately be unsuccessful, Chatham's team remain positive about the UNESCO application process, for it positively engages the community and emphasises the value of local heritage.

To progress the proposed UNESCO application, it will be necessary to determine a heritage point of focus for an area of Hastings or St. Leonards. To discuss this and consider the 'pros and cons' of a UNESCO World Heritage Site bid, a scoping group is being set up with the support of Hastings Voluntary Action. A show of hands at the meeting confirmed that the majority of persons present supported progressing the proposal, and some prospective volunteers came forward. The date for the next discussion is **Tuesday 20 November, 6 pm start, and the venue is HVA's headquarters at Jackson Hall, Portland Place, Hastings TN34 1QN**. If you want to book a place at the meeting please e-mail Steve Manwaring: steve@hvauk.org

Julia Hilton's presentation is available on the Hastings & St. Leonards Society's website: www.hastingsandstleonardssociety.org.uk (Note that Hastings & St. Leonards Society is the 'umbrella' organisation for groups and societies in the Borough concerned with heritage and civic matters. The Society is not the lead for the UNESCO World Heritage Site Status proposal.)

Hastings Embroidery

If a building is to be provided or made suitable for the display of the Bayeux Tapestry, it would make sense for this to be put to further use once the loan period for the Tapestry ended. Consequently, we have suggested to Cllr. O'Callaghan that the Hastings Embroidery be installed there – wherever 'there' may be. As mentioned in a newsletter early this year, H & St. L Society has had several inquiries about the Embroidery, which was made for the 1966 commemorations of the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings. Two panels are currently displayed in Hastings Town Hall, and the remainder of the work is in specialist storage in London, at a cost of £1,500 per annum to HBC. Cllr O'Callaghan advises that our suggestion has been noted.

Hastings Week success

Thanks to all who attended the events for our Georgian Weekend at the start of 'Hastings Week'. The talk at the Museum by Elizabeth Nathaniels was a very interesting appetizer for the walks around Hastings Old Town and then Burtons' St. Leonards on the following two days. The Georgian Weekend was arranged in association with Burtons' St. Leonards Society, and Chris Joyce (vice chair of both the H & St. L Society and B St. L Society) led these well-attended walks.

Our support, in the way of prize money, of the National Town Criers Championships during Hastings Week was appreciated by the contestants. Many of the best Town Criers from around the country, and also two Criers from Belgium, took part in the event. It was won by Eliza Mowe from Barnoldswick on the Lancashire/Yorkshire border, who travelled down to Hastings with last year's winner Terry Ford from Otley (West Yorkshire). Terry was runner-up to Eliza this year. Eliza was the first female winner of the competition since Doris Eastwood (Weymouth and Portland) won it in 1990. In congratulating Eliza and Terry I suggested they spend their prize money (£100 first prize and £50 second prize) in Hastings before heading home. Not sure that happened. We also donated the prize money for third place and the best-dressed crier.

If you want to know more about the history of the National Town Criers Championships (held annually in Hastings or St. Leonards since 1952) and the history of Hastings' Town Criers, you must buy our booklet '**A Bellow of Criers**'. It is on sale at the Tourist Information Centre on Hastings seafront, Hastings Museum, and also at Sweet Selection newsagents in the town centre (junction of Cambridge Road/Robertson Street). It **costs £4** and all proceeds from the sale of the booklet go towards supporting the National Town Criers Championships so as to keep the event here in Hastings.

Hastings Trust

For many years Hastings Trust served the Borough's needs in much the same that a civic society does. It was partly due to that organisation ceasing to operate that the founding of the Hastings & St. Leonards (Civic) Society was proposed in 2016. It has recently been announced that a '**Legacy Archive (1988–2013)**' of the Hastings Trust is available on a website: www.hastingstrust.net (There is also a link to this on our website, under local organisations.)

The archive features material from 25 years of the Trust's work, with a selection of photographs, film, presentations and project documents. If you have any comments to make about the archive and website, please e-mail them to us and we will forward on to Trust's former chair, Nick Wates.

Town Centre Walk leaflet

As the first stage in work on a Town Centre Heritage Trail booklet and information board, we have produced a leaflet 'Guide to a Short Walking Tour of Hastings Town Centre'. Places of interest are marked on a map and a brief note

about each is given. The leaflet is free and can be picked up from the Tourist Information Centre, Hastings Public Library or Sweet Selection newsagents. It is also available from our website.

Public Inquiry: Barley Lane

The main planning issue at present is the proposal to build residential properties on an area of ground off Barley Lane. This proposed development is on the outskirts of the Old Town Conservation Area and adjoining Hastings Country Park, and there is to be a public inquiry into the planning application. The inquiry is to be conducted by a planning inspector at the Council Chamber at Muriel Matters House (Breeds Place) for three days commencing on Wednesday 5 December. For further information see the HBC website: www.hastings.gov.uk

H & St. L Society Committee