

Hastings & St. Leonards Society
Notes from 1st Annual General Meeting
Thursday 8th March 2018 (6.30 p.m. start)
Venue: University's Priory Square Building, Room 204

Meeting chaired by Dr. Deborah Madden

Attendance: Dr. Deborah Madden (Chair); Dr Chris Joyce (Vice Chair); Eve Montgomery (Treasurer); Steven Whitfield (Secretary); Alan Jeffries (committee member / website manager); John Bownas (committee member / Town Centre BID manager); 6 members (Gill Page; Jerry Kind; Sheridan Lynch; Gaynor Humphreys; Stephen and Sonia Hartman)

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence received.
2. Chair's Annual Report
3. Secretary's Annual Report
4. Membership Report
5. Treasurer's Report (statement of account)
6. Election of officers (chair, vice-chair, secretary, membership Secretary, treasurer)
7. Election of executive committee (minimum is an additional two persons to the officers)
8. Agree subscription rates for Society Year 2019
9. Members' questions

Item 1: Apologies received from Abi Callaghan (membership secretary); Audrey Longley, Marilyn Saklatvala, Julia Hilton and Angela Childs (members).

Item 2: Chair's Annual Report

Hastings & St. Leonards Society became active when the constitution was adopted at the steering committee meeting on 13 February 2017. The four elected officers being: Dr. Deborah Madden (Chair); Dr. Chris Joyce (Vice-Chair); Steven Whitfield (Secretary); and Eve Montgomery (Treasurer) who each signed the constitution. Additional original committee members: Alan Jeffries and Rob Woods.

Since then Abi Callaghan has joined the committee as Membership Secretary and Rob Woods, having retired from his post as Business Improvement District (BID) manager for the Town Centre at the end of 2017, has been replaced on the committee by John Bownas. (John replaced Rob as BID manager at the start of this year.) The committee currently consists of five officers and an additional two persons.

Alan Jeffries set up a website for the Society, and this went live to the public last autumn. (hastingsandleonardsociety.org.uk). We feel this is a very professional and attractive website for our purpose. Alan has our grateful thanks for his voluntary work on this important asset to the Society.

The Society operates as an 'umbrella' organization for the various organizations in the borough concerned with conservation, heritage and development, in order to improve communication between them, share resources, and assist with and encourage information exchange and publicity. Also to work with the local authority, planning committees, voluntary organisations, charities, and other groups with similar aims to the Society, in planning for the Town's future. In working to achieve this aim we hold Open Meetings at which various organizations are represented, and members of the Society and general public are welcome to attend.

At our first Open Meeting of 24 April (2017) Rob Woods gave an overview of the aims and objectives of the new Business Improvement District initiative for the Town Centre; Cllr Terri Dowling spoke on the proposal for a new HBC 'Heritage Strategy'; and André Palfrey-Martin outlined the work of the 'Save Our Heritage' group.

At the Open Meeting of 23 October, Steven gave a summary of the project to install the statue of Prince Albert alongside Hastings Town Hall. This was a community project, led by the Albert Statue Group, and the statue was finally installed in September. Chris Lewcock gave a presentation on the work of the Hastings Urban Design Group; and Rob Woods reported on the application to Historic England for Hastings Town Centre to be registered as a 'Heritage Action Zone'. (We heard soon after from HBC that the application had failed.)

Our Open Meeting of 15 February was attended by 29 persons. Ian Jarman spoke about his campaign for a cover to be put on the statue of Harold and Edith at West Marina Gardens; and there was a presentation by Chris Lewcock on the former bathing pool site at West Marina, followed by a discussion on the future of the site, which resulted in the intention for a residents' group to work towards presenting HBC with a 'Neighbourhood Plan'.

Our next Open Meeting is on 19 April, when Ian Jarman is giving a presentation on the Harold and Edith Statue, followed by a discussion about the statue's

future; and Julia Hilton is putting forward the proposal to apply for UNESCO World Heritage Status for Hastings and St. Leonards.

We now have to move the Society forward particularly by seeking an inclusive approach, especially targeting young adults and looking at a way to work with local schools to educate on heritage. There is also a need to consider how to engage the public in the planning process. Emphasis therefore should be on engagement rather than holding events, although it is not out of the question that the Society organise a conference in the near future.

*Deborah invited comments from around the table:

Re engagement / outreach: It was suggested that the Society become 'mobile' by holding some meetings in various areas of the borough, focusing on local heritage in that particular part of the borough.

Re planning: Concern was raised that the Local Authority doesn't adequately consult with, or even consider, the community on planning matters. It was stressed that the Society has a policy not to engage in lobbying, but will endeavour to bring matters of concern to the attention of our members and associate groups and societies, and to make enquiries when deemed appropriate; also to facilitate discussion meetings.

Item 2: Secretary's Annual Report (Steven)

I have been organising outings and talks for the Society from the steering group days. The outings are to places of heritage interest, including gardens. Last year we had group visits to Hythe (hosted by Hythe Civic Society), Cranbrook (hosted by Cranbrook Museum) and Winkworth Arboretum (National Trust). These have been non-profit coach trips open to all. However, this year we are charging a booking fee for non-members of the Society, so that members get some benefit – members also have priority booking.

Our first outing of 2018 was to have been to Rye, with Rye Heritage Centre hosting, on 28 February. Due to the bad weather this had to be cancelled, but it is intended to reschedule the visit. I am also arranging a visit to Pevensey with the local historian there, Dr. Alan Starr. This is likely to be in May or June.

The Society also organised a programme of guided walks for Heritage Open Days last September. There was one walk on each of the four days: The Stade to the Pier (architectural walk led by Anne from OHPS); The West Hill of Hastings (led by myself); Linton Gardens history and tree walk (myself assisted by Owen Johnson); and Burtons' St. Leonards (led by Christine from B St. L Society). These walks were well attended, especially the Linton Gardens event.

I received comments on the walks that there has been a shortage of properties opening for HODs in recent years. The original intention of HODs was to make

places not normally open to the public, or that charge admission, open for free. I have therefore approached various venues to see if we can get them to open this year. It looks like Hastings Town Hall, St. Mary in the Castle, Emmanuel Church and St. Matthew's Gardens will be obliging, and hopefully a few places in St. Leonards conservation areas. HODs are running over two periods in September this year: 6 – 9 and 13 –16.

In Hastings Week I gave a talk on Post Office letter-boxes for the Society at Hastings Museum. I also gave the talk to a community group in the Old Town early this year, and received a donation for the Society. There seems to be considerable interest in our letter-boxes, as heritage assets, and I have nominated four items to be added to the Local List, with the approval of the Letter-box Study Group (Trust).

Another project underway is for a heritage information board to be installed in the Castle Down area. Artwork for this has been submitted to HBC, who are funding the project. It is hoped to have other heritage information boards installed before too long, such as at Pelham Crescent and in the town centre.

The Society is supporting the National Town Criers competition this year. This is held during Hastings Week at Priory Meadow shopping centre. The competition is in need of prize money, so our Crier, Jon Bartholomew, is giving a talk for the Society at the Museum on Sunday 8 July. Admission charge is £5 and all proceeds will go to the National Criers Competition. We are also currently working on producing a booklet about Town Criers and the competition to sell as a fundraiser for the event.

As secretary, I also deal with correspondence to the Society. It is apparent that there is a lot of interest in our work; attendances at our Open Meetings, along with memberships, are also encouraging. So thanks to all who have supported the Society in our first full year of operation.

*Additional comment from John Bownas: The Society (assisted by the Hastings Local History Group) is currently working on a Town Centre heritage trail walk and booklet, to be funded by the BID. It is hoped to have this available around mid-year, including as a free pdf version to be downloaded from our website.

Item 4: Membership Report (Eve, in absence of Abi)

The Society started taking memberships in October of last year. To date (8 March 2018) we have 32 members of which 26 are individual memberships and 6 are joint memberships. 66 per cent of the current members are female; 14 per cent live in St. Leonards-on-sea. We also offer corporate memberships, but as yet have not had any take up on this. It is hoped that once the Society has become established, as a useful service to the various groups concerned with local heritage and civic matters, this situation will change.

Item 5: Treasurer's Report (Eve)

We opened a Treasurer's Account with Lloyds Bank last autumn. There are no charges for operating this account. Our income to date is £289, composed of £94 donations, £135 subscriptions and £60 in payments for Rye Heritage Centre visit – refunded. Expenditure is £60 – refunds for cancelled Rye visit. Balance as at 5 March is £229 (in credit).

Our first accounting year will be from 13 October 2017 to 31 December 2018. From then on it will cover 1 January to 31 December (the 'Society Year'). To facilitate payments for membership, it is recommended that we look to set up bank transfer arrangements and 'paypal' method in the near future.

Note: Copies of the statement of account for 13 October 2017 to 5 March 2018 were circulated to those present; it was agreed that the account was accurate.

Item 6: Election of Officers

In adherence to the Society's adopted constitution, all officers relinquished their posts prior to the AGM and were eligible for re-election. All five officers agreed to stand for re-election and were duly re-elected (we received no other nominations for any position of officer). Re-election proposed Jerry Kind (member) and seconded Gill Page (member). The five elected officers are: Dr. Deborah Madden (Chair); Dr Chris Joyce (Vice Chair); Eve Montgomery (Treasurer); Steven Whitfield (Secretary); Abi Callaghan (Membership Secretary).

Item 7: Election of Executive Committee

The Society's constitution demands a minimum of two additional committee members to the elected officers. The two present executive committee members, Alan Jeffries and John Bownas, agreed to stand for re-election and were duly re-elected (we received no additional applications to join the committee). Re-election proposed Jerry Kind (member); seconded Gill Page (member).

Item 8: Agree subscription fees for Society Year 2019

Steven (secretary) proposed that the rates set when membership opened in October 2017 for the Society Year ending 31 December 2018 are held for 2019. This was unanimously agreed. Rates for 2019 are therefore:

Individual: £5

Joint (two persons in same household) £8

Student: £4

Corporate membership: Variable (according to membership size of society/group)

Item 9: Members' Questions

There were no questions from members.

Deborah thanked all for their attendance and meeting closed at 7.55 p.m.
Notes from AGM compiled by Steven (secretary); 9 March 2018