

HASTINGS & ST. LEONARDS SOCIETY

Promoting Our Heritage and Civic Pride

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Newsletter: Issue 23 (29th September 2021)

Local history focus for our Hastings Week programme

An interim e-bulletin was circulated a few weeks ago, announcing the events the Society has arranged as a 'Local History Festival' for Hastings Week (9–17 October), and the details are now included in the official Hastings Week printed programme and on HBC website, as well as our own website (see above).

Advance booking is essential for all the events and the three guided walks are now fully booked. However, you are welcome to have your name put on the 'reserve' lists for the walks in case we receive any cancellations (e-mail: hstlsoc@gmail.com) Bookings for the events at Hastings Museum (talks double-header on Monday 11 October, 2–4 pm, and the 'research the history of your home' workshop sessions on Wednesday 13 October) must be made via 'Eventbrite' – links are on the websites. **There are vacancies on the local history research workshop at Hastings Library on Friday 15 October, with sessions starting at 10.30am and 11.30am.** If you are looking to do some local history research, do sign up for this workshop as the library is providing staff free of charge to us for this event.

There is no need to book to attend the **National Town Criers Championship on Saturday 16 October.** There is a new venue for the contest this year: Butlers Gap at George Street in Hastings Old Town. Once again, Hastings & St. Leonards Society is providing the prize money for the contest: first prize £100; second prize £50; third prize £25 and best-dressed crier £25. This is one of our great heritage events, and we hope you will attend. The contest starts at 11am, and is in two parts: the 'home cry' in the first session and the second 'cry' (on a set theme) after the lunch break in the afternoon. There is then an interval for judges to determine the result before the presentations about 4pm. We are able to provide the prize money for

this historic championship thanks to our members' subscription fees and donations at our events.

Heritage Open Days report

All our Heritage Open Days events were well supported, and we thank those who attended and also the venues and individuals who put on the events for us. We had to disappoint some people, as the tours at the Observer Building and Hastings Town Hall, also the guided walk in Hastings Town Centre, were fully booked in advance. However, as we give early notification of our events to members, all members who asked for a place on any event prior to the events going live on the national Heritage Open Days website were accommodated.

And we had several correspondences from attendees saying how much they enjoyed the events. The tour of the building we will probably long keep calling 'the Debenhams Building', which was an optional extra to the Town Centre heritage walk, was especially favourably commented on. This was most likely a one-off tour, arranged by our committee member John Bownas (also BID / Town Centre manager) with the building's caretaker. However, once building work at the Observer Building has settled down, we hope further open days and tours will be available there. Thanks go to Kevin Boorman of HBC for leading the tour of the Town Hall. Hopefully this event will be repeated in future years as part of the local HODs programme.

The Emmanuel Church open day was again well attended, and there was plenty of interest in our 'West Hill of Hastings' exhibition, which the Society provided as an added attraction for the church's open day. The exhibition originated as part of our (heritage lottery funded) West Hill local heritage and community festival project in 2019. David Robinson, who led on the research for the West Hill project, represented the Society at the open day and gave out copies of the booklet published as part of the local heritage project - receiving some donations to the Society in return.

Annual subscriptions and new memberships

It was agreed at the AGM (e-mail version) that the Society is to take subscription payments to renew memberships for next year. These become due for payment as from 1 January 2022 and remain at £6 for individual, £10 joint (two persons at same address) and £5 student. Group membership is available, with quote for annual fee on request.

We waived subscriptions for existing members for the current Society Year (ends 31 December 2021), as we were unable to put on events and arrange outings, due to the continuing restrictions caused by the coronavirus pandemic. However, we hope it will be 'business as usual' next year, with outings and our important Open Meetings resumed. We do need some income to cover overheads and to

contribute to local projects - and, of course, to provide the prize money for the National Town Criers Championship, in case the event is lost to the town.

As usual, our new membership promotion is running from 1 October. New members are always welcome and they can join for the 2022 Society Year as from 1 October and get up to three months free membership. Do spread the word to family and friends who have an interest in local heritage and other civic matters. Membership form and information are on our website.

West Hill (Hastings) Local Heritage Information Board

We are pleased to announce that at long last our 'Points of Interest' panel for the West Hill of Hastings is to be installed in the repaired information board close to the West Hill café. The Society's new display panel for the information board was approved by HBC in spring 2020, but for various reasons the actual installation has been delayed. **The installation is to be done by Hastings Mayor, Cllr James Bacon, on Saturday 9 October at 12.00.** We hope some of our members will go along to give a cheer, and perhaps step into the photo-shoot Kevin Boorman from HBC has planned. This 'ceremonial' installation will make a fitting end our West Hill local heritage project, and also mark the start of our 'Local History Festival' for Hastings Week.

There has been no progress in getting our Local Heritage Information Board for Pelham Crescent / Arcade installed, though. The latest we have had from HBC's Jane Stephen is that she is too busy working on the Pelham Arcade restoration project to attend to the planning application required for installation of the information board, and to action to re-siting of the unsightly refuse bins to free up space for the board – an action desperately needed to improve the appearance of this important heritage location. However, Jane has agreed to attend one of our Open Meetings in the future, once she has made progress with the restoration project and has something 'concrete' to report.

Hastings Town Centre Heritage Trail (booklet)

The Society will soon be publishing a booklet giving a short history of Hastings Town Centre and details of the many points of interest. The Society has had contributions from some local historians for this project, and we will advise all members in an e-bulletin when the booklet is available and how to get a copy. You will, of course, be well aware that Hastings town centre is 'furnished' with many grand Victorian and early nineteenth-century buildings. But perhaps you don't know much about the origins of these buildings – unless you have been on one of the highly informative guided walks in the town centre with our leader, Alan Jeffries. Oh yes, and there are some historic statues to learn about too.

Hastings & St. Leonards Society Committee

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