

Margate Civic Society

SPRING 2021 NEWSLETTER
ISSUE NO. 402

***Margate Civic Society is a Founder
Member of Civic Voice***

CHAIR'S REPORT

Dear Members

How are you all?

On 11 March 2020, the Global Pandemic was declared, so as I write this, exactly one year on, we find ourselves attempting to restart parts of our lives, within the confines of lockdown and COVID regulations. Most of you will have now received your first COVID vaccination, which is an amazing achievement in itself and hospitals and surgeries are now gradually catching up with a list of longstanding medical appointments.

The children have now returned to school, enabling them to see their friends and teachers once again, which will assist them to socialise and learn in a formal setting once again. Their parents will breathe a sigh of relief as home schooling has proved to be a stressful, revealing scenario. Those living in care homes are now permitted to meet with one designated family member, which must have been so stressful and 'emotional, as I know my mother who lives in her own home, is exceedingly grateful that my sister and I have continued to assist with her weekly care. The prospect of meeting up with family members is hopefully on the horizon very soon and I simply cannot wait to see and hug my children and grandchildren again after months of separation.

Since last writing to you three months ago, life has continued to be challenging, which has impacted on the quality of our lives in various ways. Most of you will have known of someone who has been affected by COVID-19 or indeed may have contracted this themselves but I hope that you are now all managing to stay well and safe. Our best wishes to anyone who is suffering from any ill health issues at this time.

In Memoriam: Sadly, we ascertained from the Birchington Parish Council Magazine, that one of our Life Members: Jack Cohen has recently passed away. The Committee and I send our condolences to his wife and family.

Meetings: In increasingly difficult circumstances, the Committee have endeavoured to keep the Society's flag flying and we have maintained contact by email and telephone and some of us have seen each other, albeit virtually, at our first Editorial Team Zoom meeting held in February with Sally Whitworth, Mike Wilton, Mike Thompson and myself, which went surprisingly well, even though we ran out of time to say 'goodbye' properly! We are intending to hold another one, after which I am hoping to invite 5 Committee members to meet in my garden (when the weather improves!)

Newsletter: This is the second quarterly newsletter edition for which Sally has been Editor, so please continue to give your support and remember that you are most welcome to contribute to forthcoming editions by forwarding articles, photographs, postcards, life stories, news of events, etc. I hope you will enjoy reading the précised overview of Ralph's fascinating, varied life - more of which will follow in future issues.

Town Pride Awards 2020: Regrettably, we have not been able to progress this. It seems a distant memory when the 2020 nominations were judged last March (just prior to lockdown). It was our intention to present the 2 Plaques to the winners at this year's Town Pride Awards but sadly as this indoor event cannot be held this year, I will endeavour to meet up informally with some of my fellow Judges in order to present these, when we are permitted to do so. Photographs will be taken which can then be included in the newsletter and shown on our website.

To remind you: the two winners receiving a Town Pride Plaque and Framed Certificate are:-

The Margate Caves Visitor Centre, 1 Northdown Road, Cliftonville. (In recognition of innovative and sensitive design, making a major contribution to the regeneration of an important community amenity and to the local area)

'Westbrook House', 145 Canterbury Road, Westbrook, Margate. (In recognition of innovative, sensitive and eye-catching design, making a major historical contribution to Westbrook).

Colourful Margate

Congratulations to Stephanie Nsom on the amazing projects she has undertaken in Dane Park. I am sure you will enjoy reading her article. I hope to invite Stephanie along to a future meeting when she can share her achievements in a more personal way.

Margate Town Deal Board

For the latest information, please see the links below:-

<https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2021/03/04/margate-granted-22m-town-deal-funding/>

<https://theisleofthanetnews.com/2021/03/11/graham-razey-steps-down-from-role-as-chair-of-margate>

GRASS Cliftonville CIC (Gordon Road Area Street Scheme)

Those of you who reside in Cliftonville may already be aware of the sterling work that this community group has recently undertaken. One of their amazing achievements is their work on the Oval Bandstand and Lawns Asset Transfer, for which they organised a Crowd funder. To show our

support, on behalf of the Society, we donated £100.00. Many community events will be held here, including the Cliftonville Outdoor Cinema and the new Summer Sunday's concerts. For details of all events see <https://grasscliftonville.org/oval-whats-on>

Acknowledgements: I should like to extend our most grateful thanks to Members who have kindly renewed their membership and also for the generous donations and good wishes that have been received. Your support ensures the longevity of the Society and we look forward to when we can start organising activities again for you to enjoy.

As always, I should also like to thank the Committee for their ongoing support, friendship and resilience.

In the interim, take care of each other and I look forward to seeing you when it is safe to do so.

Happy Easter!

With my very best wishes

Pamela



LECTURE PROGRAMME 2021
(Subject to COVID-19 Guidelines)

January No Meeting

4 February CANCELLED

4 March CANCELLED

1 April CANCELLED (for the third time!)

Speaker: Sally Whitworth, (MCS Membership Secretary/Newsletter Editor and Westgate-on-Sea Heritage Centre Newsletter Editor)

You will be pleased to learn that alternative arrangements will be made at a later date, to enable Sally to give her talk on “**The Early Days of Westgate-on-Sea**” (the area before the town was built and the people who helped create what was to become an upmarket Victorian watering-hole)

13 May TOWN PRIDE AWARDS - CANCELLED

Please note if anyone wishes to propose a nomination, feel free to contact me and I will ensure these will be saved and carried over to next year.

Hopefully, we will be able to re-commence meetings in the autumn but should this not be permitted, you will obviously be notified accordingly.

7 October **Annual General Meeting** (followed by refreshments and raffle)

Topic: “Bits That Don’t Fit!” (Stand-up History! Weird and wonderful historical square pegs)

Please note prior to the raffle, there will be a collection for Cancer Research UK.

Speaker: Steve Hookins (After Dinner Speaker, historical presentations)

Guests: £4.50 nominal fee

5 November Topic: ‘The Life and Times of Edith Cavell’ (the story of the British heroine who died in Brussels in 1915. The Life and Times of Edith Cavell talk tells her story supported by photographs of existing artefacts of her life). This will be followed by the raffle.

Speaker: Melanie Gibson-Barton

Guests: £3.00 nominal fee

9 December **Christmas Soiree Guests:**

Quiz, short film (or alternative), music, refreshments and raffle.

Guests: £6.50 nominal fee

Pamela

RALPH HANDSCOMB

Most members will know our venerable and well-respected President, Ralph Handscomb. They will not all, though, be aware of his most interesting life and various careers. We plan to put that right in a series of articles in the Newsletter, starting here with a brief synopsis of his life, with more detailed articles to follow. We hope you enjoy reading about this remarkable life.

My name is Ralph Alan Handscomb. I was born in Muswell Hill, London, on 23rd July 1929 of English parents.

After initial schooling in London, I was sent to Kent College, Canterbury, in 1940. The bombing of Canterbury became so dangerous that the school was evacuated to Truro, where we were amalgamated with Truro School, where we stayed except for school holidays when I went home. The school returned to Canterbury at the end of the war and I continued my education there until 1946. On leaving school at the age of 16, I was employed by C W Martin and son in Upper Thames Street as a learner fur-buyer.

When I turned 18, I was conscripted in the Army. After initial training in Bury, Lancashire, I was transferred to the Royal Artillery, Greenwich. I volunteered for the Airborne service, achieved my wings and was posted to the 96th Airborne Light Battery RA, under Major Patrick Porteous VC, in Germany. I was trained as a Technical Assistant, setting up gun positions for 75mm artillery and plotting the positions of targets. I was stationed in Fallingbommel and Celle, ending in Flensburg where, for my last few months, I was NCO in charge of the Officers' Club – a very happy posting!

On my discharge, I returned to my old employers. I played rugby for Hendon RC. I joined the Territorial Army in the 21st Special Air Service Regiment (Artists Rifles), stationed at Kings Cross. I did several exercises on Brecon Beacons in Wales, and several 700ft balloon jumps on to Wanstead Common, being paid ten shillings per jump.

In 1951 I took my discharge from the SAS and enlisted in the British South Africa Police (BSAP) at Rhodesia House in the Strand. I sailed to Cape Town on the *Stirling Castle* then took the Blue Train through the Kalahari and eventually arrived in Salisbury, Rhodesia (now Harare, Zimbabwe). I was stationed in various towns and outposts, including Bulawayo, Fort Victoria, Wankie and Gutu. I dealt with murders, rapes, riots and went on long and short horse and motorcycle patrols. I acted as public prosecutor, traffic police and driving test officer, as well as attending post-mortems and court cases.



Ralph hard at work

I resigned from the police in late 1954, flying back to London where I joined the staff of the Diamond Trading Company, part of the De Beers group, training as a diamond buyer. Six months later I was in Sierra Leone, in West Africa, buying rough and uncut diamonds from the local diggers and Lebanese and other dealers. I became manager of the second largest buying office in the country, in Bo.

In 1959, I married my late wife Daphne, a dental surgeon in Birchington. She came with me to Sierra Leone and we spent six years there, travelling to and fro. In 1962 we had a son, Jay. In 1965, the political situation in Sierra Leone was unstable and we decided to return to England.

When Daphne's dental practice came back on the market, she decided to go back into practice. I resigned from Diamond Trading Company and purchased Port Farm, 28 acres in Upstreet near Canterbury. We lived there for nineteen years, growing strawberries and asparagus and looking after cattle, ducks, geese, chickens and a rescue pony, and selling free-range eggs. After we sold the farm, we moved to my present residence in Cliftonville. Since then, I became Treasurer of the newly formed Friends of the Theatre Royal and helped in the saving and re-opening of the theatre. I became Chairman of the Friends of the Marlowe theatre and was involved in the fight for the Odeon Cinema to be the new Marlowe theatre. When the Canterbury Festival started, I became Treasurer of the Canterbury Fringe, and I have also been on the committee of the Theatre Royal, Margate and the theatre in Ramsgate. And, of course, President of Margate Civic Society.

Ralph Handscomb

RETURN TO THE SEASIDE

With Covid-19 restrictions still a strong possibility over the coming months, seaside towns and villages all over the country will have the opportunity to welcome more visitors than usual for the summer season. The photos below show how popular this area was before cheaper foreign holidays became available to all



Above: Westbrook beach, Westbrook pavilion (Westbrook was also known as Westonville), Margate main sands and the Jetty, Margate at the turn of the last century.

PLANNING MATTERS by Mike Thompson.

Margate Civic Society (MCS) is a member of a National body representing Civic Society's countrywide, namely Civic Voice (CV). Further to the Governments public consultation on the Planning White Paper, CV consulted with its member societies and a collective response to the proposals has been made on our behalf by CV to Central Government.

The response is as follows;-

“Civic Voice accepts that the current planning system is not perfect, has become over complex and is not providing enough high-quality places. This frustrates local communities and has led to a breakdown of trust in the system, with just 2% of the public trusting developers and only 7% trusting local authorities, when it comes to planning for large-scale development, according to research by Grosvenor4 . Responding to a survey in 2019, 75% of Civic Voice members stated that they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, ‘It is easy for residents and community groups to influence the planning process’. We must acknowledge that the current system is not working for communities, who feel the balance of power has swung too far towards central government and developers, so in that spirit, we do welcome the opportunity to consider needed reform.

Nevertheless, we believe that planning matters. The system puts important safeguards in place to prevent poor development outcomes, that can have a lasting detrimental impact on people’s lives and our built, historic, and natural environment. It has a critical role in balancing social, economic, and environmental goals. With this in mind, Civic Voice welcomes the opportunity to shape future planning reforms for the better and, based on our conversations and meetings with Ministers, members of the Task Force and civil servants, we understand the White Paper to be a genuine attempt to tackle current challenges. We have, therefore, framed our response to the consultation in this spirit of helpfulness, seeking points of clarification and offering positive suggestions where possible.

As part of our survey, we asked local civic societies how much they knew about the White Paper, with 87% of respondents saying that they had spent time reading it and 71% saying that they had attended at least one webinar on the subject. However, a common concern from our workshop discussions, is that the proposals in the White Paper are vague and generalised and it is difficult to envisage exactly how they may work in practice. The fear is that there is not enough detail to be able to make an accurate judgement on some of the proposals.

For this reason, we must caveat our response and reserve the right to comment further on the proposals, if they are taken forward. We are happy to assist Ministers and civil servants in this process.

We welcome the opportunity for earlier and more meaningful engagement, but not at the expense of reducing the right of communities to make representations at a later stage.

Civic societies are local people, with an active interest in their local area. They have a focused understanding of how the planning system works, based on many years of professional and voluntary experience. They are groups that understand how various planning applications could impact upon local communities, and they provide those communities with an effective conduit to respond to planning applications in a non-party political way. They bring enthusiasm and energy to the planning system through thousands of unpaid hours scrutinising applications to ensure they deliver the best outcomes for local areas. They support growth with 71% accepting the need for more housing. In a more recent survey 48% were broadly supportive of the White Paper's housing target of 300,000 homes and 26% saying they were unsure and wanted more information. It is with considerable alarm therefore, that our members feel as though the voice of the community is being diminished in the way that the White Paper is currently worded. The questions posed in the consultation are constructed in such a way that it is difficult to ascertain the true meaning behind issues that really raise concern within the White Paper. In our survey of our members, conducted towards the end of the consultation period, 79% of Civic Voice members thought that community groups will have less influence in the system; 77% thought it will be a less accessible planning system to engage with and 86% thought the proposals to introduce zoning and reduce the role of planning committees makes the planning system less democratic. We welcome the ambition to encourage greater, early, and more meaningful community engagement in the development of Local Plans. This chimes with our own research that 84.4% of our members want civic societies and communities to have an earlier voice in the planning system. However, the Local Plan stage should not be the sole place for meaningful engagement and should not lead to reduced opportunities for engagement later in the process, when further detailed information becomes available. As a charity that works with community groups, we know that it can be difficult to get the public involved in planning at the conceptual or strategic level – and it is often not until detailed plans come forward with

visualisations that people can really understand what is being proposed for their neighbourhood. This is drawn out in our survey responses with 48% of civic societies believing that the Local Plan stage is when they can potentially have more influence. This low figure demonstrates the challenge that will exist in trying to front load community engagement at this stage. If our network – one of the most numerous participants in the planning system – thinks it will be hard to engage at this stage, it shows how challenging it will be to engage the wider public.

Civic Voice would be willing to work with Government to pilot a way for civic societies across England to work at this stage in the reformed system. Citizen assemblies are particularly effective when discussing a clearly defined issue and this may be something the Government considers introducing at the local-plan stage. We are concerned by and disagree with the phrase in Para. 1.16 (3rd bullet point), 'we will streamline the opportunity for consultation at the planning application stage, because this adds delay to the process and allows a small minority of voices, some from the local area and often some not, to shape outcomes'. This is hugely dispiriting to the civic movement, when 77% of our members say that the statutory consultation period for individual planning applications is the main stage in which they engage with the planning system. As the proposals currently stand, we are concerned that much of this consultation will disappear. Civic societies add value to the process, bring helpful local context, and knowledge of a local area to aid decision making. Communities know their areas better than anyone. We must ensure there are opportunities for this local input as development schemes evolve and make their way through the planning process. In conclusion, we welcome the opportunity for earlier and more meaningful engagement in the planning process, but not at the expense of reducing the right for communities to make representations at the later, planning application stage.

Best in class engagement means allowing sufficient time and providing adequate resources to facilitate a meaningful role for the community to engage

As highlighted in our response to the questions, we appreciate the ambition to speed up the plan making process. However, we do not think the 30-month timescale is long enough, given the level of complexity that will be involved in producing new style Local Plans and their increased importance. Members' feedback has been clear that the aim to completely reform the system and, at the same time speed things up, could be at odds

with the ability to meaningfully engage local communities.

Reference is made to 'comprehensive' and 'best in class' ways of achieving public involvement but there is no real detail on what the government considers this to be. Whilst we support the ambition for early community involvement in local plans and 'best in class' public engagement, it must be recognised that this will be challenging when the current level of community engagement in local plans is so low and the nature of plan making is more intangible and longer term. However, that is not to say that we should not try, and civic societies welcome the opportunity to have a role in shaping plans and encouraging the wider community to get involved. The proposed timescales for meaningful engagement need to be realistic.

Whilst we support faster and more streamlined production of local plans, it is unreasonable to set an arbitrary statutory timetable before the exact nature of the new system and the detail and practicalities of its workings are known. We doubt whether stage 1 consultation of 6 months is sufficient and recommend a pilot is put in place to see if this is realistic. Civic Voice would welcome being part of such a pilot. Additionally, the proposed stage 3 consultation at 6 weeks is far too short. We say this because this appears to be the first time communities will be able to see the proposed local plan and examine the detail contained within it.

We accept that there may be advantages in greater use of digital technology in this process but we must also follow international best practice to ensure there are sufficient feedback loops in the process to help explain to communities, the complex matters being considered and the reasons for the local authority's proposed plan. Further feedback loops would also help to prevent communities being surprised by the final plan and a feeling of being presented with a 'fait accompli'. As such, we recommend that the stage 3 consultation is increased to 12 weeks. To demonstrate its commitment to 'best in class' engagement, we call on the Government to adopt the proposal in the Government's Communities Framework 5 published in July 2019 to 'strengthen community involvement in local placemaking... through a planning system centred on community involvement with statutory rights to become involved at every stage from planmaking to planning application.' We would like to further explore how civic societies could have a more formal role in the new system to help deepen meaningful engagement with the wider community in helping to shape their local area. For the new proposals to work effectively, they must be adequately resourced from the

start. This means allowing sufficient time for consultations to take place and to allow them to be meaningful. It also requires that local authorities have the cash, staff, and skills resources to operate the new planning system. In Para. 5.17 of the White Paper, there is an proposal that 'The cost of operating the new planning system should be principally funded by the beneficiaries of planning gain – landowners and developers – rather than the national or local taxpayer.' This proposal appears to be framed with reference to those cities and regions, notably London and parts of the south east, with the highest land values. If the planning service is to be funded solely locally through planning gain, the results will be to serve places with lower land values, e.g. in the north, with a considerable disadvantage. We feel it essential to ensure that all local authorities are provided with the necessary funding to implement any new system fairly and to allow for the additional consultation processes that the new system will introduce at the local plan stage. We welcome the Government's ambition for a 'new civic engagement process for local plans' and to support this, we believe local authorities will need increased resources to achieve this. We would like to see local authorities appoint Community Planners to help facilitate this, as called for in our Civic Voice Manifesto (December 2019).

Let's develop the digital but not to replace the physical

Wholesale changes to introduce digital engagement into the system are long overdue so we welcome the emphasis on using data and digital methods of communication with 66% of our members supporting the introduction of digital technology into the system, with 11% opposed and 22% unsure. Developers and local authorities acknowledge that positive community input through the planning process results in better outcomes. Our members agree with this.

During the pandemic, many local authorities utilised digital platforms to crowdsource ideas, something that we welcomed. However, crowdsourcing ideas via a digital tool, whilst bringing forward 'mass' ideas and issues, may not necessarily be 'meaningful'. We must question what Government sees as 'meaningful consultation' with digital tools and how this will genuinely influence Local Plan preparation. One system used by Leeds City Council was working with Create Streets and Leeds Civic Trust whereby Create Streets was able to crowdsource the ideas, they then shared this across social media. It then allowed groups such as Leeds Civic Trust to use the data to inform their local campaigns.

We could also point to other digital tools including

Commonplace6 and PLACED7. However, the increased use of digital technology will need to be adequately resourced nationwide and well planned, especially given the history of large, centralised, IT projects not being delivered on time and within budget. There is a risk that moving away from ‘notices on lampposts’, to a solely interactive and accessible map-based online system could reduce accessibility and transparency particularly for those members of the community who are not digitally connected. The aspiration for greater digital is welcomed by our members, and if done well, it could encourage greater public involvement. However, some acknowledge that they are struggling to see how digital will work with new ‘visual local plans’. We encourage the Government to start a pilot quickly to bring this to life and Civic Voice would welcome working with officials on this to engage the community. Our message is clear. For best in class engagement to happen, we need both physical and digital approaches. We need to ensure that more traditional methods of communicating e.g. site notices and face-to-face discussions continue, to complement more digital methods of engagement. Where we have not responded to a question this does not mean that we do not have a view, it is just that we are focusing solely on the key issues raised by communities during our own consultation process on the White Paper. We trust this response is useful and we look forward to continuing our discussions with Ministers and Government officials on proposals for planning reform.”

There has also been a public consultation on the merits or otherwise of relaxing permitted development rights (the removal of the need to apply for planning permission) in specific instances and on this occasion applicable to our High Streets. The conversion of commercial premises (eg shops, offices etc.) into residential units is something that currently requires the benefit of planning permission.

The response to this consultation made on behalf of member society's by CV is as follows;-

“Civic Voice and its members are acutely aware of the challenges facing the high street, but we question claims that these proposals will breathe new life into our high streets, town, and city centres. We fear further deregulation of planning through permitted development will prevent the proactive and positive management that our centres desperately need and simply enable change of use to more profitable uses, often residential, rather than enabling a greater range of uses to diversify and support our high streets and centres. In particular, we are concerned that the proposals to widen permitted development could: • Be harmful to the diversity of our high streets, town, and city centres. • Enable the creation

of poor-quality homes and living environments. • Lead to the loss of historic character within our conservation areas through inappropriate development and unsympathetic alterations.

We also strongly object to the proposed reduction in the statutory public consultation period for major public service infrastructure development to 14 days. Whilst an efficient and effective process is important to deliver critical infrastructure, we do not believe reducing the consultation period to 2 weeks is the right way to achieve this. We understand the thinking behind the proposal and welcome greater emphasis on preapplication engagement in the consultation. However, this is guidance and Civic Voice’s experience is that effective pre-application engagement with communities is not happening in practice. We cannot support the change to the statutory consultation period unless there are standards for effective, genuine, and meaningful engagement with the local community on major developments.”

And now to matters closer to home. Members will be aware that Grade 1 agricultural land at Garlinge, Westgate on Sea and Birchington is under the threat of residential development. Your Society is vehemently opposed to these proposals and fought extremely hard against the inclusion of this land for development within the Local Plan. Despite this, we are now faced with a current proposal to construct residential housing together with associated infrastructure on part of this land. We remain totally opposed to this and were pleased that our local MP, Sir Roger Gale, saw fit to get involved and his letter which follows to Robert Jenrick (Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government) has our strongest support:-

15/09/2020

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government

Dear Robert,

Planning for the Future – Formal Response

I would be grateful if you would be kind enough to regard this letter as a formal response to the publication of the White Paper ‘Planning for the Future’ which emerged in August.

I accept entirely that there is much wrong with a planning system that is out of date and that has been

amended and adjusted over the years to the point of incoherence. That said I fear that there is also a great deal wrong with the White Paper that I could not possibly support as it stands.

My first and most fundamental concern is that while much is made of protection of the "Green Belt" there is not a single mention in the document of agricultural land.

We have in Thanet a considerable amount of agricultural land that is, as a result of the predations of your predecessor and the Local Plan that was imposed upon Thanet by the Department (against the will of both Craig Mackinlay and myself) now seriously at risk of development. Given that we are told that this fine quality land will be needed to generate produce as we are required to become more sufficient post Brexit this policy is incomprehensible. While both you and the Prime Minister in your respected forwards make much of the environmental enhancements that the White Paper will bring on the ground I am afraid that that is not reflected in the policy that emerges towards the end of the White Paper.

Time was when the Ministry of Agriculture had the right of veto over change of use from agricultural land to any other designation: that veto was eroded to the point of obscurity and there is now, effectively, no protection for agricultural land whatsoever. That is a fundamental flaw in this White Paper that must be redressed and I would suggest that it is redressed retrospectively.

Second, there is, within the White Paper, no real priority given to the development of Brownfield sites. We are all aware that developers infinitely prefer a nice Greenfield site that they can put bulldozers onto and without regard to the environment can develop with ease. Penny parcels of Brownfield land, sometimes contaminated, are more expensive and harder to develop but again it should be a priority that all – and I mean all – Brownfield sites should be utilised and that the million or so houses for which consent has been granted built before a single blade of green grass is built upon. That also is omitted from the White Paper.

Turning to housing provision the figures generated by the Government are woefully unrealistic. In the case of Thanet seventeen and a half thousand houses are projected to be built – much of them on agricultural land – between now and 2030. This is completely unachievable and also and much more to the point unnecessary. The housing figures were projected on the basis of ONS figures drawn up in 2014. Those figures have now been overtaken by a downward revision and planning ought to reflect that need. It is also the case that the local requirement falls very

short indeed of the figure imposed upon Thanet (and indeed upon Canterbury in which part of my constituency is also located). This is not building for local need: it is building to accommodate the housing problems of Central London. Within the White Paper there is a glimmer of hope that development needs to take place where development is actually needed and if that is so then there needs to be a much greater emphasis on the building of new homes and even new conurbations in the North of England rather than smothering yet more of the Home Counties with development.

Your proposals for supporting infrastructure do not, I think, hold water. The idea that developer contribution should not be paid until housing occupancy takes place means, unless you are going to fund supporting infrastructure out of Central Government funding or at the very least make Central Government funding available as loans to local authorities, then we are still going to be faced with the situation that prevails at present: woefully inadequate infrastructure in the form of roads, schools and medical provision as greedy developers cannot or will not fund these necessities. It really is time – and we have the opportunity with this White Paper – to put the horse firmly in front of the cart and to ensure that the vital infrastructure to support expanding communities is put in place before housing development is further imposed upon some areas that are already creaking at the seams.

The White Paper suggests that there is a greater degree of autonomy and control over the planning process but that, I believe, is simply not reflected in the proposals set out in the document. Setting down centrally devised controls and presumptions is not the way to local involvement – as we have experienced by the imposition of the Department's will upon Thanet.

I enclose in support of some of the arguments that I have made an article that I published in the local press recently: although brief – inevitably because of newspaper space – this I think sets out my view very clearly indeed. I hope and expect that before the White Paper sees any further light of day very considerable amendments will be made to reflect the concerns that not only I but I know very many of my Kent colleagues share. You will note that I wrote to you on the 10th February seeking a meeting: that letter has not received a response. Many of the concerns that I wish to raise with you are contained within this letter. I shall welcome your substantive reply as a matter of some urgency.

With my best wishes.

Sir Roger Gale

We will keep you updated as matters progress on these issues.

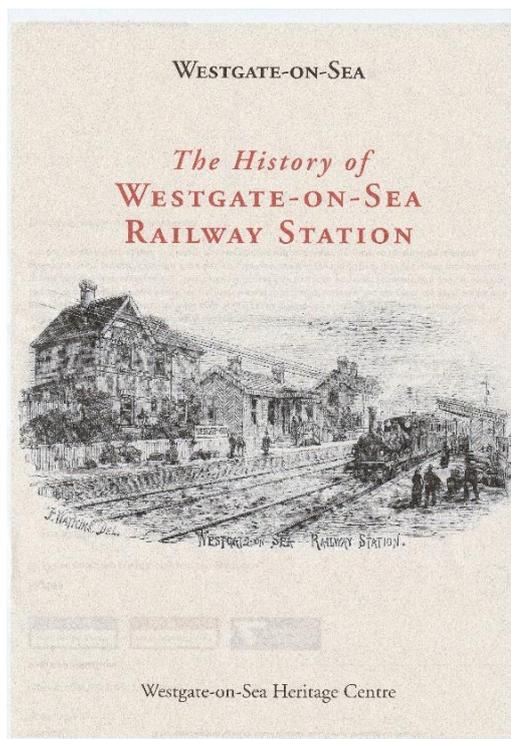
There is a forthcoming proposal from Central Government to restrict and make it harder to implement Article 4 directions within the Planning framework (these directions are not in widespread use here - I do believe there are only one or two of them in existence in Thanet). An Article 4 direction can be applied by a local authority to a specific area or even a single street to restrict what would otherwise be allowed. They are usually made for sound reasons, for example, there might be a group of architecturally interesting houses all in possession of their original timber double hung sash windows preserving the quality and character of the group as a whole and the threat of double glazed plastic replacements would visibly damage the group, so a local authority could, for example apply an Article 4 direction to the group preventing anything other than like for like replacement timber windows. More on this next time.

We continue to monitor planning applications submitted to Thanet District Council and make representations where we feel it appropriate to do so.

Let us hope that some semblance of normality can be resumed this year and we can once again hold our regular meetings where we can all look forward to catching up with one another. In the meantime, I would like to thank you all for your continued support of MCS - it really is very much appreciated by all the committee. The survival of organisations like ours is of paramount importance in our quest to seek fair, appropriate and good governance in this, our local area, that we all enjoy calling home. In the meantime, keep safe, keep well and let's raise a glass to being together again soon.

Mike Thompson

A WESTGATE-ON-SEA CELEBRATION



Above – the front cover of the Westgate-on-Sea Heritage Centre's new publication priced at £7.50 (p&p extra)

On the 12th April 1871, just before 1 pm, a train stopped at the newly built Westgate-on-Sea railway station. It was carrying the Vice Chairman of the London, Chatham and Dover Railway and William Corbett, the joint owner and developer of, what was to become, the estate town of Westgate-on-Sea. The Vice Chairman and William Corbett stepped down from the train to a small celebration and a short speech to mark this important event in the history of the town. Westgate-on-Sea Station was now officially open.

It was vital to William Corbett that Westgate-on-Sea had a railway station, especially as prospective London buyers could now travel quickly and directly to the town to choose a plot for their new summer homes. Westgate-on-Sea was not the only seaside resort developing at this time and William wanted to ensure the journey from London was as smooth and as trouble free as possible. This would be very important to prospective buyers when making the choice of where to have a 'marine vacation home'. There is much evidence to suggest that William Corbett paid for the building of the station himself so, although an astute businessman and experienced builder, he must have breathed a sigh of relief that the station was ready for business. The growing town would give upmarket London families the opportunity to spend summers away from the smells, pollution and often stifling heat of the city and stay in the new and healthy setting of Westgate-on-Sea.

Westgate-on-Sea back then would be almost unrecognisable to anyone visiting the town today. A few houses had been built at the railway end of Roxburgh Road, and four “tower” bungalows were completed in Marsh Bay (now St Mildred’s Bay). The census of 1871, taken 10 days before the station opened, shows that three of these bungalows were occupied by caretakers; April would be too early in the year for most summer visitors to stay. The coastguard cottages were newly built in Beach Road and one unoccupied house was the only property in Sea Road.

The Nottingham Castle was open and a few other properties had been built nearby, occupied mainly by builders and people associated with the development of the town.

Over in Westgate Bay (now West Bay) was the old Westgate Farm with its associated cottages and the Southampton Arms, also with associated cottages. The Southampton Arms was originally a coastguard station built in the late seventeen hundreds and used until the new coastguard station and cottages were built in Beach Road. It was a tradition of William Corbett to make sure his builders had a public house near where they worked and the old Georgian building was ideal. The Westgate Farm and the Southampton Arms were not part of the plan for an urban, modern resort and these buildings and their cottages were demolished in the 1880’s.

As well as very few houses, there were no shops in Westgate in 1871; the streets were laid out but the shops and squares had yet to be built. The gas and the water works were also under construction away from where the main area of where the town would be. All was to change though and the town would soon be developed into a well-known ‘watering hole’ where wealthy London families would stay during the summer season.

After the short opening ceremony, William could now enjoy a planned celebratory lunch with a few eminent local people and perhaps stay at his new Westgate-on-Sea home (Redcliffe Villa in Canterbury Road) before returning to the capital.

The Westgate-on-Sea Heritage Centre has published a book about the history of Westgate-on-Sea Railway Station which will be available very shortly.

For more details, please visit their website – www.westgateheritagecentre.org.uk or email enquiries@westgateheritagecentre.org.uk.

Sally Whitworth



An Update by Claudine Derkson

TMS has not been hibernating despite Covid-19 confinements. A very active programme has been devised to continue to fulfill the original Coastal Community Fund mission of reviving the High Street and supporting our burgeoning creative industries.

We are now enrolled as an Associate of ELIA – the globally connected European network for higher arts education. This reflects our partnership with the Rouen/Le Havre Ecole Superieure de l’Art et Design who supervise the International MA in Fine Art and is an indication of our general status.

Activities during the lockdown have included exhibitions by James Lemon, a local graphic designer drawing inspiration from Nature in both digital and traditional media.

Alyson Hunter, a New Zealander now Margate resident, on the Manufacture of Photographic Media.

London-based ‘Rebel Overlay’ who are devising a project 11akura11tion11 in visual performance.

The Digital Photography Studio featuring Profoto and Bowens lighting which has been launched with introductory offers for half-day hire.

Emily Parris will be teaching a series of online photography workshops from late March. Subjects include Camera Obscura, Cyanotypes, Lumen and Chemigrams.

Permanent and shared desk spaces are now available which are suitable for both ‘small footprint’ makers (Jewellery, Analogue electronics) and computer workers (Graphic designers, Animators). Studio membership includes access to FabLab (Fabrications Laboratory) for woodwork, screen printing, soldering and metalwork, laser cutting, 3D printing. There is also a facility for “messy” projects involving clay, plaster and moulding work.

Be it noted that the French and Dutch have four or

five times as many FabLabs as the Brits ~ the concept originated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology about ten years ago. TMS aims to inaugurate the first fully-fledged one in Kent – most obviously as the kernel of the Town Deal's Skills Hub to address our worrying 'upskilling' and 'reskilling' issues.

As it is, a programme of online short courses in Digital Marketing for small businesses and sole traders has already been launched following the successful and well-attended pilot by Tanja Mullarkey

A Creative Coding short course led by Genetic Moo of Marine Studios is on the horizon for when the Covid-19 permits. GM hosted a Digital Fair at Woolworths for the half-term Margate Fair in October 2019 which attracted several hundred enthusiasts and 'digital' promises well for our creative future – not least for a revival of the GEEK FAIR at the Winter Gardens in due course.

A Video Production course to be run by local technical expert Ormut Gunduz is also hovering in the pipeline for when circumstances permit and will also be undoubtedly very popular.

Our MA students have prepared a diverse range of presentations including the 12akura12tion of unique digital techniques and there will be a final graduate show in the summer when our very first 'crop' passes out. Thus encouraged TMS is now researching a broadening out of the modules to be offered.

TMS was pleased to be invited to participate in this year's **ESTUARY FESTIVAL** from Saturday 23 May and well into June. This event is masterminded by the University of Kent Institute of Cultural & Creative Studies and, as noted by the Kent Business School conference recently 'creative industries' are very much a 'driver' for the East Kent economy – especially with Margate as the 'spearhead'.

The whole 'selling point' of TMS for the Coastal Community Fund was to 'repurpose' the High Street and act as a catalyst for a 'creative corridor' supporting the host of small creative businesses abounding. In the fullness of time the Fabrications Laboratory may help stimulate interest in design and technology for the satellite industries at Manston and feed into the proposed Airport College (which aims to emulate what they already have at Stansted).

GOING COASTAL is but one of the proposals which will coincide with the Estuary Festival. It is a novel series of 'storytelling' exercises which will engage the community and in which MCS members will be able to join.

Currently scheduled for August/September are a series of **Creative Experiences**:

1. Three sessions on Styling for Advertising – Working with Colour, Set Design & Styling and Still Life
2. En Plein Air (sounds intriguing)
3. Becoming Animal – Children's Workshops (even more intriguing)

And a pilot **TECH CLUB** to provide a forum (and equipment) for the cord of enthusiasts of all ages.

One of the major advantages of having the Woolies building (and temporary use of PRIMARK) has been the capacity to attract footfall with a variety of exhibitions and thus contribute to the variety of Margate's 'staycation offer' for the wider community benefit.

And we still aim with MCS to put on the first **Public Lecture on RUSKIN & FRANCE** by the doyen of Ruskin Studies culture historian Robert Hewison in time for the FESTIVAL as well as the MCS/TMS ECO EXPO so long delayed. John Ruskin it was who first promoted JMWT and followed his footsteps all the way to Rouen Cathedral (so you see the link !).

All this activity has provided further employment opportunities and TMS is proud to have just recruited its first apprentice in association with the Cambridge Marketing College – Poppy Phibbs has joined us ostensibly to assist with 'marketing' but she will no doubt have to be a multi-tasker extraordinaire ! The standard of candidate was exceptionally high and we hope to provide more opportunities soon.

All is dynamic at TMS and our programmes are continually evolving as the 'creative community' expands and contributes to that dynamism. You can keep up to date by visiting our website www.themargateschool.com or Facebook page or email us at info@themargateschool.com.

And if you should happen to prowl along New Street do look out for the portrait of Kathe Kollwitz painted on by one of our residents DREAM SAFARI as part of the International Women's Day event.

Upwards & Onwards!

Claudine Derksen

Colourful Margate

We are delighted to be back in the Margate Civic Society's Newsletter to share with the interested reader an update of past and ongoing activities in Dane Park and beyond. While the Spring Newsletter 2019 mainly reflected on our formative months, we want to provide this time a recap of what has been accomplished over the past two years and why we have been so busy.

Japanese 'Sakura' cherry trees in Dane Park and for schools.

Our cherry tree vision was launched just over two years ago. Reminiscing a bit; the planting of the first 16 ornamental cherry trees (*Prunus Pink Perfection*) in October/November 2018 was a true community venture with residents, local businesses and local councillors, in close collaboration with the Thanet District Council Open Spaces Team and KCC Councillor Barry Lewis, and in partnership with Dane Valley Woods and Margate Civic Society. Since then, with Colourful Margate's vision, the number of cherry trees in Dane Park has increased to 123 (which is a small success story) covering tree species such as *Prunus Kanzan*, *Prunus Okame*, *Prunus Umineko*, *Prunus Taihaku*, *Prunus Shirofugen* and *Prunus Subhirtella Autumnalis*! The varieties of Japanese sakura were chosen by Colourful Margate based on such factors as the variation of colour, timing and historical significance. For instance, *Prunus Okame* and *Prunus Umineko* are cultivars from Collingwood Ingram who resided in Westgate-on-Sea for several years (see the book *'Cherry' Ingram – The Englishman who saved Japan's Blossoms*, Naoko Abe).

The planting in season 2019/2020 was made possible thanks to the funding from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund (carried out under the former partnership of ITTWI, which is now run as a social enterprise of which Colourful Margate is not part), and again, from residents and local businesses, in partnership with a number of organizations. Dane Park has 123 cherry trees and we don't intend to stop there! We continue to be inspired by the stunning vision of Washington DC's cherry blossom with its more than 3,000 Japanese cherry trees.

We were pleased to read in February this year about the National Trust announcing its project to plant blossom trees in cities nationwide in the UK. It is great to see that others share a similar vision. As does Margate Civic Society who believed in and supported our Dane Park Cherry Tree project from the very beginning. To show our appreciation, a label for the Margate Civic Society's cherry tree went up in December 2020, in presence of Honorary Secretary Geoff Orton (Thank you, Geoff!).



Geoff Orton, Margate Civic Society, with the newly labelled cherry tree

One of our ongoing future goals has been to involve the younger community more in cherry tree planting. This idea is taking shape since February this year. Colourful Margate started collaborating with the national Sakura Cherry Tree Project in the UK, to provide free cherry trees to schools in Thanet. The Sakura project marks 150 years of Japan-UK friendship and the continued cooperation between the two nations. Launched in 2017, and because cherry blossom (sakura) is the national flower of Japan, 6,000 cherry trees have been planted throughout the UK since 2020, with a dedicated school program. These trees from the Sakura project are a gift from the people of Japan to the people of the UK, sponsored by Japanese businesses. We are delighted that 7 schools in Margate and one in Westgate-on-Sea will receive their free cherry trees for planting in March 2021.

Margate and the Sakura team will reach out to all schools in Thanet over the next weeks to offer a free cherry tree to the interested schools, for planting in November 2021. Hopefully, more schools in Thanet will join this nationwide initiative

'Sound of Music' in Dane Park



Having fun with music in Dane Park

'The hills are alive with the sound of music' and now so is Dane Park, as the latest installation by Colourful Margate allows Thanet families to emulate the Von Trapps. We are excited that we installed three outdoor musical instruments, namely bongos, a

xylophone, and cam chimes, at Dane Park children's playground in February 2021. Cllr Barry Lewis from KCC provided funding from the Member Grants Scheme for this project which was match-funded by the TDC Open Spaces Team. This is success! Thanks to both, TDC and KCC. These musical instruments will bring a lot of fun and joy for children and adults alike. If you are around in Dane Park, go and have fun with playing some tunes.

'Bubble bulb plantings'

To make lockdown colourful, residents came out in their lockdown bubbles in December to plant 220 flower bulbs of Narcissi, Daffodils and Crocuses near the old Walnut tree (close to the fountain). Crocuses blossomed beautifully over the last weeks. Another 'bubble bulb planting' in March 2021 involved several bubbles of families from Dane Valley Ward and Cliftonville West who planted another 1,200 'bulbs in the green' of English Bluebells and Single Snowdrops, that were provided by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust (Thank you!). This time, we decided to plant them near the Fairy House woodcarving (commissioned by Colourful Margate in 2018) right next to the existing daffodil area. Our vision is to keep planting in that area of the Park in order to create an enchanting spring flower section for everyone to enjoy.



Planting bulbs in the park

Eat our sweets, support our cause!

We are so excited! We are collaborating with Bakery Modern Provider (Ben) in Margate (off High Street, The Centre, open Wednesday to Saturday) to celebrate Cherry Blossom in Dane Park and raise funds for us to do more cool stuff. Ben has created a special and super delicious Black Forest Cruffin for Colourful Margate, with croissant pastry rolled in sugar, filled with cherry custard and dipped in dark chocolate. Modern Provider will sell them over the next 4 weeks with a % of all sales going to Colourful Margate. Myum Myum!

Another way to support us (that involves less calories) is to get your hands on our campaign

artwork by local artist Grace Attlee for £35 - with 100% of the proceeds going to our Dane Park Project. The artwork is A3 (41.5x29.5cm) giclee prints on museum etching paper and can be bought at Lovely's Gallery, at The Eclectic Art Gallery and at Storeroom coffee shop.

You can also help us through the Thanet Community Lotto:

<https://www.thanetlotto.co.uk/support/colourful-margate>,

Or contact us at colourfulmargate@gmail.com to make a donation.



Ben at Modern Provider and the delicious Black Forest Cruffin

We have more project ideas. If you would like to contribute/volunteer, please do get in touch. For more colour and info, head to Facebook and Instagram.

Thank you for your interest in Colourful Margate and continued support! The future is pink.



Yours Stephanie Nsom

Civic Voice Update

CV is our national federation representing some 200 civic societies and 200,000 individual members. It is run by a very small staff and chaired by Joan Humble of Blackpool Civic Trust who is also rather usefully a former Parliamentarian. Margate Civic Society is a founder member.

There had been high hopes last year of celebrating CV's 10th anniversary in its new formulation – Laura Sandys' father Duncan was instrumental in setting up the original incarnation. Unfortunately, Covid-19 dashed those hopes as everywhere but on the plus side CV has run many more regional meetings via zoom under the wing of Sarah James who is our national officer and a qualified planner herself. She has visited Margate in the past for a BIMBY (Beautiful In My Back Yard) Seminar and wants to return in the near future.

A delayed zoom AGM was held on St Patrick's Day with a phenomenal 78 in attendance. Including friends and neighbours in Ramsgate and Deal. When circumstances permit we are likely to inaugurate an East Kent Federation to mirror the inevitable East Kent Combined Authority.

Aside from the essential statutory business (the boring bit dealt with in 10 minutes flat) a brief outline of CV's aims and objectives was set out by Ian Harvey our Chief Executive Officer :

Over 7,500 individual members have attended the 'webinars' and the support for continuing these as a key part of the two-way information process is now established as a key facility.

The All Party Parliamentary Group is to be revived under our local man Craig Mackinlay MP as a conduit to the corridors of power. This gives the civic movement an early chance to engage with decision-making at an early stage and bring its influence to bear.

CV's strategic priorities are to reinforce its national mandate providing a collective voice and three themes have emerged from discussions with individual societies :

1. bringing new life to High Streets
2. influencing planning and placemaking
3. protecting and enhancing conservation areas

A major concern, as expressed by the Halifax Civic Trust and endorsed by the AGM as a whole, is the government's 'salami slicing' of the community's role in the planning process. We are expecting the long awaited Planning White Paper to come before Parliament in September. The civic movement and

local democracy generally is 'under attack' and CV is working with the University of Reading on the Statement of Community Involvement which should shape local policies.

Concerns are expressed about the quality of design including the resources and skills of local authorities. Permitted Development Rights will prevent a planned approach to town centres to universal detriment : a fundamental threat to the planning system with communities rendered powerless to influence matters. (The more you hear of democracy the more you should check the spoons !)

CV is concerned that the population at large has not grasped this assault which means a severe curtailment of community participation in planning in its direction of travel. So the sooner the APPG is revived the better.

CV is working on a 'Planning Jigsaw' training programme to educate those who wish to be educated and some local authorities (Blackpool for one) do actually engage with their civic societies to seek to arrive at local plans acceptable to the majority. Thanet's Local Plan is looking rather outdated already.

Geoff Orton
MCS Secretary

FROM THE EDITOR

We would love to hear about your memories of this area, perhaps you came here for holidays or perhaps you have lived here all your life. Perhaps you have a specialist subject you would like to write about. Our area covers Margate, Cliftonville, Birchington, Westgate-on-Sea and the villages so any memories or articles about these any of these places would be most welcome. Alternatively, you might like some help with something you are researching, if so please let us know. Please visit our website for contact details - www.margatecivicsociety.org.uk

With my Membership Secretary's hat on, I would like to remind members that subscriptions were due last October and if you have not yet paid, this sadly will be the last newsletter than you receive. Please visit our website for information on how to renew your membership fees.

Sally Whitworth

Margate Civic Society

www.margatecivicsociety.org.uk



Founded in 1968, the Margate Civic Society is a registered charity and a founder member of Civic Voice. It was also both an affiliated member of the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies and a member of the Kent History Federation but, sadly, both those organisations have recently been wound up.

The Society's purpose and aims are to encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in Margate and its environs (Birchington, Westgate-on-Sea, Cliftonville, Westbrook, Garlinge, Acol, Sarre and St Nicholas-at-Wade); to stimulate public interest and care for the history and character of the area; and to encourage the preservation, development and improvement of features of general amenity and historical interest. To this end, Town Pride awards are given annually to those buildings which have been refurbished, cleaned or modified and which, in the opinion of the Society, have enhanced the appearance of the town. New high-quality buildings are also eligible for the award. The Society also vets planning applications and makes known to Thanet District Council any objections to those applications which it considers necessary.

Evening meetings are held monthly between October and May at the Walpole Bay Hotel, Fifth Avenue, Cliftonville. The lectures, mostly digitally illustrated, are interesting and of local interest; they are also varied in their appeal. A Newsletter is published four times a year.

Committee for 2020/21:

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If you are interested in joining our Society, please fill in the enrolment form below:

✂.....

Enrolment/Renewal Form

I enclose the sum of £ (Cheques should be made payable to **Margate Civic Society**)

Name:

Address:

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	Individual	Joint	Junior (under 18)	Corporate
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