



Annual Report

MARCH 2025

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President

Una Stanley

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Julia Gresty Social Events

Mary Venables Secretary

Ron Condon Newsletter Editor

Sub-Committees

Planning

Social Programme

Communications

The end of The Deal Society?

For the last few years our membership has increased but this has not been reflected in people coming forward to run the society, and we are at the stage where long standing Officers are retiring.

We have vacancies on the committee for:

- Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Social Secretary
- Website Manager
- Publicity

Our sub-committees also need new people to help.

There are good reasons why a properly constituted and long standing organisation is needed to support and advise shorter lived campaign groups but if no one is prepared to run the society it cannot continue.

You can see from this report that the society has been busy and there is clearly a future for the society if new people come forward to run it.

If you might be able to help, please contact us now as it might be too late by the time of the Annual Meeting.

Society events planned for this year

Details of these events, and online booking, are under 'Events' on our website

Annual Meeting and Talk

Tuesday 8th April

Your chance to hear how the society did last year and discuss its future. We offer a drink prior to the meeting and have a guest speaker - details are on the last page.

Summer Social

Thursday 19th June

The Wollaston family have kindly made their elegant house and garden available for us once more, with its superb views past Walmer Castle to the sea.

The event includes canapés and wine which will be supplied by Ralph Cade.

Trip to Chatham Dockyard

Date to be confirmed

In June we are planning a trip to Chatham Historic Dockyard. Attractions include a working ropery, two ships and a submarine to explore, historic lifeboats and a railway.

Heritage Open Days

13/14 and 20/21 September

Heritage Open Days is England's biggest heritage festival. It celebrates our fantastic history, architecture and culture; offering people the chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences.

Details of local events as part of this national initiative are at www.dealheritage.org.uk.

Talk

Wednesday 8th October

Martin Hoskins will give a talk at The Landmark Centre about some of the Lord Wardens' amazing ladies, which focuses on a number of the WAGS during the 20th century.

Quiz

Wednesday 29th October

We are holding a Halloween Quiz with Quizmaster, John Andrews at The Landmark Centre.

Christmas Party

Date and venue to be confirmed

Celebrate the season with fellow members in an informal atmosphere. Wine and canapés will be served by Ralph and his team.

Booking

The best way to book is by credit/debit card or PayPal from the 'Events' section of our website at www.thedealsociety.org.uk. You will receive an acknowledgement of your booking and will be sure of a place.

If you have any questions about an event please email Alice or Julia at events@thedealsociety.org.uk.

If you cannot book online, please contact David White on 07710 124300 and you can send a cheque.

Details of the other events in our programme will be sent in our monthly emails and online booking will be available on our website. If you do not have access to those, please get in touch with David White during the month before the event to arrange an alternative way to book.

Planning Report

Performance of the Planning Sub-Committee over the past year has been hampered somewhat by illness affecting key members. Despite this, there has been considerable progress on many fronts, many of which will lead to key questions being addressed by members concerning the Society moving forward.

Planning Applications Overview

The downward trend in the volume of larger scale development applications, has continued; with most of the developments around the fringes of Deal, Walmer, and the local villages having been approved pre-COVID: but only now are we seeing their (ugly?) face.

Most applications are now minor, and single property specific in nature, and it is unusual to see anything larger though there are a few, which I will refer to shortly.

Planning Network, broadening community knowledge and involvement

The information on planning, on the planning system, on evaluating planning proposals, etc. has been greatly expanded on the DS website and we've been encouraging people to refer to/use it.

We have provided steering, guidance, and advised on other expert sources of knowledge/experience, that has helped those who have been campaigning to save the Fairfield in Gt Mongeham from development.

We have collaborated with the Reopen the Regent campaign on responses to the latest proposals to develop the site; submitting a response of our own, and providing key intelligence on some of the key planning issues for others to consider.

From the linkages around Fairfield, we have learnt about new measures in the Dover DC Local Plan, specifically relating to Deal and its environs, "to prevent Deal absorbing nearby separate entity villages" though I'm sure many in Sholden, Mongeham, and Upper Walmer in particular will feel that comes a bit too late for them.

This link demonstrates the importance of networking: much more needs to be done to secure that.

Current sites of concern

Two development proposals concern Northwall Road, close to the railway crossing, but also bordering the flood plain for the area which is already under strain from all other development around Sholden. One is for 44 houses, the other for 6; no infrastructure, access, traffic volume, are other issues.

The Local Plan anticipates a development of 75 houses in Kingsdown, which local residents do not want to see happen; an initial planning application has gone in to DDC.

Perhaps the biggest threat comes in Deal Town Centre where there are prospectively 6 sites being redeveloped, and no overarching strategy to ensure these are considered collectively and their cumulative impact on the Town Centre all are in the Middle Street conservation area.

Conservation area assessments

Deal & Walmer have 7 conservation areas between them, and DS has played a major role in the assessments of these areas, and in the associated planning guidance that stems from them.

The most recently completed by the DS was Upper Walmer, which was pre-COVID, and only now are DDC considering its implementation.

Growing problem is that the expertise on conservation assessments is concentrated in just 2 planning sub-committee volunteers who are getting no younger; and if the DS is to be able to continue this role of direct community involvement in shaping their conservation areas, it needs to develop new volunteer resources with those skills across the 7 areas.

Local Government reform and re-organisation

The new government is in the middle of bringing about the largest change in Local Government and how it is geographically organised, in more than 50 years: the challenge is to create new structures that are fit-for-purpose, efficient and effective In place of public services badly neglected.

The number of Local Authorities will reduce, in favour of unitary authorities (most with Mayors), which in Kent could bring about 4 areas rather than the current 10 districts, plus a major overhaul of the roles of Town & Parish Councils.

What that means for us in Kent is subject to conjecture, but we have taken steps to join with other Amenity associations in East Kent (through an East Kent Civic Forum) to try to align civic action as well as influence new structures we need to keep ahead of the game.

However, irrespective of the outcome of that re-organisation, it does not mean that the planning function will necessarily mirror that; but we must hope that such decisions are not taken too far away from being relatively local or we risk not being able to influence those decisions.

In the meantime, the important link that DS has with the Deal Town Council Planning Committee must be maintained in the best interests of heritage protection and reasonable developments; and seek to secure similar integration with whichever future structure replaces it.

Improved Communication internally and externally

Expanded Newsletter, with wider-ranging issues from across the town: targeted use of social media (with thanks to Ron)

Seeking to include input from individual planning campaigns across the area, sharing information and intelligence

Collaborating with other bodies that have newsletters or who have social networks that reach out across different groups within the community

Mutually beneficial placing of articles in other(s) publications

Challenges aheadto summarise

Local residents placing too much reliance on DS as policing developments, but they need to realise that it is everybody's job and responsibility..... and not just when an issue arises they don't like

No overview to Deal Town Centre changes, so need to raise awareness (Town Council are beginning to realise the risks, but we should perhaps, lead on a public debate on the issue?)

Increasing and spreading the skills around conservation area assessment, including "champions" in each area

Strengthening networking to ensure we access all key data and intelligence (e.g. Planning Inspectorate involvement with The Regent)

Helping to create a stronger History Alliance, that brings all with expertise to contribute to how Deal and Walmer's history and heritage is depicted, and

Ideally having such a group acting within a wider network of bodies that together present our history and heritage holistically, within a very relevant current day context say, illustrating and understanding our past, identifying and promoting our heritage, spreading knowledge of how this manifests itself in the area today in both our buildings and our communities, why conservation areas are so important in planning and regeneration, protecting the heritage yet still enable needed development: that means Deal Society, Deal Museum, Time Ball Tower etc. working strategically together, and engaging/informing wider social networks that our people regularly use.

Ian Redding and Robin Green

Social Event Reports

A variety of social events took place during 2024 as follows:

Three talks

In March, Dr Tony Redding gave a talk about Britain's V-bomber deterrent during the Cold War. Dr Redding showed a clip from the long banned film 'The War Game' together with telling us about this terrifying time.

Following the Annual Meeting in April, Martin Hoskins gave an insight into the lives of some of the Lord Wardens of the Cinque Ports, one of whom was W.H. Smith (of the famous High Street stationers).

Later in October, Peter Ewart delivered a talk on 'Smuggling in Kent'. This was an informative history of the dangerous and ruthless practice around our county's coast.

Three social parties

The Spring Social was held at Glenhill during May. Despite the cold and wet weather members were able to move inside and enjoy the cosy and welcoming interior of the House.

The Summer Social was held in July in Ralph & Robin's beautiful garden. The weather was warm and sunny.

The Christmas Drinks Social was held at the Town Hall. The evening's entertainment was given by pianist Neil Gibbons. Towards the end of the evening Ralph Cade accompanied the pianist with a number of songs and the evening was finally rounded off with everyone singing along to the famous Bing Crosby song White Christmas creating a happy Christmas spirit.

The excellent catering for all events was provided by Ralph Cade.

Outing

There was a day trip to Rochester in June. Members were able to wander around the famous High Street and visit a variety of museums, the Castle and Cathedral.

Quiz

Quizmaster John Andrews, provided a much enjoyed quiz which tested our knowledge on a number of categories including our town of Deal.

Alice Goodliffe and Julia Gresty

Report on last year

Civic Matters

We are a member of Civic Voice which raises concerns from civic societies nationally. We are also part of an emerging initiative, East Kent Civic Forum, to improve cooperation between local societies.

We continue to support Walmer Town Council with Walmer In Bloom.

Communication

A year has gone by since we last produced a printed report, we are committed to maintaining this contact for those who don't have email, but more frequent updates are available through our electronic newsletter and social media.

The electronic newsletter goes out every month to almost 600 people. To subscribe to it, simply go to our website and fill in the form. We can see that some people have dropped off the circulation list because their e-mail address has changed – if you don't receive a newsletter each month, please re-subscribe.

Heritage

The society continues to co-organise Heritage Open Days, England's biggest heritage festival, in conjunction with the Deal and Walmer Town Councils.

The event takes place each September and all venues are free to explore, offering people the chance to see hidden places and try out new experiences.

Our activities have returned to pre-pandemic levels and we continue to try to improve the event with new ideas.

We are also part of the Deal History Alliance, which includes local organisations and individual historians with the aim of improving the communication between them and to generate year-round interest in our history.

The alliance organised a number of drop in history sessions to introduce new people to our heritage.

The society maintains the Deal Heritage website to promote local heritage events, together with our social media and newsletter.

As with other parts of the society, these initiatives need additional help.

David White

Finances

In 2024 we had an income of £4,939 and expenditure of £5,601, giving a deficit for the year of £662. At the end of the year the funds held were £6,469.

The cost of running the society was similar to the previous year but donations were down by about £100. Social events are budgeted to break even but for various reasons made a loss.

The deficit does not raise any concerns as the reserves equate to 5 years running costs, which is why we did not make any appeal for donations during the year.

Detailed accounts have been externally examined and are available on our website but if you would like a copy please contact the Treasurer on 07710 124300 or treasurer@thedealsociety.org.uk.

Membership

Our membership comprises:

- Those on our mailing list who receive monthly newsletters by email;
- Those who do not use email but wish to remain members, who receive this annual report

At the end of 2024 we had 558 (524 in 2023) members on our electronic list and 11 (14 in 2023) on our postal list.

We no longer charge a membership fee but will invite donations from time to time.

Thank you to the members who have left their standing orders in place – we accept those as a donation towards our costs. If you do not wish to continue to make such a donation please cancel your standing order as we are unable to do it for you.

Annual Meeting 2025

Tuesday 8th April from 7pm

Deal Town Hall

You are invited to join the committee and fellow members for a drink, followed by our annual meeting and a speaker which will comprise:

1. Annual Report and Accounts

As reported on the previous pages and we invite questions on it.

2. Elections and Resolutions

Must be submitted in advance as on the right.

3. Plans for the forthcoming year

The committee will outline forthcoming events and other plans.

4. Questions to the committee

Members are invited to ask the committee whatever questions they wish about the running of the society. It would help us prepare an answer if you notify the Secretary of your question at least a week in advance.

5. The Cinque Ports: A powerful confederation to guard our coast

The story of the Cinque Ports is a fascinating tale of how a few settlements by the sea rose to become towns of such wealth and influence that they could threaten the King's power.

From Anglo-Saxon times, well before the days of the Royal Navy, the Cinque Ports provided the men and ships to defend our shores and to protect their lucrative trading links, but they were an unruly group who had little regard for rules.

After centuries of strength many of the towns declined into obscurity, but the confederation still exists and David White will tell the story of the rise and fall of this historic institution.

Nominations and Resolutions

If you would like to be put forward as committee member, or if you wish to submit a resolution to be voted upon, please submit them to the Secretary by Tuesday 1st April. You may either send an email containing the information below or post it.

Nomination as an officer (committee member):

- Name of nominee
- Phone number & e-mail address
- Name of proposer
- Name of seconder

Resolution to be voted upon by the members:

- Wording of resolution
- Name of proposer
- Name of seconder

Mary Venables, Secretary

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