

Christmas Gathering

Our Christmas Party this year will be held on Friday 6 December and once again we are fortunate to have use of the Rye Town Hall Council Chamber for our gathering. It will follow a similar format to last year commencing at 6.00pm with the Town Crier, Paul Goring, opening proceedings. As last year admission will include a glass of wine and a locally sourced mince pie or two. We will also have a raffle with donated prizes and profits in aid of the Rye Food Bank. Local musician, Reg Marchant has been invited to play a few seasonal tunes. All members are cordially invited and friends and guests are most welcome to attend, so Christmas can begin! Christmas in Rye with Father Christmas, mulled wine and Christmas lights will take place the day after on Saturday 7 December.

Methodist Church

The Rye Methodist Church in Church Square closed in 2021, the Church authorities being concerned by rising costs of upkeep supported by smaller congregations transferred Sunday services to the St Marys Centre. The Church has recently been advertised for sale and its future is unclear. We hope that a new purpose can be found for the building as lying empty it can only deteriorate. Various ideas have been put forward for the site, but economic factors will probably favour some form of housing development. The creation of an open space on a European model has also been mooted but this would need to be financed from somewhere and there would be opposition from some to demolishing the building. It is to be hoped that local people have a say in the development.

Derelict Buildings

Rye has a number of world famous streets with wonderful old houses mostly granted listed status within the Conservation Area. The creation of the Conservation area and associated legal protection has enabled the centre of Rye to retain its magical allure as witnessed by the growing number of visitors to the town. It is thus a bit surprising that there are a number of buildings in bad repair, which can cause problems for the owners of neighbouring properties. Rother District Council can take action where buildings become hazardous e.g. with falling roof tiles, but these powers are limited and often it is difficult and expensive to contact the owners. Recent articles in Rye News have helped to highlight the problems and the Conservation Society will continue to encourage remedial action.

Housing Development.

Since the last Newsletter there has been little progress on the housing proposals that were put forward for the Lower School Site behind the Queen Adelaide or the Winchelsea Road site west of the Strand. The latter site consists of three parts, a block of flats for older residents, a number of houses and an Aldi supermarket which is being held up by discussions concerning traffic flows in and out of the site that we hope might be resolved relatively soon. The Society supports a second supermarket on the site but is not happy that the flats are to be restricted to older people aged over fifty five or that there is no provision for social housing. We do recognise the shortage of housing and the new government's policy for more building, but Rye does have particular problems with flood plains and drainage which

have deterred much progress for many years, indeed since the building of Valley Park. The building of the Rother tidal defences may enable development to be considered next year on the Freda Gardham site off New Road currently occupied by the Creative Centre and earmarked for housing units in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Solar Panels

Recently the Conservation Society supported an application for solar panels on the roof of the Rye Club. We took the view that even in a Conservation Area they did not cause significant loss to amenity, being mostly out of sight. Normally any addition to the external appearance of a building requires planning permission but that said we would not always oppose such modernisation, it should depend on the individual case. The increasing cost of energy is likely to encourage greater demand for solar panels but we must be sensitive to the appearance of the area as previously we have objected to satellite dishes and other objects that seriously detract from a historic buildings appearance.

Grass Cutting

For the past few summers Rother Council has not mowed most of the grass on the Salts which some people thought was part of a rewilding policy, but in our view seems mainly to have been not done for cost cutting reasons. Consequently a large part of the Salts are unusable in the Summer months and this year the very long grass was cut just as kids returned to school in September. This policy needs reconsidering as the Salts used to be a well-used leisure amenity conveniently in the centre of town..

Railings

A word of praise for a change, it was a good idea to repaint the railings down to the Landgate and gilt the tops there and on Conduit Hill. Congratulations to the Rye Town steward team for this and other work around the town.

Awards

The committee is still considering awards for building refurbishment or new building. Suggestions considered so far include the external recent refurbishment of the Cinque Ports pub, but a winner(s) will be chosen at the time of our next AGM in May.

Membership Subscriptions

Just a reminder for those who are annual members and who pay by cash or cheque their annual subscription for 2024 is due from 1st January. The Committee are grateful for your ongoing support and loyalty. Members who wish to may apply for life or corporate membership. Membership forms are available to download from our web site at www.ryeconservationsociety.org

Subs remain at £6 for a single person or £10 for joint membership.

It is most convenient for us if you can pay us by bank transfer to Rye Conservation Society, Sort Code 30-90-28, Account Number 00710394, using the membership form as above.

Alternatively you can drop the cash or cheque (payable to Rye Conservation Society) to Andy Stuart, the Society's membership secretary at: Little Orchard House, 3 West St, Rye TN31 7ES or hand it in at the Christmas Gathering.

With Seasonal Greetings and Best Wishes

David Bookless, Chairman RCS