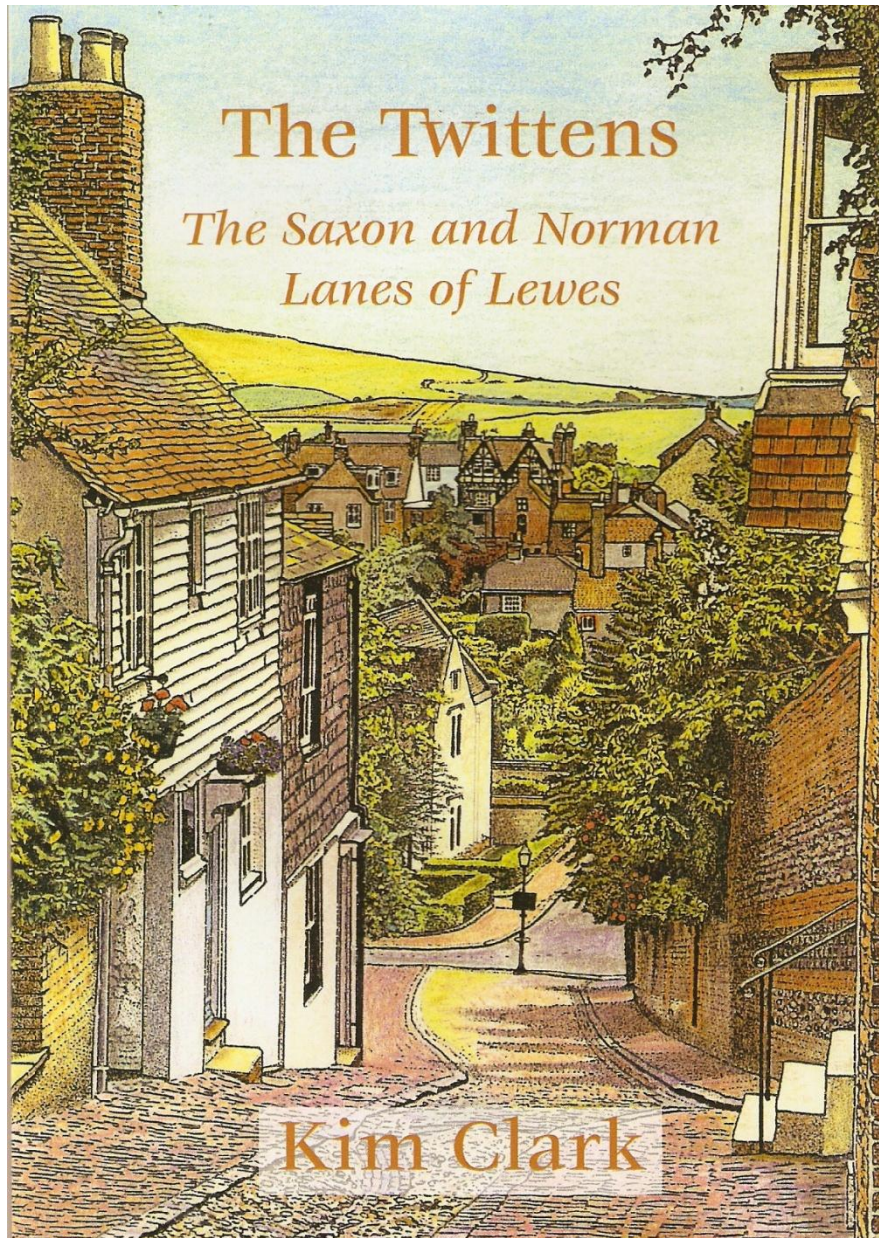


# Friends of Lewes

the Lewes civic society



Annual Report 2012



# THE FRIENDS OF LEWES - THE LEWES CIVIC SOCIETY

Lewes Town Council Offices, Town Hall, High Street, Lewes,  
East Sussex BN7 2QS (Registered Charity No 258756)

Web site : [www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk](http://www.friends-of-lewes.org.uk) E-mail address: [enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk)

## Personnel at 31st December 2012

President Phyllida Stewart-Roberts CVO, OBE  
Vice-Presidents Norman Baker MP Jim Franks Peter Mettyear  
Honorary Life Member John Davey

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Officers	Chairman	Robert Cheesman	(11/12)
	Vice-Chairman	David Hutchinson	(8/12)
	Secretary	Marcus Taylor	(10/12)
	Treasurer	Mike Stepney	(10/12)

Elected members	<u>At 2011 AGM</u>	<u>At 2012 AGM</u>	
	Roger Beasley (8/12)	Kim Clark (10/12)	
	Anthony Dicks (8/12)	Ruth O'Keeffe (7/12)	
	Jon Gunson (9/12)	Frances Tufnell (12/12)	
		Neil Merchant (7/12)	
		Micheal Turner (6/12)	

Co-opted Audrey Jarvis (5/5)

(The figures after each name above indicate the number of actual and possible attendances at Executive Committee meetings.)

Minutes Secretaries Judith Davies & Angela Blyth

The Mayor of Lewes has the right to attend Executive Committee meetings.

## PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

\* indicates member of Executive Committee

Frances Tufnell (Chairman) \*  
Carolyn Beckingham  
Aaron Curtis  
John Kennett  
Chris Kneale  
Betty Lewis  
Bronagh Liddicoat  
Neil McWalter  
Nick Wiseman

**Membership Secretary**  
**Distribution Organiser**

## EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

Marcus Taylor (Chairman) \*  
Marietta van Dyck  
Jeannette Swayne  
Howard Taylor  
Susan Weeks

Marietta van Dyck  
Michael Cotgrove

## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

The Friends of Lewes - the Lewes Civic Society - is an unincorporated association, the constitution of which was last amended in March 1997. It is a registered charity (No 258756) usually known as the Friends of Lewes but referred to in this report as the Society. Communications to it should be addressed to Lewes Town Council Offices, High Street, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2QS. Or by e-mail to [enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@friends-of-lewes.org.uk). Membership is open to all on payment of the relevant subscription.

Members of the Society's Executive Committee, who are elected at an Annual General Meeting, are the charity trustees. Officers are elected for one year whilst half of the other elected members retire each year but are eligible for re-election. The trustees in office on 31st December 2012, all of whom are members of the Society, are listed above.

The Executive Committee, which meets monthly, manages the Society's affairs but annually appoints a Sub-Committee to examine all planning applications affecting Lewes and the surrounding area and another to provide services and events for members.

The Society had a membership of 492 at 31st December 2012 (this figure was 502 at the end of 2011).

The Charities Aid Foundation holds the Society's liquid assets. Its accounts are examined by Clifton Page Wood, Chartered Accountants of 36a West Hill Road, Brighton BN1 3RT. The Society employs no staff and has not incurred fees from professional advisers during the year.

On 31st December 2012 the Society's representatives on external bodies were: -

Federation of Sussex Amenity Societies	David Hutchinson
Lewes Conservation Area Advisory Group	Anthony Dicks
Lewes District Council's Planning Service Users Group	Robert Cheesman
South Downs Network	Robert Cheesman

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

The Society's objectives are to stimulate public interest in the beauty, history and character of the town of Lewes and its surrounding area; to organise concerted action for protecting and enhancing the townscape of Lewes and the architectural, visual and historic interest of Lewes and the immediate surrounding area and to co-operate with similar civic societies. It does so by arranging meetings for members on conservation issues; lobbying relevant bodies to protect the historic environment of Lewes, whilst recognising that the town needs to remain an economically vibrant place, and by supporting projects that fall within its objectives. The principal risks facing the Society are an inability to find sufficient volunteers to undertake these activities and a possible decline in income through lower membership, a lack of legacies and low interest rates. This would limit the projects the Society is able to fund.

## **ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE**

The Executive Committee considers that during the year the Society's activities, projects and services to members, details of which follow, fulfil the Society's objectives and that they are

beneficial to the town and its inhabitants. The Committee therefore considers that the Society has complied with the public benefit test that applies to all charities.

The death of Paul Millmore in March was a great loss to the Society as he had not only been full of ideas but also played a significant part in considering and commenting on policy documents. In his will he left £ 5,000 to the Society for tree maintenance and to re-establish the post of Town Crier, issues which are currently under consideration.

### ***PLANNING POLICY ISSUES***

The South Downs National Park Authority (NPA) is the planning authority for Lewes and delegates all but the most controversial planning applications back to the District Council which considers them on its behalf. At present they are determined against the planning policies inherited from the District Council, alongside the purposes and duty of the NPA and the new National Planning Policy Framework. However a joint Local Plan is under consideration to take effect until the NPA has its own planning policy. It was feared that this joint Local Plan would propose housing development at Old Malling Farm, but following lobbying by the Society this has been dropped. The detail of the Joint Local Plan is still being considered whilst the Society intends to play a full part in the Neighbourhood Plan being contemplated by the Town Council which will be expected to recommend where new housing should be sited in Lewes.

The Society commented on the NPA's draft Lewes Conservation Area Management Plan. It was pleasing to see that the NPA have extended the conservation area to include additional land to its west, including the grounds of St Anne's School, as the Society had requested.

During the year the Government proposed extending the permitted development rights that allow certain works such as extensions to be carried out without seeking planning permission. Whilst the consultation said that National Parks are excluded from the relaxation the Society is anxious that this exclusion should be maintained in the final instrument, so that planning control is still exercised on these works.

### ***MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS***

Plans to develop two significant sites in Lewes have dominated the news in 2012: proposals from the Santon Group for the Phoenix site (also known as the North Street Quarter) and the site on South Downs Road opposite Sackville House.

Although Santon's plans are at an early stage, with public consultation due to begin early in 2013, the Society has met with representatives of the group and other interested parties about having a holistic plan for this site and the adjoining Wenban-Smith, Waitrose and bus station sites. It continues to recommend that a new development should have good contact with the existing town centre; it should also include the creation of a riverside walk, affordable housing and proper provision for existing users and tenants as part of any scheme.

The Society objected to the design of the proposals for the site on South Downs Road, and had concerns about there being too much office space and no affordable housing in these proposals. The NPA deferred consideration of the planning application so that the design issues can be reconsidered. This is in hand as this report goes to press.



The planned extension to the Tesco supermarket, for which some demolition has already taken place, has been further delayed. Plans by Waitrose to build a new store on the former Wenban-Smith site appear to be “on hold”, awaiting decisions on the holistic plan referred to previously. Another project on which there has been no movement in 2012 is the proposed development on the former kitchen garden of Lewes House.

### ***PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT***

On 1st April the NPA made changes in format to the way planning applications and weekly lists are recorded. The District Council, which determines most applications, no longer produce hard copies of applications to be viewed at Southover House nor do they acknowledge receipt of comments or the decisions made on the applications the Society has commented on. These services were much appreciated. There have been teething problems particularly when documents for an application are not available on line and this has created difficulties for the Planning Committee. However, the Town Council continues to hold hard copies of the applications and the Committee are grateful to them for the assistance they provide.

The Planning Committee considered 307 applications in 2012, the same as in 2011. 25 of these applications were from Openreach for cabinets around the town for broadband connections. The committee commented on 60 applications objecting to 39 and commending 10. Again this year there have been a large number of applications for loft conversions with dormer windows and for house extensions. It was disappointing that so many of the applications the committee had objected to were approved.

Among the more significant applications approved during the year for housing were the land beside the river at the end of Timberyard Lane; re-development of Falcon Wharf, and, after an appeal, the former Social Club, later light industrial building at the end of South Street. However the conversion of the former Canon O'Donnell centre for housing was dismissed on appeal whilst the NPA turned down the application to build 2 houses in the chalk pit in Mill Road, both determinations being in line with the Society's views. In each of the last three cases, the Society was represented by a member at the hearings.

Tree work applications no longer appear on the weekly lists and with the difficulties the Planning Committee has been experiencing it has not searched for them and has therefore made no comments.

There have been changes in the membership of the committee; Kim Clark and Joy Preston have retired and Bronagh Liddicoat, Aaron Curtis, Chris Kneale and Neil McWalter have been welcomed

### ***TRANSPORT ISSUES***

There has been little change to the road scene in the town in 2012. The Society continues to seek improvements to the railway station approaches, to Station Street's pavements and is in favour of a change of priority at the Fisher Street/West Street junction in order to improve air quality in Fisher Street.

Positive contributions were made to consultations about the long awaited introduction of a 20mph speed limit on roads in the town centre and on the proposal to reduce street lighting at night.

Members of the Society have met with County Council officials as part of the consultation phase of their proposed Sustainable Transport Projects and views have been expressed on the introduction of RTPI (Real-Time Passenger Information) displays at selected bus stops on the 28/29 route through the town, starting in mid-2013. Our particular concern is to see this useful addition without further cluttering the street scape. (see the Society's website for more detail).

The Society has contributed to the latest phase of consultations about parking in the town and has continued to press for a holistic approach, considering on-street and off-street arrangements together.

The importance of repairing the bridge on the railway station approach road was stressed.

The possibility of an improvement being made to the Earwig Corner junction seems more likely and would be welcomed.

Representations continue to be made to the County Council on the inappropriate use of 'black-top' in repairs to paved areas in the conservation area, especially by utility companies.

The Society contributed to consultations about a cycle-way to Kingston and speed limits as the C7 road enters Lewes, together with the banning of HGVs from this road.

### ***OTHER ISSUES***

Society Officers met late in the year with Jenny Rowlands, Chief Executive of the District Council to discuss the Council's Property Strategy and anxieties in the town arising from this review. The matter of unregulated trading on Cliffe Bridge was also mentioned. The District Council's wish to draw on the Society's knowledge and experience of the town was made clear.

Liaison meetings between the Society and members of the Town Council occur roughly twice a year, where matters of mutual interest can be raised and updated. The support and advice of the Town Council in several of the Society's projects is much appreciated.

### ***SOCIETY PROJECTS***

#### ***A number of projects mentioned in the 2011 report are still not completed:***

The "magic circle" above Castle Ditch Lane: redesign work continues. Efforts to confirm a right of way through the circle area from Castle Precincts to Castle Ditch Lane are on-going.

Restoration of the White Lion sign in Westgate by the Town Ranger is almost complete. However, mindful of the spate of recent metal thefts, the production of a resin replica is being actively pursued.

Plans to place a Greyfriars memorial stone in St Anne's churchyard still await final decisions on materials, design and costs.

### ***While others made good progress:***

Kim Clark's book on the Twittens of Lewes was published in July and has sold very well. A reprint with some revisions, is planned for 2013. Kim is now working on a new book on Eminent Lewesians.

Sales of Friends of Lewes books have gone up markedly, partly because of vigorous promotion with bookshops by a new member of the Executive Committee, Audrey Jarvis, who has taken on this brief.

Six more plaques marking historic features in Lewes were put up in the latter part of 2012 by the Town Council. The Society has researched and suggested wording for a further six, on which a decision will be taken by the Town Council in 2013.

The Society acted as co-sponsor, with the District Council, in ensuring the success of Heritage Open Days in September and plans to repeat its involvement in 2013. Arising from last year's events, an application to English Heritage has been made, with the Society's support, for the listing of the relief panels above the main entrance to County Hall, made by William Mitchell in the 1960s.

A meeting with Anthony Smith, Head of Priory School last year led to the Society being involved in the school's "Engage" Day in December. Identifying the best way to involve and inform younger Lewesians about the Society continues to be elusive.

The proposal for a project to put up banners on the High Street to mark the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Lewes in 2014 is making progress and involving several other groups.

With a view to spending wisely the legacy for tree planting of over £5,000 received some years ago, the Society has commissioned a survey of trees in the town. The report, due imminently, will contain recommendations for planting. Part of the cost of this project was covered by a grant from the NPA's Sustainable Communities Fund.

### ***SERVICES FOR MEMBERS***

Four lectures took place in 2012; in January Debby Matthews, with the dramatic assistance of her son, took us around the Lewes of Gideon Mantell; in March we were treated to a look behind the scenes of the collection of the Sussex Archaeological Society. The Autumn saw two local authors talking about recent books: in October Kim Clark made a presentation on Lewes Twittens and in November, David Arscott described the long and varied history of Lewes Old Grammar School..

Two general meetings were held in the year; at the AGM in March, there was a presentation by OVESCO on alternative energy options, whilst at the Autumn General Meeting in September there was a talk by Ptolemy Dean - "More than just a collection of buildings" – which was enlivened by pages from his sketch-books.

A tour of the AMEX Community Stadium at Falmer took place in April, which it is hoped to repeat in 2013.

Participation in the town's annual Societies Fair in the Town Hall provided another opportunity for the Society to explain what it does.

Michael Cotgrove continues to arrange distribution of newsletters three times a year, and other information to members whether as a hard copy or by e-mail. Marietta van Dyck as



Membership Secretary keeps track of our 500 members with meticulous care. We are very grateful to both of them.

Thanks are due to all those who give their time organising and staffing events, providing services for members or carrying out other work for the Society. Additional offers of help to ensure that all our activities and work continues would be appreciated.

We have new stocks of tea towels in three colours, navy blue, maroon and green, at £3 each. These will be available, together with prints and cards and the Society's publications, on our sales table at lectures in the Town Hall. Call Marietta Van Dyck on 01273 474521 for orders (delivery within Lewes) at other times.

## **FINANCIAL REVIEW**

### *Unrestricted Funds Receipts and Payments.*

On the Society's unrestricted funds, receipts in 2012 amounted to £9,711 (£9,446 in 2011) and total payments £7,356 (£5,747) which resulted in a surplus of £2,355 (£3,699).

The aggregate of receipts from voluntary sources has reduced by £1,667 (from £8,328 to £6,661). This predominantly reflects the difference in income between Mary Edith Wrigley's £3,000 legacy in 2011 and the £1,621 tax rebate from Gift Aid in 2012.

On Trading Activities, after a somewhat dormant 2011, there has been a concerted sales drive of the Society's books that has led to an overall net sales increase of some £1,600 over 2011.

With no expenses being paid to trustees, the cost of running the society in 2012 was £2,520 (£993 on Governance plus £1,527 on Other). This is a significant decrease on the 2011 aggregate cost of £4,210 but is virtually wholly accounted for by the 2011 one-off £1,170 cost of designing and implementing the Society's new web site and, in 2012, not repeating advance payments for subsequent year's events room hire. The recurring costs of running the Society remain below the 2012 ordinary membership subscription income of £3,340. It is nevertheless hoped that those who can afford to pay more than the minimum subscription will continue to do so, to maintain support for small enhancements to the town.

### *Balance Sheet*

At the end of the financial year, the Society's total assets on its unrestricted funds account amounted to £35,634 of which £32,170 was cash and £3,464 stock of books, tea towels and cards. A reserve of £10,000 has historically been considered necessary and proposed unrestricted project expenditure amounts to over £7,000 (including the Magic Circle, Greyfriars Stone in St Anne's Churchyard, completion of the tree survey and display boards.) The residual balance of some £15,000 is held in order that the Society can provide funding for further small projects which meet the Society's overall objectives without firstly having to make an appeal.

### *Restricted Funds*

A further £10,797 of cash is held in restricted funds. Of this, £5,797 has to be spent on tree planting (Tree Planting Fund) and £5,000 on the maintenance of trees and getting the post of Town Crier re-instated (a generous legacy received in 2012 from Paul Milmore's estate).

For a number of years the Society managed a restricted fund on behalf of the Lewes Library Friends. This ceased in 2012 when the balance of £3,718 was transferred back to their direct control.

## **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE**

The Society will continue to take a professional and independent approach to the issues facing the town, while trying to explain to the public what it does more effectively. However whilst it would like to be more pro-active in pursuing its objectives in the future, the extent to which it can do so will continue to be determined by both the human and financial resources available. In particular it would like to financially assist minor projects which enhance the townscape of Lewes and it will be considering whether its support for such projects could lever funds from bodies such as the NPA.

Approved by the Executive Committee on 23rd January, 2013 and signed on their behalf by

Robert Cheesman      Chairman

The Annual Report cover of Keere Street, which was used as the cover for Kim Clark's Twittens book, was drawn by Marietta van Dyck, to whom grateful thanks are offered.

Wherever possible we would like to deliver this report and newsletters by e-mail.. Not only will this provide faster and more effective communication but enable us to inform you of meetings and local events by email. It will also help minimise our overheads and thereby maximise the benefit we can bring to members and the residents of Lewes. If you not already done so and would be prepared to adopt this arrangement would you please email [mscotgrove@aol.com](mailto:mscotgrove@aol.com) with your e-mail address