



Margate Civic Society

WINTER 2021/2022 NEWSLETTER
ISSUE NO. 405

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

CHAIR'S REPORT

Dear Members

How are you all?

Well, how did that happen? Christmas is fast approaching and since lockdown eased, this year has 'flown by' with a whirlwind of emotions. After the overwhelming disappointment of last Christmas, the majority of us are now looking forward to hopefully celebrating in style with family and friends. The latest Covid situation is looking grim, so let's hope we can all pull together and bring this under control rather than slip back to the surreal situation we experienced last winter.

In spite of the colder weather, I hope that most of you are now all managing to stay well and safe and our best wishes go to anyone who is suffering from any ill health issues at this time, caring for a loved one or has been recently bereaved.

In Memoriam: I was very sorry to hear the sad news that the husband of my friend and long-term Member: Iris Johnston, sadly passed away on 23 October at the Shottendane Nursing Home. My husband Ray and I attended Michael's funeral, as did James Brazier and his wife, Sue. Our thoughts are with her and her family at this difficult time.

Membership: Subscriptions were, of course, due for renewal at our AGM in October and it is gratifying to see that many have already renewed. Membership continues to be excellent value for money and lapsed Members are still welcome to attend meetings but will obviously be requested to pay a nominal charge on entry, as, of course, will guests. They will not, however, receive newsletters or emails. My sincere thanks to our

Treasurer, Mike, who has kindly updated all the membership information, ensuring we have the correct current details for paid-up Members. Life Members wishing to receive hard copies of newsletters are now requested to pay a very nominal charge of £5.00 annually to cover the costs of printing and distribution. Richard Clements has kindly also been making calls on Life Members to ensure that our details are current, explaining the situation and has received a very positive, generous response. My thanks to Richard as this has been an extremely helpful exercise.

Newsletter: This is the fifth quarterly newsletter edition for which Sally has been Editor with the Editorial Team: Mike Wilton, Mike Thompson and myself, 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, book reviews, etc. I hope you will enjoy reading your Winter Issue and Arnold Schwartzman's article which includes some fascinating personal photographs of his family.

2021-22 Committee: I am delighted that Harry Scobie, Mike Wilton, Mike Thompson and Sally Whitworth agreed to continue as we make a good team. Kate Wilson has now taken on the role of Minutes Secretary and new Member, Andrew Chard, who spoke with us after the AGM, has also now joined our Committee. As means of an introduction, the following gives an insight into Andrew's achievements and experience.

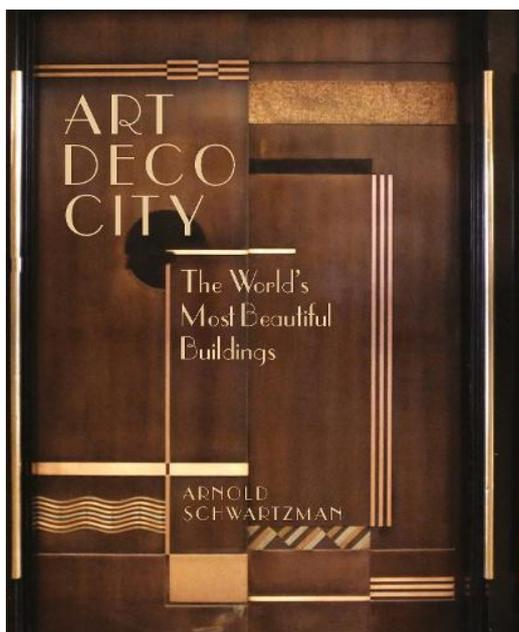
'I moved to Margate last September (2020) having previously lived in Cheltenham where I served as a Trustee of the Cheltenham Civic Society, both as a member and, later, as Treasurer.

I was a School Governor in Cheltenham and have been appointed as a Governor of Laleham Gap School in Ramsgate. I served as a Borough Councillor in Cheltenham (2012-2016). Before that I ran my own businesses firstly in London and then, Cheltenham'.

We are still without a Secretary and in the interim, Mike Wilton and I are covering the tasks involved. Should anyone be interested in taking over this role, or just undertake a part, I should be grateful if they would get in touch.

Mike Wilton, has also now kindly taken over the role of Membership Secretary, which will enable Sally more time to focus on her Newsletter Editorship. Mike has already spent considerable time reforming Membership, in addition to his existing roles of Treasurer and Web Master.

At the November meeting, on behalf of the Committee, I presented Geoff Orton with this beautiful book, written by Arnold Schwartzman, as a memento of the past 12 years on the Committee. Geoff will still attend meetings and has kindly offered assistance when required.



Above: Arnold Schwartzman's book 'Art Deco City' The Worlds Most Beautiful Buildings

Town Pride Awards 2020: On the evening of our AGM in October, I was delighted that, at long last, I was able to present a TPA Plaque to Kayleigh MacMahon, who is the Manager of 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).



Above The Margate Caves Visitors Centre, 1 Northdown Road, Cliftonville and right, Kayleigh receiving her award

Although we had intended to incorporate the presentation to both winners, changes had to be made once again, as the owner was unable to attend, due to work commitments in Manchester.

We held our November meeting at our alternative venue: Holy Trinity Church Hall in Cliftonville which was very successful and we are intending to use this again as was most suitable for our needs. During the evening, I was delighted that I was able to present a Town Pride Award Highly Commended Certificate to Uwe Derksen for his outstanding work on The Margate School, 21-22 High Street, Margate (in recognition of an innovative project, making a major creative contribution to the local community and the regeneration of Margate High Street)

Our congratulations to Uwe Derksen on his remarkable achievements and it is absolutely fantastic to see the progression after years of his dedication and hard work - this award is richly deserved. I was also delighted to learn that their recent application to the Arts Council has been successful, which is fantastic news!



Left: Uwe Derksen receiving his award

Separate arrangements were then made to present the other Town Pride Award Plaque and framed certificate on 26 November to Russell Grubiak, owner of **'Westbrook House', 145 Canterbury Road, Westbrook (in recognition of innovative, sensitive and eye-catching design, making a major historical contribution to Westbrook)**. Three of the judges: Mike Wilton, Mike Thompson and I presented Russell with his award, with which he was absolutely delighted and we were then treated to Prosecco, cakes and a tour of his home, which we all thoroughly enjoyed! Russell and his partner, Louisa were very hospitable and were keen to know more of the Society's work.



"Westbrook House", 145 Canterbury Road, Westbrook



Above left, a very proud recipient and, right, Russell Grubiak with Pamela Pople. (Photographs courtesy of Mike Wilton)

Lecture Programme: You will see in this newsletter that I have now finalised the 2022 programme. Talks cover various topics that hopefully will be of interest. We have now been informed that we **are** able to use The Walpole Bay Hotel for most of next year, excluding the months of February and December, when we have booked Holy Trinity Church Hall again which has excellent facilities: accessibility, car parking, toilets, airy rooms, a kitchen area from which we can serve refreshments, comfortable chairs and heating! Assistance will be required at these meetings, for setting up and clearing away chairs

and rubbish and Members who attended in November and December were more than willing to 'give a hand' and my thanks to them and to the caretaker, Tony, for their assistance.

Historical Walks: Vice-President, Robin Colyer managed to give his first **Old Town Walk** on **Saturday, 6 November** and has provided the following feedback:-

"I had a good walk this afternoon. The weather and the group of seven was fine as I was concerned I might be a bit rusty after the lockdowns but it went well and some of them asked about other walks next year.

The booked tour seemed to work well, although I would have accepted some others if they had turned up. As things stand I would prefer to work on that basis into next year. I am thinking I might do one walk per month from **April next year** and will work out a programme of the various tours. It was a really enjoyable afternoon".

Robin received £31.00 in donations for our Society which was a very promising start.

You will be advised once next year's programme is finalised and future booking will be essential via Robin on **Mobile: 7878 537 448**. Walks are obviously dependent on the Covid situation.

Community News:

'Wilderness to Wonderland' Project (which enhances Civic Pride) - see below the latest news update from Rory Waitt:-

We have continued to develop and maintain flora in Westbrook High Street and beach approaches

Attended Coastal Waste Scrutiny Review WP Meeting - 15 November 2021

Held first meeting of the Wildernesstowonderland committee which is now an 'ethically constituted community interest group' - 19 November.

Fundraising quiz night held in Westbrook Club - 25 November.

Seeking funding from Social enterprise Kent and Dreamland - 28 November

Plans for 2022: Inspired by support for our endeavours and measurable improvement to environment, diversity, mental and physical

health of all involved, Wildernesstowonderland needs to develop into a more strategic self-sustaining operation next year to do more good.

We plan for two events per week targeted at environmental diversity, community wellbeing and mental health.

To this end we need

£8000 'pump priming' funding, to pay for planning, resources and to 'buy time' to secure other funding.

An introduction to TDC parks department to have a meaningful conversation with a person who schedules environmental maintenance so that we can work together.

Wildernessstowonderland will be making a significant contribution (2000 person hours) of input into improving and maintaining the natural environment of our community.

Should you wish to find out more about this very worthwhile community project or to make a donation please see link below:-

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/imagine?utm_term=3e6rXrrnYCHRISTMAS

Margate Town Council: If you have not yet expressed a view, please see www.margatetowncouncil.co.uk. I have been informed by the Mayor's Parlour that 1,006 signatures have been obtained to date and that the final meeting will be held in the Cliftonville East Ward.

Theatre Royal Margate Pantomime: This year's production by Wicked Productions along with Margate panto favourites, JezO and Georgia Rowland Elliott, is **Robin Hood** which runs from Fri 17 December 2021 - Sun 2 January 2022.

Town Pride Awards 2022: Forward planning: It is time to start thinking of any nominations for next year's event. Criteria is that all nominees must be have been completed by the deadline of **14 February**, so Members are requested to please get in touch with either me or Mike Wilton and submit details in writing to ensure they are included on the list.

Overview: Since we were informed that we were permitted to hold our first meeting in October, a tremendous amount of work has had to be undertaken, after a lapse of 19 months, in order to rekindle the Society. During this time, we have sourced an alternative venue for some of our meetings, organised our AGM in October, booked a speaker/refreshments in November, organised a Christmas soiree, presented 3 Town Pride Awards, organised a private tour of the 1-1 Collection at Hornby's, created newsletters, organised the 2022 programme and booked the Walpole Bay, held Committee meetings, revamped the membership spreadsheet, visited Life Members and collected membership and donations. It has been very stressful at times as you can imagine but our meetings were very successful (two of which were very different to our usual format but had a great atmosphere of friendship and community, which appealed to attendees) and the response to membership from both annual and Life members has been very positive indeed, for which we are most grateful.

Acknowledgements: As always, I should also like to thank all the Committee members: in addition to the Auxiliary Committee: Anny Squire, Heather Wilton, Diane Addison, Ray Pople, Glenys and Richard Clements for their ongoing support over the past difficult few months. I am delighted to report that we are finally now 'back on track.'

I hope to see you on **3 February** at Holy Trinity Church Hall, Cliftonville, which will be our first meeting in 2022, at which refreshments will be on sale!

Wishing you all a Very Merry Christmas and let us raise a glass of your favourite tippie on New Year's Eve with a toast to 'A Brighter, Happier, Healthier and Peaceful New Year'.



With my very best wishes

Pamela

LECTURE PROGRAMME FEBRUARY 2022 TO OCTOBER 2022 (Subject to COVID-19 Guidelines)

January 2022 NO MEETING

3 February **Guests: £3.00 nominal fee**

Topic: “The History of Epple Bay”. **Speaker:** John Robinson (MCS Member, local historian and Chair of Birchington Heritage Trust). **Venue:** Holy Trinity Church Hall, Cliftonville. **Start time** 1945 hrs (to be seated by 1935 hrs)

3 March **Guests: £3.00 Nominal fee**

Topic: “The Hanbury Gardens on the Italian Riviera” – Sir Thomas Hanbury, a celebrated Victorian Quaker and philanthropist, his connection with Wisley and the history of his renowned garden on the Italian Riviera. **Speaker:** Hugh Raggett (a retired, professional Emmy-award film-maker). **Venue:** The Walpole Bay Hotel. **Start time** 1930 hrs (to be seated by 1915 hrs)

7 April **Guests: £3.00 nominal fee**

Topic: “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”. **Speaker:** Sally Whitworth (MCS Newsletter Editor and Westgate-on-Sea Heritage Centre Newsletter Editor and local historian) **Venue:** The Walpole Bay Hotel. **Start time** 1930 hrs (to be seated by 1915 hrs)

12 May **Guests: £4.50 nominal fee**

Topic: TOWN PRIDE AWARDS (followed by refreshments and raffle). **Venue/Time:** Walpole Bay Hotel. **Start time** 1930 hrs (to be seated by 1915 hrs)

6 October **Guests £4.50 nominal fee**

Topic: Annual General Meeting (Renewal of Subs due) and “Battle Royale 1066” (to help commemorate the 954th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings and possibly the most famous date in English history. Meet the main characters involved and the series of events that brought them together, whilst Steve Hookings tries to make sense of a battle that everyone has heard of but one that so little is known about. Let Steve talk about what he thinks happened, why, where, when and who was involved. Featuring an all-star cast, it’s a story of Medieval power, politics and pushy parents. **Speaker:** Steve Hookings (After-dinner speaker, historical presentations). **Venue:** The Walpole Bay Hotel. **Start Time:** 1930 hrs (to be seated by 1915hrs)

3 November **Guests £3.00 nominal fee**

Topic: “Margate, a Cornishman and a Bi-Plane” **Speaker:** Bob Varnham (MCS Member and local historian) **Venue:** Walpole Bay Hotel **Start Time:** 1930 hrs (to be seated by 1915 hrs)

8 December Christmas Soiree **Guests £6.50 nominal fee**

Topic: “The Goose is Getting Fat! The History of Christmas Traditions” followed by music, refreshments and raffle. **Speaker:** Imogen Corrigan (Lecturer on Anglo Saxon and Medieval History of Art). **Venue:** Holy Trinity Church Hall, Cliftonville **Start Time:** 1945 hrs (to be seated 1935 hrs)

Any suggestions for future topics, please feel welcome to get in touch.

MARGATE SYNAGOGUE – “THE ECHOES THAT REMAIN”

By Arnold Schwartzman OBE RDI



Above: The Margate Hebrew Congregation's Synagogue, 1929, Godwin Road, Cliftonville

After an absence of half a century I recently revisited the Margate Synagogue in Godwin Road, Cliftonville, the house of worship where at age 13 I was Bar Mitzvah'd.

Sadly, due to the town's depleted Jewish community, the Arts and Craft style building was recently put up for auction. The good news is that the structure is now to enjoy its reincarnation as "Cliftonville's Cultural Space".

My visit to the Synagogue brought back so many memories from my days as a young member of the, then, flourishing Jewish community. Gone are the two gold-leaf lettered wall plaques containing the prayer for the Royal Family flanking each side of the Ark which house the Torah scrolls. Also removed was the "Bimah", the raised platform in the centre of the synagogue from where I once read from the Torah.

The 1971 photograph of the Bimah features (left to right) my father, David Schwartzman (circled), hotelier Alec Brooks, Reverend Landau, The Mayor of Margate, Henry Arnish MBE (circled) and hotelier Harry Stander.

Below the Bimah I am (circled) looking up to my father to the right of the Town Clerk. Reverend Bernard Landau, a former Czech-born refugee, was my Hebrew teacher and served with distinction as the Margate congregation's minister for 33 years.



Also lost are the long benches that bore the names of the synagogue's members. Thanks to my late father's thoughtfulness, I possibly possess the only surviving seat name-plate (see photograph below). The seat's lid opened for the storage of my tallit (prayer shawl) plus prayer books.



Time has taken its toll as many of the members of the congregation are no longer with us but the remnants of the community linger on. I still recall a number of the names of those congregants: Arnish, Brooks, Black, Bonny, Collier, Finestone, Godfrey, Goldman, Gradus, Hann, Hirschfeld,

Jacobs, Moss, Philips, Ruback, Smith, Sober, Stander, Stone and Taylor ... so many memories. I noted a memorial board leaning against a wall that included my later mother Rose's name among the others listed are Herbert Smith, the former film producer. At the age of twelve I was recruited as an extra to appear in his studio's production of "The Weaker Sex" which was filmed on Walpole Bay's beach. The experience was a seminal precursor to my future career in the film industry.

As a young man my father worked as a waiter during the summer seasons in Margate, years later my parents spent their honeymoon there. They first brought me to the town on holiday when I was just a few months old. Following the Second World War my parents decided to move to Cliftonville where they opened "Rosanda", a boarding house in Warwick Road, its name a melding of my parents' names, Rose and David. The front door's fanlight still graces that name to this day.

As the country recovered from its war time restrictions, tourism flourished, allowing my parents to later successfully open a small hotel, the "Hotel Majestic" on Lewis Crescent. Among the Majestic's guests were two popular singing stars, Helen Shapiro and Alma Cogan, who were both performing at the Winter Gardens.

The adjoining building to the Majestic was Rowden Hall, the former summer holiday home of Jacob Van Den Bergh, the Dutch margarine magnate. Following his death in 1934 the property was made available by his family as a hostel for the children of the Kindertransport project. Later the building was used as a hospital for Canadian troops evacuated from Dunkirk. The building has since been replaced by a block of flats.

On visiting my parents' graves in the Jewish section of Margate's St John's cemetery, the names on the nearby gravestones brought back a further flood of memories. Mr Hyman Black, whose gift shop on the corner of the Parade the Duke Street is now "The Coffee Shed". Benny and Sadie Gradus's Kosher butcher shop at 123 Northdown Road, my mother being one of their regular customers. Other weathered stones included that of film producer Herbert Smith who on his retirement opened Pav's Café, Westgate – recent demolished.

Other members of the congregation were Dr Montague Curwen, a decorated former Royal Navy Medical Officer, who would be called to make regular house calls to our home for the most minor ailments, eg the loss of my hair at age 18. The doctor's diagnosis, in a matter-of-fact way, informed me that I would lose most of it, which indeed came true!

My mother was a life warden of the Jewish Blind Society's Home in Beresford Gardens, which was opened by the Chief Rabbi, Dr Israel Brodie. My Margate-born younger sister Diana presented the bouquet of flowers to Mrs Brodie. In his youth, the latter Chief Rabbi Baron Sacks, along with his family, spent their summer holidays in a house opposite our home in Avenue Gardens and regularly attend Sabbath service at the Margate Synagogue (See Brian Sacks, the late Chief Rabbi's younger brother's brilliant article in the MCS Summer 2016 Newsletter 383, reliving their annual summer holidays in Margate).

In conclusion, I put my faith in the creative minds of the team who will once more breathe new life into the former Synagogue.

*O there are voices of the past,
Links of a broken chair,
Wings that can bear me back to Times which
cannot come again;
Yet God forbids that I should lose
The Echoes that remain! – Adelaide Anne Porter*

Arnold Schwartzman OBE, RDI,

Arnold Schwartzman OBE, RDI, designer filmmaker, author and educator, was born in London, and later become a long-time resident of Margate

He attended Margate's Holy Trinity and Birchington's King Ethelbert Schools

For a short period he became an assistant projectionist at Northdown Road's Cameo Cinema prior to attending the Thanet School of Art & Crafts.

Following his graduation he performed his National Service in Germany and South Korea.

On demobilization, his career began in broadcast television, noted for his graphics for the Pop/Rock & Roll programme "Ready, Steady Go!"

A regular illustrator for the Sunday Times, he later became an advertising agency art director.

In 1978 he was invited to Hollywood to be the design director for Saul Bass & Associates.

Three years later, as the director & producer, his film "Genocide" received the Academy Award for best documentary feature. In 1982 he was appointed as the Director of Design for the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games.

A Governor and Past Chairman of BAFTA Los Angeles. He is also the founding Chair of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Science Documentary Branch.

In 2002 he was awarded the OBE and in 2006 conferred the distinction of Royal Designer, RDI. Today he proudly serves as the Patron of The Margate School.

CLIFTONVILLE CULTURAL SPACE

The Synagogue may no longer be a functioning place of worship, but alongside creating a flourishing arts venue, Cliftonville Cultural Space is committed to preserving the rich cultural heritage of Margate's Jewish community. Over the coming months, we will be working with Arnold Schwartzman to create an exhibition based on the recollections of local people. This project will both capture the heyday of Cliftonville's past, and celebrate the contribution of new cultural groups to the eclectic diversity of this vibrant area of Margate. Our vision is to make the former "Shul" once again, a focal point for the local community.

Jan Ryan

Co-Director of Cliftonville Cultural Space
www.cliftonvilleculturalspace.com



Above: Lewis Crescent. The house on the corner on the left was the former summer home of Jacob Van Den Bergh, the Dutch margarine magnate.

THE ONE TO ONE COLLECTION VISIT



Around 30 keen members gathered at Hornby on the 16th November to take advantage of the kind offer of a guided tour from Frank Martin, Director of the One:One Collection. The title One:One Collection refers to the actual scale of the locomotives and rolling stock exhibits - ie a scale of 'One to One' or in other words, full size.

After introducing himself to the group in the Hornby cafe, Frank gave us a brief history of the site, its acquisition by the new owner and of his desire to create something very special and of significant national importance relating to our railway history.

The conversion of the former Hornby buildings is a massive undertaking. The buildings themselves are enormous in scale and provide the perfect platform to exhibit full size railway locomotives and rolling stock. These are displayed on track laid on the ground floor and three newly installed purpose-built doors in the rear elevation provide access for delivering or taking out exhibits.

There will be an impressive collection of small-scale steam locomotives and railway memorabilia on display on the mezzanine level and the lower ground floor will eventually house a cafeteria. Provision is also being made to run some of these small-scale steam locomotives and rolling stock outside offering rides to the public.

The entire project is expected to take three or four years to complete and once open will represent an asset of National significance and will attract visitors from far and wide, much to the benefit of the Thanet economy. It will undoubtedly be one of the finest collections anywhere of heritage railway exhibits - from classic steam through electric, diesel electric and even a Eurostar loco and carriage are on display.



Left: BR Intercity class 47 and, right, officers' saloon coach from 1903 with luxurious interior.

Frank made the tour very interesting indeed with not only historical facts relating to the exhibits but also information on the building and conversion works. He was most ably assisted on the day by Bob Fryars, a retired British Rail driver who gave us valuable technical information plus insights into his past duties as a driver - most interesting.

As the project is set to take three to four years to complete, we are delighted that Frank has offered to update us on progress with the offer of further visits in the future as they move towards completion.

Our grateful thanks then to both Frank and Bob for hosting our visit and for making it so enjoyable. As for the future visits - watch this space! For further information, please visit the website:-

www.theonetoonecollection.co.uk



The Churchill hearse attracted much interest



Members were able to look into Bittern's cab



Bittern, sister engine to Mallard – the world steam record holder of 126 mph set on 3rd July 1938



Members had free time to enjoy the exhibits



Admiring Deltic D9016

Photos by Mike Wilton and Mike Thompson

Mike Thompson

In the last instalment of our President, Ralph Handscomb's, autobiography, Ralph had reached the end of his four-year contract with the British South African Police in Rhodesia and had returned to England, unemployed. The story continues...

I was quite excited at the thought of seeing my parents again and expected a great welcome when I arrived home in Lansdown Road. However, as I entered there was a great wailing and gnashing of teeth - my grandmother on my mother's side had just died! The following day I was with parents on the train to Margate to stay with Aunty Thelma, ma's sister, who was arranging the funeral. Not the homecoming I was expecting - I wished I had travelled by sea!

Back in London, I started looking up old friends and made a few visits to the old haunts, the Brevet Club in Mayfair, and the Denman Club. I also applied for an interview with the Crown Agents for overseas Governments and Administrations with a view of applying for a commission with the Colonial Police. I received a letter on 11th November 1955 informing me that my application had been referred to the Government of Nyasaland as an Assistant Inspector of Police. There were several other letters of appointment for Hong Kong, Bermuda, Bahamas, Cyprus, Gold Coast, Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika, Malaya, Mauritius, Nigeria, and Northern Rhodesia, with rates of pay, allowances, tax, etc. I could apply for any of these if vacancies were available, providing I passed the medical.

A number of us from the SAS had joined the Underwater Explorers Club at the Lansdowne Club in Mayfair, and took a course in Scuba diving, training there once a week. One long weekend, Ricky and I loaded a couple of compressed air cylinders onto the Dicky seat of my car, and we trundled off to Durdle Door in Dorset. It was a lovely day and on arrival we set up camp on the beach. Durdle Door is an arch where the water was about forty feet deep. Lying on the bottom at the base of the rock was wonderful - seaweed floating out from the side wall, lots of small fish and some spider crabs plus a very large conger eel poking its head out of a crevice. That evening we went to the local pub and drank scrumpy. Luckily, the landlord stopped us drinking too much, but it had affected our legs which was terribly funny. Later we had a meal and

met up with a couple of girls who were staying in a caravan, and we were invited to stay the night with them. Very friendly!



Above: Durdle Door, Dorset

One day I met up with George Goldie and I took him to the Denman Club where George had a bit too much to drink. I was driving my old Austin 10, so I suggested I drive him home to Weybridge. In Weybridge we drove on to St. Georges Hill (very posh area) and up a long drive to a huge mansion. It had been Von Ribbentrop's residence when he was German Ambassador to Britain before the war. (See photograph below)



The Goldie family had what had been the servant's quarter and the garden, a large section of the building. Inside we were greeted by George's father, Cedric Goldie, and wife Dianna. I got on extremely well with them and stayed the night and most of the following day. I told Mr Goldie of my plans and he suggested that I stay with them for a couple of weeks while I waited for the outcome of my applications. I went home, collected some bits and pieces, and returned to Weybridge. I had my medical and eye tests and passed various oral and written tests and thought I would soon be on my way back to Africa. While I was staying with them, I cleaned and repainted

their greenhouse. I had to do something in return for their hospitality.

A letter arrived for me from the Crown Agents forwarded from home. They were sorry. Owing to the failure of passing the eye test, I could not be considered for any overseas posting. I was sitting with Mr Goldie at his home bar when I opened the letter. I handed it to him saying I didn't now know what I was going to do. His answer was: "Don't worry, the Diamond Corporation are looking for people like you to go out to Sierra Leone to buy diamonds". It turned out he was a diamond broker and had contacts with the directors of DTC (Diamond Trading Co).

The outcome – I sent a letter to Mr Chappell, Managing Director of DTC with a brief outline of my career. That was on a Friday. I had a reply on the following Wednesday asking me to go for an interview on Friday. At the interview I was asked various questions with all the Directors (Teddy Dawe, Derry Turner and Monty Charles) of the subsidiary of DTC, the Diamond Corporation Sierra Leone Ltd. (DCSL). At the end of the interview, I was asked to report on Monday to start a year's intensive training in the valuation and grading of rough and uncut diamonds. I was delighted. I was back in work and would be returning to Africa. On arrival at the DTC in Charterhouse Street I met various people and then taken over the road to Horton House on Holborn Viaduct, where the trainees for Sierra Leone were being instructed.

The days passed and I quickly became reasonably competent with grading and valuing. We had large quantities of diamonds at Horton House, housed in large safes. Occasionally these were changed for a new selection. One day I was instructed with two other trainees to take a trolley full of boxed diamonds to our main office in Charterhouse Street. Now, I wouldn't think it sensible but in 1955 we pushed this lot worth over a million pounds down Holborn Viaduct to the main office where we handed it over and received a new batch which we then pushed back to Horton House.

I was now earning a good salary and bought a couple of suits and started using Toppers Hair Salon in Regent Street for my hair cut. Life was beginning to change for the better. Sometimes I would meet up with my brother when his ship was in. He had become an assistant Purser in the

Orient Line travelling between England and Australia. I lost touch with all my old friends in the SAS.

At the end of six months, I was told to prepare for departure to Sierra Leone. There were three of us. About six months previously John Saville, Mike Finney, Roy Fitch and Ray Fabes had opened an office in Kenema. Houses and a Buying Office had been built. We were sent to Bakers in Golden Square, Soho to get kitted up for the tropics. Once again I said my goodbyes to my parents and to friends and girlfriends and off we went to London Airport.

The plane was again Airwork, the same as I had travelled on from Rhodesia. A very interesting journey. First stop was Lisbon for lunch. We then crossed the Med to Tangiers for a night stop. I joined forces with a couple of lads who were off to the Gold Coast, and we went into the Gut to have a taste of the nightlife, eventually being chased out by some very angry Arabs at about two in the morning. We made it safely to our hotel. The next morning, we took off and landed at Villa Ceserberos in Spanish Sahara for lunch. Gosh it was hot! Next stop was Dakar in Senegal for lunch. On again to Bathurst in Gambia for a night stop. (Very French). Next day to Freetown in Sierra Leone. We stayed in Freetown with Derek Cliverd, the Manager of Diamond Corp. Sierra Leone Ltd, for a couple of days, then by car to Hastings along the coast to where our Company plane was housed.

Here we met with Bill Everett, the company pilot. The plane was a single engine Beaver. We took off and landed in Kenema where I spent the next few months. *To be continued*



Above: Ralph's company plane

RALPH HANDSCOMB

MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

SUMMER MEETINGS

The committee has been considering whether to change our monthly meetings to hold them in the summer months rather than in winter, as now. We would like to hear comments from members about this proposed change.

The proposal from the committee is that we will hold meetings next year, 2022, as planned – from February to May and then October to December. The following year, 2023, we will hold meetings in March to October (except August when many people will be on holiday). Subsequent years will follow the same pattern. We will hold seven meetings a year, as now, but the first meeting each year will be in March and the last (our AGM) will be in October. This does mean that we will be able to hold all our meetings at the Walpole Bay Hotel, which currently closes for the winter, and that it will, most months, still be light when we emerge after each meeting. Meetings will continue to be held on the first Thursday of each month, or very occasionally on the second Thursday, starting at 7.30pm.

Unlike some, this is a genuine consultation and we won't make this change unless a majority of members who respond are in agreement. Please let us know what you think by telling any committee member or by email to me at

treasurer@margatecivicsociety.org.uk

MEMBERSHIP

Attached to this copy of the Newsletter is a form to set up a Standing Order to pay your subscription fees to the Society with, on the reverse of the form, details of the various other means of payment. We hope that setting up a Standing Order will prove convenient for members to pay their subscriptions each year but, of course, we hope that you will continue to support the Society by paying by whichever means suit you best. If you would like to set up a Standing Order and have already paid your subscription for 2021/22 (October 2021 to September 2022), please enter the 1st October 2022 as the first Standing Order payment date and 2023 in the "Starting in October" box. If you haven't yet paid but wish to set up a Standing

Order, please enter the phrase "As soon as possible" as the first payment date, and 2022 in the "Starting in October" box.

The Society presently has 150 members, which is around 100 fewer than the membership ten years ago, with a consequent reduction in subscription fees received. Additionally, we have not been able to arrange coach trips for the past two years, which again has reduced the Society's funds. We have continued to produce our Newsletter and we have, since October, recommenced our monthly meetings, all of which cost money. We are, though, determined to keep doing the activities of the Society in a way which benefits the members and the community.

The Society's constitution allows members three months to pay subscription fees after the due date of 1st October each year, following which time their membership lapses. Therefore, any member who has not renewed by the end of December will not receive any future Newsletters and will not be eligible to attend meetings other than as a paying guest.

We are asking life members who receive a printed copy of the Newsletter to donate a sum of £5 each year, to help cover the production cost. Members may instead wish to change to email membership, where a full-colour copy of the Newsletter is sent to them by email.

Please also consider signing up for Gift Aid if you are a UK taxpayer. This means that the Society can claim 25p for every £1 you pay. A Gift Aid form can be downloaded from our website or I will be happy to send you a paper copy.

With members' help, we very much hope that the Society will continue to meet its purpose and aims as described on the back page of each Newsletter and to provide interest and pleasure to members in the activities we arrange.

Thank you.

Mike Wilton
Treasurer & Membership Secretary

CHRISTMAS EVENTS IN WESTGATE-ON-SEA

One of the busiest mornings in Westgate-on-Sea was probably just before Christmas, when the boarding schools (very prominent in the town from the late 1880s onwards) were breaking up and the boys going home. This was usually around the 21st December each year.



Above: Wellington House School in Rowena Road

Two special trains would run from Westgate-on-Sea station for two of the well-known schools, Hawtreys Preparatory School (known as St Michael's School in its early years) in St Mildred's Road and Wellington House School in Rowena Road.

There were probably many moans and complaints about these trains as the railway system in this area was held up for around half-an-hour while the children were being despatched to London from Westgate-on-Sea. Porters would be working hard on the platforms loading all the luggage while the teachers and matrons made sure all the pupils were safely on board. It must have seemed like organised chaos with around 150 excited schoolboys converging on the station on the morning the school term ended.

Two trains would be in the station together, both facing towards London. One train would leave about fifteen minutes before the other. Once the first train had cleared the section at Birchington, the next train would leave the station at Westgate-on-Sea, crossing over to the up line to London by the points at Westgate-on-Sea station. It must have been a very unusual sight to see both trains facing the same way on the platform ready to make their journey to the capital.

Westgate-on-Sea would have been very quiet in winter in early years of the Victorian town, as most

people with property in the town would visit during the summer months to escape the heat and pollution of the City. In December 1878 though, something unusual brought people to the town to see what must have seemed a very futuristic project. An experimental electric light system was placed on St Mildred's Promenade for one month. The system was invented by Pavel Jablochhoff (a Russian engineer) and had already been used in Paris. It was exactly the same system that was trialled on the promenade at Westgate, with 'candles' or electric lights, placed 80 yards apart.

The Morning Star reported on the 3rd December 1878 that a "duplex dynamo-electric machine worked by an engine of 10 nominal horse-power, supplied two circuits of wire, about 650 yds long, the lights being estimated as equal to that of 1000 candles. The average distance between the six lamps was about 80 yards and they extended about a quarter of a mile along the promenade".

The light was brilliant white and would have been dazzling but was softened by the thickness of the globes, which were specially designed for that purpose. It must have been an amazing sight for people to see, suddenly from the relative gloom of gas lamps, the promenade was brightly illuminated with a white light that was visible from Margate and Reculver.

The experiment was the idea of the entrepreneurial Edmund Davis, the Westgate Estate owner at the time, and was widely reported in local and London papers. As Davis hoped, Westgate-on-Sea received a lot of publicity from this experiment. The Whitstable Times of the 7th December 1878 went on to report that "Mr Davis invited several gentleman to dine with him at the Beach House Hotel ... and the opinion was expressed that electric light for general purposes or domestic use could not supersede gas on the grounds of general expense and utility".

Despite this month-long experiment, Westgate-on-Sea did not have electric lighting installed until the 1930's. The town had its own gas works and the owners were very protective of their profits. Westgate-on-Sea was one of the first places to trial electric lights but one of the last places to actually have electricity installed in private homes.



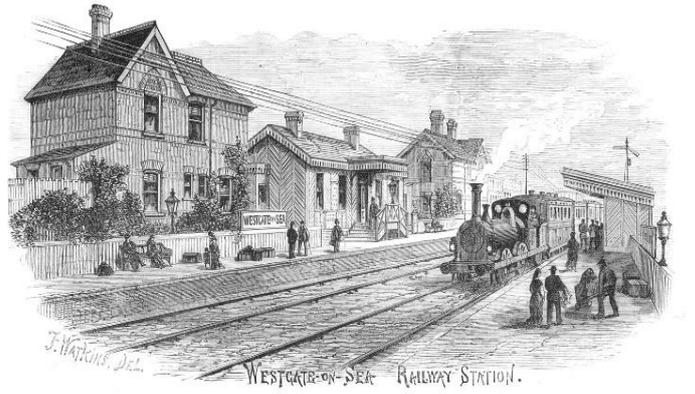
Above: Wellington House School with the playing field and masters' house in the foreground



Above: St Mildred's Promenade in 1897



Above: The experimental electric lights in Paris



Above: Westgate-in-Sea Railway Station 1878

Sally Whitworth



Above: Sewyn Road, Cliftonville

**THE COMMITTEE OF THE
MARGATE CIVIC SOCIETY
WOULD LIKE TO WISH
ALL OUR MEMBERS A
VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS
AND A PEACEFUL NEW
YEAR**

Margate Civic Society

www.margatecivicsociety.org.uk



Founded in 1968, the Margate Civic Society is a registered charity (No.257884) and a founder member of Civic Voice.

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 often of local interest; they are also varied in their appeal. A Newsletter is published four times a year.

Committee for 2021/22:

President: Mr Ralph Handscomb

Chair: Mrs Pamela Pople, Hurston Cottage, Sloe Lane, Westwood, Margate CT9 4DX
Tel: 01843 221689 e-mail: chair@margatecivicsociety.org.uk

Vice-Chair: Mr Harry Scobie

Secretary: Vacancy

Treasurer & Membership Secretary: Mr Mike Wilton, 30 Barrington Crescent, Birchington CT7 9DF
Tel: 07799 835819 e-mail: treasurer@margatecivicsociety.org.uk

Newsletter Editor: Mrs Sally Whitworth
Tel: 07949 835777 e-mail: newsletter@margatecivicsociety.org.uk

Planning and Conservation issues: Mr Mike Thompson

Minutes Secretary: Ms Kate Wilson

Committee member: Mr Andrew Chard

To contact us, please email enquiries@margatecivicsociety.org.uk or write to or telephone the Chair.

All committee members are also Trustees of Margate Civic Society.

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