

Hastings & St Leonards Museum Association
Annual General Meeting 2025 Annual Report

Chair's report:

Committee:

Your committee has met 5 times this year and had numerous email conversations to ensure the smooth running of the Association and keep on top of any issues as they arise. Museum staff have attended each meeting to keep us fully updated with happenings at the Museum and I'd like to thank Katherine Buckland (maternity cover for Alice) for making us feel welcome and a real part of Hastings Museum & Art Gallery.

Bequest:

The saga of the Watkins bequest has continued to drag on thanks to the Council's legal team's reluctance to co-operate and obstruction at every turn. Probate was finally granted in June but not a penny has yet materialised. You will recall that we agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with HBC to ensure that the funds would be paid into a dedicated bank account and overseen by the HBC Museum Committee to ensure maximum benefit to the museum. The council has not, so far as we are aware, set up this account yet and is prevaricating over disposal of the property concerned. Meanwhile funds are being frittered away in legal expenses. We are extremely concerned that little will remain by the time the saga concludes.

Charitable Incorporated Organisation:

We have completed our application to become a CIO thanks to the fantastic help of Steve Manwaring from HVA. It is now down to you as members to decide whether you wish to proceed with the dissolution of the existing Association and transfer all assets to the new one with the same name, same bank account and same aims and objectives.

Other matters:

- a) In September I attended a meeting with HBC councillors, Council officers and a representative of Arts Council England who had been tasked with investigating a "merger" between HMAG, Hastings Contemporary and the Towner Gallery. The suggestion was rejected in no uncertain terms though we were very much in favour of closer co-operation between these and other local cultural institutions.
- b) We agreed to purchase storage boxes and cleaning materials for the recently acquired Barry Funnell collection of 3,000 slides.
- c) Hilda Kean is researching the history of the Association with a view to producing a booklet in due course.
- d) I am preparing a new leaflet to promote the Association. An information poster about the Association is now on display.
- e) We were pleased to co-opt Stephen Van Dulken onto the Committee at our November meeting.

Secretary's Report

Museum Association events during 2025 have all proved popular and we have received very positive feedback from members. I would like to thank committee members, Museum Association members and those from the other organisations we have worked with throughout this year. I have already arranged most of the programme for the forthcoming year which I have outlined below.

During 2025 we held the following events:

2nd February: Ken Brooks' talk on Hastings in WW2

23rd March: Haydon Luke's talk on Fairlight in WW2

13th April: Stephen van Dulken's talk on the history of his house in Vale Road

10th May: The Robert Tressell Walk with Dr Trevor Hopper

28th June: Dr Hilda Kean's talk on Animals in Wartime

12th July: The Alexandra Park walk and visit to the Alexandra Park Greenhouse with Bruce Dowling

4th October: A visit and tour of Brede Steam Giants and the Cold War bunker

12th October: Kevin Boorman's talk on Railways 200

14th December: AGM and talk by Steve Peak on Hastings historical maps

Plans for 2026

25th January: A talk by Steve Dine from Empress Coaches on the history of the company

8th February: A talk by Steve Peak on Robert Tressell

8th March: A talk by Elaine Luke on local author, Malcolm Saville

25th April: A talk by Andrew Blackman and Haydon Luke on Fairlight Place

May: The Robert Tressell Walk, date to be confirmed

21st June: A talk by Barbara Atkinson on The Brede Giants

11th July: The 'No Hills' Old Town Walk with Judy Cubison, OHPS

September, date to be confirmed: A talk by Ken Brooks on the history of the RNLI

I am hoping to organise a visit to The Pevensey Mint House and the Hastings Museum Store sometime during the spring or summer of 2026. I have also been asked to organise another visit to the Brede Giants when both engines are up and running, as the visit in October was a great success.

Any other suggestions for speakers and local outside visits are very welcome.