

**Notes for the Chair's Speech**  
**Ramsgate Society 60th Anniversary Celebration 4<sup>th</sup> June 2025**

I'd just like to say a few words of welcome to everyone here at this 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the founding of the Ramsgate Society in 1964 and to give apologies from our President Clive Aslet who very much wanted to join us but is currently in America.

**Who would have thought back in 1964** – when I was 17 years old and the Beatles had just conquered America, when Harold Wilson won the General Election with a majority of just 4, when BBC 2 made it three channels we could watch on television, and when some of us thought that going to the Moon was a crazy idea – that the newly-formed Ramsgate Society would still be working and making a difference sixty years later?

In 1964, we were dedicated to help preserve and enhance Ramsgate's unique heritage and environment – its architecture, coastal areas, The Royal Harbour, and the Town as a genuine treasure. In 2025 as we stand here today our aim is very much the same. Technology may have changed many things over the decades, but the challenges remain the same: to preserve and cherish what we have, while embracing what's to come.

On an occasion like this it's worth remembering **what** the Society stands for and I think the best way to do this is to look at the Charitable Objectives in our Constitution which are:

To benefit the current and future citizens of Ramsgate by

1. Protecting and improving their quality of life, including their economic and social well-being;
2. Encouraging high standards of architecture and planning in Ramsgate;
3. Protecting and enhancing the quality of the built and natural environment, and the public realm;
4. Promoting the history and heritage of the town;
5. Encouraging civic pride and active citizenship.

6. And To pursue these objectives by means of campaigns, meetings, exhibitions, lectures, publications, other forms of instruction and publicity and the promotion of projects of a charitable nature.

**I joined the Ramsgate Society when I moved to Ramsgate in 2011** and took over as Chair in 2014 when Jocelyn stood down. That was just 14 years ago which is as far back as my personal memories go with the Society, but I thought I would read out just some of the things we have done since then to give you some idea of the scope of our activities.

### **Achievements in the first 60 Years**

1. Renovation and ongoing maintenance of 15 Sea Front Shelters – continuing with invaluable support from Ramsgate Glass and Maxine Morgan and Technicians at Ramsgate Town Council.

2. Ramsgate Society Design Awards

3. The Clock House Project (2016-2025)

4. Community Champion Awards

5. Van Gogh Summer 2019

6. Ellington Park Restoration (Supporting the Friends of Ellington Park)

7. Twice a year Chine to Chine Litter Picks.

8. Planting 50 Tress in the Ramsgate Conservation Area in 2020.

9. Partnering Historic England in the Ramsgate Heritage Action Zone Project.

10. Coordinating the Annual Thanet Heritage Open Days with The National Trust

11. Highly successful Monthly Talks Series

12. Ramsgate Society Blue Plaques Project

13. Conservation Area Appraisal with Historic England

14. Campaigning against the Manston DCO

15. Supporting Ramsgate Town Council with the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

16. Heritage Harbour Group

**None of these things could have been done without the dedication of our committee and the support of our members over all these years.**

If I start mentioned names, I could be here for another hour but I would just like to thank my predecessor Jocelyn McCarthy who is here with us today and Jennifer Smith. Jennifer who was a committee member for many years and made such a great contribution to the work of the Society over a long period of time. I would also like to thank our current committee for the time and expertise they provide in pursuit of our Objectives. Without their endeavours the Society would be unable to function as well as it does.

**Looking to the future there are many opportunities and challenges ahead.**

1. The impending Local Government Reorganisation (Unitary Authorities)
2. The Clock House and Pier Yard Project
3. The Future of the Port of Ramsgate and of Manston Airport.
4. The Regeneration of our rundown High Street.
5. The delivery of the Long Term Plan for Towns (£20 million over 10 Years) and how this will be implemented.
6. The impact of climate change on all of us.

I don't expect many of us will be here in another 60 years time to see what Ramsgate looks like then, but it is important that we focus on the present and continue to work on delivering our Objectives **now** to make Ramsgate a better place for our children and grandchildren to enjoy in the future.

Thanks to Susanne Ford for organising this event and to Bertie Pierce for his amazing magic.

Thank you for coming and for your ongoing support and I hope you have an enjoyable evening.

**Thank you.**

John Walker