

OUR COMMUNITY

The Parish of Yarmouth and Thorley had a population of 793 at the 2001 Census and 534 households. The age profile showed an imbalance towards the elderly with just under a third (32%) aged 65+, which is twice the national average. Only 13% of the population were aged below 17 years compared with 23% nationally.

It is not surprising, given the number of older people, that there was more long term illness shown in the Census: 24% of the population compared with 18% nationally.

The Census also indicates that the number of pensioner households is almost double the national figure and is a third more than the Island figure. Many references are made in the area to the number of second homes and the impact this has had on house prices and the consequent lack of affordable homes for young families. It is impossible to ascertain in a free society the actual number of second homes, but the number we have been given is 19.1% based on the Census number of homes and Council Tax figures, this being the nationally used basis for this calculation.

YARMOUTH TOWN COUNCIL

The ancient town of Yarmouth received its first Royal Charter in 1135, became a Borough in 1439 with the right to elect a Mayor in 1440, but was abolished as a "Rotten Borough" in the 1880's as part of the national reorganization of representation in the House of Commons. The Corporation held its last meeting on 27 February 1891. The subsequent Parish status was changed in 1974, reverting back to a Town with a Mayor.



Remains of Thorley's 13th century church © PD

These bare historical facts give little hint of the wealth and colour of personalities and events which shaped our local community. One of our treasured traditions goes back to the time of the Royal Charter in 1609, which granted the town an annual fair to be held on St James' Day (25 July). The custom still continues of setting a gloved hand on a pole from the upstairs window of the Town Hall on St James' Day to indicate a relaxing of laws so long as it is exposed so that the citizens of the town may "drink heartily and make merry with the wenches without fear of apprehension or condemnation".



The gloved hand © DK

One outcome of our community's eventful past is a deep-rooted respect for tradition, which Town Councillors of today balance with the need for improvements. There are 8 Town Councillors, 2 representing Thorley and 6 representing Yarmouth, with an annual election of Mayor. The Town Council resolved in November 2007 to initiate work on a Parish Plan, which soon became a Community Plan to embrace all sections of Yarmouth and Thorley. A Steering Committee was set up to work in partnership with the Town Council but working from the aspirations of the people at grass roots level. It is not surprising to find from the consultations that local people reflect the balance referred to above: the wish to retain the traditional "feel" of our area as well as aspiring to a variety of improvements. When the preparation of the Plan is complete it will become the responsibility of the Town Council to manage and deliver the Action Plans.

YARMOUTH TOWN TRUST

Yarmouth Town Trust is another important part of the community. The 1931 Scheme lays down the rules of the Trust and the Charity Commission has recently clarified the role of the Yarmouth Town Trust very specifically to that stated in this Trust Deed. The Trust owns Yarmouth Town Hall, the Common, the Recreation Ground, five cottages in Mill Road, and is in possession of the Graveyard Copse. The Trust is also keeper of a substantial number of Artefacts and Documents, many of the latter can be seen on its website.

The Scheme lays down that the first call on income is to meet the cost of management and maintenance repairs. The second is the Town Hall, and if further income is available it shall be spent "for any purpose for the public benefit of the inhabitants of Yarmouth which shall be approved by the Charity Commissioners". The accounts for the last ten years show that the Trust's income has been insufficient to meet these expenditures and

without help from other charities necessary asset maintenance would not have taken place.



Yarmouth Town Hall © PD

CHARITABLE TRUSTS

Much benefit is given to our community by two Charitable Trusts. The Delphie Lakeman Memorial Trust was set up in 2001 to perpetuate the memory of Delphie Lakeman. She was a redoubtable citizen of Yarmouth, who gave her time, energy and money to help needy causes (principally) in Yarmouth. The Trustees aim to continue the work that Delphie started and much has already been donated to a variety of projects.

The Herapath Shenton Trust was formed thanks to the generosity of Yvonne and Spencer Herapath who lived in Yarmouth for many years. Three local Trustees administer the Trust, giving financial help to other local charities especially those with an emphasis on youth, education, sailing, historic buildings and similar projects. Only other registered charities are considered for donations.

A SAFE COMMUNITY

Our consultations show that our community believes this is a safe place to live. We have a dedicated team of a Sergeant, a Police Constable (PC) and a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) whose aim is to be available to and to work with the community to ensure people feel safe to live, work or visit our area. The primary role of the PC and the PCSO is to be visible to the community, aided by posters with photographs and details of how to make contact. At least half of the staff at Yarmouth Police Station lives in West Wight and, together with support staff, they give a 24hour cover. Most weekends they are on duty at the Station, especially in the early hours. A particular concern is to engage with young teenagers by talking to them and treating them with respect rather than using a heavy approach. This is proving a successful precedent for future contacts between those involved and the police. Crime rates have decreased and West Wight is judged to be one of the safest places on the Island and in the UK.

Yarmouth and Thorley come within the remit of the West Wight Rural Environment and Neighbourhood Officer (ENO), part of the Island's Community Safety Services department. The ENO's take on environmental and community issues to make the Island a cleaner, safer and more enjoyable place to live, work and visit. They liaise with other partnerships to achieve this, including the police and a range of environmental officers and they are also enforcement officers for certain environmental offences.



Yarmouth Police Station © BCE

A VIBRANT COMMUNITY

In the initial survey by Flyer, a large majority made positive comments on the community including many on the community spirit and friendliness of people, such as “village atmosphere even in high season”, “never dull”, “good balance of visitors in summer and local needs”, “lovely”, “tranquil”.



Yarmouth Old Gaffers Festival © PG

There is a lot of fun throughout the year thanks to the following volunteer Committees. The Carnival Committee organises Shrove Tuesday Pancake races for the Primary School children, local businesses and residents in the Square, an Easter Duck Race in the Yar Estuary, and a week-long Carnival in August. They later attract a crowd of 3,000-4,000 from the West Wight and beyond for November Fireworks, then a Christmas lunch for 70 or so Senior Citizens, and Carols in the Square with the Salvation Army Band and singing led by Primary School children and the local "Slipshod" male choir, the crowd being fortified by mulled wine and hot chestnuts. At the end of May the work of the volunteer Yarmouth Old Gaffers Festival Committee fills the harbour with traditional boats, attracts 25,000 visitors over 3 days, and brings Yarmouth alive with street performers, singing groups, dancing displays, magicians, colourful stalls, brass bands, steel bands, jazz bands, and much revelry in the evening Quay Marquee.

Thorley's St Swithin's and Yarmouth's St James' churches serve their communities well. There are 2 flourishing sailing/yacht clubs, a football club, Sea Scouts and Brownies, a Youth Club, Yarmouth Institute, Yarmouth Sports and Social Club, the Women's Institute, a lively Pre-School Nursery, a happy and enlightened Primary School, many active businesses, an Irish dancing group, and a very popular Yarmouth Society keeping a watchful eye over history and heritage. An active fund-raising Guild is part of the proud local support of a Severn class RNLI Lifeboat stationed in the harbour.



Yarmouth Old Gaffers Festival © JB



Carnival Harbour Sports © MH



St Swithin's Church, Thorley © SD