

Information Brief

Friends of Martello24

Two organisations in Dymchurch, the Dymchurch Parish Council and the Dymchurch & District Heritage Group had, separately, often expressed concerns about the limited access to Martello Tower No. 24 for members of the public.

Martello Tower No. 24, one of three Martello Towers in Dymchurch, is the most accurate example remaining of an original Martello Tower and the only Martello Tower in the UK that is more or less in its original condition as built in 1805/6. Owned by English Heritage, the inside of the tower could only be seen by telephoning English Heritage in advance and making an appointment for a future date.

This was felt by both the Parish Council and the Heritage Group to be inadequate and not meeting the needs of either the public, the Parish Council or those promoting the heritage of Romney Marsh.

Dymchurch and the rest of Romney Marsh received many thousands of visitors every year, with its many holiday parks, B&Bs and self catering establishments full of people during the summer months. It was felt that these visitors were not being given an easy and ready opportunity to see inside this unique tower and how much better it would be for all concerned if the tower could be opened on a published regular basis. Opening hours could be published and people would then know when the tower would be open and could visit accordingly.

An exploratory meeting was held between the Parish Council, the Heritage Group and English Heritage on the issue, which led to an agreed desire to pursue the possibility of having volunteers opening the tower on a published regular basis. The Parish Council and the Heritage Group set up a joint working group, comprising of two parish councillors and three committee members of the Heritage Group, to look into the feasibility of achieving this.

The working group concluded that, with the right support and help, a group of volunteers could man the tower with regular opening hours on a 'meet and greet' basis. It was agreed that this would be best achieved by the setting up of a separate charitable trust, who would have a formal agreement with English Heritage about such openings.

Thus the Friends of Martello24 trust was born, with the object to advance the education of the public in the history and heritage of Martello Tower No. 24 and other historic buildings in Dymchurch, Kent and the surrounding area.

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This object to be achieved by

(a) working in partnership with English Heritage to open Martello Tower No. 24 in Dymchurch to the public on a regular basis,

(b) working in partnership with the owners of other historic buildings in Dymchurch and the local area to promote greater awareness of the historic value of these historic buildings and to enable greater access to the public and

(c) working in partnership with other organisations on (a) and (b).

The Friends of Martello24 became a Registered Charity in April 2017 and signed a Managed Properties Agreement with English Heritage in respect of Martello Tower No. 24 in May 2017.

We have a team of 17 volunteers who will open the tower on a regular basis. We hope to increase this number of volunteers over the coming months. Training, covering health & safety and Martello Tower knowledge, will be given to all volunteers.

The trust will work with English Heritage and the Heritage Group to update and improve the internal displays.

Financial support has been received from Kent County Council, two Shepway District Councillors and Dymchurch Parish Council.

The Friends of Martello24 will be responsible for opening the Tower from 2pm to 4pm every Saturday and Sunday from Saturday 15 July 2017 until Sunday 29 October 2017. And then again in summer 2018 and beyond, with possible longer opening hours.

Further information about the Friends of Martello24 is available on our website www.martello24.net. Further information about Martello Tower No. 24 is available at www.theromneymarsh.net/martello24.

Peter Faulkner
Secretary
Friends of Martello24
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