

**John James Jeal (1850–1920),  
Mayor of Hythe, 1902 to 1903**



- **1850:** Born in Lewisham to a working-class family.
- **c. 1862:** Leaves school around age 12 to work; he later offers his own employees pay rises if they attend night school as he did.
- **1874:** Marries Emily Edwards.
- **1880:** His son, Ernest, is born; Jeal's builder's business in Lewisham now employs ten men.
- **1881:** Moves to Hythe and settles at Cavendish Villas. He begins building "Sea Road" (originally a shorter road leading to the front) to provide carriage access for residents of Cannongate and Cliff Roads.



Sea Road & bridge before World War 2, when it was demolished for defence reasons.

- **1884:** Elected to Hythe Town Council. He quickly becomes known for his "no-nonsense" approach, often clashing with fellow councillors.
- **1891: Protest Resignation:** Refuses to stand for re-election so he can harass the Council as a "free agent" regarding Seabrook's poor drainage, which he claimed left his new Sea Road a foot deep in storm water.
- **1893: Boycott:** In a dramatic protest against the Council's inaction, he cancels his membership in all local clubs, including the golf club.
- **1894:** The Council finally concedes to his drainage demands; Jeal becomes a founder-member of the **Hythe Golf Club**.
- **1897:** Returns to the Council, elected unopposed. Around this time, his rivalry with **Frank White**, a committed Republican, intensifies. White famously nicknames him "The King of Seabrook" and once demands Jeal's dog be removed from a committee meeting.

John James Jeal served as the Mayor of Hythe from 1902 to 1903. Below are the key duties and events from his tenure, integrated with specific dates:

November 9, 1902: Formally elected as Mayor of Hythe by his fellow councillors, succeeding Henry Thomas Cobay.

Late 1902: Begins his tenure by advocating for practical town improvements, most notably pushing through a proposal for Sunday street sweeping to maintain the town's appearance for visitors and residents alike.

May 1903: Presides over the official civic functions in Hythe. During this time, he famously dismisses religious objections to Sunday labour, arguing that if private citizens can have servants cook on the Sabbath, the Council should be able to keep the town clean.

November 1903: Unanimously re-elected for a second term as Mayor.

December 1903: Performs one of his most lasting civic duties by laying the foundation stone of the Oddfellows Hall at the east end of the High Street. He uses the ceremony to publicly champion the "self-help ethos" of friendly societies.

1903–1904: Acts as the town's Chief Magistrate (a standard duty of the Mayor at the time), presiding over local court sessions and maintaining public order.

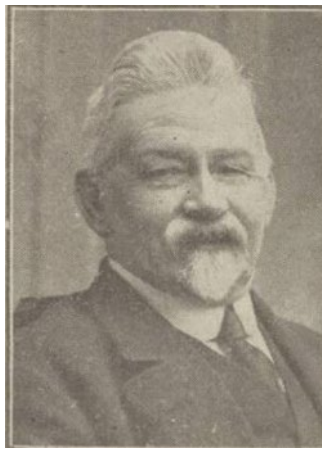
September 15, 1904: Sits as an Alderman on the Elham County Bench, fulfilling his judicial duties by hearing local cases, such as the prosecution of individuals for being drunk while in charge of a horse and cart.

November 9, 1904: Concludes his two-year mayoral tenure, returning to his role as an influential Alderman and Councillor for the East Ward.

Throughout this period, he was supported by Alderman John Scott, who served as his Deputy Mayor. Jeal's mayoralty was characterized by a shift from purely ceremonial duties to a more "hands-on" administrative style that often challenged established traditions in favour of modern efficiency.

- **1910:** His son Ernest publicly announces in the press that he will no longer be responsible for his wife Minnie's debts.
- **1911: Political Shift:** After hearing **Sylvia Pankhurst** speak at the Hythe Institute, Jeal—previously a sceptic of militant tactics—proposes a vote of thanks and declares himself a supporter of the women's suffrage movement.
- **1913 (December):** Ernest emigrates to Australia alone.
- **1915 (April):** Ernest is killed at Gallipoli. Jeal immediately changes his will to ensure his granddaughter, Emily Joyce, cannot access her inheritance until age 21, specifically to keep the money away from her mother, Minnie.

- **Wartime (1914–1918):** Establishes a large **co-operative piggery** behind the Sea View Hotel in Seabrook to help with food shortages, personally organizing swill collection from local houses.
- **1920 (January):** The Hythe Golf Club hosts a dinner for his 70th birthday.
- **1920 (June 19): Final Act:** Hosts a prestigious group at the golf club, including Prime Minister **Lloyd George** and **Marshal Foch**. He dies unexpectedly that same evening. His will leaves a portion of his estate to **Alice Putnam**, his secretary and bookkeeper of nearly forty years.



John Jeal in later life