

The Dover Society Newsletter

No 1 June 1988

*Registered with the Civic Trust.
Affiliated to the Kent Federation
of Amenity Societies.*

Editorial

As a result of considerable concern over recent events in and around Dover a number of people met on 18 March to discuss the possibility of forming a civic society. The futures of Connaught Park, Brook House, Pencester Gardens and River Recreation Ground, combined with anxieties produced by the building of the Channel Tunnel and a desire to be involved in the development of tourism, were among the issues which brought us together. Information provided by the Civic Trust proved very useful.

The first meeting of the Dover Society took place on 25 April with about a hundred people present. After Peter Johnson had proposed that the Society be formed, in an interesting speech reprinted later in this Newsletter, members of the temporary committee were confirmed in office and others proposed and seconded from the floor.

The Chairman, Jack Woolford, then gave a commentary entitled "Dover: Assets and Liabilities" to a selection of slides taken by Ray Warner and Philomena Kennedy.

We are very grateful to the Headmaster of Dover College, Mr Jack Ind, who kindly allowed us to use the Menzies Hall for the occasion.

The Dover Society was registered with the Civic Trust as a civic society on 16 May and is also now affiliated to the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies.

Unfortunately members of Dover District Council felt unable to accept an invitation to send representatives to take part in a Public Meeting to be organised by the Society. However they did offer to meet members of the Committee on 1 June at the Town Hall. So ten of us met Mr John Moir, Chief Executive, Mr David Sturt, Director of Planning and Mr Richard Bowditch, Finance Officer and Councillors Watkins, Forster, Smith and Tatum in the Council Chamber.

The objects of the Society were outlined and the hope expressed that we could make useful contacts with the Council which would help to avoid misunderstandings and enable us to offer informed comment in the future.

The usual procedures in regard to planning applications were outlined and the best course for investigation and comment by the Society were summarized by Mr Sturt. It was pointed out that some decisions were not theirs or theirs alone, Kent County Council, English Heritage and the Dover Harbour Board being among those bodies which might be involved.

No decisions have yet been reached concerning Connaught Park or Pencester Gardens. It was felt by the Council that premature disclosure of discussions at a very early stage had provoked much unnecessary concern over these and other matters.

It was pointed out that expenditure had to be spread as fairly as possible for the benefit of the whole Dover District which, of course, also includes the towns of Deal and Sandwich and a number of villages

The upgrading of properties in the Conservation Area of Castle Street and East Cliff is being encouraged by the provision of small grants.

We were then taken for a tour of Brook House. The sad state of its interior is all too obvious. Despite continuous pumping the high water table and unsatisfactory foundations have resulted in severe damp everywhere. Poor maintenance over many years has compounded the problems. In spite of peeling walls, unsafe floors and general deterioration some rooms are still quite attractive. However it is hardly surprising that so far several potential purchasers have considered that its problems outweigh its possible usefulness. It is a pity as the Victorian house makes such a pleasing focus in this area.

Members of the Committee were glad of the opportunity to begin making useful, friendly and informed contacts with representatives of the Council which will doubtless be fruitful. Members of the Council also welcomed our interest and possible cooperation.

A copy of the Constitution of The Dover Society is deposited in the Reference Department of the Public Library where it may be consulted.

We offer our congratulations to the people of River on their determined and ultimately successful fight to retain the whole of River Recreation Ground for leisure purposes.

We hope and expect that The Dover Society will be able to make a lively and positive contribution to the future of our ancient and famous town and that of the pleasant villages nearby.

We are delighted that the Countess of Guilford has agreed to be our President.

Philomena Kennedy

VICE PRESIDENTS: *Mr 'Budge' Adams, Lord Ennals, Mr Jack Ind, Mr Ivan Green, Mr Peter Johnson, Miss Lilian Kay, Mr Jonathan Sloggett, Mr Ray Warner.*

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