

THE NEW DOVER GROUP 1964-1981

The New Dover Group was formed by David (now Lord) Ennals when he became the MP for Dover in 1964 to supply him with information and ideas about his new constituency. Initially membership of its various committees for Education, Trade and Industry etc etc was by invitation. When I asked for an exhibit on "Dover 2000" for a history exhibition I was organising for the Borough Council in 1964 I was invited to become Chairman of a new Planning Committee which, with the help of locally born architects and planners, produced a Plan and, with the help of the then Borstal, a Model of Dover in the year 2000. This model is still in the custody of the Dover Museum.

The party-political link was clearly inappropriate for what was in effect an amenity society and a number of us successfully urged adoption of the Civic Trust model constitution which made membership open and secured democratic control. The New Dover Group then expanded in membership and achievement. It saved the trees in St Mary's churchyard from felling and pioneered the concept of a Riverside Walk from Kearsney Abbey to the seafront. The Borough Council accepted in principle the dedication of a metre-wide strip adjoining the Dour whenever planning consents were to be granted.

Its record is impressive. On two occasions it helped to preserve Kearsney Abbey from housing proposals and attempted to preserve Whitfield and Guston from the Eastern Bypass (for which it had campaigned). It helped to defend Alkham Valley from the assaults of a predatory farmer on Sites of Special Scientific Interest in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and took the lead in attempting to safeguard the seafront from the noise and smell of the new Hoverport. Equally it first opposed and then attempted to mitigate the adverse implications of the 1970s threat of the Channel Tunnel. It initiated the archeological excavations in York Street, preserved part of the revealed Roman fortress from destruction, and its members contributed labour and cash to the preservation of the Painted House. It was controversially involved in the design and construction of Burlington House and produced a second plan for the District in 1980. It initiated the conservation and renovation of Priory Terrace but failed to save "The Cause Is Altered." It formed an Action Group to coordinate representations to the Dept of Transport on the route of the proposed new A20 from Folkestone.

Why did it die? The Group failed to provide a social programme or to produce an attractive newsletter. None of its achievements (or failures) pleased everyone and Doverians on the whole were more concerned with employment than conservation. Recruitment declined and the officers who died or retired were not effectively replaced.

The new challenges of the Channel Tunnel with its threat of mass unemployment and of the proposed remedies of tourism and other industrial and commercial developments has stimulated the creation of The Dover Society. May it avoid the errors and repeat the successes of its predecessor.

Jack Woolford

RIVER REC

On May 19th 1988, at a special meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee of DDC, the following resolution was passed. "Subsequent to discussions with River Parish Council, the decision to sell part of River Recreation Ground has been rescinded".

Many hundreds of local residents breathed a huge sigh of relief. A recreation ground which had been the playground and walking area of several generations of River residents and their children had been saved, and the open vista, looking across the Rec to Crabble Mill, was no longer under threat. Once again it had been demonstrated that determined local feelings

could halt the destruction of valuable green breathing space, and the necessary lungs of a residential area had been preserved.

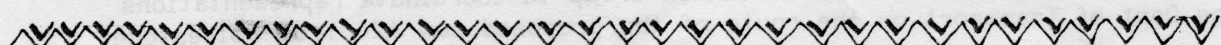
It was back in 1921 that the bulk of the land was acquired by the then Dover Borough Council from a local landowner, Mr Banks, at the cost of a little over £930. A further strip along Lewisham Road was purchased from Mr Dunford and the entire area declared recreational land. The land had originally been known as Crabble Court and a house of that name is still in Lower Road and occupied by the Child Welfare Clinic. It was decided to call this land River Recreation Ground and so avoid confusion with Crabble Athletic Ground.

In its first years of life it only had football and hockey pitches and a rough tennis area, but soon, with increasing unemployment in the early 20s it was decided to use some of these men to level an area for a Bowling Green and in the summer of 1923 River Bowling Club came into existence. Following this the tennis courts along Lower Road were improved and the River Originals Tennis Club was formed. The club still flourishes with the recent reinstatement of three more courts and is the only club catering for junior players in the District.

The Woodpeckers Cricket Club is a more recent arrival and was only properly established after World War II but it is now thriving and has added River to its title. The two football pitches are of excellent standard and are in constant use during the winter season, both mid-week and at weekends. The Junior pitch at the eastern end of the ground is the only one in the District and is the venue for ace Dover Junior League games and sees many a final fought out between the teams from local Primary Schools.

The ground will now pass into the care of River Parish Council who, we hope, will be mindful of their responsibilities and together with the people of River preserve this open space and continue its traditional use as a recreation ground for generations to come.

Alan Dale



FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF DOVER

For one whose previous knowledge of Dover was confined to the Western Docks when travelling to Europe, arrival in the 1950s was an exciting experience.

Despite the daunting task of finding somewhere to live, as so many properties were uninhabitable or badly damaged, the stranger was immediately struck by the salient fact. Here was a town, battle-scarred as it was, which was steeped in history and experience, and whose inhabitants were full of hope and confident that it was on the brink of great things.

Councillors and Aldermen, volunteers in those days, were determined to tackle all the shabbiness, and the shopkeepers were eager to please. How often one heard the helpful remark, "We haven't got it but try Clout's or Morecroft's".

I remember walking, pre-war map in hand, amongst the piles of rubble on the Sea Front, trying to locate the site of the Fox Inn or the Gordon Boys' Home, later rejoicing in the refurbished St Mary the Virgin with its new East window.

Dover to me seemed a comfortable town. It was possible to park outside Hatton's and drive both ways in Maison Dieu Road; a man selling crabs stood by the steps to the old lock-up in Townwall Street; one could take tea at the Pharos in Castle Street or eat dinner at the Café de Paris or the Crypt. Soon flowers appeared in the beds at Connaught Park, and as one walked under the whale-bone arch the goldfish in the pond caught the eye. Then there were tennis courts in the Park^{and} in the front of Brook House, and