

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