

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF DOVER

We moved to Dover in May 1987. We came for family reasons and because we had been lucky enough to obtain a flat on the front. We had been to Dover as visitors many times before but this time we moved to the town to live there. My wife and I are retired so we looked at Dover simply as a place in which to live.

Since the flat is on the front one might as well start there. The Dover Harbour Board section is well maintained and, particularly in summer, very popular. The DHB section of the promenade is cleaned daily by their men, but in spite of their efforts, there is still much fouling of promenade and beach but this is caused by dogs. The pier, too, is often grubby but this is caused by the careless behaviour of the anglers who allow newspapers containing unwanted bait and scraps of food to blow about the place.

Whilst the Dover Harbour Board section of the front is generally clean and tidy the Dover District Council Section is grubby. Railings are rusty, shingle lies on the tarmac for days on end. It is disappointing and dirty looking and, unfortunately, it is the first part of the prom seen by visitors coming through the Eastern Docks.

Moving townwards via Bench Street into the Market Square one moved into a dingy and overparked area. Cars and vans parked on both sides of the road often caused jams. The gap in the buildings by the side of Doyle's the butcher was dreadful, but it has now been covered over and is the site for the "Three Day Market" which, although a "cheap-jack" pattern, is certainly better than a neglected site covered in litter. The Market Square did not inspire one whilst Cannon St. and Biggin St. were, and still are, a peculiar mix of empty rundown shops and active businesses. From some shops "pop" music screamed at one whilst everywhere vans and lorries, intermingled with parked cars, obstructed pedestrians. The old, the infirm, mothers with prams and young children, all faced the hazards of swinging van doors and laden trolleys. The problem continues right through to the High Street and beyond. One can only hope that the plans for pedestrianisation will, as in Canterbury, keep all traffic out from at least 9.30 a.m. to about 5.00 p.m. daily.

Empty shops do not help the town's appearance and fly-posting of advertisements for pop-groups, boot-fairs, jumble sales, strikers' meetings and so on only detract further from its appearance, adding to the general feeling of a declining environment. It is to be hoped that the local authority intends to control this type of activity.

The Town Centre, of course, has its attractions - the Maison Dieu, St Mary's Church - but it is certainly not an attractive or welcoming shopping centre. We soon understand why we were told by friends and acquaintances: "Go to Canterbury, Folkestone or Deal - they are all much more pleasant for shopping". This "advice" from Doverians was certainly an indictment of the shopping centre of the home town.

Away from the town centre we found Kearsney Abbey, Russell Gardens and Bushy Ruff to be delightful places but poor old Connaught Park looked rather neglected. It appeared that it had been a first class ornamental park in its day but now it appears "tired". Surely, situated as it is on such a slope it could once again become a most attractive garden site which would attract both locals and visitors. Perhaps it lacks a car park. It might be worthwhile sacrificing some space near the cemetery end for parking so that citizens would come once more to this amenity.

We have also enjoyed walking over the Western Heights and ascending the Grand Shaft. We have climbed Shakespeare Cliff and, in the other direction, walked along the Langdon Cliffs to St Margaret's-at-Cliffe. Socially we found a welcome in several societies - the History Society, the Dover Film Society, the Men of Kent and I was transferred to the Dover branch of Probus. My wife, a chorister all her life, soon discovered the Dover Choral. Our neighbours have been kind and extremely helpful.

The problems of Dover seem to reside in the town centre. Over the last year however, the authorities, urged on by the Dover Society, seem to be doing something, and doing it quite promisingly. No one as yet, however, seems to have considered a concert hall. Surely Dover, Folkestone, Canterbury and Deal can get together and build one in one of the towns. Is this another item to be added to the list in the Society's contribution to the Dover Local Plan?

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More articles for this series requested. Ed.

THE ERA OF THE PRIVATE SCHOOL IN DOVER

Among a number of small private schools in Dover before the last war one of the oldest was Minerva College in Folkestone Road (now WERU International: Doors & Windows) run by the two Miss Harts and Miss Whatplate which catered mainly for Jewish girls, and mostly boarders but, according to an old guide book of Dover, the school originally belonged to the Rev. M. Koettlitz. The College moved to Leicester in 1915 and closed in 1932. Almost opposite was the Junior Dover College, "Westmount", still an educational establishment. A number of our senior citizens in Dover would have started their education at Miss Burfield's school for small boys in Maison Dieu road near the Roman Catholic Church, opposite the red brick building of the Dover High School for Girls, later the County School; and a little further along the road was the "Oakleigh House" of which Miss Lindsey was Principal.

Miss Roberts had a small school at the bottom of Ladywell, and on the corner of Park Avenue Miss Hill and Miss Lazenbury catered for the "the daughters of Professional people"; no tradesmen's daughters here! In Godwyn Road "Glenmount" Principal Miss Annie Moore assisted by Miss Doris Honeyball survived until 1917. Miss Croockewitt and her sister catered for young boys and girls at a small school at the corner of Leyburne Road while up the hill was Godwynhurst College. St Ursula's Convent in Park Avenue has only recently closed. Girls from France, Spain and Italy joined local people for their education. Mother Bernardine was a much loved headmistress, and many girls will have memories of beautiful sewing and pillow-lace made by the nuns. I spent two terms there in 1917 and have memories of a scrambled "Lord's Prayer" recited before every session and at the monthly class ratings when all pupils had to wear white gloves!

The Misses Falloon ran a happy little school at Temple Ewell, just opposite the Parish Hall, called "Coolderry", and there may be others I have forgotten. The principals and staff of these small schools might not have had letters after their names, but they did endeavour to instil a sense of "Esprit de Corps" among their charges, words hardly known these days.

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