

# Meeting of the Dover Society 10 Jan. 1989

What is to be the future of Dover? What is the Dover District Council planning to do about the Town's future with special reference to the Heritage Centre? A substantial number of members of the Dover Society gathered in the Council Chamber at Whitfield on the 10th January to learn what the future holds in store.

The first speaker was Mr John Clayton, Director of Planning and Technical Services. He explained that three years ago the Council decided that the image of Dover must be improved. A Select Committee was set up which together with the Kent Impact Study Group identified the development of tourism as the most effective way of stimulating the economic and social life of the town.

A Tourist Initiative of seven persons was chosen. They engaged Peat, Marwick, McClintoch as consultants to carry out land design research. A series of studies on the following parts of Dover were prepared: Dover Castle (considered to be under-developed), the Western Heights and Drop Redoubt, the Wellington Dock (considered to be a potential maritime centre), Pencester Gardens, Russell Street and Market Square. From this grew the concept of the Heritage Centre and a new site for the Museum.

A second firm of consultants (American) was briefed for an investigation in depth in order to plan the Heritage Centre. So that Dover's image might be improved this firm emphasised the need for litter-free streets and clean toilets.

When the Heritage Centre was finished, Mr Clayton concluded, Dover would be leading the way in demonstrating how archaeology should be shown to the taxpayer.

Mr Madge, the Director of Tourism, spoke next and with the aid of coloured slides explained what the Heritage Centre would be like. The following basic considerations would be incorporated in the design: the complex would be an integrated one, it should reflect archaeology, it should have flexibility, it should have all weather use, it should have shopping facilities and a restaurant on site.

The Centre would incorporate a museum, a cinema and lecture theatre, a tourist information centre, as well as an area depicting scenes from the history of Dover. These would include illustrations of Celtic mythology, the scene of Caesar's landing, and a Saxon Shore fort. Thus the visitor would be taken through history to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the depiction of a Victorian pleasure pier, cross-Channel swimming and replicas of Dover buildings in 1940 accompanied by a simulated conversation of that time.

Mr Madge told us that market research had shown that about seven million people live within two hours drive of Dover. In answering questions later, Mr Clayton said that at present about 200,000 people visit Dover Castle each year; so it was reasonable to suppose that the Centre would receive

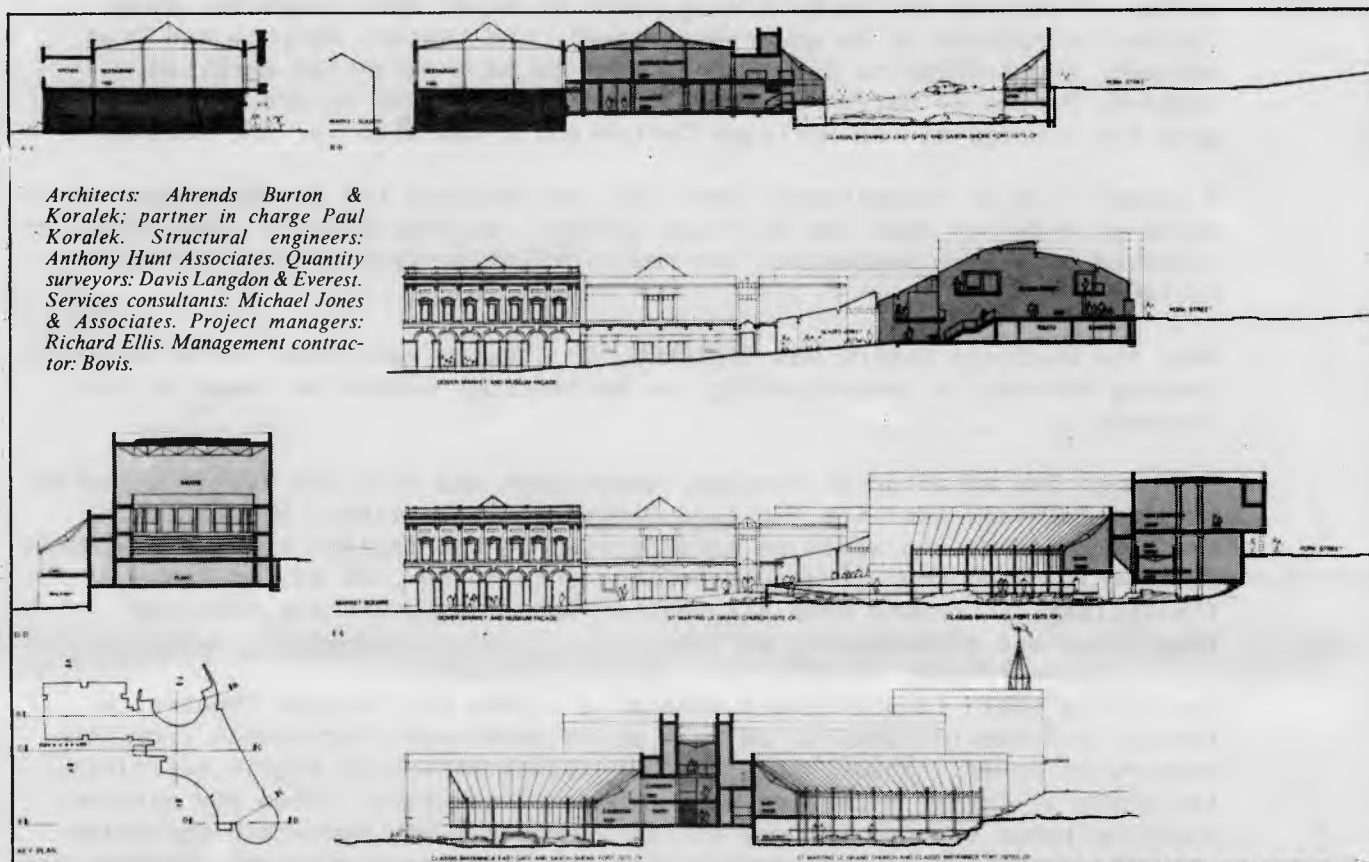
between 250,000 and 300,000 visitors per year. However, the Heritage Centre would be constructed to provide for up to 300 visitors per hour.

Mr Madge said it was planned for the Centre to open in April 1991.

Question time followed. Several members of the audience expressed concern about the need for extensive car parking facilities for visitors to the Centre. Mr Clayton gave assurance that adequate facilities would be provided and that about £5,000,000 was available.

Members of the Dover Society were grateful for the interesting and informative talks about the Heritage Project. However, during the course of questions and discussion after the formal meeting had ended, it became clear that none of the archaeological remains in Dover, not even the Painted House, is to be incorporated, *in situ*, in the Heritage Centre when it first opens. We understand, however, that it is hoped to include the Roman remains in the Heritage Centre at a later stage in its development.

W. Gordon King



CROSS SECTIONS OF HERITAGE CENTRE  
see also p. 31

**NEWSLETTER No.5** Please send material for the next edition to the Editor c/o Jack Woolford, 106b Green Lane, Temple Ewell, Dover CT16 3AR, by 31 August.

Thanks are due to Jack who has typed much of this and previous Newsletters as well as producing a number of articles.