

MEETING OF THE DOVER SOCIETY

30th May 1989

The well attended meeting opened with a welcome from our Chairman. Apologies were received from Mr. John Moir, Mr. Bowditch and Mr. John Drover. The Chairman himself apologised for the postal surcharges incurred by some members on the bumper Newsletter No. 4 but said that even with the surcharges it was well worth it!

A reminder for Philomena Kennedy's exhibition at Deal Library Gallery (30 May - 16 June) was given and the Chairman intimated that he was taking on responsibility for the next Newsletter in the absence of the Editor.

Amenity Societies are best engaged in encouraging rather than criticising and of course at this very meeting THE DOVER SOCIETY SHOP FRONT AWARD is to be launched.

But first in the words of the Chairman:

Noble Endeavour No. 1 provided by Mrs. Deborah Turner who spoke on the untidy state of the River Dour and its banks and proposed that the DOVER SOCIETY should take it under its wing. Commercial interests in the area, she said, should be encouraged to clean up their patches. She hopes eventually to have a Dour Day annually as a focus for clearing up. Meanwhile she is calling for volunteers who were invited to give their names to the Secretary during the interval.

Noble Endeavour No.2 Vice-President Mr. Peter Johnson officially launched THE DOVER SOCIETY SHOP FRONT AWARD 1989. 'What we have decided to do is make an award(s) in the autumn for shopfronts. Please look not just in but at the shopfronts' (guidelines and a Nomination Form appear in Newsletter No.4). A Press notice will give full details very shortly. 'Meanwhile encourage one's friends to participate in this important exercise'.

The Chairman rose to welcome the main speaker of the evening MR. JOHN SUNDERLAND project designer of THE WHITE CLIFFS EXPERIENCE and Jorvik the Viking museum in York, adding he was most pleased that Dover District Council had taken the initiative in bringing to Dover a project similar to the very successful Jorvik experience. He thanked MR. SUNDERLAND for his immediate and enthusiastic response to the Society's invitation to give the Presentation.

There followed a most informative and fascinating presentation of THE WHITE CLIFFS EXPERIENCE (was this Noble Endeavour No.3 of the evening!) With a background of film and television MR. SUNDERLAND runs a Heritage Projects consultancy. He says that he is essentially a storyteller, who aims to present his story in a new and more vital way.

His job is to make the archaeological trust's efforts work. His commission is to tell the Dover story. We heard that the project would combine Town Museum and Heritage Centre at the same site to their mutual benefit and that the location would make use of the Market Hall facade and existing archaeological sites. A thoroughfare linking York Street and the Market Square would allow free passage and would be so designed as to wet the appetite of the passing public.

On payment of the entrance fee the visitor will be confronted with up-front questions such as 'Why Dover?' 'What's so important about Dover?' A fine art spectacular mural with musical accompaniment will provide impact. Sound light and movement will depict the ancient warriors of the region. Grand gestures and theatrical events will combine with live action images, acting out the unfolding historical experience, calculated to enthrall and emotionally involve the viewer. Graphic interpretation and video programmes will feature throughout and will provide in depth educational data. Roman army deployment techniques will make use of very powerful images. The model of the Roman port of Dover though essentially speculative will be based on the best advice and will include a period warehouse, dockyard sequences and Roman crossings.

There will be a 'fragments section' designed to give some idea of how they lived in Dover in those early days - a shop, a shrine, a bathhouse perhaps and so on.

Dover's maritime history will be further depicted through the ages with 'hands-on' experience for the children to participate and let off steam by jumping about or perhaps by doing a bit of rowing. There will be nautical instruments to be handled, speak back voicepipes and ventilators.

The rail ferries and marine station are not forgotten and then an 'End of the Pier Show' changes the tempo with a complete shift to fantasy. To maintain the magic of the experience one now encounters imaginary characters such as Captain Crusty, Sid Seagull and Corporal Crab to mention but a few. The whole scene suddenly erupts into pure pantomime and is the highlight which is calculated to draw in the crowds from far and wide for this is essentially a project with a European dimension.

Then there is the Blitz and the shelling period to be narrated largely by those Doverians who remained behind in the early forties, (John welcomes help with this from all who were there).

The finale is to be a happy one dealing with the monumental attempts at crossing the channel to the accompaniment of more spectacular music and visual effects.

The Presentation was enthusiastically received by the audience.

In his vote of thanks Vice Chairman John Gerrard said that with John Sunderland's tremendous enthusiasm we are more than happy that the project is in his capable hands.

John Owen