

EAU DEAR DOVER

Dover citizens have, almost overnight, become acutely aware of the absence rather than the presence of a water supply. Still in January the ban on hosepipes persists and our trains remain unwashed, as well as our cars.

While national attention to water supplies has been focussed on the newly privatised water companies, little has been said or written about the old statutory companies of which the Folkestone and District Company is one.

We are now told that levels in our legendary deep and inexhaustible aquifers in the chalk are at a record low. There is some criticism of the quality of our water; some even say it is undrinkable and bottled water sales are soaring. There are headlines of a "drought crisis". Finally we learn that the large French company Compagnie Générale des Eaux is sufficiently interested in our assets to buy shares in our water. This is the company which supplies Paris with water and is active in cleaning the city. Perhaps they will contribute their know-how?

It is perhaps the moment to look back to see how our water supply system developed. It began in Folkestone in 1848 when the Folkestone Water Company was founded, and in Dover, in 1855 with the setting up of the Borough of Dover Water Supply. It was not until 1970 that the two were amalgamated, primarily to ensure a substantial injection of capital "in order to improve supplies." In effect the Dover company was sold to Folkestone for £210,000 and the Dover water rate went up.

In the seventies, in order to maintain adequate supplies of water, it was proposed to build a large reservoir at Broad Oak valley, near Canterbury. This scheme was defeated by public opinion. With water levels continuing to fall (Remember the headline? Washing machines threaten our water supply?) the project has been revived and perhaps made more ecologically palatable by including a nature reserve and leisure facilities. Which comes first? Ecology or cleanliness?

The extract below is from the "Account of Dover's water supply" in the Handbook on Dover prepared for the British Association in 1899. One hopes that the British Association members, meeting in Dover, enjoyed taking the waters. Have we progressed in the 91 years since? How can you progress on perfection?

BOROUGH OF DOVER WATER SUPPLY

In addition, the inhabitants enjoy that inestimable boon, a supply of water, derived from works belonging to the ratepayers, constant in supply and constant in its purity. The water is procured from deep wells in the chalk, an absolutely unexceptionable source of supply, and is as pure to-day as it was years ago, when analysed by that well-known chemist, the late Dr. Letheby, who reported it to be "remarkably bright and clear, free from all traces of organic matter, and well suited for domestic purposes."

The analysis of the water is as follows:—

Color	...	...	...	...	Pale blue.
Appearance	...	...	...	...	Very clear.
Smell	...	...	...	...	None.
Chlorine in Chlorides	...	...	...	...	1.54.
Phosphoric Acid in Phosphates	...	...	...	...	Absent.
Nitrogen in Nitrates	...	...	...	...	0.33
Ammonia	...	...	...	...	None.
Albuminoid Ammonia	...	...	...	...	0.0008.
Oxygen absorbed in 15 mins.	...	...	...	...	Trace only.
„ „ 4 hours	...	...	...	...	0.022
Hardness before boiling (total)	...	...	...	...	17.3
„ after „ (permanent)	...	...	...	...	1.8.
Total Solid matter	...	...	...	...	22.40
Microscopical Examination of deposit	...	...	...	...	Very slight and unimportant.

I hope that members have put in their new diaries Saturday 29 September "WATER AND WINE", when the Dover Society will visit the Waterworks near Wingham, as well as a vineyard.

Marjory Wright

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

13 November 1989

Readers of the "Sunday Telegraph" may have noticed in Mandrake's column a few weeks ago his dissatisfaction upon arriving in Dover from Europe. Describing an excellent French meal he enjoyed in Boulogne (where else?) he regrets the fact that driving along Snargate Street he saw nothing but fish and chip shops. In fact there is only one fish and chip shop in Snargate Street, albeit several greasy spoons. Had he bothered (and it seems he didn't) to turn back into Dover he would have come across several Indian, Italian and other restaurants of a high standard. In Dover High Street there is an excellent restaurant and several reputable Chinese restaurants. We now have a French restaurant as such (the first as far as I am aware) but with a mere twenty odd miles separating us from France does it matter? Vive la différence, Mandrake! After all we would not expect to find a British fish and chip shop in France. Perhaps he and Sir Clement Freud could have a tete-à-tête on this subject. They would realise that tourism in Dover is improving all the time and he and Sir Clement Freud might be agreeably surprised. Mandrake invited comments and views from Dover residents upon this subject. Has anyone had a reply from him?

Marjorie Wiggins

Dover resident for 10 years