

## FROM ROMAN OCCUPATION TO CHANNEL TUNNEL

KFAS SPRING CONFERENCE 1990  
ST MARY'S PARISH CENTRE, DOVER, MAY 5 1990

This year's Spring Conference was hosted by the Dover Society in the architecturally agreeable and commodious St Mary's Parish Centre. Members and friends were welcomed by the Chairman of Dover District Council, Cllr Paul Watkins, who praised the constructive but critical contribution which the Society made to the refurbishment of Dover necessitated by the Channel Tunnel's threat to the local economy.

After the AGM the Conference was first addressed by Dr John Williams, the recently appointed County Archaeologist, who responded to the Chairman's introductory quips about the County Council's lateness in making such an appointment and the reputation of archaeologists for in-fighting by saying that at least they washed their dirty linen in public(!)

Speaking on the subject of A STRATEGY FOR KENTISH ARCHAEOLOGY, Dr Williams began with the Dept of the Environment's 1987 Circular which (at last) recognised that archaeology was an environmental issue relevant to planning applications of which, such were developmental pressures, there were 26,000 per annum in Kent. He himself was a *conservation* archaeologist, believing in preservation where possible. There could only be one excavation of a site and it was a last resort. He had no field unit and was dependent upon the collaboration of the Kentish archaeological trusts, societies and rescue units which he congratulated and thanked.

Dr Williams then illustrated with slides the unique diversity of Kentish landscapes of coast, marsh, chalk downs, greensand and wealden woodland, stressing Kent as the archaeological (as well as strategic and economic gateway) to the continental mainland. He showed examples of palaeolithic and Iron Age as well as Roman and medieval examples, emphasising the sequence of defensive remains from the Roman Saxon Shore forts, Dover and Rochester Castles, Cinque Ports contributions to naval defence, Tudor and castles and Martello Towers and Dover's 18th, 19th and 20th century Western Heights fortifications.

There were massive threats to these survivals from changes in agricultural practice as well as from the construction of motorways, industry, housing, tunnels, rail links and the extraction of minerals. Dr Williams illustrated and explained the appearance of crop marks which show up in aerial photographs of ripening corn and which evidence previous subsoiling.

He also illustrated Canterbury's sequential development with diagrams and brilliantly imaginative Roman and medieval pictures, Dover's Saxon Shore forts and Painted House, the planned New Romney chequerboard housing from a 1614 map, Smallhythe harbour and the now isolated churches of deserted Romney Marsh villages.

Even more interesting, because less well-known, were illustrations of inter-tidal excavations which revealed organic remains in a Bronze Age pit and a dugout canoe. Excavation for the Channel Tunnel had revealed bronze age post holes which were much more revealing than their appearance suggested.

Dr Williams then switched to overhead projector to explain the systematic data base recording of site reports. Transparencies of areas of hazard or potential interest including geology or crop marks, for instance, could then be overlaid on 1/10,000 maps. It was significant that he was employed by the County Planning Department in close association with District Council planners in the preparation of Local Plans. He instanced various examples of voluntary agreement with developers on e.g the re-use of medieval foundations and various types of rafts and pilings and the importance of avoiding 11th hour confrontations. Powers (needing legislation) were nevertheless required against uncooperative developers.

Barry Cunliffe, Oxford Professor of European Archaeology and adviser to Dover District Council, to whose good offices we owe his appearance, spoke on DOVER IN THE FOREFRONT, AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE. Like Dr Williams, Prof. Cunliffe highlighted the predominant importance of the close link with the continental mainland, emphasising the geographical unity underlying the North Sea culture of north France, the Netherlands and the south and east England up to the Humber. This he illustrated with picardy pins from Ramsgate and scrap metal axes from a wreck in Langdon Bay, the result of Bronze Age trade with the Somme valley. There was even greater evidence of Iron Age trade, c. 5-400 BC in the 'French' black and rusticated pottery found at Dollond's Moor from Channel Tunnel excavation and other recent rescue excavations all over east and mid-Kent.

Around 80BC gold coins, derived in design from Philip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great)'s period, were received as gifts in the Dover area from Belgica in the Netherlands and gold coins purchased British mercenaries to defend Gaul against the military and political ambitions of Julius Caesar between 60 and 50 BC. His gee-whiz expeditions here, comparable to moon landings, in 55 and 54 BC were part of the same political programme. He was diverted (by warlike Dovorians) from Dover to Richborough and withdrew after a river battle at Bigbury (near later Canterbury) the site of which would ultimately be found.

Between 50 and 20 BC Rome lost interest in Britain and the native culture survived, with economic development between Britain and the Moselle-Rhine area which included Roman wine and Augustan silver bowls, included rich burials and other evidence of urban(!) sophistication.

As with Julius Caesar's expeditions, so with the Claudian conquest of AD 43. Claudius needed a triumph to overcome his flagging political credibility. Dover was ignored in favour of Richborough, which progressed from ditches and ramparts to roads, a castle and a granary and then to the foundations for a quadrifons, a monumental memorial gateway. Dover did develop as a port (with twin lighthouses) and became the headquarters of the Classis Britannica, a Roman fleet, but most trade was direct to the Thames. Silts and pollens in boreholes now evidenced food production methods and there was also evidence of the development of riverine routes for access to Wealden iron.

From the second century pirate raids necessitated the defensive forts of the Saxon Shore, including the sequence at Dover which had been excavated by Brian Philp. Prof. Cunliffe said that were St Mary's to be demolished a great deal more would be revealed!

## CHANNEL TUNNEL AND RAIL LINK

The County Planning Officer Brian Briscoe began by saying that the Channel Tunnel Rail Link was equal in obscurity to archaeology. The Channel Tunnel was directly responsible for Dept of Transport investment in the road network: the proposed upgrading of Jubilee Way on M2/A2, the completion of M20 including the widening of the Maidstone bypass and the new A20 from Folkestone to Dover, all in time for the opening of the tunnel in 1993. The bypasses along the south coast would be completed in 1994 or later and all these were to the advantage of ferry competition. Kent County road schemes south of Ashford, from Folkestone to Canterbury, Dover to Thanet and the dualling of Thanet Way were part of the same response. Traffic growth in the last nine years had been well beyond forecasts, worse in Kent than elsewhere.

The County Council's immediate criteria for the new rail link were the use of existing corridors where possible, the avoidance of built development, minimum