

168 Our Civic Trust Award gained in 1990 has a central position and the whole makes for an attractive and professional presentation.

Every few weeks curling photographs especially have required attention but we have largely been able to maintain the high standard set by our designer, Philomena Kennedy.

The display will continue for as long as possible as another Society contribution towards 'backing Dover'.

JOHN OWEN

Chairman, Projects Committee 27.6.91

The Society acknowledges with thanks the willing help of Mr & Mrs John Wilkins, the owners of the premises, without which this project would not have succeeded.

Reviews

Exhibitions at Dover Museum

DOVER – A PORT IN A STORM

5th APRIL — 12th MAY 1991

Photography by JANINE WIEDEL

PHILOMENA KENNEDY

At first sight the black and white of this exhibition makes an austere impact. The monochrome is enriched by the full range of tones from near whites to rich darks and solid blacks, enlivened by line and texture. The sheer size of some unframed enlargements emphasises their abstract effect.

A closer look reveals a sharp eye for character, visual dialogue, humour, drama and the unexpected but revealing juxtaposition of shapes.

Ray Pidgeon is shown, suspicious but determined, at his garden gate contemplating the destruction of his much-loved home in the interests of road transport. The founding committee of The Libra Club, apparently united only by physical proximity, is shown with Pat dozing, Joan standing apparently fending off an awkward question or comment and Lulu immersed in reading. Two elderly ladies at the 'Young at Heart' Tea Dance in the Town Hall, demonstrate their high kicks as they stare at the photographer, while two members of the White Cliffs Sequence Dance Club inevitably recall Joyce Grenfield's song about "dancing bust to bust." A TIR trucker crouches to eat a snack, from a compact 'kitchen cabinet' slung beneath his lorry, at the Eastern Docks. A standing figure gazes from the deck of a ferry; the foreground horizontals of benches enlivened by trainer-encased feet projecting from largely-invisible recumbent bodies. A couple embrace in a shelter on the Prince of Wales Pier, the man's feet seemingly entangled in the rope which leads to a lifebelt in the foreground. A young boy looks apprehensively into the 'Lost and Found' tent at Dover Hospital Fête which shelters a line of girls in flowery wreaths, laced bodices and gingham skirts.

Drama is evident in the breaking of a huge wave at the Eastern Docks watched by a woman and child bent against the gale and the silhouetted figure of a man on the

shingle-strewn promenade. Dun kirk veterans walk down through St. James's Cemetery, to commemorate lost comrades, the slanting flags they shoulder making a series of diagonals and curves. Young soldiers casually carry modern weapons. Behind them, slightly hazy in the sunlight, tombstones lean at various angles. Strong diagonals emphasise the action of Sealink crew-members on a training exercise. A young man with a tattooed arm hauls in an inflatable life-raft, the rope beautifully counteracted by the tilt of his safety-helmet,

This collection was the first shown in the new Museum's temporary exhibition gallery. It was commissioned, by the Cross-Channel Photographic Mission, from Janine Wiedel, an American who has lived and worked in England for twenty years and who specialises in the documentary approach. She has exhibited widely and her work is used by national newspapers, magazines, book publishers and television. Janine found that "Dover remains staunchly English and individualistic, shaping attitudes that seem impervious to the constant flow of traffic to and from the Continent."

A paper-back book with the same title as the exhibition, containing reproductions of many of the photographs, is available. The collection will tour to other venues.

Should you wish to see the excellent permanent and temporary exhibitions at the Museum you would be well-advised to buy an annual season ticket for £2, or to join the Friends of Dover Museum which, for £5, will offer you not only free entry but a programme of lectures, visits, etc.

DOVER IN PICTURES

The May-June Exhibition at Dover Museum

LEO WRIGHT

Let me place on record at once that this exhibition gave great pleasure to many Dovorians. I saw visitors who retraced their steps, some who went round a second time and others who returned to the town-plan to check and re-check this or that change over the centuries.

The exhibition included oils, watercolours, pen and ink, engravings, maps, plans and photographs, relating to 500 years of our history. This represents a selection, a mere forty per cent I was told, from the huge collection which I was shown many years ago by the then Deputy Town Clerk, W. Ransome, stored away in the cellars and tower of the Maison Dieu.

The presentation deserves high praise. The large number of items led to no sense of being overloaded in the relatively small area. The overall impression, with the alternation of colour and black and white, photographs, prints, water-colours and oils was attractive.

The arrangement was not chronological but based primarily on display and a rough classification. This means that it is difficult to give a logical account of the exhibition. I can only try to give a summary of its scope.

Their size dictated locating the huge photographs of Dover street scenes in the 1980's around the balustrade of the well — still leaving a clear view of Sir William Crundall's copy of Landseer's huge "Peace": a family with their children's saddled goats on the East Cliffs.

The "loose classification" could perhaps be headed: Maps, Subjects: the Town (the oldest), the Castle, the Harbour and Events.

Water-colours were to some extent grouped. There were the blurred rugged sketches of 1820 Romanticism, with their melodramatic light and gouache and water-colours by typically talented Victorians, often documentary. Especially pleasing, as well as being documentary, were those of William Burgess. More recent, one was glad to see a familiar name, Mrs D. Mowll a picture of Temple Ewell in 1931, which had been shown at the Royal Academy.

Of the "headings": *the Maps* formed landmarks from 1595, 1641 to date. The development of *the Town* was very fully documented. A very "modern" ink sketch of 1795. The very handsome Custom House 1560-1682, when it was demolished. The Pier District slums 1825. The New Town Hall 1881. Documentary photographs very rich from the 1890's. *The Castle*: to name but one: Mackie's fairy castle version, 1840 Romanticism. There was a whole bay of views of the *Harbour* and shipping. *Of Events*: The Night Shift at Work (1845) building the Wellington Dock Quay by the light of flares. The painting of the dinner in the newly finished reservoir 1854. The blasting of the Round Down Cliff to make way for the Shakespeare Cliff Tunnel and the trestle line to Folkestone 1856. The installation of a Lord Warden, the Marquis of Dufferin 1892.

The total impression was enriching, leaving a sense of history and a vision of the periods of prosperity, even elegance and also dearth, through which Dover has passed.

It was very pleasing and interesting to see two very striking ink and wash sketches by Randolph Schwabe. He evoked almost abstract patterns from unpromising subjects. Professor Schwabe was head of the Slade and his Dover association was through his daughter Dora Cobbe, wife of the chief surgeon at the Royal Victoria Hospital during the War and after.

Members of the Dover Society were particularly pleased to see 1990 represented by ten Philomena Kennedy's, in her Douanier Rousseau naïf manner. These pictures have his intuitive skill to solve architectural problems, his sense of scale and decorative sense. They are equally free from Romantic or photographic concepts and they invite us to look again at the subjects when next we walk past them.

Before leaving the subject of exhibitions of Dover in Pictures one must include a word of praise for what the "One Off Gallery" and "Castle Fine Arts Studio" contribute to

Castle Street and to Dovorians. They represent another "first" in post-war Dover. They both had special exhibitions of recent paintings of local subjects by talented local artists. These were very attractive and some would surely have been *inter pares* in the annual Royal Water Colour Society exhibition.

"THE MASTER AND THE SPY"

The Current Exhibition at Dover Museum

The excellent gallery space at Dover's new Museum provides plenty of scope for this unusual exhibition. Christine Waterman, the Dover Museum Curator, is to be congratulated, not only for the high standard of research but also for the original idea – to explore Noel Coward and Ian Fleming's connection with this part of Kent.

Great friends, they both, at different times, lived at the "White Cliffs", a house which stands almost on the beach at St. Margarets Bay. Clearly Ms Waterman has become fascinated with her subject and the enthusiasm with which it has been approached, together with the drawing together of such a variety of material makes for a most successful exhibition.

Personal memorabilia, (including two of Coward's famous dressing gowns!) posters, books and photographs, have been borrowed from private and national collections, and the exhibition gathers together for the first time some of his unusual paintings, including one on loan from the Queen Mother, and Dover Museum's own "White Cliffs", (a view of St Margaret's Bay purchased by the District Council in 1988.) The strong connection with Dover and St Margaret's Bay is underlined by extracts from Coward's diaries and correspondence.

Similarly the exhibition shows connections between the work of Ian Fleming and the locality – particularly such James Bond books as "Moonraker", where Fleming used the Café Royal, in Bench Street, and the Swingate Inn as inspiration for scenes in the novel. An original idea is the amazing array of James Bond "merchandise" on view, and the stall dedicated to the James Bond fan club. Walk this way for your PATATILLA 007 Crisps!

I very much enjoyed the exhibition, which is open till the 8th September 1991, during normal Museum hours.

Gavin Wright

Group Manager Dover/Deal
Arts & Libraries Department