
MEMORIES OF OLD DOVER

STROND STREET

LILLIAN KAY

I lived at 56 Strond Street, just opposite the heap of coal on to which Hawksfield's unloaded the colliers from Northumberland and Durham, and the piles of timber which provided such forbidden joys to the local children. In those days we were allowed 'out to play' after tea. The timber was always piled with one end absolutely flat; we could clamber up the sides, or see-saw on the planks projecting at the far end, and for some reason our elders thought this was dangerous. The road of course was perfectly safe: just a few horses and carts, and the very occasional motor car, spotted far away along Commercial Quay travelling at about 15 m.p.h. A worse hazard was the engine pulling trucks of coal which appeared out of the Harbour Station, chuffed along Strond Street, round the dock to Union Street, over the swing bridge to either the Prince of Wales Pier, or right along the Sea Front to the Eastern Arm, all preceded by the man with the red flag. This also caused trouble when one was old enough to ride a bicycle, for the wheels slipped neatly into the railway lines.

On Sundays we nearly always had winkles for tea. A boy came round with a basketful which he had collected off the rocks on Saturday and we bought a basinful for a penny. At tea a needle was provided by the plate, to slip off that covering across the opening and wrinkle out the tasty part. Unfortunately the really tasty bit is the tail, and one has to be quite expert and give a very gentle twist to bring out the wrinkle whole — otherwise the tail is ungetatable. I wonder if I could still do it?

DOVER GUIDES

MAY BRADLEY

The human variety, not information books!! The Girl Guide movement was very strong in Dover in the 20s and 30s, when there were some 16 companies in the town, plus one in most of the villages. Most were attached to the Churches (St. James's, St. Mary's, St. Andrew's, St. Martin's, Wesleyan, Congregational, also at the Duke of York's School, St. Ursula's, St. Hilda's, Crabble, Priory, Holy Trinity, etc.) Each year we had District Banner Competitions for Swimming, Sports and Company Competitions, plus the yearly Guide Play at the Town Hall, which our District Commissioner, Miss Pat Elnor (daughter of the Vicar of St. Mary's Church) produced in fine style. If we met her in the town in mufti, a smart half-salute was expected; there must be a number of 'Old Guides' who remember her rather autocratic manner, but she was a splendid organizer and we had many happy years in the Guides.

In my 'neck of the woods', at St. James's, we had Brownies, two Guide Companies and Sea Guides (later Rangers). We studied astronomy, sea shanties, boat management, swimming, and were once invited over to visit Calais and joined a procession to celebrate some event, which I have now forgotten. I remember being very annoyed at not being able to open the windows of our bedroom — put me off the French for a long time!!

The first Sunday in the month at St. James's the whole lot of us, joined by the Scouts and Cubs marched to church headed by the pipes and drums of the Gordon Boys with colours flying — not

182 much traffic in those days. (Happy memories of Miss Wishaw, Sylvia and Joyce Watkins, Madelain Clipsham, Kathleen Gigg, Kath Godfrey, Edna Meadows, Sylvia Skey, Jean Marinden, Evelyn Dawson, Jessie Marsh.) I remember meeting the Chief Guide, Lady Baden Powell, over at Hawksdown, and getting a last look at Sir Robert when he disembarked from the cruise liner in the harbour.

When I was enrolled as a Guide in 1918, at boarding school in Ipswich, our Headmistress was our Commissioner and to take our Promise we were dressed by our Patrol Leader with hat, belt, tie, shoulder knots and white haversack. That promise I have tried my best to carry out and only wish more young people could have the help and guidance of those days.

ENTERTAINMENT *DAHLIA HARRIS*

Dover is my home town, and was also my husband's, so we always had a great love for it, as so many people do. When I was growing up we had a really lovely big theatre here, called the 'Hippodrome', which was in Snargate Street, and it was very well attended, especially when the show was "Local Talent." I am sorry it is not there now, but it was bombed by the Germans, as the elder citizens will remember.

We also had the Granada picture house, with a beautiful organ, in Castle Street; the King's Hall, the Queen's Hall, the Plaza, and in Buckland was the Regent, later renamed the 'Odeon.' On the Sea Front was the Buffs' Drill Hall which held some good dances. In Maison Dieu Road was the Co-op Hall, a really good Social and Dance Hall. On Bunker's Hill there was a jolly good little Scouts' Hut in which were held dances, socials and beetle drives, jumble sales, etc. - so reasonably

priced for admission that my sister and I were quite regular customers there and made lots of friends. Before the war there was also the big Burlington Hotel where they had a beautiful big Dance Hall, a roller skating rink, a boxing ring (also used for wrestling and weight-lifting) and 'keep-fit' was also practised there.

At the bandstand on the Sea Front where the local military and marine bands used to play, it was only 6d to sit in a deck chair and listen. There were bathing machines on the beach, where people who were shy could change into their bathing costumes. My sisters and I had a lively girlhood. Where is it all now?

SEA BATHING *WINIFRED COPE*

Swimming off Dover Beach was rather different when I was young, than it is now.

There was no undressing on the beach between 8am and 8pm: we had to use the bathing cabins situated in the Clock Tower area. I felt so grown up walking on the duck boards which were laid from the Promenade to the sea and intersecting the rows of cabins. I think the charge was 2d. (2 old pence).

Then in all-over swim suits and rubber caps we went into the sea and swam to the raft floating off shore: always there was a boatman rowing up and down and keeping an eye on everybody.

I remember so well the rubber roller wringer which we all used to take the water from our swimming suits and the galvanised bath that caught the water.

I feel so happy that with so much alteration: our Sea Front is basically the same, but soon the eastern end will be very much altered.

A SENSE OF SMELL SHIRLEY DOWLE

Among the dreadful, frightening memories of the war I have two totally different memories—two very aromatic smells.

I can almost hear some of you saying “How can that be during a time of hard food rationing?” Let me enlighten you.

My Dad—Mr Frank Abbott—had a small-holding, with about 40 pigs, 100 chickens, rabbits, a horse, etc. In the cookhouse, dominating half the space, was a huge copper fuelled by a fire underneath. Twice a day—morning and evening—this copper would be half filled with water. Into this was thrown buckets and buckets of “swill”. This swill was people’s left-over food—potato peelings, cabbage leaves, apple cores, etc. Householders had to keep these in a separate container from their ordinary rubbish. After about 1–2 hours all this would be bubbling away and shovelful of bran would be added to thicken it. By this time the smell was like that of a massive stew or casserole. It always made me feel hungry. This mixture was ladled out in buckets and so taken to feed the pigs.

I used to go with my Dad in his lorry to collect the swill from people’s houses. In addition we would collect from the boats and the Army transit camps, especially the one in the old oil mills in Limekiln Street. Here I found my second favourite smell and my first love. A Catering Sergeant took a fancy to me, especially my curly hair. He used to call me “Curly Shirley”. Each week he would make me a tray of “DOSH”. This was rich, dark, treacly toffee. What a blessing it was to me to help stretch my sweet coupons. Oh! how I loved that man—and I was all of five years old! They say the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach. I consider it to be the other way round.

I have only to smell a stew or casserole cooking or toffee being made and my

mind and my nose play tricks on me and I can easily imagine that I am five years old again

NINE DECADES A DOVORIAN

DICTATED BY HARRY FAGG.

I was born in Dover in 1901 at 176 London Road, opposite Buckland Infants’ School. I started there at three years old. I remember there was an abbatoir just behind the school, a coal merchant and a coffin maker.

When I was about seven, one of my friends and I played hookey and went to look at the abbatoir, and when we got there an ox was being slaughtered. I was sick on the spot and ran all the way back to school. In the end I was so ill I was sent home anyway.

The night the first zeppelin came over in 1914 my parents were watching from the window. I woke up when it dropped its bombs near Dover Castle; they killed a rabbit and a blackbird.

When Bleriot landed in 1910 I was eight years old. It was very early in the morning, but when we heard about it we ran up to the Castle. We got a good look at the plane even though there were policemen all around it. Afterwards people were charged sixpence a look.

When the *Preussen* was wrecked in Fan Bay (now called Langdon Bay) it was loaded with crockery. Our “gang” and I climbed down the cliffs to get at the china.

I did service with the St Martin’s Scouts at the beginning of the war. Bert Brown did duty at the bottom of Whitfield Hill at Billy Crundall’s house, later taken over by the army. We acted as messenger boys for the military. I joined the mine-sweepers in 1917.

One of my uncles, Ben Curtis, worked on the wreck of H.M.S. Glatton, sunk in Dover Harbour with all hands. It was

Dover from the Pier.



↑ Marine Parade c. 1904 ↑ Marine Court ↑ Sea Baths

The Esplanade Dover.



↑ The Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club c. 1904



at the bottom of St James St. c. 1900



Townwall Street before 1952

Picture at bottom left by courtesy of the *Dover Express*, the others from Budge Adams's own collection

loaded with explosives and was on fire. Glatton was a ship of the Monitor Class. She was sunk by torpedoes because if she had exploded, Dover would have been destroyed. When the order came from Admiral Sir Roger Keyes to sink, no warning was given to the 65 men on board and they were all lost. My uncle was a taciturn man and, on his return from work, was questioned by his wife, my Aunt Flora (my mother's sister) on what it was like down there; were there any bodies, etc.? His reply was, "You had your tea?"

Well, I want mine".

His son Cyril (who died recently) was also 26 years in the Navy and a diver for Dover Harbour Board. He, like me, was an hereditary Freeman of Dover, through our mothers, whose maiden name was Williams.

I hardly recognise Dover now. It's all changed so much, and so many places have been built over, like Plum Pudding Hill, but I have a lot of very happy and exciting memories.

Visit to CALAIS ACCUEIL

As reported in Newsletter 10, the return visit of the Society to Calais Accueil will take place on October 5th. The day's programme in Calais will include a mayoral reception at the Town Hall and a visit to the museum to explore the history of lace-making in Calais. Members will then disperse to find their own lunch and go shopping before the return journey.

Members who originally expressed interest in this trip will have confirmed their bookings by the time this Newsletter is printed.

However, it is not too late to join the party! There are still a few places left. If you are interested in joining us, please get in touch with Lin Clackett, Social Secretary, The Warehouse, 29 Queens Gardens, Dover, telephone 242006.

As others see us

It is refreshing to read the comments of outsiders, writing about Dover. Children from an out-lying village and students on a language course (extracts in this issue) did not have any criticisms of the town.

Also, I note that the Dover Express has printed, in the last month or so several letters from visitors, ex-residents, friends of residents, which comment favourably on the cleanliness of the town and the increased number of places of interest to visit, mentioning, in particular, the Museum and the White Cliffs Experience, and also the old favourites of the Castle and Roman Painted House. Outsiders do not make any special mention of our empty shops, perhaps because they see such sites in all towns as symptomatic of the present recession.

Do you have any such comments or letters from your friends and visitors to the town? If so, could we include them in the next issue? What do others think and say about our town?

ED.