

18 *THE OMBUDSMAN and* *THE WESTERN HEIGHTS*

JACK WOOLFORD

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Not *Again!*

In September, 1980, prompted by its Chairman, the late Douglas Crellin (whose achievements for Dover are commemorated on the plaque at the top of the Grand Shaft), and supported by its MP (then Peter (now Lord) Rees) our predecessor society, the New Dover Group, successfully protested to the Ombudsman against the Home Office which demolished part of an Ancient Monument, (at the then Dover Borstal), a Victorian (powder) Magazine at the Citadel, in order to build a new boiler house (whose wretched chimney has disfigured the White Cliffs skyline ever since. They were rebuked for not having consulted both the Department of the Environment and Dover District Council. The Department of the Environment was rebuked for not having done anything about it. Explanations from the Home Office were described as unsatisfactory and inconsistent with other sources (*sic*).

The then Ombudsman commented "... the Home Office ... omitted the usual consultations before they carried out the work to the magazine and I do not find such explanations as they have offered for this serious failure at all satisfactory ... I find their performance in this whole unhappy business deplorable and disturbing ... I can only hope that both the DoE and the Home Office have learned important lessons from it *and that there will be no further incidents of this kind ...*" (My italics).

So far, so good. Prompted, however, by Vice-President and founder-member Peter Johnson, and supported by David Shaw, MP, in March 1990 the Dover Society protested to the Ombudsman that despite the undertakings of 1981, precisely the same thing had happened again. The Home Office had constructed an accommodation block at the Young Offenders Institute without, again, consulting either English Heritage or the Department of the Environment. They had, this time, informed Dover District Council which confined its attention to the appearance of the roof and the brickwork, apparently thinking it would be unnoticeable from outside. Were they thus unaware – in 1988! – of the threat to the White Cliffs skyline which had become even more important to Dover's touristic image with the threat of the Channel Tunnel to local employment?

The Home Office, although ignoring circular 18/44, said that particular care had been taken in carrying out the work below ground and that (shades of Brian Philp!) no man-made artefacts had been found. Excuses included the belief that Dover District Council would inform English Heritage and the fact that an unexpected and unprecedented increase in the prison population had put officials, some new and untrained, under heavy pressure.

The Ombudsman very strongly criticised the Home Office for failing to learn lessons from the 1981 report and for repeating their mistake. The Permanent Under-Secretary had asked him to convey his apologies to all concerned and said that the Department was extremely sorry that the oversight should have occurred again. New instructions had been issued to all staff and oral guidance given to senior staff on the procedures for dealing with ancient monuments. He concluded with the hope that this time measures have been taken to prevent any recurrence of a mistake of this nature. We must hope so; *but will not take it for granted.*

Reviews

THE KENT CONCERT ORCHESTRA

Dover Town Hall — 21 September 1991

ROSS ANDERSON

THE Dover Society must be congratulated in bringing off a double coup for its September event in Dover Town Hall. The brilliant young pianist, Marie-Noëlle Kendall, and the Kent Concert Orchestra provided an evening of almost unalloyed enjoyment. The orchestra which, with its programme content and playing strength of 28, might more properly be called a chamber orchestra, under its conductor, Paul Neville, offered style, sensitivity and disciplined commitment that outweighed the occasional flaw in ensemble.

Marie-Noëlle Kendall, on her first appearance here, displayed technical accomplishment of a very high order allied to deep musicianship which, with the admirable co-operation of conductor and orchestra, resulted in a performance of the E flat Piano Concerto of Mozart which gave great satisfaction, rightly earning a warm ovation.

Works by Boyce, Elgar, Handel and Purcell fitted well into the programme, the Elgar Serenade being of especial interest to your reviewer who, when conducting in the West Midlands, used a score marked by the composer and frequently directed players who had worked under Sir Edward Elgar.

A spirited performance of Mozart's Symphony 29 in A proved a fitting finale to a distinguished occasion.

Enhancing the pleasures of the evening were an elegant programme sensibly priced, helpful and succinct – albeit anonymous – programme notes and last – but by no means least – most civilised interval refreshment.