

Local involvement in historical events receive befitting detailed treatment because of their national significance. The basically chronological narrative usefully pauses to record and reflect upon economic changes in local agriculture and industry. Local worthies, either by birth or residence, are naturally emphasised.

It is all thoroughly and impressively readable. No review, however, is complete without reservations and I did find one grammatical error, one or two instances of value-judgements dependent upon hindsight and some apparent inconsistencies of attitude to rebellion and conformity. Some of the parish pump details are trivial to the outsider. But these are minor flaws. The book as a whole is a splendid testament to the establishment and survival, indeed the conservation over a thousand years, of a community. It offers a precedent and sets a standard which other amenity societies may praiseworthily follow.

DOUGLAS E. WELBY'S

"The History of Archcliffe Fort"

PETER JOHNSON

It is very easy, especially in an old and historic town, for some of the less conspicuous landmarks of its history to be lost without trace as the years go by.

Archcliffe Fort is just such a place and when it was finally abandoned by the Ministry of Defence in the 1970s the intention was to sell it on the open market, unless another government department wished to buy it. The Department of the Environment stepped in and the Fort was scheduled as an Ancient Monument.

Now Douglas Welby has written a short account of the history of the Fort and this has been published for the Friends of Dover Museum.

The origins of the defences go back to the reign of Edward III but it was not until Henry VIII's time that an order was given for the construction of a substantial bulwark and in 1540 it was recorded as being manned by a Captain and two soldiers. It would not appear to have been a very significant part of the nation's defences!

During the next 250 years the occasional threat of invasion brought the fort to the attention of the authorities and it was generally reported to be neglected and in need of repair and strengthening. The activities of Napoleon at the beginning of the 19th century brought perhaps the most serious threat but invasion did not come, though the activities of French privateers caused a good deal of embarrassment. Considerable strengthening and development of the Fort took place during the 19th century but it was only used for training purposes. By the beginning of the present century it was obsolete and by 1928 part of it had been demolished to make way for the increasing demands of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway which ran below the fort at sea level.

In his booklet Douglas Welby traces the history of Archcliffe Fort in more detail and his narrative is well illustrated with reproductions of maps and pictures. He also includes some interesting information about the guns and other weaponry installed at the fort from time to time.

Throughout the text there is a considerable amount of information about the cost of construction and maintenance work, some of which has an almost fairytale quality about it when compared with expenditure on defences in the 20th century. In 1370 a watch tower and earthworks were constructed by a team of 50 workmen in 40 days at a total cost of £15!. Even 400 years later the estimate for the modernisation, of what had by then become Archcliffe Fort, was a mere £1200.

In addition to such specific information about the fort, Douglas Welby touches on various events in Dover of both historical and social nature during the period. Altogether it makes an interesting and readable booklet.

I would add as an afterthought that during the present century parts of the fort have been demolished and with the new A20 now under construction more demolition will take place. There is bound to come a point at which it will be necessary to consider whether what then remains is worth preserving. I am a staunch supporter of conservation but equally I believe we must allow our town to develop and keep abreast of the times. I have a feeling that in the end Archcliffe Fort will go and that piece of our history will be lost. If that does happen Douglas Welby's booklet will be of particular value.

“OLD POTS FOR NEW”

*An Exhibition of medieval pottery and contemporary ceramics.
Dover Museum Gallery—26th October to 26th November 1991*

JOHN GOODING

IT was with considerable curiosity that I visited this exhibition, as the choice of European pottery from the period 900 - 1500 AD alongside recent work of the Rochester Connection, a group of ex-Medway students, seemed strange but interesting.

The exhibition was set up with the works in glass cases displayed in two separate sections. Firstly the medieval pottery, found in archaeological digs there over the past 30 years. It included pots brought into the Hampshire port from France, the Low Countries, Germany, Spain and Italy, together with some locally made finds. These were well displayed and presented in an interesting museum-type educational format.

One has to say that viewed through the critical eyes of a potter, the medieval European pots were, in the main, not very inspiring. More so, that is, when one thinks of the classical ceramics being produced at about that period in the Orient (Sung, Yuan and early Ming) and also of those Roman pots, visible downstairs in the museum, from the previous millenium, including fine Samian ware.