

The Awards Meeting 1991

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The meeting, on the 14th of October, followed the pattern of previous years.

The Chairman opened the meeting, welcoming in particular three of our Vice-Presidents: Lillian Kay, Terry Sutton and 'Budge' Adams, two of whom were going to address us.

The first was 'Budge'. He presented a selection of some fifty slides, many of which he had taken himself with very professional skill. They covered the subjects of the awards and the commendations and also some good and some bad features which had gone from our town or which had appeared in recent years. The material was carefully researched and concisely and wittingly presented. Brevity was indeed the soul of wit. The shots of the award and commendation subjects, often exciting or dramatic, caused us to look and think about them before we were to hear their authors speak about them. Of other subjects; we looked at the last days of Last Lane and we admired Goal Lane today. Of blackspots and eyesores we looked at the part of Cannon Street which has *not* been restored and the car-breakers' yard by the Dour at Cherry Tree. Restored too late to be considered for our official commendations, the Market Square shop where David Copperfield may have rested was so obviously preferable to the modern eyesore north of Lloyds Bank. We were shown the three incarnations of this shop since 1788. Fly-posting was recorded (the offender photographed in the act) at B & Q's now-vacated site and so was their new equally aggressive "in-town" building. We had glimpses of the turmoil in preparation for the new A20. Were contractors really unaware of the aircraft slipways, built in the First World War, which could be seen clearly impeding the pile-drivers at East Cliff?

The whole tone of 'Budge's' presentation, with no excessive nostalgia, could be summed up as "caring for the past and looking to the future".

There were two "special commendations" this year, of equal merit.

1. The two riparian owners of the reach of the River Dour above Mannering's Mill: Alan Bateman and Peter Swinburne. Alan Bateman explained how what had begun as a mere "clean-up" twenty years ago had led to the creation of an island, planting, continuing efforts to control the level of the Mill pool, attracting and safeguarding fowl and fish. They were grateful to Alan Cawsey, owner of the Mill, for all his support. They were very modest about their efforts, which deserve the highest credit, and it is for other riparian owners to follow their example.

2. The K.C.C. Refuse Transfer Station. If we were not already familiar with this 'Budge' Adams had amply shown us its special merits. County Councillor W. R. Howard spoke

impromptu but eloquently for the recipients, praising their cleanliness and good housekeeping and, in the words of our Award, "for the imaginative approach to their work". Our Chairman recalled that the predecessor of the Dover Society, the New Dover Group, had in its day opposed the project, believing it to be unworkable and had been proved very wrong.

There were five awards:

1. The first Award winner to speak was Paul Koralek, Architect of the White Cliffs Experience. He dissociated himself from "isms" but conceded that, on a rough division, he would be classed as a Modernist.

Within the limits of his allotted ten minutes, with the help of well-chosen slides, he outlined the problems which were to be solved in designing the Heritage Centre.

a) It was going to be a large building which must not appear so in proportion to the town. This was made possible because it is in reality a series of linked buildings.

b) It was important to minimise the effect of the adjacent A20. This was the purpose of the axis through the building from the Market Square to the A20 - which will become increasingly valuable as York Street ceases to be the A20. (The post-war development of the banks, building societies and shops had been a problem).

c) It was essential to make the most of what was there already: the Market Hall façade and the archaeological remains.

d) Another guiding principle was flexibility for the future. For example, the Time and Tide auditorium is designed to serve equally well as a theatre. Yet more flexibility is represented by the possibility of extension in a second phase.



THE
St. MARGARET'S BAY
MUSEUM



DOVER MUSEUM
1st Floor (top)
PERMANENT EXHIBITION
1066 - 1991



THE RESTORED
TRAM SHELTER
AT ELMS VALE ROAD



THE RESTORED SHOPS IN CANNON STREET

THE ORIGINAL MODEL OF 'THE WHITE CLIFFS EXPERIENCE'



THE AWARDS 1991

34 The rather complex features of the entrance would indeed link his work with Rogers or Foster and his slides of steel and glass areas certainly demonstrated the success in achieving attractive effects of lightness and light, contrasting with the solid brickwork.

2. The Award to the designer of the Museum, Ivor Heal and to the Museum Staff was received on their behalf by Miss Christine Waterman, the Curator. She warmly welcomed the terms of the Award, praising the work of Ivor Heal and of her staff. The efforts of the staff, against every obstacle, in the run-up to open on time were almost comic epic.

She outlined the 150 years of history of the Museum since its founding by "The Dover Museum and Philosophical Society". She looked back with gratitude to, amongst others, the devoted work of Mr Warner, who ensured that the collection survived the Second World War, Mrs Coveney and Sarah Campbell who embarked on the cataloguing and Major Took who successfully fended off attempts to close the Museum in the 1970s.

She expressed her pride in a Museum which is unique, in that it is the only museum in the United Kingdom linked to a heritage centre and it provides a history of Dover, illustrated predominantly by Dovorian artefacts. For its splendid re-birth she expressed her gratitude to the Councillors and Officers of the District Council and to her staff.

3. The Award for the exemplary restoration and refurbishment of two shops in Cannon Street by Dover District Council was accepted by the Chairman of the Council, Councillor Paul Watkins.

He humorously explained how the project was in fact the result of serendipity. The premises had been acquired originally to make possible access to a heritage centre of rotunda design which was later rejected. Tourism research recommended the Council to use the shops to present an example. In the event it has proved a very happy accident. Not only are the shops such as we would like to see in that prime area but they also offer residential accommodation above. Living over the shop would be a most valuable development, combining retail vitality with residential vitality, as Councillor Watkins expressed it.

As with the conservation of the Dour, this is another example for others to follow. It was hinted that there may be such progress in the adjoining Metropole Building.

4. Anthony Reed was not present to receive his Award for his contribution to the Refurbishment of the old Tram Shelter at Elms Vale, as he was away on business in Scandinavia, but his contribution to the street scene was warmly noted.

5. Mrs Pauline Gould of the Cleary Foundation, which made possible Crabble Mill and the Community Centre, received the Award for the St Margaret's Bay Museum. The Museum, which opened two years ago, houses what was Mr Fred Cleary's private collection. Mrs Gould was grateful for the help of the local History Society and the professional advice from the York Railway Museum. The memorial garden has boosted the attraction of the museum which has, so far, received 11,000 visitors.

Mrs Gould also praised the Dover Society because St Margaret's Bay, and indeed Dover, are areas under threat and she sees the Society as "people who watch and care." During the interval she gave firm expression to this praise with a very generous donation.

The second half of the meeting was delightfully taken up by Miss Lillian Kay, previously Maths. Mistress and later Head Mistress of the Dover Girls' Grammar School, in all

over 30 years, treating us to: Memories of Old Dover or, as she called it:

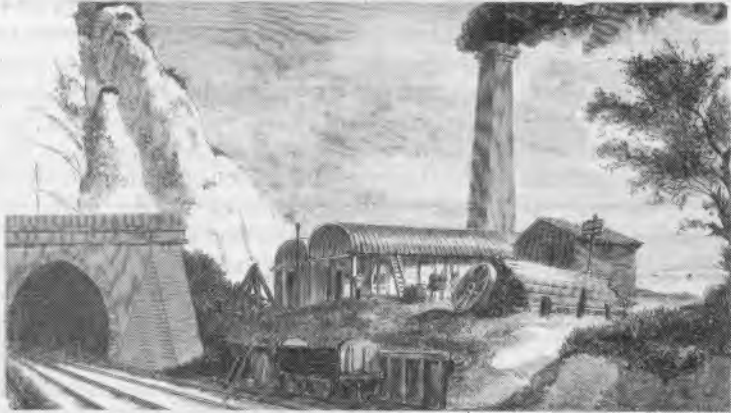
Memories of an Old Dovorian.

It is exceedingly difficult to capture in writing the impact of Lillian Kay's address. Not a complete transcript nor a recorded tape, not even a video tape, would capture it, because the rapport and empathy she established with us the audience would not be there. She held us spellbound.

What Miss Kay gave us was a chapter of social history, as epitomised in the generations of her family since 1752. But it would need the brush of a Hogarth, the pen of a Dickens – occasionally of a Rabelais! – to do justice to the courage, humanity, humour, tolerance and forbearance in hardship of those families of fourteen or so, surviving in the old Pier District of Dover.

Miss Kay gave us a graphic account of her ancestors, who were all Freeman, starting with William Kay, born in 1752. The account was brought to life by many amusing anecdotes, for instance, William's grandson, Thomas, ship's carpenter on the *Lady Violet* was not on board when she was lost on the Goodwins, as he had been too drunk to sail. (By 1900 there were 241 pubs in Dover, mostly in the Pier District.) Ancestors and anecdotes are too numerous to

relate here, but the Chairman summarised it for us. The ancestors included sailor, soldier, marble dropper, smuggler, runaway, worker on (the first) Channel Tunnel, the Hythe Canal and the Packet Yard,



THE PROPOSED CHANNEL TUNNEL, ABBOT'S CLIFF, ENGLISH COAST, 1830

now demolished to make way for the new A20 and, on the distaff side, bird scarer, bootboy, a cowherd in the Paddock, when it was a paddock, barmaid *et al.*

Miss Kay also lightly outlined the arrival of the educational ladder, represented by the tiny private-house schools (at sixpence a week), the Sunday Schools, the National Schools, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Infant Schools and indeed the Grammar Schools which ultimately made it possible for her to study mathematics at the University of London. So, it was another example of serendipity this evening: all those vicissitudes of the Kays and Inwoods and Le Maçons and the educational ladder and the repeal of the "Marriage by deceased Wife's Sister Act" all led to Lillian Kay being with us to enlighten us with this history brought to life.

The great characteristic of the evening was its infinite variety which, like Cleopatra, could not stale. With every speaker, without exception, we would have been happy if they had more time to continue. The only disappointment of the evening was the relatively poor turnout, as compared with the sheer quality of the entertainment on offer. Some 250 members don't know what they missed.