



## THE SOCIETY'S OCTOBER OPEN MEETING

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MAY JONES

The IMPACT meeting on 12th October was well-attended and it was good to see new members as well as familiar faces in the audience. John Gerrard, deputising for Jack Woolford, introduced the speakers with his customary good humour.

Julian Owen, IMPACT Project leader, with the aid of a K.C.C. video, ably demonstrated what had been achieved in Gravesend and Ramsgate through consultation and co-operation with property owners and local authorities, coupled with sound planning principles.

Three examples of IMPACT's influence in the commercial sector of Ramsgate and one outside will give the reader an indication of the scope of these activities. Encouragement to remove an ugly modern fascia board led one enthusiastic and energetic café owner to reveal the former green and gold glory of the HOME & COLONIAL original, which provided him with a more attractive sign *and*, in time, increased custom. The IMPACT display in formerly empty premises in York Street stimulated interest, improvements and trade in adjacent properties, while well-designed and paved pedestrian areas have made leisurely shopping a pleasurable and safe experience.

Elsewhere in Ramsgate equally important repair and re-occupation of Victorian buildings has taken place – in some cases generating job skill training in the use of contemporary techniques rather than unsuitable modern ones, as for instance, when a particular mortar was needed for re-pointing some Georgian brickwork.

IMPACT has thus assisted and encouraged sensitive revitalization of parts of the two towns, while firing the imagination and enthusiasm of local people for further action.

Mr Owen then turned to Dover, acknowledging the good work already done and pointing out places ripe for improvement, to enhance the town's tourist image, especially on the approaches to the centre and beside the new A20 route, along Snargate Street and beyond. Slides of these areas were rapidly flashed onto the screen to make the point visually as well as verbally. Having earlier seen the attractive tiled mural destined for a Ramsgate subway, it was interesting to speculate what would adorn our future subterranean passages to the sea front once the roadworks were complete.

Changes in the port, as a result of the Channel Tunnel, had led Dover Harbour Board to plan for the regeneration of the Western Docks, including very shortly the arrival of the Spanish brig *Maria Asumpta* in the Wellington Dock for the winter. The brig, built in 1858, is believed to be the world's oldest active sailing ship and she should prove to be a valuable tourist attraction.

After the interval, John Clayton, Director of Planning for D.D.C., skilfully answered the questions fired at him and, in discussing street furniture, explained the necessity for movable, boxed trees in the precinct, instead of more orthodox plantings, to allow access to public utilities below the paving (thereby making them much more acceptable to one listener).

Mr Fawcus, Property Development Manager for Dover Harbour Board, was able to give some indication of the direction of the Board's thinking and was happy to assure Mrs Walker that consideration would certainly be given to the creation of an open-air market near the water with a pedestrian link to the town centre,

John Owen and John Clayton were likewise willing to receive suggestions, for instance, about further enhancement and extension of the Riverside Walk.

Although the sound system unfortunately failed to amplify the speaker's voices sufficiently for comfortable listening and there was inevitably some repetition of information when Roy Adsett of the Ramsgate Society described the co-operative efforts of local groups, I found it a very interesting, informative and valuable session. We can obviously look forward to some interesting developments in Dover with the aid of IMPACT money and expertise. ◇

## *Investing in Dover's Future*

— JULIAN OWEN, IMPACT Project Manager

*"Urban regeneration is not just about bricks and mortar. It is about economic revival, pride of place and a belief in a better future."*

Thus did Tony Aldous introduce and summarise a recent article in "Building" magazine, about the IMPACT project in Ramsgate. IMPACT was devised by Kent County Council as a means of targeting urban improvements in areas of economic priority, and will shortly transfer to Dover, in partnership with the District Council.

Living up to its name, IMPACT already has a strong track record of success in Gravesend and Ramsgate, with an emphasis on quality. There's much more to it than just cosmetic improvements, as those members who came to the meeting on 12th October will have heard. IMPACT plays a strong complementary rôle in relation to other economic development initiatives, especially in improving the image and marketability of the area.

IMPACT has pioneered a unique approach, strongly linked with the Civic Trust's Regeneration Campaign, concentrating skilled staff and money on particular towns in a series of three-year programmes. An important feature is the partnership between County and District Councils, with the private and voluntary sectors, to bring about a regeneration package which is not only greater than the sum of its parts, but also establishes the means to sustain improvement in the future.

Each programme is unique, but taking Ramsgate as an example, the programme consists of a mixture of short, medium and long-term measures, such as: