

The Society's A.G.M. 1993

SYBIL STANDING

AFTER WELCOMING THE NEW PRESIDENT, Brigadier Maurice Atherton, Mrs Atherton and other dignitaries, the Chairman asked everyone to stand in tribute to the late Countess of Guilford, the Society's first President.

The Minutes of the Fourth Annual General Meeting being then read and adopted, the Chairman began his report in ebullient mood, saying that the AGM. was the highlight of the year – all the more so in 1993 as there was so much good to report, both for the Society and for the town. On the positive side he referred to IMPACT, the planned redevelopment of the Western Docks and the beginnings of recovery from recession. On the negative side, however, he had to record the delay to the opening of the Channel Tunnel. (No burst of applause!)

He stated that the publication of the Peverley Papers, was one step nearer, for with an additional sponsorship of £1000 from a Eurotunnel subsidiary and a further £100 donation from Hammonds, printing costs could be comfortably covered.

The Society was in close contact with IMPACT, which had £2 million to spend in next three years to improve Dover's image. Julian Owen, the IMPACT project leader, had addressed the Committee and, with members of his team, had attended the March Members' Meeting, which produced many suggestions for serious consideration. The Society was represented on the consultative Forum and had been advised by the Ramsgate Society on their experience with IMPACT.

The Society had made submissions on the Local Plan and had been involved in matters as diverse as the relocation of the Rolls statue on the Seafront, the future of the Marine Station, the Dover Patrol Memorial, Royal Victoria Hospital housing scheme, the architecture of the new Co-op, the quality of shop fronts and the chimneys at Buckland Mill. There had been sharp correspondence with the Department of Transport via M.P. David Shaw regarding the problems with the Whitfield By-pass, one-way traffic in London Road and the dualling of the A2. Sympathy, and a contribution rather than tea, had been given to Crabble Corn Mill Trust. Possible additions to listed buildings were to be investigated.

Our Secretary had involved himself in water and sewage treatment problems and worked hard to assist Sister Ambrose in her case against excessive pumping by Folkestone & District Water Co. The proposed location of the sewage treatment plant at Farthingloe left much to be desired and efforts to find a better solution would continue.

Proceeding to Social events, the Chairman welcomed Joan Liggett as a worthy successor to Lin Clackett and recorded the successful visits to a local vineyard, Chatham Dockyard and St. Omer. One of the highlights of the year had been the Dickens Evening with Professor Curry who held a packed hall spellbound and, at the same time benefited both the Split Charity and St. Martins Trust. A special vote of thanks was due to Budge Adams for props as well as printing on that occasion. Members and guests had enjoyed another successful Wine and Wisdom Evening, thanks to Clive Taylor.

The Chairman thanked Sheila Cope, the Membership Secretary, in whose hands numbers had risen from 328 to 378* and Sheila and her husband, Jeremy, for organising fund-raising raffles at public meetings. He thanked Merrill Lilley for her editorship of the *Newsletter* and Budge Adams for its production and printing and welcomed Bruce Lilley as Advertising manager.

John Owen was reported to be continuing the good work on projects with Lydden Pond now holding water and Lydden School using a rain-gauge, donated in appreciation of the children's help. The Lousybery Wood plantation had been improved by bramble clearance and another 'Dour Scour' organised with assistance from local cadets. Residual funds from the now defunct River Dour Society had been transferred to the Dover Society via David Elms.

The Chairman commented on the excellent relations with the D.H.B. despite the Society's opposition to the proposed sea front petrol station and continuous consultation with Bill Fawcus on the development of the Western Docks was welcomed. The new Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee, Lawrence Gage, has drawn the Society's response. The superstore plan was not approved by all but it was recognised that it was a necessary condition of further development.

Dover Harbour Board has offered £700 towards the cost of the Peverley Publication, re-housed the Transport Museum and allowed the use of rooms at Cambridge Terrace for committee meetings for the last four years, and assisted with the lifting and storage of the major archaeological find, the Bronze Age Boat. The Chairman congratulated Keith Parfitt on his discovery, saying that it compensated somewhat for all the chaos of the new A20.

He went on to mention the talk by John Moir, the Chief Executive of Dover District Council, who forecast that an enlarged DDC would survive the impending death of the KCC, remarking that the Society's continuous dialogue with DDC was 'friendly but not uncritical'.

At the end of his report the Chairman mentioned changes in the committee. Phylis Dobbins, now living in Leeds, was thanked "for her outspoken services". He lamented the resignation of the Treasurer, Ken Berry, 'who had progressed from tight-fisted tyranny to open-handed generosity, notably to Crabble Mill and the Shepherdsweil Railway'. Congratulations were conveyed to him and Delysia (as Christmas Feast choirmistress and AGM hostess *par excellence*) on their forthcoming Golden Wedding. Jennifer Gerrard has agreed to act as Treasurer, Jenny Olpin was the new Press Officer and Paul Youden the Publicity Advisor. Thanks to Leo Wright, the Chairman of the Planning Sub-Committee was now architect Lawrence Gage who had relieved Ken Wraight after his two stints in that capacity.

The Chairman expressed his regret that the Society's founder, Philomena Kennedy, was not standing for re-election to the committee, saying that there had been occasions when Philomena and he had differed but he hoped that she considered their 'sparring partnership' had served a useful purpose.

Brigadier Maurice Atherton followed the Chairman's report with a short address, saying that he considered it an honour to have been asked to follow the Countess of Guilford. He and his wife are both natives of Yorkshire but they had a special affection for Dover. He spoke of the Queen Mother's appointment as Lord Warden and added that he still took his weekly *Dover Express*. He would be happy to help the Society in any way, but would not meddle.

Topics raised by members were diverse . . . a casino for Dover, a children's farm, a theatre, an open market, a French store e . . . and there were objections to the proposed Western Docks superstore and the Lydden MacLaren Track.

* At the editorial deadline this figure had risen to 406.

After the interval, when refreshments were served and raffle tickets sold, Bill Fawcus, Dover Harbour Board Property Development Manager, gave a talk on the Board's plans, introduced with two contrasting comments on the Western Docks Scheme. "Grandiose and incredible, pardon me if I yawn", from columnist Paula James and "low key and dull" from the Dover Society Chairman and the Planning Sub-Committee Chairman. Mr Fawcus continued by reminding his audience that DHB owned the Harbour and most of the seafront of the busiest passenger port in Europe, through which 18 million people had passed in 1992, with obvious effect on the town's roads and traffic problems.

Things would change radically with the new A20. The Western Dock area would become a shop window and this would call for major investment. He did not envisage a Canary Wharf type of development and did not share the Dover Society's optimism about the Millennium Fund. Self-help was, therefore, the answer, with a partner experienced in waterside development. This partner was to be Pearce Developments of Bristol, whose master plan involved expansion of the marina as a focus of tourism and leisure with a new superstore linked to speciality shops overlooking the water and residential and office accommodation.

The process had already started with the renovation of the old Shalimar Hotel which was now providing office space for South African businesses seeking closer contact with the European market. Ideally the Harbour Board would like to attract a large department such as Customs and Excise. Profits from the superstore should provide funds to enhance the marina and improve pedestrian links with the rest of the town. The Dover Society's suggestion of a transport or maritime museum was a non-starter. It would need an entrance fee of £250 plus VAT!

Mr Fawcus concluded by distributing brochures on the Pearce plans and some questionnaires for comments and suggestions.

Finally, came the presentation to the Society's founder, Philomena Kennedy, upon the occasion of her resignation from the Committee and her address, a brief history of the Dover Society, prefaced by the remark that she was still surprised that she had founded it.

When in 1987 the Museum staff had appealed for guides for the Drop Redoubt Philomena had volunteered and at one stage someone had remarked in discussion that the town needed a civic society – the seed had been sown! By early 1988 it was beginning to grow, fed by fears of the possible loss of Connaught Park to a caravan site and Pencester Gardens to buildings.

Philomena had seen the urgent need to bring concerned people together; Sheila and Jeremy Cope had offered their home for meetings, where Steering Committee sessions had been held in March and April 1988 with Jack Woolford in the chair – a position which he had accepted with alacrity when asked. The Inaugural Meeting of the Society had taken place on 25th April in the Menzies Hall, by kind permission of the Headmaster of Dover College. The first Committee had been duly elected at that time. About a hundred people had attended – a very successful launch!

Peter Johnson made an excellent speech, setting the standard by which the Society had tried to abide – of being well-informed and responsible, and critical but constructive when necessary, in providing an independent voice on matters of interest and concern in the town and surrounding villages.

The Society had been fortunate in its first Social Secretary, Lin Clackett and her successor Joan Liggett. They had organised annual programmes of public and members' meetings,

social events, visits and the Christmas Feast. It had never been necessary to cancel anything for lack of support.

The Society had initiated the presentation of Dover Society Awards, had forged useful links with the Dover Harbour Board and the Chamber of Commerce, had begun positive dialogue with the Dover District Council via the Planning Sub-Committee, registered with the Civic Trust and the Charity Commissioners, became affiliated to the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies and had been represented on the Eurotunnel's Consultative Committee.

Referring to the Society's original concerns in 1988, Philomena pointed out that Pencester Gardens and Connaught Park remained intact for public enjoyment, Brook House had fallen down when nudged by a Council vehicle early one morning, some shop fronts had been improved, the Grand Shaft was open, Crabble Mill renovated, the White Cliffs Experience was attracting many visitors and the Channel Tunnel seemed less of a threat than in 1988.

At the 1990 AGM the Chairman had had to record with sorrow the death of a Vice-President, Ray Warner. The Society had acquired a very efficient Chairman of the Projects sub-committee in John Owen, who had organised tree planting at Lousybery Wood and the re-lining of Lydden Pond and had won national awards with them. The Secretary, among others, had organised a well-attended concert by Primavera in the Maison Dieu Hall. In the same year the Society's 'elder statesman' and Vice-President 'Budge' Adams had taken over the production of our *Newsletter* and in his hands the former type-written and stapled sheets had been transformed into a prestigious publication.

1991 had seen a capacity audience for the 'Save our Sewage' meeting in February, indicating the strength of local concern and the Society's ability to bring various interest groups together, and John Peverely's address to the A.G.M. had resulted in a decision to incorporate some of the material into a publication about the Western Heights. After three years Philomena had decided to bow out as Editor and Merril Lilley had taken over with *Newsletter* No. 11 after handing over her membership responsibility to Sheila Cope. That autumn, too, the first of the cross-Channel trips had been arranged to Calais.

In 1992 the first Festival of Dover was held, to which, of course, the Society had made its contribution. It had been at the official launch that Merril and Philomena had met a member of Julian Owen's Ramsgate IMPACT team which prompted the suggestion that they should be invited to give the Society a pre-view of their ideas for Dover. Throughout 1992 the A20 roadworks had continued to cause chaos and concern, but they had at least led to the discovery of the Bronze Age Boat!

Philomena concluded by expressing her gratitude for all the kind words said about her and the splendid gifts of a bouquet and book and assured members that she would continue to follow the progress of the Society with great interest.

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Philomena received a beautifully bound copy of DOVER PRIORY: A History of the Priory of St. Mary the Virgin and St. Martin of the New Work by Charles Reginald Haines, published by C.U.P. in 1930.