



LANGDON CLIFFS, DOVER Proposed new Visitor centre
Bird's eye view from the west

Architects: van Heyningen and Haward

THE PROPOSED VISITOR'S CENTRE ON LANGDON CLIFFS

TERRY SUTTON

This is an idea of what a new Visitors' Centre could look like on Langdon Cliffs, Dover, by 1995 if the National Trust's proposals reach fruition.

However, reservations have been raised on aspects of the design and there could well be modifications by the time planning consent is gained and the centre costed and constructed.

The visitors' centre would be built on the present lower terrace of car parking on the site of part of the old convict prison. Peter Battrick, who is the Trust's regional public affairs manager, says the design for the centre fulfils the Trust's aims by improving the present unsightly facilities in a way that is "sensitive to the site, environmentally friendly and energy efficient,"

The National Trust's competition to design the visitors' centre was won by the architects van Heyningen and Haward. Involved in the judging process was Lawrence Gage, chairman of the Dover Society's planning sub-committee. Initial submissions came from twenty-one architects of whom twelve were interviewed before the judges looked at designs from seven practices.

The Trust protects more than five miles of the White Cliffs of Dover from Great Farthingloe to Bockhill Farm, east of St. Margaret's Bay. Around 250,000 people each year visit Langdon Cliffs, acquired by the National Trust in 1988.

The idea is to construct the centre predominantly of wood, a sustainable resource, but with a turf roof that will carry a suitable grass seed mix allowing it to become a home to many wild flowers including orchids.

“The turf roof will be highly energy efficient and will also ensure the whole structure blends successfully into the surrounding downland. There will be a deep verandah to shade any reflections from glass and it should be hardly visible from the sea,” says Mr Battrick.

The building will house information about the work of the Trust as well as the archæology and history of the landscape of this sweep of The White Cliffs and the Dover Strait. There will also be a café and a small shop, lavatories and a meeting area for school groups. A spokesman for the Trust stated “The existence of this building, and the provision of accommodation for the Trust’s warden, will provide greatly improved security for an area that has been subject to vandalism in the past”.

WINE & WISDOM '94 SHEILA R. COPE

How to reduce the members of the Dover Society to silence? Ask them what happened in Paris and Brussels in 1887. The hush was caused by Clive Taylor’s opening question at the Wine and Wisdom evening on 21 February. Once again Clive, assisted by his wife Jillian and by Andrew Denyer, efficiently masterminded the questions. Clive’s own pleasure was infectious. By the time we heard the first answer – the two cities were connected by telephone – we were relaxed and, with the wine starting to flow, confident.

In the interval we enjoyed crusty bread and cheese prepared by Joan Liggett and her family and thought about the Dingbats. These are word-puzzles, incomprehensible to the novice but obvious once the brain had “clicked”. They require consultation between team members and contrast with the topics of the other eight rounds.

For the Archers and the Lizards, who tied for second place with 76%, the most difficult problem of the evening was division of the prizes. Try sharing three bottles of sparkling wine and three monster slabs of chocolate fairly between six people! Of the 14 teams taking part the Motleys were few in number, yet they won with 79%. This quartet comprised May Jones (geography expert), Bessie Newton (sport specialist) and Budge Adams and Lillian Kay whose combined knowledge of historic Dover is formidable. The winners received commemorative glass tumblers. Thanks to Clive, who nourished our minds, and to Joan, who nourished our bodies, the rest of us will also remember an entertaining evening. It was also useful. My favourite piece of new knowledge was the medical term for “delirious fumbling with bedclothes, etc.” It was carphology, defined by the OED (concise edition). ◊