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comments upon

THE 1994 FESTIVAL

To the reviews of events in the 1994 Festival of Dover I would like to add the following report on behalf of the Festival Committee.

To those who do not know, we are: Sarah Pascoe, Donna Sowerby and Kim Norton from the Dover District Council, and from Kent County Council, Arts and Libraries, myself, Maggi Waite and Peter Ryan. Sarah joined the team this year and much of the success of the Festival is a tribute to her hard work and enthusiasm.

The Dover Festival is becoming rather like the Forth Bridge! Just as the committee had breathed a sigh of relief, and retired licking its wounds at the end of May 1993, it was time to start considering successes and failures, suggesting new ideas, and generally planning for 1994. It was extremely useful to have the views of the Dover Society when we met with members in July 1993, when many suggestions for improvements were discussed.

We have to start planning so early because the festival relies on the sponsorship it attracts from companies both locally and nationally, and one has to be quick off the mark to get a reasonable share of the cake! Similarly, personalities such as Britain's most popular children's poet Michael Rosen, or acclaimed crime writer, Colin Dexter, have their diaries full months and years in advance – so again, one needs to be prompt in the planning and arranging.

We feel that several initiatives this year were improvements in the organisation of the Festival. Having the box office at Thomas Cook's in Cannon Street, seemed to be very successful and we found their staff unfailingly efficient and helpful. This year we were delighted to be able to include the Dover Operatic and Dramatic Society's annual production in our programme. It had always been felt – even before the very first was planned, that our Festival should rely heavily upon the people already working in the fields of music, art and culture in our community. Dover Operatic and Dramatic Society's production of "My Fair Lady" could not be faulted and the professionalism of all concerned was another tribute to the talents of Dover people.

Events were for the most part reasonably well attended, with just a few disappointments. As always, the "Festival for Schools", organised by Maggi, reached a very large proportion of Dover school children (3,875 in all!), with events by Michael Rosen

and Patrick Ryan being particularly popular. "Tosca" was a sell-out, skilfully moved at no notice at all to the Duke of York's Royal Military School, as the rain poured down on the Castle. The Teddy Bear's Picnic at Kearsney Abbey was again so dramatically successful that I am sure it is here to stay!

Honestly – we did wonder what we should do if it rained on the opening night of the festival, when we were due to mount the outdoor production of "Tosca" by the First Act Opera Company.

After Friday, warm and sunny, we were devastated to wake to a Saturday that promised quite exceptional rain. Later that afternoon it became clear that, if anything, the weather would deteriorate and it was decided to move the whole production to the Duke of York's School.

The setting at the Castle would have been lovely. But the Nye Hall with its very interesting, cathedral-like architecture was a very fitting alternative and the sound quality was good. I very much enjoyed the production by First Act, who seemed unconcerned about the eleventh hour change of plans. Some of the audience had come from as far away as Wiltshire, but the majority were from Dover and Deal and surrounding areas – the opportunity to hear music of this quality in Dover was obviously not to be missed.

My lasting impressions of Dover Festival 1994 will, I think, be these: the sight of Donna Sowerby in dripping raincoat directing cars at the Duke of York's Royal Military School, and emerging fifteen minutes later, poised and lovely in an evening dress at the start of a wonderful evening of opera, which everyone seemed to enjoy; and the sweet voices of the Prague School Choir as they enjoyed their concert in the Town Hall, despite a very poor audience, their faces and shoulders unconsciously swaying as they showed a real joy in their music.

IDEAS FOR WOULD-BE CONTRIBUTORS

1. Reports or Reviews of current events in Dover.
2. Accounts of Dover Society Trips.
3. Ongoing Series:
 - Memories of Old Dover
 - Working for Dover
 - World-wide Dovers (e.g. Delaware in *Newsletter* 19 and Tasmania in *Newsletter* 20)
 - European Insights (e.g. Leo Wright's "A small town in Germany" in *Newsletter* 19)