

Water, Water everywhere...

LEO WRIGHT

At the time of writing there is certainly no lack of water in Western Europe. Water often seems to be in the news – either because there is too little or too much.

Some of the earliest campaigning of the Dover Society was concerned with water: the purity or otherwise of our sea-water, the state of our beaches and, later, the lack of fresh water when the Dour and our lakes dried up. One of our best attended meetings was on the latter issue.

The present is a good moment to take stock because it can be said that almost all our requests and demands are in process of being examined or dealt with.

A turning-point was the creation by the N.R.A. in November 1994 of a Stour and Dour Catchment Management Plan. The Dour has now been included, slightly belatedly, with the Darent and the Stour as “rivers in need of urgent remedial action” and action has resulted from this decision.

The N.R.A. has accepted and confirmed the claims so strongly and repeatedly made by the amateur but devoted experts in River, by Sister Ambrose and Maurice Sayers and the Alkham Valley Society and ourselves, claims which the water company always disregarded or denied: that the flow of the Dour is affected by ground water extraction, particularly from certain bore-holes; that there is a deficit in the Dover Chalk Block and that in the whole catchment area demand is forecast to exceed the current reliable yield.

Decisions will be made to close or move some bore-holes. Drilling is in progress to seek a new Dour bore-hole. At the time of writing the N.R.A. is installing gauges in Bushy Ruff, so that the erratic flow of the Dour can be more fully monitored and understood.

No new licenses have been issued since January 1993 and the DoE has ruled that water companies are not obliged to honour existing licenses in full. The N.R.A. now examines all planning/development notices and can indicate that water supply is not available. The developer would then have to seek and finance a supply. Consideration is also being given to bringing in water from a neighbouring authority.

So much for the fresh water. On the sea-fronts: the £120 m. scheme of Southern Water to renew the sewage systems in Folkestone, Dover and Deal will improve our beaches – already this summer in Deal, and work has already started on the new Dover outfall.

Meanwhile, the Society’s voluntary practical environment work continues. John Owen, our gallant Projects Chairman leads the Society’s ongoing programme of cleaning the Dour and the beaches. Negotiations also continue to improve access and accessibility along the Dour riverside path by South Kent College. >

Over this generally favourable and hopeful picture there also falls a shadow which must be watched. The Government plans to merge the N.R.A. with H.M. Inspectorate of Pollution as an "Environmental Agency". Environmentalists fear that this could lead, as already in other spheres, to one more reduction of an inspectorate or that other functions of the N.R.A. might suffer. The N.R.A. has been praised as "the strongest environmental agency in Europe" and we see it as a good and efficient quango. Lord Crickhowell, the Chairman of the N.R.A. has warned that vital functions of his organisation might collapse as a result of the proposed merger. "Regulation of the nation's water" he said, was about "a lot more than pollution control." The strength of the N.R.A. has lain in its *integrated* management of river catchments.

We must remain watchful.

SAVING DOVER ARCHIVES

Dover Society members may be interested to know that after receiving the following appeal, the Committee voted to donate £500 to this project. We hope you will agree that this is a worth-while cause.

DOVER HISTORY PROJECT

James N. Gibson

What would you do if someone delivered two lorry loads of paper to your doorstep? That's what happened in 1979, when the newly formed Dover District Council deposited in the county archives office all the Dover Borough records dating back to the 13th century. The collection includes the earliest surviving town charters, common assembly minutes, chamberlains' accounts, and registers of freemen and apprentices, as well as 19th and 20th century borough minutes and correspondence. Everything about Dover is there from mediæval Cinque Ports records and the formation of the Dover Harbour Board to civil defence arrangements during the Napoleonic wars, log books of bomb damage during World War II and celebrations of V-E Day.

Unfortunately, this large and valuable collection (about 200 linear feet of volumes and 500 linear feet of files and papers) remains largely unusable for historians, students, and the general public. For fifteen years the archives office, now known as the Centre for Kentish Studies, has housed the Dover collection in its air-conditioned strongrooms at County Hall. During that time the Kent County Council has invested heavily in the core services of storage, conservation and public access, improving the