

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

26 air-conditioning in the strongrooms and expanding the public searchrooms. However, due to the ever-increasing number of postal and telephone queries and the public demand for its searchroom services, only a small amount of archival staff time is spent on cataloguing the large number of documents from all sources that are deposited in the Centre for Kentish Studies each year. A rough list of the Dover documents was made in 1980, shortly after the district council deposited the Dover records, but until the collection has been properly catalogued, it cannot be made available to the public. The rich heritage of Dover lies untapped and untouched.

Finally, in June 1994 Penny Brook, Manager of the Centre for Kentish Studies, and Dr. James M. Gibson of the Centre's staff organised the Dover History Project — a two-year project that will involve cataloguing the Dover archives, mounting a travelling exhibition, and hosting a public lecture and reception to launch the new Dover catalogue. Then they set out to raise the money. Seven months later a combination of grants from charities and sponsorships from Dover businesses has put the Centre for Kentish Studies well on course to reach its target of £40,000. Thus far the Centre has received £16,000 in grants from the Sir James Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust, The British Library, The Astor of Hever Trust and The Dover Society. Another £6,000 in business sponsorships has come from Dover businesses interested in preserving the town's heritage — George Hammond plc, the Dover Branch of the National Westminster Bank, The London Fancy Box Company, and Pfizer. The success of this project to re-create the history and heritage of Dover, depends in part on the financial support of local amenity societies in East Kent. Without your help, the Dover records will remain physically secure in the Centre's strongroom but practically unavailable in its searchrooms. With your help, the rich historical heritage of the town and port of Dover will be opened up to the people of Kent for generations to come. Any individual or member society of the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies interested in supporting the Dover History Project should get in touch with Mrs Penny Brook, Manager, Centre for Kentish Studies, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME16 1XQ.

DINNER GUESTS ————— JACK WOOLFORD

It has been our practice to offer visiting speakers, before introducing them to you at our meetings, an aperitif and a light meal. There they meet with our President, one or more Vice-Presidents and several members of the Committee. They are pleasant occasions which promote our image and get our meetings off to a good start. I hasten to say that we pay our own whack: only speakers are the guests of the Society.

Members who would like to take part and be informed in advance should let me know. We meet at Blake's Wine Bar in Castle Street at 17.45 for 18.00 and the current charge is £13.50. Menus are circulated in advance so that time may be saved. The next occasion will be the AGM on 24 April when our guests will be Sir Richard and Lady Knowles.