

questions on liaison with the local MP and with local and county authorities, farming, fishing, road and rail links, the port, environmental issues and, finally, on the European Parliament.

Asked how he could best help the district, he referred the audience to his local office in Ashford, saying he was always ready to talk to his constituents.

After a short interval, when tea and coffee were served, Lawrence Gage, Chairman of the society's Planning Committee and Chairman of the Millennium Steering Committee, addressed the meeting on the progress of plans for an application for Millennium funds for Dover.

The first submissions had been approved and the committee was now preparing a full application to be forwarded to the Millennium Commission by the end of April.

The plans for the project, to be called Britain's Maritime Odyssey, included a Maritime Museum, which would include a National Boat Collection from Greenwich Maritime Museum, a centre of Maritime Excellence, a maritime Observatory and a European Trade and Exhibition Centre.

All these would link with other developments either already existing or in planning stages. These include the development of the Cruise Liner Terminal, already being built by Dover Harbour Board at the Western Docks, the development of a new programme of investment by English Heritage at Dover Castle, the existing White Cliffs Experience, which will house the recently discovered Bronze Age Boat, the new Marina currently under construction and the Sea Training and Activity Centre planned for the sea front.

There would be transport links between all the centres and exhibitions, possibly including trams, cable cars and shuttle buses – even a paddle steamer! This all fitted so perfectly well with the idea of a Maritime Heritage advocated by Mark Watts that the two halves of the evening blended into such a grand vision of Dover in the year 2000, that the audience found it difficult to grasp the scale of the undertaking.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Unfortunately Dover's first application for Millennium money was turned down by the Commission. See *Planning Report*

The Dover Society's Annual General Meeting

JEREMY COPE

When I was asked to report on the 1995 meeting I felt uncertain because of all the meetings the Society holds, the AGM is the one I least enjoy. I do not look forward to the necessary formalities, a view shared I guess, by most members. I prefer meetings which foster an interest in Dover and its amenities, with illustrative slides, and the interaction of questions and answers. It is in this slightly critical and questioning vein that I prepared my personal view of the meeting.

It started well with our Chairman announced as "*Secretary*" by the gentleman who bade us rise for our guests, the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Birmingham. We can certainly boast an impressive list of speakers! Notwithstanding his new rôle, Jack Woolford stood in as Chairman and gave us his summary of the

past year's events in his own inimitable style. The Society has had a good 1994/95, with the Millennium Project, Rolls Statue, *Newsletter* as good as ever, publications in the pipeline and many other achievements that made Jack's job easier and to his liking.

He paid tribute to the various committee members who had done so much in the past year. Although a committee member, I am sure that the whole of the Society recognises the part an active and energetic committee plays in our success and the AGM is the time for the acknowledgements to be made. Among those sometimes overlooked I was pleased to hear mention of the *Newsletter*'s proofreaders, May Jones and Pam Taylor. As an accountant I appreciated the tribute to our treasurer's careful management of our funds. As a result

62 we made a substantial donation, when it was really needed, towards the preservation of the town's archives. Did members realise that Muriel Goulding makes the tea at our meetings? We are also indebted to Joan Liggett's husband Dick, who frequently helps with practical support. The members quite rightly received appreciation for their support of both general and fund-raising meetings as well as of the Society generally.

Much to my delight Budge Adams was given not one but two presents, one a painting, the other a photograph of the Rolls statue. This made him nearly speechless, but not totally. He could still respond, including a thank you to John Gerrard for harnessing the Harbour Board's resources to move Mr Rolls.

Our treasurer received high marks on my score card with her speech. Clear, concise and to the point. We must all have been impressed. Proof was the increased subscription, agreed unanimously and without comment.

Cheers for Budge again! He told us of the Dover Society certificates he is taking to Norway – to the survivors among the Norwegian sailors who were stationed in Dover during the war. This is a satisfying gesture from Dorvians to some of our true friends in this anniversary year of war's end. How many of us are aware that these Norwegian sailors are the actual donors and providers of the Christmas Tree that appears in our Market Square each year?

After the interval we heard from our guest Dick Knowles (now Sir Richard). He was the Labour Party agent in Dover for nine years in the fifties. He rose high in local government political circles and came across as the shrewd politician. He had benefited from Jack Woolford's teaching whilst in Dover and had apparently been the indirect cause of Jack's interest in amenity matters. Bill Breeze and Budge Adams, both present, were mentioned from those times past.

Dick Knowles was born a country lad, a fact which appeared to have influenced his opinion that the best form of democracy was the parish council and, more particularly, the parish meeting, with maximum participation by ordinary people. This drew comparison with the Society's stand over the parishing of Dover.

Dick had that afternoon walked around the town and spoke of his involvement in the

building of the Gateway Flats. The intention had been that the flats would be a modern match in quality with Waterloo Crescent but he felt the result was an opportunity missed.

He believed that much modern town development is based upon the supremacy of the motor car and of business, at the expense of town centres and the pedestrian. When he moved to Leeds he had been involved with the pedestrianisation of much of the centre, with associated rebuilding standards comparable to the existing quality, albeit in modern terms.

On moving to Birmingham he found the City Centre dominated by the car. Based on his previous experience in Leeds, policy was reversed. Streets and pavements belong to the people and it is the car that should be driven underground or kept to the periphery. He even tried to increase democracy in Greater Birmingham in 1984 by having a parish for each ward but was defeated by the political establishment. He believed in mixed housing estates of council tenants and private homeowners. He described in outline the European money that had been obtained for Birmingham, and its importance for the city.

Dick Knowles' speech had a party political content. It will be interesting to hear of members' reaction since we are used to comment without a political bias. Since the meeting I have pondered whether my reservations noted at the beginning were reinforced or did our members feel excited/interested/amused by the proceedings. I suspect that a proportion of the audience, judging by their body language and the odd remark, were not too happy by the end of it. If so, this is a great pity and something to which the Society's committee should give attention. Would we have liked to have heard more of Dick Knowles' observations on Dover and how his obviously wide knowledge of amenity matters in other cities could be applied to us? A good illustrative slide can, in the right circumstances, say more than a half-hour's talk. Slides could have substantially added to the description of the changes to Leeds and Birmingham. However skilful our Chairman is in dealing with the business of the meeting, we needed a more lively second half as a counterweight, with some audience participation.