

# “O & M”: – in 1582?

## *The genesis of Cambridge Road and the Pent*

The “ancestry” of Cambridge Road in Dover can well be said to stretch back to 1582. In that year what is now known as the Pent or Wellington Dock was a not very useful stretch of water, with mud banks restricting its use, bounded on its seaward side by a bank of shingle.

In 1582 Queen Elizabeth I appointed a commission to improve the harbour, paying particular attention to the area now the Pent or Wellington Dock, and prominent in the eleven-man commission were Sir Thomas Scott, Sir James Hales, Richard Barry (Lieutenant of Dover Castle) and Sir(?) Thomas Digges.

The last named, an engineer of experience and with a flair for originality, devised a number of plans and eventually it was decided to enclose this stretch of water, which had a minimum depth of twelve feet at H.W. Springs, with walls and a sluice gate to impound the water and receive the flow from the Dour. This head of water was to be used to flush out the harbour entrance and keep it navigable at all times. Up to this time there had often been less than four feet of water over the bar at the harbour entrance.

The plan adopted was for the building of a wall from (using modern place names) a point midway between the Rifles’ Monument and the SW end of the Gateway to a point approximately where now is the small roundabout at the SW end of the Esplanade. The enterprise was to be completed by the building of another wall, from the end of the Long Wall (as it came to be known) at a right-angle across the water to the shore line under the cliff. This shorter wall is now known as Union Quay but it has had various names, including the interesting ‘Snargate-Street-over-the-Water’ and, for obvious reasons, the ‘Crosswall’, a name now in use for the wall enclosing the Granville Dock.

The building of the two walls was a triumph of what is today referred to as Organisation and Method – the “O & M” in the title of this piece – or alternatively as ‘critical path analysis’, a process well-known to modern civil engineers. The work started on 15th May 1583 and the two walls met and had been “brought above high water mark” by 27th June of the same year, when Sir Thomas Scott, no doubt much fatigued by



CAMBRIDGE ROAD FROM TOP OF BURLINGTON HOUSE, 1974



MAP OF THOMAS DIGGES' PLAN FOR THE NEW WALLS

78 his dedication to the work, "fell sick upon the walls and was conveyed thence in a wagon to his house". In the six week following Sir Thomas's collapse the walls were raised a further two feet and by the middle of August, just three months from the start, "the great work was completed at the small cost of £2,700". Three years after the Pent wall was finished it was written that the walls and sluice were so perfect that "a full pent shrinketh not any whit betwixt tide and tide".

And so was laid the foundation for the area on which the Harbour Board's workshops

in Cambridge Road were built and for Cambridge Road itself and the graceful Waterloo Crescent.

The modern picture is of Cambridge Road from the top of Burlington House in Townwall Street in 19XX and the accompanying map, one of a series drawn by the author depicting the growth of the harbour, shows the Long and Cross Walls in their relationship with the mud- and sand-banks formed since the building of the earlier 'Henry VII's pier'.

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(dug up from the archive)

## Letter to the Editor

229 Folkestone Road  
Dover  
28 April 1995

Dear Editor,

Yes, I did enjoy the Dover Chat Page. Please go on with it! I find the *Newsletter*, which is the only part of the Dover Society I have contact with now, very interesting, and well-worth the subscription.

I joined during the first year, when I came to the meetings regularly, but cannot do so now, for health reasons.

I am not a real Dovorian, but I have regarded the town as home for thirty-eight

years – and my family grew up here. Sadly for me, they have settled in other areas, too far off for frequent visits.

May I suggest that you collect interesting facts or memories about the Amateur Dramatic Activities in the town? When we came here in 1957, we were thrilled by the amount and quality of the entertainment – in spite of the lack of a theatre. It certainly has dwindled since then but some of the "stars" of those days are still with us – and Ray Warner must have left some interesting records.

Thanks again for the *Newsletter*.

Yours sincerely,

EDNA M. LITTLEHALES



Did you spot this cartoon in the *Dover Express*?

To be given this recognition we must have achieved  
**FAME AT LAST!**

EDITOR

The cartoon is printed by courtesy of the artist, George Pitts and the *Dover Express*