

# 4 *The Eighth Annual General Meeting of the Dover Society*

on 22 April 1996 at St Mary's Parish Centre

LEO WRIGHT, *Hon. Secretary*

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THE EVENING of the Society's Annual General Meeting was, this year, divided into three parts : the formalities and reporting, which must be legally completed : the presentation of three awards and an illustrated talk on the achievements of IMPACT, by Julian Owen.

With such a full programme the Chairman made every effort to expedite the formalities, including, as he himself expressed it, "avoiding being carried away by his own exuberant verbosity".

We shall have to wait until Monday, 21 April 1997 before we see the Minutes with the full record of the formal proceedings. This is just a summary impression.

The voting (which was unanimous in favour) concerned a change in the constitution, designed to make room for one more member of the Executive Committee and Mr. Michael Sartin was elected. However, with regret, the Chairman had to announce two resignations: Ken Wraight – a foundation member of the Committee – and Lawrence Gage. A resignation letter from Ken was read out in which he begged us to think of the future. Every member was urged to recruit new members, at least ten years younger than themselves.

Lawrence Gage's resignation arose from a difference of opinion on the Society's best strategy for improving Dover's prospects. The Chairman paid tribute to Lawrence's invaluable contribution to the Society, his professional expertise and tireless and fearless pursuit of both the smallest and largest issues. The Committee will address his replacement as Chairman of the Planning sub-Committee at its next meeting.

The Chairman paid tribute to the Committee members and indeed the many members who had done so much to contribute to a successful year. He outlined

our relationship with Dover District Council and Dover Harbour Board, where the agreements strongly exceeded the disagreements. In particular, there has been a recent very successful meeting with Officers of the Council. Merrill's *Newsletter* has continued to project our image with distinction and the Peverley Paper, with lavish illustrations, will shortly be on sale. The production of these and a whole evening's slide show with commentary, in January, are only part of the far from small contribution of Budge Adams. Projects continue to make news; membership at 426 is at a record height; the social programme flourishes, with the addition of some 'minitrips'. The Treasurer presented a very satisfactory financial position with her usual firm clarity.

If there is to be a last quote in this very brief summary it must be the Chairman's proclamation that : "Dover must have a major millennium project : what world-famed place has a better claim?"

The formalities completed, the members proceeded to make three more Awards for 1996 – the first to Arjo Wiggins, having been made at the Christmas Feast. In the words of Lawrence Gage: "So many awards in one year must surely mean that some very good things are happening in Dover, despite the gloom and doom that some would have us believe".

The presentations were made by our President, Brigadier Maurice Atherton. The first was to the Sanctuary Housing Association for the renovation of listed buildings formerly the Royal Victoria Hospital, Dover. This combined socially valuable provision of housing for the homeless, inventive internal planning to provide good accommodation and quality restoration work to the exterior of the building. This project is a model of how best to take full advantage of a redundant yet well-loved building, which will continue to provide a valuable service.

Michael Evans, the Architect of this project, on receiving the certificate, explained the constraints – environmental, architectural and financial which govern such projects. This one had entailed four and a half year's work. He added that Dover has a number of other buildings which would benefit from similar treatment but that, unless there is a change of heart and finance from above, there will be no more such projects.

The second award was to IMPACT for the rejuvenation and general upgrading of Snargate Street, Dover. We had considered giving a general award to cover all their many different projects but decided it would be most appropriate to make an award for a specific project that best represented their work. The project had required close co-operation with the owners and users of buildings in the street and the end result shows imaginative and bold use of colours and high quality materials and detailing. The scheme has made an enormous difference to the important initial impression one has when entering the town from the A20. Julian Owen, responding on behalf of the IMPACT team expressed pleasure and appreciation at the excellent co-operative relationship which had existed between IMPACT and the Dover Society, such as had not always existed in their other locations.

The third award was to the Dover Harbour Board, in this particular case in association with IMPACT, and it was received by Jonathan Sloggett, Managing Director of the Harbour Board.

The award was for the up-grading of a portion of Dover Seafront with particular approval for the high quality materials and detailing, the imaginative and elegant design of shelters and for jointly sponsoring the Public Art Competition resulting in Ray Smith's 'On the Crest of a Wave.' The new scheme will provide a fine environment for cruise-liner passengers as they set foot on Dover soil and we look forward to the possible upgrading of the remainder of the Seafront.

With the Awards completed, we heard after the interval, from Julian Owen about the achievements of IMPACT in Dover.

The basic facts which faced them are: that Dover is a long valley town, that the A20 cuts a swathe through the town and that there remains the need for more development, notably in the St. James's area. IMPACT focused on the approaches to the town, on improving the links between various parts of the town and encouraging and supporting building improvements.

The talk was fully illustrated by a superb collection of slides – one and a half carousels of them. Many showed the "before and after" appearance of individual projects. Others showed some of the all-important employment generated by IMPACT.

Most important now for the Dover Society is what remains to be done and we were shown some of the eye-sores and areas that could be improved.

IMPACT will be departing for Folkestone before the end of the year but we shall not be left bereft because the Town Centre Management Committee has been formed with Terry Sutton, a Vice-President of the Dover Society, as Chairman. So, with the T.C.M. Committee and the Dover Society, Dover virtually has a Syndicat d'Initiative for the future.

A.G.M.s as such, whether at Lloyds of London, The Channel Tunnel or the Dover Society, are not the most popular occasions but this evening was a warm-hearted occasion and very well attended. The conversation during the interval seemed even more animated than usual.