

IMPACT

ACTION IN LOCAL IMPROVEMENT

A Sad Farewell

A FINAL REPORT from JULIAN OWEN

THE IMPACT TEAM has not fled the town boundaries and may not vacate the Castle Street premises until September. They are looking ahead to an exciting new programme in Folkestone, but there is still a lot happening in Dover and some finishing touches to apply.

Meanwhile, after Julian Owen had addressed the AGM of the Dover Society in April, I asked him to suggest his "shopping list" for Dover. Here he elaborates on some of the points he made in his April talk and contributes some of his own views on the future of the town.

Sadly, this is the last IMPACT report for the Newsletter and thus an opportunity to thank Julian and his team for their work in Dover. We shall miss them. EDITOR.

MAKING THE TOWN WORK

YOUR SOCIETY has been very kind to the IMPACT team, making our short stay in Dover a pleasant one, not least with the unexpected presentation at the AGM of an Award for our work in Snargate St. and the Grand Shaft. We were very pleased to be associated with the Sea Front and Royal Victoria Hospital projects, which also received Awards. Those of you who patiently endured the talk and slide show at the AGM will remember that I talked about some of the areas that still need attention, as part of a continuous commitment to conserve and develop Dover's precious assets – but with a "health warning" that these were my own personal comments.

In talking about some of the things that IMPACT set out to do in Dover and Deal, and the reasons why we chose them, I emphasised the priority for projects which affected the way the town works as well as the way it looks. Towns are alive, they need constantly to change and adapt, responding both to opportunities and a need for continuity.

Bearing in mind that there are no immediate plans or budgets for continued environmental improvement, and even the Conservation Area Partnership scheme has had to be put on hold, perhaps now is an appropriate time to draw breath and take a

longer view, but be ready to lobby for continued improvements of the town.

I think we need to look beyond a simple "shopping list" of one-off schemes, and identify areas where change might be encouraged, or needs to be responded to, as well as areas where special conservation measures are urgently required. For example, one of the key challenges we faced, coming to Dover when we did, was to try to respond to the major change in the whole structure of the town brought about by the construction of the A20.

Essential though it was to the town's future, the new road presented a whole fresh set of challenges, not just in appearance, as Dover's new "front door", but also in how to achieve the regeneration of the Western Docks and Seafront not as a separate area but very much as part of the town.

Integrating the redevelopment of the Russell Street area with the town centre is also very clearly an important issue, as are the longer term challenges faced in the Charlton Centre area. I would like to think that the continued activity in Town Centre Management will go no further than the day-to-day issues and help bring about the right response to these opportunities, as well as a means to bringing about a number of minor improvements.



DOVER SEAFRONT OPENING 23.1.96

FLYING A KITE FOR YORK STREET

I think I may have horrified some of the audience and some of the readers of the *Dover Express* with sweeping references to the re-planning of the York Street area, and I was certainly "flying a kite", but why not? It is clear that a lot remains to be done in this area, where historic streets were swept away after the war and sensitive archaeology remains to be displayed to better advantage. To me, this is an unnecessarily unattractive edge to the town centre, and now that the A20 takes another route is a rare opportunity to restore human scale to this part of the town.

I therefore questioned whether the right course would be merely to tidy up some of the surrounding sites – Queen Street, New Street, Saxon Street and Priory Street for example – or to take a more comprehensive look at what is arguably now unnecessarily a dual carriageway, and could provide much better surroundings to the White Cliffs Experience, with better coach

parking, and attractive links through to the Market Square and Cannon Street. I don't count myself amongst those who want to see the demolition of one side of the Market Square to "open the view". The buildings there are not of exceptional value but they do have a scale that helps to provide the Market Square with its urban quality and focus as a space. Similarly, although I quite understand why people were keen to get rid of advertising hoardings, I think this is only part of the solution for the York Street corner, which cries out for sensitive redevelopment, again to regain some of the urban form.

WESTERN DOCKS - A MORE PROMISING FUTURE

In the last few weeks, interesting proposals have started to come forward for the regeneration of the Wellington Dock area, with the first phase of amended proposals for factory shops. Personally, I welcome the re-use and renovation of the dockside

22 buildings, especially if they are linked more firmly to the town centre. We don't have to see a massive new road junction to serve the development, and much of the water area can be retained. Later phases may prove more problematic, but what we can see so far could link very well with the pedestrianised New Bridge area, and is an added impetus for continued attention to Bench Street.

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

In my talk, the main issue I raised on the town centre was the subject of what we have come to call the "missing link" – the area at the heart of the centre around Boots, which still suffers more than its fair share of traffic problems and in my view weakens the enjoyment of a fine pedestrian environment. We still hope to include some minor improvements to Worthington Street in our programme, to give at least some impression of greater continuity to the shopping area, but in the longer term it would be good to see at least some traffic removed and the street re-designed to give it a more pedestrian feel.

Town Centre Management has proved to be a popular challenge for candidates for the newly created job of Town Centre Co-ordinator, and applications have been flooding in. Candidates are being asked to demonstrate strong organisational skills and the drive to achieve results along with determination and a high degree of self-motivation and initiative.

Dover Town Management Company will appoint its first Co-ordinator towards the end of July and the new organisation will be run from 7 Castle Street, in an office generously donated to the Company for its first year, by John Ullman, one of a list of local sponsors which includes Dover Harbour Board, Boots the Chemists, Marks and Spencer, Arjo Wiggins, Travel Market, Hammonds and the Charlton Centre (Park Rutland Ltd) as well as the County and District Councils.

The Co-ordinator will assist the Company's Board of Directors to deliver a demanding business plan which will continue the excellent work already undertaken by local people and businesses under the guidance of the IMPACT team. We are delighted that all the hard work in setting up a local partnership of this kind to manage town centre issues has come to fruition and we look forward to launching the new company on the next stage of its journey to bring greater prosperity and enjoyment to all who live in and use its centre.

WORK GOES ON

In the meantime, you will have realised, however, that IMPACT projects are still receiving finishing touches in both Dover and Deal and work has been progressing in areas such as New Bridge, York Street Corner, Victoria Crescent and in Deal at the entrance to the Pier. In addition, a fresh project should soon start at Flying Horse Lane, adding to the group of projects along the riverside. At the AGM, I advocated a cautious approach to the ideas for a ramp on the riverside walk near the Bowling Green – not because I didn't think it was a good idea, but because it would be all too easy to spoil what at present is a charming scene with an over-engineered solution. Here are some of the things happening at the moment.

YORK STREET CORNER

The interesting blue wavy railings will certainly have caught your attention at the York Street Corner. Fronting the path around the entrance area of the Nu-Age Night Club, they are part of a package of visual improvements at one of the most prominent corners in the town, achieved in partnership with the Nu-Age Club and the Unitarian Church. Shrubs and hedging are yet to be put in place, to round off the transformation of a corner of Dover which gives vital first impressions of the town to visitors and passers-by. >

VICTORIA CRESCENT and LONDON ROAD

Another scheme, now finished apart from the planting, is the repair of the walls and stone capping at Victoria Crescent, and restoration of the railings. We have rebuilt the sections of the piers which were in disrepair and have added decorative ball tops to each section. A new railing crafted by a local blacksmith sits atop the wall and the entrances to the Crescent have been fitted with new granite channels and granite setts and paved with blue engineering bricks to match the other side of the road. Together this project and the work on the Royal Victoria Hospital gives a much needed boost to this part of High Street and opens up an opportunity for façade improvements to the buildings themselves in the future. Soft landscaping works will follow at the same time and as part of the same contract as those for the York Street corner.

London Road as a whole remains an area in need of continued and sustained action, in terms both of conservation and land use; we shouldn't ignore the fact that it continues to support a myriad of small businesses, as well as being an area of significant quality. I would have liked to have seen a repeat of the kind of improvements we were able to bring about in Snargate Street

NEW BRIDGE

A great deal of delay has built up here, not through any misjudgement on our part but through the inadequacies of the underground service mapping supplied initially by the public utilities. It was essential to move water and gas supplies before work could get fully under way and this put the contract back by quite a number of weeks. These frustrations are now behind us and, at last, emerging from the subway into New Bridge one is presented with an entirely new vista. The improvements here have created a spacious, safe environment for pedestrians heading towards the seafront. The finish-

ing touches will shortly include some striking new lighting columns made by craftsman Ray Hudson. Again simple robust planting will be added, along with the work in Victoria Crescent and at the York Street corner.

SEAFRONT PROMENADE

We were delighted to receive news that Ray Smith's sculpture 'On the Crest of a Wave' was nominated for the County's Rouse Kent Public Art Award. The works of art nominated can be anything from statues to sculptures, ornate street lamps to overhead shelters, or murals, but they must be on permanent public display. The award, now in its third year, is sponsored by West Malling's Kings Hill developers Rouse Kent and is supported by Kent County Council and South East Arts.

Members of the IMPACT team were invited to the award dinner on 3 June and were delighted to be associated with Dover Harbour Board in the receipt of the "Rouse Chair". We have received many complimentary comments concerning the newly designed promenade and it is a joy to see people sitting around Ray Smith's sculpture obviously enjoying the setting, the summer sun and soaking up the atmosphere of the spirit of Dover. The whole subject of Channel Swimming is to be commemorated in a specially designed set of plaques on a plinth near the sculpture.

We look forward to the continued improvement of the promenade in due course, and have passed on to the DHB the latest suggestion for **another** statue, celebrating the first crossing of the Channel by a lady pilot – the American, Helen Quimby, whose picture graces the US 50 cent stamp. Get your teeth into this one, Budge!

ARCHCLIFFE FORT

Here, the Emmaus group are working hard not only to achieve a worthwhile project in its own right but also to put the historic site back into effective use. Our rôle has been to work with their architects

to upgrade the frontage, and once again we have shared the frustration of underground services not being where they are supposed to be.

CASTLE HILL ROAD

Many of you will have had fun on the traffic obstacle race running up and down Castle Hill Road recently. We are confidently assured by our K.C.C. Highways colleagues that the packet of safety measures, which IMPACT has been able to add to by way of upgraded materials and better quality design (such as the lighting columns) will be finished by the end of this week (28 June).

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN DEAL

The Deal Chamber of Commerce has realised that although Deal Town Centre works very well now, complacency should not be allowed to set in and it has recognised the value of working together with all sections of the town to continue to keep Deal firmly in business. Four members of the IMPACT team and some members of the Joint Committee, helped run a local event on 7 March, as a result of which working groups are now looking at key promotional and development issues affecting the town centre. One of these activities involves the production of a Town Centre Shopping Guide which will assist in attracting visitors/customers to the town as a destination. The Working Group involved with the production of the guide will also involve itself in the promotion of planned events.

Recent improvement works in Deal have coincidentally involved two town centre churches.

Church of

St. GEORGE the MARTYR, DEAL

The first, St. George the Martyr in High Street, has followed IMPACT carrying out reconstruction and improvement works to pavements outside the main gate, including a secluded garden for the blind. Now the church, with IMPACT help, plans other work within the churchyard, including re-paving, landscaping, bicycle stands and a lighting scheme which will illuminate the paths around the Church – and possibly a flood-lighting scheme for the east elevation fronting High Street.

DISABLED ACCESS

VICTORIA BAPTIST CHURCH

A grant has been awarded to the Victoria Baptist Church in Victoria Road. Two disabled access ramps are proposed to the front and side entrances. Materials to be used have been specified to be in keeping with the appearance of this Victorian building.

DEAL PIER

Last but not least, work is due to be completed this month on a major scheme around the forecourt to Deal Pier. Taking its cue from the 1950s design, and following a number of design meetings with local groups, attractive new paving and extended planters, with specially designed new curved seats, enhance the seafront. The District Council next have the pleasant duty to use to best advantage a substantial bequest specifically for a new feature for the site, which could well be a new piece of art to rival Dover's. ◊

East Kent Hospice Benefits from the work of Society Members

Recently several members of the Society assisted at a Dover Museum Quiz for Dover Harbour Board, who, in appreciation of our help donated £100 to the Society. It was decided to give this unexpected bonus to support the East Kent Hospice, which had already received £150 from the Society on the occasion of the Vardon Organ Recital.
