

The 1997 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

REPORTED BY TERRY SUTTON

THERE WAS an excellent attendance at the 9th Annual General Meeting of the Dover Society on 28 April at St. Mary's Parish Centre, when the guest speaker was Keith Parfitt, the "home-grown" Dover archæologist.

No one found fault with the minutes of the previous AGM and there were no matters arising.

Chairman Jack Woolford welcomed increasing membership, up by 15 on last year to 440 - thanks largely to the efforts of membership secretary, Sheila Cope. Jack recalled the successful launch of John Peverley's book, *Dover's Hidden Fortress*, and said the Society might order a reprint - about 800 of the first print of 1,000 copies already having been sold.

The chairman spoke highly of the links forged with the new Dover Town council, thanked Budge Adams for providing information about Dover boundary stones, and referred to the input by Society members in assisting Dover Town Centre Management with shopping surveys. Financial help had been given to the conservation of Dover Archives, to Crabble Corn Mill Trust and to the East Kent Hospice.

Looking to the near future the chairman reported the society's initiative in installing a memorial on the Prince of Wales Pier to the late Sir Clifford Jarrett and also to placing a plaque at the cruise liner terminal to mark the landing of the spot where the Unknown Warrior was landed in 1920.

The chairman said that the possibility of going on the world-wide Internet was being discussed.

Thanks were expressed for various projects to John Owen, John Gerrard and Joan Liggett, and especially to Budge Adams without whose help the society would be unable to produce the Newsletter so economically.

Presentations were made by Mrs Wendi Atherton, on behalf of the Society, to Lawrence Gage for all his hard but abortive

work on the Millennium project for Dover, and to Ken Wraight (in his absence) for his long service as a committee member.

Officers reelected were: Jack Woolford (chairman), John Gerrard and Jeremy Cope (vice-chairmen), Leo Wright (secretary), Jennifer Gerrard (treasurer), Sheila Cope (membership), Merril Lilley (Newsletter editor), Joan Liggett (social secretary), Jeremy Cope (chairman-planning), John Owen (chairman-projects), Terry Sutton (media secretary), Sybil Standing (archivist) and committee members, Budge Adams, Adrian Galley, Mike McFarnell, Margaret Robson, and new member, Captain Michael Weston.

Paul Bennett, Director of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) was to have given the talk but he was engaged in a dig in France so Keith Parfitt admirably took on the duty. The subject was the Townwall Street Dig. Keith explained that the excavations were at the BP petrol filling station at Townwall street and that BP contracted CAT to carry out the archaeological work. It cost BP about £250,000. The task proved to be the biggest archaeological dig in Dover for 20 years - the biggest since the York Street task.

It was not long before they found, just one foot below the tarmac, thirteenth century remains. They discovered multi-layers of chalk, floors covered with occupational levels which proved rather mystifying. They eventually came to the conclusion that these were the floors of successive wooden-framed houses, built between 1150 and 1250, with each generation constructing the floor on top of the previous one.

8 Mr. Parfitt suggested it was possible these were the hovels occupied by the army of workers who, about that time, were building the keep of Dover Castle on the hill above. There was also evidence that fisher folk lived in this waterfront area of Dover.

CAT was now busy researching 40,000 pieces of excavated pottery (including imported pottery) and 4,500 samples taken from the site. And Mr. Parfitt revealed

what may have been a dark Mediæval scandal – the finding of two skeletons of young babies (possibly premature) concealed beneath the chalk floors. This was particularly strange because there was a Christian burial ground only a hundred or so yards away.

The meeting ended just before ten o'clock with thanks to the chairman for the way he had conducted the meeting and to Mr. Parfitt for a most interesting talk.

The audited Financial Statement is printed at pages 34 and 35

MARCH MEETING DISCUSSION GROUPS

After the interval members divided into four groups, The four main subjects for discussion were as follows.

1. The Future of Dover Castle
2. The Proposed " Art Trail"
3. Dover's Empty Shops
4. Suggestions for Future Meetings.

1. The Future of Dover Castle

The discussion of Dover Castle followed Ken Scott's talk in the first half of the evening. Members thought there should be improved links between town and castle. Regular bus services between Priory Station, Pencester Road and Dover Castle should be provided. "Park and ride" facilities were suggested and also shuttle buses from car parks.

One group put forward the idea of an Information Centre about Dover within the castle. Another group thought there should be advertising in the Pas de Calais area. Another suggested improvements in the castle, such as the restoration of armour and furnishing of parts of the Keep, would be very popular with the public.

2. The Art Trail

Members in three groups voiced their rejection of this idea, saying they liked the cliffs as they were and that any attempt to install statues would be unwelcome and subject to problems of vandalism. One group supported the idea, providing the trail harmonised with the surroundings and was made as resistant as possible to vandals.