

14 almost a free lunch. The food was provided by Tesco's. On Wednesday nearly replete with peppered sausage, I listened for a time to the Peelsburgers, members of Kent Police Band who performed traditional German Oompah music, involving large wind instruments and percussion. This would have been a static performance but for the attempts of the leader to persuade those watching to get up and dance. Some children accepted his challenge but the weather was cool and overcast and people were in a workaday mood.

Dance had been promised on Thursday afternoon but in De Bradley galeria Africa was celebrated by two colourfully-dressed singers accompanying themselves on cone-shaped drums which they beat with their hands. Perhaps these men were just representative of the group Zuriya and such a performance is better suited to outdoors; one would need to be

an expert in this type of music to comment on its quality.

By Friday Tesco's staff had sensibly moved their stall next to the stage facing the fountain and their cheese and wine attracted a steady stream of recipients who provided a captive audience for a French accordionist and a pierrot-style mime artiste. This was not Marcel Marceau nor did she have his advantages but she engaged and amused small groups at a time.

Our well-known street cleaner went away smiling after she pinned a tricolour to his barrow. Warm weather is crucial to such open-air events and they were brave attempts to introduce life and colour to the Market Square.

I hope that neither the organisers nor partakers felt discouraged as they undoubtedly provided entertainment for visitors with children and others who had time to linger.

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## *Organiser's Review*

DONNA SOWERBY, ARTS AND EVENTS MANAGER

Every year I approach the opening day of the Festival of Dover with the same trepidation. Even after six years the feelings and questions are no different - Will the programme be well received and will people support it?

1997 brought its own challenges, firstly with the introduction of a new colleague in the team to learn the general running of the annual celebration and, secondly, the everyday problem of tighter budgets and tougher sponsorship! Lisa Webb took over from Sarah Pascoe as the Council's Arts Development Officer in July 1996 and introduced her own new elements into the programme.

The theme, "New Horizons", encompassed world cultures, travel and partnerships across the seas, the programme including artistes representing many corners of the globe, from the opening Caribbean Mardi Gras Day (with appropriate sunny weather) to European countries - an armchair traveller's delight and almost all free!

We reduced the number of days of the event and many people questioned this decision and also asked why the festival was not staged in half term. The main reason was that the festival has always provided a very strong educational pack-

age for local schools, giving them the opportunity to be a part of the festivities and experience new art forms in the classroom. This continued in 1997 with keen enthusiasm from teachers to host the events. However, with the key emphasis on the Town Centre Management initiative, it has already been proposed to move the 1998 Festival of Dover to the half-term holiday period, providing more time for families and holiday makers to join in the fun.

I had a number of favourites for 1997. I'm sure that anyone who popped into the Market Square during the lunchtimes would agree that the Tesco's food and wine tasting was a welcome addition to the programme. The evening performance by the Italian Festival Ensemble provided a platform for the area's talent to shine. The new White Cliffs theatre was the setting for a passionate performance by "Flamenco Express", an outstanding Spanish theatre and dance company.

On British Day the Page-Mason Company, based in Broadstairs, created and performed a beautiful programme of dance, drama and song from around the British Isles in a show entitled "Interweave". The same afternoon the Deal-based Footlights Youth Theatre presented an upbeat and contemporary version of Macbeth, under the direction of the talented Michael Corbridge.

However, my first choice for 1997 can only be the open air street theatre production of "Paperboat Journey", created, written and performed by students from Astor Secondary School, together with younger pupils from Astor and Temple Ewell Primary Schools. The Council's Schools Art Project was for this year incorporated into the Festival, providing a finale to the festivities in the town. A local professional theatre company - Strange Cargo - in association with jazz musician, Peter Cook, staged a two week residency on combined arts,



PAPER BOAT JOURNEY, Pencester Gardens

PHOTO: *by courtesy of* PETER SOWERBY

16 including craft, music, dance, drama and theatre skills training. Over 100 children were involved, working closely with staff, with the support of parents and friends.

There was something special in the atmosphere on the evening before the big day, when participants, busy making final preparations to costumes and sets, decided spontaneously to break out into song and performance in one of the Harbour Board's warehouse sheds. It was obvious that these young people had really gained from the project, learned to work together, discovered talents previously unknown, shown dedication to and passion for the project and still had fun!

On the night the heavy winds dropped and temperatures nudged a little higher as we assembled in the Market square with a flotilla of flickering paper boat lanterns. The procession led us to Pencester Gardens, transformed for a couple of hours into a magical kingdom

of light, sound and movement, as we were taken on a journey of discovery with magical creatures, mighty machines, shipwrecks and a tree glazed shadow puppet show. The spell binding performance was then topped by a magnificent Fireworks Spectacular to keep everyone awake a little longer! My philosophy has always been that unless young people are introduced to the Arts at a young age they will never truly understand the richness they can bring to our lives. It was a fitting finale to the Festival. It had opened and closed on a high, with excellent support from residents and visitors.

Tomorrow we will begin all over again with plans for 1998. The theme will be "Coastal Landscapes", looking at and addressing environmental issues through the arts and events programme. It is planned to run the Festival of Dover from Bank Holiday Saturday 23rd May until Saturday 30th May -- so make a note in your diary!

## Membership News – Summer 1997

THANKS TO MEMBERS – the majority – who have now paid their subscriptions. To save postage, cheques and/or cash put through our door will not normally be acknowledged, though I am happy to provide new membership cards at the AGM or on receipt of a stamped and addressed envelope. Also, for economy reasons, we try to limit bank transactions and cheques may take some weeks to show up on a statement. Please do not hesitate to telephone me if there are any queries.

We are becoming more and more international and have members in the USA, New Zealand, Norway, Belgium and Australia, one recruited as a result of our advertisement in the Dover Town Centre Shopping Guide, which I hope will continue to be published. Nevertheless, word of mouth is the most effective means of gaining new members, so please mention our activities to your friends,

The Committee is trying to show that *all members* are welcome at our meetings and we intend to provide a positive greeting to anyone coming along for the first time. Since 'Society' includes companionship we hope to live up to our name and at our October meeting we especially welcome all new members who are able to attend that first meeting of the winter season. One of the committee members will be standing at the door and we would ask new members to identify themselves as they arrive.

Since the last issue of the *Newsletter* we have welcomed: Mr A, Brooks, Mr R. Kennett, Mr & Mrs L. Wood, Mr & Mrs R. Evans, Mr P. Waelput, Mrs T. Hirst, Mr M. Igglesden, Mr & Mrs H. Gordon and Mrs P. Mayes.

SHEILA R. COPE, *Membership Secretary*