

## The March Meeting . . . . Merrill Lilley

THE MEETING ON MARCH 16 might, it was suggested, be described as a "Dover Night", as it consisted of two talks on very different aspects of Dover. The first talk was by Lillian Kay, on her memories of growing up in the old "Pier District" of Dover in the nineteen twenties. Lillian was born in Dover, has lived here most of her life and was on the staff at Dover Girls' Grammar School for 31 years, the final 12 as Headmistress.

The second talk, on the fortifications of Dover and in particular those on the Western Heights, was by Jon Iveson, Assistant Curator at Dover Museum. Jon came to join the museum team from Aldershot as a military historian and has been at Dover Museum for nine years. There is, of course, plenty of military history in Dover to absorb Jon's interests and he is now compiling a series of articles for the museum on aspects of his research. The first of these, on Fort Burgoyne, is included in this issue of the Newsletter. I hope there will be more to follow.

Although the talks were on two such different subjects there was some overlap in content, as each speaker felt a need to sketch in a brief historical background, before proceeding to the main focus of the talk.

Lillian started with reference to the Roman occupation of Dover, when the sea came up to the Market Square. She reminded us of the division of the Eastbrook and the Westbrook, of the lives of the fishermen, of the formation of the haven called Paradise Harbour, of the building of the various piers and the contributions of several monarchs, notably Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, to the development of the harbour as we know it today. She read, with great relish, the detailed descriptions from Bavington Jones, of the building of the sea walls in

the time of Elizabeth I in 1596, so that we marvelled at the prodigious work performed by hundreds of labourers of all kinds, each trade with its own fixed rate for the job.

Then she came to the central theme of her talk, the area of "Little Paradise", the Pier District which she remembered so well; Snargate Street, Strond Street, Limekiln Street and the Pent (now Wellington Dock) were her childhood haunts. Her father worked in the yard making nuts and bolts for the packet boats. The area where her father lived in 1889 "was all pubs. If you wanted company you went to the pub or joined the Methodists." The family owned the house on the Pent bought by her great-grandfather in the late eighteenth century. The coming of the railways marked the beginning of the decline of the Pier District.

Lillian Kay's house in Douro Place



When Lillian was three months old, her family moved house to a quay by the Granville Dock, where coal and timber boats unloaded their cargoes. Later, in 1928, when part of Snargate Street was pulled down, they moved again, this time to Douro Place (See picture), the house which holds most memories for Lillian.

From this period she has a wealth of recollections; of summer on the beach; of tennis, bathing and bandstands; of trams; of breakerwater swimming; of annual regattas; of regular concerts by the bands of one of the three resident Dover regiments and 'beating of the retreat' each Wednesday on the seafront; of roller-skating, dancing, community singing. Her memory of this part of her childhood is that "there was something on every day". Her audience, having relived the years with her, were reluctant to break for the interval.

After the break, Jon Iveson, talked about fortifications in Dover. He started with a reminder of Dover's earliest history and the importance of sea routes for traders and invaders. He described the coming of the Romans to Dover and their subsequent occupation and building of their three forts, which they occupied, abandoned, then returned and rebuilt, between 130 AD and 208 AD. A fort held 10 barracks of 64 men (the crew of a galley). The Roman Pharoses, or lighthouses, were built between 120 and 130 AD.

After the Romans left, about 400 AD, there was little to report in the Dark Ages which followed. At the time of the Norman Conquest, 1066, William first burned Dover and thereafter strengthened its fortifications.

It was not until 1185, that Henry II was responsible for the building of the Keep at Dover Castle, at a cost of £8000, the king's income for a year! From this time onwards there is plenty of historical detail on Dover's fortifications, with the changes and additions to the castle over the centuries and later the installation of various fortifications on the Western Heights from the mid-eighteenth century onwards. These included the Citadel, the Drop Redoubt and the Grand Shaft. Jon gave his audience a comprehensive introduction to all these features, but, as he pointed out, each of them merits a full address to do it justice.

Dover is so rich in history that a full discussion of its fortifications would fill volumes. However, we are fortunate to have Jon working at the museum and he has agreed to contribute a series of articles to the Newsletter, each one dealing with one aspect of Dover's fortifications. The first of these, on Fort Burgoyne, appears in this issue.

At the end of this information-packed evening, the Chairman thanked both speakers for their valuable contributions, pointing out that, as ever, the old Dovorians and the newcomers, like himself, had much to offer to the town.

## Membership News

S. R. COPE

*Membership Secretary*

At the time of writing we have 427 members and 90% have paid their subscriptions which have been pursued more promptly this financial year. Subscriptions provide the backbone of our funding and now that we are faced with realistic newsletter costs it is even more crucial that money is gathered in on time to earn interest and to enable the treasurer to get effectively. Fortunately we have some reserves and the committee is looking at new methods to maintain our sound finances without asking members for increased contributions. Several members outside the area voluntarily pay extra for postage and this is always appreciated.



We have welcomed to membership Mr D Lowe, Miss A Lingard, Mrs P Yeomans, Mr and Mrs E Thomas and record with much regret the deaths of Captain W Hoar, Mrs C Staveley and Mr K Lawson.