

# Review of the Dover Festival 1999 19

• • • • • Donna Sowerby • • • • •  
ARTS & EVENTS MANAGER, DDC

**T**he Dover Festival celebrated its 8th birthday this May with another action packed programme of events and the same old wet weather forecast!

Each year the Festival programme adapts to meet community needs and expectations - as far as the budget allows! It was through our consultation last year that young people of the district requested more opportunities to 'have a go' at popular art forms or to further develop their artistic skills.

Not wishing to discourage their enthusiasm for the arts the team looked at past Festival events and the more recent introduction of various holiday arts workshops. Finally, the programme for 1999 was created - a new look, yet again, for the Dover Festival.

The celebrations opened with the ever popular family fun weekend of professional European street theatre, the famous Teddy Bear's Picnic and a day of traditional seaside entertainment on the Bank Holiday Monday. Five days of young people's workshops, training and performance followed, with collaborative dance projects led by well known choreographers, music professionals and the second part of the combined arts trilogy - 'The Dreaming Sea' - with Strange Cargo Arts Company.

Adults were encouraged to take part in the Channel Theatre's "Open Stages '99" programme, a series of theatre related events and workshops designed to stimulate interest in writing, performing and directing for stage. Unfortunately attendances were a little low, so maybe we should choose a different art form in the years ahead?

Music, dance and song combined with good food and drink at the Coward and Gershwin Centenary Cabarets staged at the Churchill Hotel, performing to a full house over two nights. Dover Town Council's 60's Night was a great success, and the Evacuees'

Reunion sold out in little over two hours!

The package was topped with a good range of walks and cycle rides, exhibitions and competitions - thanks to the continuing support of local organisations, attractions and businesses.

After eight years of Festival events with, no doubt, almost a thousand activities how can you select a favourite? I have to say that



*Fun at the evacuees reunion - De Bradelei Wharf Shopping Centre*

the performance of 'The Dreaming Sea' at Dover Castle was by far the highlight of this programme for me. As a member of the audience it is so difficult to imagine the challenges set by any project to achieve the quality experienced on the opening night. The artistes and technicians of Strange Cargo Arts Company had been working around the clock in the weeks leading to the production to ensure the young people, amateur and professional artists taking part were well rehearsed.

With a number of changes and adjustments made to the programme, we were close to tears when on dress rehearsal night the weather was grim with winds of gale force 9 and temperatures dipped to 10c - would the show have to be cancelled?



*The Jelly Rollers in action at  
'Beside the Seaside' festivities*

Thursday evening finally arrived. The sky was crystal clear, the winds had dropped and the temperature rose (a little!). The performance from everyone involved was magical: from the impressive sculptures and haunting musical score, to the choreography, special effects and creativity of such a contemporary piece of work which the cast and crew had worked so hard to achieve.

I hope some of you had the chance to see the production, and if so, I do hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. For me, it is so rewarding to see young people, some with little or no arts experiences, become a valued part of a production, working alongside professionals to achieve the final result.

Next year the Dover Festival will change again to enable the Arts & Events team to stage something a little different for the Millennium year. So keep an eye on the local press for exciting news of the 'Vision 2000 - A New Millennium' programme of celebrations.

## OPEN DAY

**Sunday 12 September**

*The surviving dissenters meeting house in Dover.*

*Learn something of its intriguing history,  
see the simple beauty of its interior*

## UNITARIAN CHURCH DOVER

Grade II Listed Building

**12 - 4pm**

*Gallery • Box Pews • Holdich Pipe Organ  
Art Work • Music • Old Documents  
Baptism/Burial Records*

**REFRESHMENTS - ADMISSION FREE**

**SNARGATE/YORK STREET ROUNDABOUT**

**Enquiries: 01303 276916**

## DOVER PAGEANT 29 & 30 August 1999



To celebrate the end of the millennium in style by telling the story of Dover through narration, music, dance and colourful costumes in the beautiful 12th century grounds of Dover College.

We need more help from members for our next project which is participation in the Dover pageant to be held in the grounds of Dover College in a few weeks' time.

The Pageant itself will run for two hours from 2.30pm and, on both days, the Society tent will be in action from 1.45pm until the completion of the Pageant.

In addition to the volunteers with a sense of fun who will be dressing in Napoleonic period costumes (provided) for the Wellington slot, we also need:

- stewards in the hospitality tent
- contributions of home-made refreshments to offer for sale to members and friends who visit the tent during the Pageant
- donations of prizes for our tombola stall.

As this is a two day event this year we need lots of helpers. Offers of help, please, to John or Ann Owen on 01304 202207 or to any committee member.