

THE SOCIETY'S MILLENNIUM PROJECTS

Two Historic Plaques Installed in Dover

The first of The Dover Society blue plaques - marking historic sites in the town - have at last gone up. More will follow.

It was in February 1998 that I suggested to our committee that the erection of blue plaques should be our main millennium project. This was agreed and then the work started! It took two years of hard work by Jeremy and Sheila Cope to negotiate the production of the plaques, to win agreement from the property owners, to satisfy insurance requirements and to persuade others to help us financially with the project.

So it was with delight that a group of members met in Taswell Street one bright morning in February this year to watch Dover's mayor, Councillor Margaret Sansum, install the first plaque that marked the area where the first bomb ever to fall on Britain exploded. As the mayor pointed out she could not really unveil the plaque because there was no veil over it!

The proceedings began with a welcome by our President, Brigadier Maurice Atherton, who said it was hoped the plaques would add to every Doverian's pride in the town's history as well as creating a series of tourist attractions.

The mayor kindly paid tribute to the society for its initiative and said Dover Town Council was pleased to help financially with the project.

Peter Johnson, one of our Vice-Presidents, detailed the history of the first bomb, on Christmas Eve 1914, and put forward his belief that it might have been the first bomb to drop on a town anywhere in the world. He related how, with the help of the late George Youden, a

Report by Terry Sutton

senior Dover solicitor and the use of a Dover

Express 1914-18 bomb and shell map, they had pinpointed the impact spot as in the garden of what is now I Taswell Close.

The short ceremony was rounded off by our chairman Jeremy Cope thanking all who had contributed financially, and in other ways, to make the project successful. The ceremony was well covered by the media with both radio (BBC Radio Kent) and newspapers represented.

The second plaque, on the Lloyd's TSB bank in Castle Street, was installed three days later by Councillor Frank Woodbridge MBE, chairman of Dover District Council. This plaque marked the spot where the last of more than 2,000 enemy shells, fired from the French coast, hit Dover in September, 1944.

Councillor Woodbridge, born only 200 yards away from the spot, gave a dramatic account of life in wartime Dover and described what pre-war Castle Street looked like. He said he hoped the plaque would remind future generations of the sacrifice of Dover people during those exciting but deadly times. Our member Joe Harman also spoke about the war years in Dover and described the reaction to the first shell to hit Dover in 1940.

Dover District Council and Lloyd's TSB contributed towards the cost of the Castle Street plaque. The ceremony concluded pleasantly with a presentation of photographs to the Lloyd's TSB manager John Mackie. The framed photographs to be hung in the Castle Street premises were the work of our Vice-President Budge Adams, now 90, who also recalled living in the area in his youth.



Our Chairman Jeremy Cope and his wife Sheila, Chairman of the Plaques Sub-committee

Photo: Terry Sutton/Dover Express