

THE MILLENNIUM ESSAY COMPETITION

••••• Report by Merril Lilley •••••

AS REPORTED IN NEWSLETTER 36 the Essay competition, open to the sixth forms of Dover secondary schools, was won by Amy Packman of Dover Grammar School for Girls. Amy received a book token for £50, awarded by the Society, and the school received £100 to buy books. The runner-up, Suzanne Adkins, received a book token for £10 given by the Editor.

On 6th December 1999 three members of the Society, President Brigadier Maurice Atherton, Chairman, Jeremy Cope, and Editor, Merril Lilley, went to the school to attend morning assembly. Brigadier Atherton presented the prizes and afterwards we had coffee with the Headteacher, Mrs. Bell and were then taken on a guided tour of the school by the two prize winners, Amy and Suzanne. Later a Dover Express photographer attended to take a picture of the winners and the event was reported in the paper the following week.

We greatly enjoyed our tour of the school and were impressed with everything we saw, especially the new library and the facilities available to the sixth-formers for study and recreation. We would like to thank the Headteacher, Mrs Bell, and the Head of History, Miss Gail Swinston, for their hospitality and to congratulate the two prize winners and thank them for the time they spent entertaining us.

THE ESSAYS

Among the essays submitted from the school there were some very interesting ideas presented in answer to the question as to how Dover could build upon its historic past to benefit the town in the next century.

Amy Packman advocated that a lot more should be done to promote existing attractions in Dover and to bring in more visitors. She thought that there could be more seasonal festivals and displays, particularly at Dover Castle. She suggested aerial development; viewing the town by balloon, helicopter or glider. Her essay,

which includes many ideas for preserving and improving the town's image, can be read in full in Newsletter 36.

Suzanne Adkins in her essay had other enterprising ideas. She wanted more imaginative and sophisticated ways of advertising Dover's attractions. She suggested that, instead of a fountain, the Market Square should have a four-sided, thick-screened television set, showing images of Dover's historic sites.

She decried the litter and pollution in the town and called for a massive clean-up and improved maintenance of historic buildings. She says, "we need to improve upon the evidence of the past before it is completely destroyed".

Another idea is to erect a large plaque with an inscribed time line, which would present information about the past simply and effectively and could be easily up-dated.

Key attractions, like the Castle and Old Town Gaol, should have more opportunities for hands-on experience and for re-enactments of historic events. She says, "We have entered the age of seeing-by-doing. The tourists and general public want to be able to experience life as it was, not just hear about it".

Other essays also put forward useful suggestions. Emma Lee Yarwood thought we should have festivals to celebrate different periods in our history. She suggested package tours of historic Dover and the use of local people as tour guides, co-ordinators and bus drivers. This could involve part timers and provide employment for some who are currently unemployed and thus boost the economy.

Hannah Perrin thought that tourism should focus more on the cliffs and the surrounding countryside and rare habitats and also that more should be done to encourage small businesses which lend character to the High Street. She too stressed the importance of creative advertising.