

*On 14th January our two speakers were Councillor Frank Woodbridge, giving his recollections of Dover during the Second World War and Jack Woolford telling us about his home town, Hartlepool, which he has described in his new book.*

*Our Chairman, Terry Sutton, received from Jack a copy of his book 'A History of the Central Estate, Hartlepool', on which he had worked for thirty years.*

*Glyn Hale has written a short account of the first talk and Jack Woolford has provided the details of his own address.*

## **A COUNCILLOR'S BATTLE OF BRITAIN**

### *Report from S.S.G. Hale*

Councillor Frank Woodbridge, OBE and former DDC Chairman, was born at Stembrook (a very tough area) and his family moved to Pioneer Road when he was eleven years old - a wise move

because Stembrook suffered heavy damage in the Second World War.

The councillor worked as a blacksmith's striker at Kearsney, but his 70 year old boss, Taffy Creef, closed the smithy (now the Renault repair shop) at the commencement of the Battle of Britain. Frank then, in the same area, helped to build concrete dragon teeth, intended to block German tanks



Hell Fire Corner. Painting by local artist, Brian Petch.

12 (which were expected to arrive circa 22 September, via Hawkinge!!) Then, aged 17½ years, Frank joined the Home Guard and stood sentry at the Harbour Clock Tower. He enjoyed the excitement of the battle between aircraft at 30,000ft and rejoiced when an enemy machine was shot down. He also viewed the low level destruction of barrage balloons, and Stukas diving on the harbour.

The family along with three-quarters of the population were evacuated. Frank said he remembered the faces of the children awaiting evacuation, clutching their little gasmasks, but, more than that he remembered the faces of their mothers, trying not to cry. Some evacuees were treated well, he said, and some were treated badly and many of them came back to Dover before the war ended.

The Woodbridge family went to South Wales. Frank wanted to volunteer

for the army but was dissuaded from doing so by his father who had experienced the carnage of the World War I. Eventually from there he was conscripted into the South Wales Borderers.

He was taken prisoner and spent the later part of the war in Eastern Europe where he saw the devastation of the Allies' bombing and the treatment meted out to the Jewish and Russian prisoners. He realised that war was not just a competition between machines but involved human suffering. 'On the whole,' he said, 'I think we did very well. I think the British are a nation to be proud of.... as far as fighting was concerned I always felt there wasn't a better soldier in the world!'

He concluded that in war everyone was a loser and so one had to work to win the peace. In the post-war period he worked with NALCO for the betterment of the workers' lot.

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## WHO HUNG THE MONKEY?

*Jack Woolford's address,  
reported by himself*

What later became Hartlepool had been occupied from c.3000BC by a sequence of asylum seekers, Neolithic if not Paeolithic, Bronze and Iron Agers, Celts, Romans, Picts, Scots, Angles and Saxons, Jutes, Danes and Normans (etc, etc). By 500AD it was part of the kingdom of Northumbria and the king's daughter Hilda established a monastery there in 639. Transferred as Abbess to Whitby, she chaired the Synod of 664 which settled the dispute between Celtic and Roman Catholics. St Hilda's Gothic Church, which splendidly survives, dates from c.1240.

The place was named Herterpol because it was the harbour for the

manor of Hart which by the time of the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 was owned by the Brus family. It had received a municipal Charter from King John in 1201 (now 801 years ago) and the seal portrayed a hart at bay to a hound (not a monkey) on its back in a pool. It acted as port for the Bishopric of Durham, the county Palatine then on the border with hostile Scotland. Consequently it had to be fortified against raids with a thirteenth century wall, parts of which also splendidly survive.

At the time of the Spanish Armada (1588) it was one of a chain of warning beacons. A message to the Mayor was misread as "No more frying of the bacon", whereupon frying pans were collected and buried. It was later re-read as "No more firing of the beacon". Presumably the frying pans were