

4 THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

22nd APRIL 2002

reported by Merrill Lilley

THE FOURTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Society was held on 22nd April at St. Mary's Parish Centre and was well-attended.

The Chairman, Terry Sutton, began by listing apologies for absence and regretting the loss of members who had died during the last year. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted without correction and there were no matters arising. In his report he said that the Society had had a year of steady progress. The only problem encountered had been the delay on the installation of the Society's tenth, and last, plaque but he hoped that arrangements would soon be made for this to be put in place. He spoke of our good relations with the Dover District Council and the Dover Town Council. He ended by thanking all the committee members for their work during the year, Sheila Cope for her work as Membership Secretary, Merrill Lilley for the Newsletter and Bruce Lilley, the Advertising Manager. He made especial mention of our Social Secretary, Joan Liggett, saying that altogether social events throughout the year had shown a profit of £918.00, a great help to the Society.

The Treasurer, Mike Weston, was unable to attend the meeting so his report was read by the Chairman. All members had a copy of the end-of-year accounts. The Treasurer said we had had a year of consolidation. As well as the ten plaques planned for the millennium we had also sponsored the Zeebrugge plaque, bearing the Society's name, at the Town Hall and arranged for its installation at eye level so that visitors could easily read the history

of the bell. This was funded partly by the Society's project fund, partly by donations and partly by a local authority grant. Despite all our expenditure there was a surplus of £1336.29 in the General Fund. Many outings had made a profit and thus helped to balance the cost of indoor winter meetings which may just break even and occasionally operate at a loss. The money raised from raffles at these meetings (£540 over the last year) make a big difference and contribute towards the cost of hiring the hall. Thanks were due to Sheila Cope and all her helpers with the raffles.

He reminded members that the cost of producing the Newsletter had risen to £800 per issue, which in fact outstrips the membership subscriptions for the year. This is the reason why other sources of revenue are so crucial. Advertising revenue last year brought in £522. New sponsors for the Newsletter are being sought, to contribute to the cost of one, or part of one, issue.

Administration costs were down on the previous year. One of the reasons for this was that committee members often did not claim all their expenses for postage, telephone calls, photocopying, etc. and thus reduced the costs. Outgoings included donations to worthy local causes, incoming revenue included interest on bank accounts.

Lastly the Treasurer mentioned the Gift Aid forms which had been sent to every member and thanked all those tax-paying members who had responded. The gain to the Society is 28p for every £1 paid per member per year - a very useful addition to our funds! He urged members

who had not returned forms to do so as soon as possible.

The Treasurer ended by thanking all members who had contributed to the welfare of the Society by attending meetings and outings and supporting raffles.

Next the Chairman called upon Jack Woolford, Chairman of the Planning Committee, to make his report, which was full and comprehensive. He began by telling the membership that the Planning Committee had considered 75 applications in the last year and mentioned several of these in detail. He mentioned the work of the Western Heights Resident's Association and the fact that the name of the area had been changed to Braddon. He spoke of our ongoing efforts to get The Co-op and B&Q to keep their premises litter free, with some success. He talked of our good relations with Dover District Council and Dover Town Council. He discussed the St. James'/York Street development and the SEEDA plans for the Buckland Paper Mill development. He welcomed the plans for the new Discovery Centre on the site of the White Cliffs Experience and the subsequent possibility that the library might be the future home of Dover Town Council.

He explained the reasons for the delay in the installation of the tenth plaque, which was connected with the new site for a town clock at the junction of Bridge Street and London Road. Both the plaque and the clock could now be installed on the Eagle Public House. He mentioned here that the location of all ten Society plaques is included in the new Dover Guide.

Other concerns covered by Mr. Woolford included the kerbside recycling of waste, the new Connex trains and the lack of ticket machines on unmanned trains, traffic congestion on Townwall

Street, the lorry park closure at Eastern Docks and the fact that Dover Town Council had not been consulted by Kent Highways before work commenced on the Folkestone Road and the London Road.

Turning his attention to the plans of Dover Harbour Board, he said that we still awaited further information on the future of the Yacht Club, of the Water Sports Centre, Westport and the Esplanade Hotel.

For further updates on the work of the Planning Sub-Committee he referred members to his regular reports in the Newsletter.

The Editor then reported on the continued success of the Newsletter and thanked all contributors, advertisers and distributors, stressing that the Society always seeks sponsors and new advertisers to help with the cost of its production.

Then, speaking of Triangle Publications, she said that the first book, *Memories of a Century*, had been a great success and was now out of print. The second book, *Dover and the Monarchy*, was selling steadily. In the case of the third book, *The White Cliffs of Dover*, which was selling well and had gone into a second print, the authors, Peter and Julie Burville had given half the profits from the first print to the Society. She thanked them for their generous donation.

The Editor reminded members that it had always been our intention to use the profits from the first book towards a memorial for Budge Adams. It has been decided that this will take the form of a CD of Budge's slides with accompanying notes. A sub-committee is working on this project with the help of Dover Museum and it is hoped that the CD will be available in 2003.

The Social Secretary, Joan Liggett thanked all members who support Society outings and meetings, especially Muriel Goulding and Sybil Standing who help

6 with refreshments at indoor meetings, Sheila Cope who organises raffles and Jack Woolford who provides speakers. She reminded members to check details of bookings for the four summer outings in May, June and July.

After these individual reports the elections were rapidly dealt with, as there were no objections and all the officers were re-elected *en bloc*.

After the interval the speaker was Dr. Fred Lansberry. His talk is reported by Tessa George.

HENRY VIII, DOVER AND THE FIELD OF CLOTH OF GOLD

*A talk given to the Dover Society by
Dr Fred Lansberry on April 22, 2002
reported by Tessa George.*

Dr Lansberry's talk was first centred on the gravel drift which eventually destroyed a unique governmental and naval confederation, the Cinque Ports (Dover, Sandwich, Romney, Hythe and Hastings and the two ancient towns of Winchelsea and Rye), the primary purpose of which was to provide shipping for the sovereign and his retinue when he wished to cross to the Continent, and to defend the Channel coast. In return the Cinque Ports obtained privileges and freedoms unique to this country. Although part of Kent and Sussex, they were never part of those counties' pattern of government. They were in fact a series of mini-republics and had a separate listing after Yorkshire.

The deposit of shingle and sand carried by the flood tides up the Channel from the Atlantic aggravated by the prevailing south-westerly winds, left the bulk of the shingle on the English side and the fine sand on the French side. Only constant dredging and sea works kept Dover open as a port and Dover was

the only Cinque Port to receive financial aid from the Crown. This was because of the short sea crossing. More importantly, by the reign of Henry VIII, Dover was the obvious link between England and Calais, the last toehold of the Crown upon French soil.

More important were Henry's vaunting imperial ambitions. His sights were set upon nothing less than being crowned the Holy Roman Emperor. The sixteenth century was the period of the rise of the powerful nation states of France and Spain. England too was to follow this pattern of development but the earlier elusive dream of universal empire held great attraction for Henry.

Dynastic rivalry by the most ambitious royal families in Europe had precluded universal peace. The expulsion of the Moors from Spain in 1492 and the discovery of America in the same year made Spain the most rapidly rising power in Europe, potentially capable of challenging the Valois of France. England came late into this struggle. Henry Tudor, a usurper who needed to establish a legitimate dynasty, married his eldest son, Arthur, to Catherine, the daughter of the Spanish monarchs, Ferdinand and Isabella. Within five months Arthur was dead and, defying the Church's rules of consanguinity which forbade a man to marry his dead brother's widow, Henry, married Catherine to his second son, the future Henry VIII.

Holbein's portraits of Henry VIII showed Henry as an over-weight, over-dressed pomposity. In his youth, however, Henry had been a fine athlete and a good scholar conversant in Latin, Spanish and Italian. He was given the title *Fidei Defensor*, Defender of the Faith, by the Pope for his defence of the seven sacraments and was in the early part of his reign the very epitome of a Renaissance prince.

Henry's greatest extravagance from his father's much hoarded fortunes was war. In this Henry challenged his greatest royal rival, Francis I. In 1511 Henry joined the Holy Alliance, formed by Pope Julius II to expel the French from Italy. He attempted to regain his inheritance in France and invaded Therouanne and on the 12th of August was joined by the Emperor, Maximilian, who also wished to humble the French king. Francis was a fine horseman, a veteran of real campaigns in Italy, a patron of the arts and a skilled student of architecture. Nothing that Henry had built could be compared to the Chateau Chambord of Fontainebleu. Francis's queen was Claude of Brittany, aged twenty, the mother of three and expecting a fourth. Ann Boleyn was at the French court at the time and may have accompanied Claude as an interpreter.

A French attempt to reprovise their forces was routed and this action became known as the Battle of the Spurs, because of the speed of the French retreat. The town capitulated and Henry entered in triumph, accoutred in a superb suit of armour, accompanied by Maximilian. Maximilian then talked of Henry resigning the empire to him and later of adopting Henry as his son, but as the post was nominally elective, decided by the seven elector princes of the Empire, it was money that decided the issue. The young Hapsburg, Charles V, who borrowed the money from the German copper mining and banking house of the Fuggers, secured the election. Henry did not have much wealth left over at this point.

It is in this light that the Field of the Cloth of Gold should be viewed, for the meeting had been arranged in October 1518, before Charles V had been elected in 1519. Princely magnificence and extravagance was of fundamental importance in the game that Henry and

his Chancellor, Cardinal Thomas Wolsey, were playing. Even though it might mean bankruptcy, princes and great magnates hoped to curry support, by their lavish processions and court festivals. The enhancing of royal entries into towns with pagentry was part of the tradition common to England, France and Italy and the low countries.

Whether or not it was Wolsey's idea, he dominated the meeting in its early stages. Archbishop of York 1514, Papal legate 1515, Lord Chancellor of England 1518, in 1520 Wolsey aged 35 was at the height of his power. Paying attention to Wolsey often meant *douceurs*, which could be endowments to the church, pensions, sums of money, goods in kind. He was known in Europe as the "arbiter of Christendom", a phrase which probably arose from the arrangement in 1518 whereby England and France concluded a treaty of perpetual friendship and a marriage alliance between the Dauphin, (then aged 1 year and 8 months) and Henry's daughter Mary, (then aged 2 years and 8 months). The personal meeting would secure this bond and benefit the whole of Christendom.

The setting was in the "golden vale" between the village of Guines within the English pale of Calais and the village of Ardres in neighbouring France. The date was 7th June 1520 and the festivities lasted until the 20th of June. Wolsey and 500 men accompanied Henry on horseback and 3000 on foot. The two Kings met in a tent of cloth of gold provided by Henry. Cannons were fired from Guines and Ardres. A large temporary palace was constructed of brick and timber with the timber painted to look like stone. The walls rose to a height of some 38 feet with large expanse of windows at second floor level. The palace was of the usual courtyard plan. Some of it had been preconstructed in

8 England and shipped across to France. The interior was lavishly furnished and decorated. The whole was a superb example of the English craftsmanship and timber construction.

The field itself was 900 feet long and 320 feet broad. The whole was railed in with gates and triumphal arches at each end. It was overlooked by two galleries; one was 230 feet long, glazed and hung with tapestries for kings, queens, lords and ladies and the other 200 feet long for lesser spectators. A mill from Greenwich was shipped over for the armoury. 1000 Milan swords were ordered and 600 two-handed swords. 1500 spear staves were sent from the Tower of London.

Challenges to the whole of Europe went out but England and France were the only ones to answer the challenge. The tournaments were always preceded and followed by elaborate ceremonials and processions accompanied by trumpeters.

There were three parts to a tournament: foot combat, the tilt or joust in which one horseman fought another, and the tourney in which multiple

combatants fought a mock battle. The fighting could be furious and the barrier for the foot combat was hinged like a gate to lever the opponents apart. The two kings did not joust, but at the tourney they showed greater enthusiasm than all the rest. They shattered plate armour, corslets and swords making the steel strike sparks of fire in the air. They wrestled and Henry was thrown but Henry triumphed at archery. The banquets were monstrous and feasting and drinking endless.

In practical terms the meeting had brought about a revised marriage treaty between Mary Tudor and the Dauphin and an agreement by the French to end their interference in Scottish affairs. Although Francis claimed that Henry was his perfect friend, as soon as the meeting was over he began to refortify Ardres with wood from the pavilions where the two monarchs had met. Wolsey called it an act of unparalleled perfidy. Francis stopped this work on Wosley's protests, but he used his tents, pavilion and chapel for campaigning against the Emperor in Italy.



The famous view of Henry boarding ship in Dover harbour on its way to meet the French king. The two towers in the foreground were important features of the harbour at that time.