

# GLIMPSES OF THE PAST

*Some snippets of Dover history*

## LINKS WITH DOVER

**The story of Dover Society member, Marion L. Griffiths (née Holmes)**

Marion's mother, Irene Myra Holmes (née Harmer) was born at 157 Buckland Avenue on 11th January, 1904. Soon afterwards her family moved to 13 Lascelles Road and was there for a few years before moving to 1 Bartholomew Street, Charlton. Irene's childhood memories of Dover were an interesting and important part of the family life. She retained her recollections of school days, of church services and Sunday School at St. Peter's and St. Paul's, of friends, of local events and activities, walks around the town

and the waterfront, explorations along the Dour and the surrounding countryside, visits to Connaught Park, the Castle and Bleriot's landing place.

In 1918 Irene went to Harrow-on-the-Hill, Middlesex, to help a relative and friends with young children. During her time there she often returned to Dover to see her parents, James and Myra Harmer. She met Mervyn Charles Holmes at the Wembley Empire Exhibition. They were married in Hendon in 1924 and enjoyed their honeymoon in Dover before travelling to India, where Mervyn was stationed at Peshawar, near the Khyber Pass. In 1930 they returned to Dover and stayed with Myra at 1 Bartholomew Street and there Marion was born.

At the end of 1930 the family returned to India. Irene always kept her clear memories of her Dover childhood. She had five children, two boys and three girls, who were all brought up in India. Only Marion had been born in England and her parents were always trying to work out a plan for a Dover holiday. They had intended to visit Dover again in 1934, but their passage was cancelled due to an outbreak of smallpox on the boat. Later, with the onset of World War II, they were unable to visit England and after the war they were unable to return. British citizens were encountering problems in being permitted to retain their citizenship rights and return to England where there was extensive war damage and where food, houses and jobs were so scarce. The partition of India was imminent. British citizens were told they could only return to the UK if they had sick and dependent relatives there to



Irene Myra Harmer, Dover 1908



James and Myra Harmer at 1 Bartholomew Street,  
Armistice Day 1918

look after. Many decided to go to the Dominions. In 1946 the Holmes family decided to make their home in New Zealand.

Many years were to pass before any of the family saw England again. Marion's parents and her sister, Ruth, visited England and Dover in 1972 but her first visit to the country of her birth was in 1983 when she was doing a work-related course in London and managed a brief visit to Dover.

In 1992 Marion returned for a two week stay and took many photographs, including one of Charlton Church, which she used on her mother's funeral sheet. At last she was able to see Dover. On her return she received a letter from Budge Adams, enclosing two newsletters. She immediately decided to join the Dover Society.

She wrote to Budge, 'I thoroughly enjoyed my stay in Dover and felt that I really belonged there. It was a wonderful experience and I enjoyed many interesting

walks in and around Dover, including Temple Ewell, River, Kearsney Abbey, Crabble Corn Mill, Buckland, St. Radigund's Abbey ruins and Russell Gardens, Church Hougham, Capel-le-Ferne, St. Margaret's Bay, St. Margaret's-at-Cliffe and Deal, the Western Heights, the Castle, the seafront, Maxton, Tower Hamlets, Coombe Valley, Charlton, Connaught Park, some old cemeteries, the White Cliffs Experience, the Roman Painted House, the museum, the Town Hall and the library and the town centre.'

*Editor's Note: Marion is still a member of the Society. She corresponded regularly with Budge and she and I exchange letters each time we post her copy of the Newsletter.*



Marion Griffiths (née Holmes) in Dover, 1992