

R.E.V.I.E.W

from Terry Sutton

SALEM by Pamela Godden

The struggle of the early Baptists in establishing their Church in Dover is graphically portrayed in Pamela Godden's book *Salem* published in April.

The book tells a fascinating story of a century and a half of growth, setbacks and regrowth as worshippers moved from place to place as the town of Dover developed. It also reveals the dramas, schisms, occasional animosity, joys and sorrows through which Baptists have emerged to provide their modern church in Maison Dieu Road.

As the book tells us, 'The scene changes and the organisation changes but the worship and the witness continue.' In the opening chapter Dover primary school teacher Mrs Godden recalls the earliest days of Christianity and how, over the centuries, various schisms have occurred leading to the creation of Henry VIII's Church of England, Lutherans, Calvinists, Presbyterians and Independents. Clashing views over beliefs concerning baptism caused more splits leading to the birth of the Baptist movement. *Salem* tells how the 'Particular Baptists' and the 'General Baptists' came to Kent and, around 1640, to Dover. The early history of their Dover church is full of dramatic episodes with

Baptists sent to prison for holding services and their meeting places ransacked by the forces of the law.

The story of Samuel Tavernor is retold. How he spied on the Baptists, was converted, jailed at Dover Castle and became their pastor is part of Dover's history. What is not so well known is what went on in the Baptist church on the Pentside - overlooking what is now the Wellington Dock - when 'intemperate allegations' were made about a leading member's character resulting in yet another split that went to the East Kent Baptist Association for arbitration. So yet another strand of the church was born out of conflict. Many will remember the fine Salem chapel in Biggin Street - next to the old Queen's Head public house - with its hall off Edwards Road where we used to queue for our ration books. In front of this now vanished chapel, to make way for Boots the Chemist, was a graveyard. So as we tread this section of the main street we are probably walking over the graves of long forgotten Dovorians.

The money raised by the sale of the site of this Salem chapel helped to pay for the new and flourishing church in Maison Dieu Road.

Ironically the book was published at a time when Dover Baptists faced a fresh challenge, the tragic death in a road accident of their pastor, the Reverend Nigel Booth. This is an excellent read for anyone interested in Dover history and well worth the price of £7.50.

Exhibition of work by

∞ **FREDA J. STREET** ∞

at Crabble Corn Mill ~ Sunday, 28 July to Sunday, 18 August, 2002

Freda Street attended Dover Grammar School for Girls from 1965-1972. After school she obtained a degree in Fine Arts and German from the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Thereafter she went to Mainz where she took a Fine Arts degree and met her German husband. They married in 1980 and have three children. Freda now lives in Germany in Lanfenselden and also has a cottage in St. Margaret's Bay.