

Our River Dour - Has its Time come at Last?

by Jeremy Cope

The Society and its predecessor, The New Dover Group, believed in and campaigned for a riverside walk over many years without success. The Society wrote to the Town Council in October 2002 asking if they would be prepared to finance a survey of the river, to identify opportunities and how they might be achieved. We were also concerned about how the river could be best maintained and the resources required. At the November 2002 meeting Mike Webb, Manager of Dover Town Centre described its Riverwatch project. Anyone reading the local press cannot escape the enthusiasm and support for Riverwatch and its cleansing programme. For so many Doverians the river is special, but we despair of any action to realise its potential.

A survey should look to the long term; any major changes to the river would require substantial resources and positive official support over many years.

The Town Council made a grant for a survey by Dr. Paul Bolas, an expert responsible for the changes to the river at Buckland paper mill site. Paul has local connections; his wife is a local girl from River. Mike Weston and I have accompanied him twice along the river bank and, I hope, provided him with both local information and details of the Society's thinking. It was instructive for us. Weeds are important and should cover about 50% of the river bed; they are the home of the invertebrates upon which the fish live. You might think that old bricks or a lump of concrete in the river bottom is rubbish to be cleared out. Not so, they are a base on which weeds grow and therefore to be valued.

Paul invited us to look at the changes to the Dour at Buckland paper mill. The banks retain the concrete from the industrial past, but the river is now exposed to view. The restoration includes a fish ladder, lake and island, it only requires landscaping. Any development of this site should allow for public access and

be part of any riverside walk.

Paul produced his report in May. He showed the special nature of the Dour as a chalk stream. Although there are many threats to it, it has no wastewater discharges. The variety of plants, aquatic life and wildlife is limited, but there is potential for it to be restored to a richer habitat including migratory fish e.g. sea trout, salmon.

Most Doverians think that the river only needs to be cleared of rubbish to tidy it up. The report details much richer possibilities, which if realised would make the river a great asset. A restored River Dour could be a tourist attraction with great economic benefits. Although the report only deals with the stretch covered by the Council's area of authority it is clear that the river must be dealt with as a whole. Pollution upstream affects the whole. A riverside walk should cover the whole length of the river.

The report includes ideas of how the river might be developed, for example a path and wildlife rest area between Lorne Road and London Road based upon the old flour mill millpond. The stretch by Barton Path is too wide for the volume of water and a narrowing of the channel with part of the riverbed becoming a wildlife area is proposed. Two fish ladders would assist migratory fish to swim up the river to spawn. The report contains many other ideas.

A walk along the river reveals that properties back onto it; a restored river could persuade residents and developers that properties should face the river. Such a change would be proof indeed of success of our ideas.

We are now lobbying Dover District Council to convene a steering committee whose members would include Dover Town Council, Dover Town Centre Management (Riverwatch), River Parish Council, The Dover Society and Environment Agency. They should, using the Bolas Report, be responsible for preparing an

action plan for approval and subsequent implementation.

I would like to think that we are at the beginning of a serious process for the long term development of the river. The Bolas Report gives

a picture of what is possible. Dover has a history of neglecting the river in particular and its assets generally however, so we shall need great good fortune and determination if there is to be a change for the better.

Come and Join Us

Update on Cowgate Cemetery Clearance

by Lesley Gordon

Great progress on the clearance of Cowgate Cemetery means that the Society, in the hopes of encouraging visits by members, has decided to offer a free guided walk of the area, combining it with a 'Heritage Day' opportunity to view the delightful Unitarian Church nearby.

The guided tour will commence at 11am on Sunday 14th September. Please assemble at the Albany Place car park (no charges on Sundays), which is conveniently situated between the two sites. First we will take a very short walk to the cemetery to view the

work done by the society and learn a little of its history and some of the sad tales that the gravestones and vaults bear witness to. Then it is another short walk back to the Unitarian Church at the bottom of Adrian Street. There will also be the chance to view a very interesting art exhibition by members of the church and tea and cakes will be on offer to finish.

This should be a very pleasant way to pass an hour or two on a Sunday morning, so do book the date in your diaries.

See you all then.

A Miracle of Music

Jack Woolford

The concert of Friday April 25, was unique in my 50 years in Dover. The star, Yuri Tykhonenko, is a world-class pianist of great technical brilliance from Moscow. I chose my seat so that I could see the keyboard and never saw fingers deliver more power, awesome but delicate. Nor did I ever hear more deeply heart-felt music-making. In the first session it was, Albeniz apart, wholly Russian, from Khachaturian to Prokofiev's "Love of the Thee Oranges" and Rachmaninov's "Prelude: in C Sharp Minor". Yuri then partnered Dover's Nicholas Harby in piano duets of Grieg's Norwegian Dances, which again 'brought the house down'.

Next came the startling contrast of Poulenc's Sonata for Flute and Piano, faultlessly played by Elizabeth Luckhurst and Nicholas Harby. Pure classical music then properly had its turn

when Elizabeth played a Handel flute sonata accompanied on the harpsichord by Dr. Linda Keen who went on to play, equally brilliantly, solo Preludes by one of Bach's forerunners.

There was no time for interval. The finale was a dazzling display of virtuosity to match that of the composer, Liszt himself: his Funerailles, the forgotten Waltz in C# Minor and Hungarian Rhapsody No 6 in D Minor. After a storm of applause, curtains opened at the back of the stage to reveal Elizabeth Luckhurst wheeling in a mountain bicycle, a surprise gift for Yuri, which he promptly mounted and rode off the stage.

The Dover Society is proud to have helped to organise this unforgettable occasion. Thanks are due to Dover Town Council and its Deputy Town Clerk James Summerfield for sponsorship, the Dover Mercury for printing and publicity, Astor College for the Arts for a perfect venue and piano and most of all Nicholas Harby and Yuri Tykhonenko.