

tion grew vigorously, hiding the tombstones and providing a romantic aspect. In August we started mowing the grass with petrol strimmers and grass hooks. Paul Hadaway used the WCCP mower which was a very great help and we should have the whole of the hay meadow area cleared by the time this article goes to press. We will then turn our attention to the remaining three plots to clear the undergrowth that has grown during the year. We shall also reduce the amount of shade from the trees by pruning the lower branches and this, combined with the clearance of the undergrowth, will encourage the grass to dominate and change the plot's vegetation to that of a hay meadow.

The Society has received an anonymous donation of £250 for the Project Fund for which we are very grateful. The commit-

tee has agreed to the purchase of a more powerful strimmer than currently available to us which will make a very useful addition to our resources.

WCCP are to install a cemetery information board which will include the history and details of flora and fauna. This is very welcome and the committee agreed to contribute £100 towards the cost. We have been asked to comment on the content and are currently circulating the proposed text to those involved for comment.

Finally if any member is interested in joining our clearance working parties they would be most welcome. You will only be expected to carry out work that is within your skill and I think that you will find us a happy bunch. (Contact Jeremy Cope on 01304 211348).

The October Meeting

The Dour

A report of a talk by Paul Bolas with an update on the restoration of the river

by Jeremy Cope

The August issue reported on the survey of the Dour from Buckland to the sea. At the October meeting Paul addressed the Society with the subject of 'The River Dour Survey'. His talk covered the science, problems and potential of the river and how that potential might be realised.

The Dour, a typical chalk stream, gets its water from rain falling on the surrounding hills which is then filtered through the chalk and rises in springs to feed the river as clear, pure and oxygen-rich water at a constant temperature of 11 degrees. This

combination readily supports plants, insects crustacea and fish. The natural chalk reservoir provides a reasonably steady river flow.

How do we arrive at the present state of the river given its natural beauty and cleanliness? In the past rivers were seen as a cheap way of providing sewers, with culverting a method of hiding the subsequent spoliation. We are fortunate in that the Dour does not suffer from sewage outfalls although it receives toxic silt from paved areas. The litter-strewn river is evi-

dence that this careless attitude is still with us. Abstraction can be a problem although Folkestone and Dover Water Services and the Environment Agency are working to minimise the impact.

The river has enormous potential and value to Dover. One has only to think of the beauty of Kearsney Abbey and Russell Gardens. The biodiversity and the sound of running water make for a very attractive environment. The value of surrounding properties will be increased by an attractive prospect with riverside restaurants and pubs a tourist attraction.

Paul described the ways in which the improvement may be achieved through opening up culverts, riffles (a patch of boulders in the river to enhance the flow), narrowing to help the flow but using the released river bed as flood plain and putting in weirs and fish passes at Halfords and the London Road flour mill. Future riverside developments should have porous surfaces (SUDS) so the any potential run off is soaked up by the ground rather than draining into the river. Education of riparian owners and of the public is essential if people are to take care of the river. Removing rubbish will encourage us all to value the Dour.

At the end of the talk Mike Webb, Dover Town Centre Manager, told the meeting that Riverwatch, using Paul's report, had made a successful application to Peoples 'Places for funding. John Mahon of Criccieth Homes intends to spend £100,000 over ten years on river improvements primarily at the flour mill's millpond. He also

reported the Harbour Board's offer of help with the outfall into the harbour.

Away from the meeting The River Dour Steering Committee has now been formed and has held two meetings. It has agreed the general principles and objectives by which it will be run. Briefly the committee is concerned with the whole river from its sources to its mouth in the Wellington Dock 'The Bubbles'. The committee's membership consists of the local authorities and associated bodies, the Environment Agency, The Society and Criccieth Homes. The committee sees itself as a co-ordinator of those involved in the restoration and as a fund raiser and lobbyist on behalf of the river.

At our last meeting it was agreed that Alexi Gilmartin of the Environment Agency should ask the Agency to fund preparation of a development plan for the whole river. Such a plan will no doubt build on the Bolas report but go well beyond Paul's brief. It should be all embracing, listing priorities, include financial implications and planning issues as they affect the river corridor. Funding is by no means certain but such a plan will enable restoration to be planned and executed in an orderly and efficient manner. It will be essential evidence to support any application for the substantial funding necessary to make a long term impact on the river. If the Environment Agency will not fund the plan, and we were given an estimate of between £10,000 and £15,000, then the Committee must decide whether or not to find the money.