

PROJECTS

♦ ♦ by Jeremy Cope ♦ ♦

COWGATE CEMETERY

This report is written following our February work sessions. Until now, and despite an outward show of confidence, I have always had an edge of doubt about our ability to get the cemetery under control and then to maintain it both as a nature reserve and a place that respects the dead and its history.

The area we are committed to clearing and then maintaining is over 2 acres, a considerable task, particularly if the cemetery is to be maintained over the years ahead. But following our work this month I felt that we were, at last, getting on top and I could see a clear way forward for a regular maintenance programme.

We have six sections and the associated borders cleared with the remaining two sections cleared but in need of tidying with our strimmers and hooks prior to spring re-growth.

Our clearance workers are doing a

grand job. On Thursday morning there were ten of us and despite a wettish start the weather cleared and we made excellent progress. On Saturday we numbered five, the rain stopped about 8.30am and at 9.30 it was sunny and warm. Again we made excellent progress.

Our progress is dependent on our use of strimmers to get through the work and I am always grateful for those who donated cash or equipment or bring their own tools that makes our progress possible. Equally important are our members who rake up and tidy the results of the mowing and clear the awkward and difficult areas by hand. In all, good team working that produces results.

We have two sessions each month, one on a Thursday morning the other on a Saturday morning. If anyone would like to find out more please phone me on 211348.

RIVER DOUR UPDATE

I last reported in our August 2004 Newsletter in which I noted that we awaited the Babbie Report which, it was hoped, would point the way forward in the regeneration of the river. I hoped to be able to include a summary in the following newsletter. The Babbie Report has finally been produced but I am afraid that it was not what the lay members of the

steering group expected. In May 2003 Paul Bolas produced a report for Dover Town Council at the suggestion of the Society. Paul's report included a series of projects that would be the basis of the regeneration of the river and we all expected Babbie to develop these ideas. Babbie wrote a management and enhancement strategy which collated all that was known and made

generalised suggestions only. In today's world this sort of document is a necessary starting point for any programme of action and relevant funding and whilst the professional sees this as vital I am afraid that we lay people tend to be unimpressed. We need plans that allow us to visualise projects and how we are to implement them. We made our feelings and sense of disappointment quite clear to the Environment Agency, principal sponsors of Babbie.

I have to say that the Environment Agency have come up trumps and Paul Bolas, now a member of the steering group, has been an important part of creating the way forward. With the conclusion of Babbie we still needed a topographical survey, necessary to an understanding of the impact of any changes to the river, and an ordered way of implementing a management regime and the projects to improve the river. The Environment Agency are now concluding the topographical survey and in conjunction with Paul have produced a map of the river with the projects and they have suggested how we might manage the river.

Of the proposals six are recommended as priorities with sixteen

projects to follow. The priority proposals are:-

(1) developing a scheme to control litter and the need to employ a river warden.

(2) a feasibility study to investigate removal of obstructions so that fish are able to travel the length of the river

(3) to (6) improve sections of the river at Lower Road (River), Barton Path, B&Q and Ladywell. The suggested changes include narrowing the river to increase the speed of flow with the resultant increased bank area put to appropriate marginal vegetation. Stone deflectors in the river will help to increase diversity in flora and fauna. The overall effect is aimed to alter the barren and uninteresting aspect into one more resembling a natural chalk stream.

Now we must get on with the implementation and funding of these projects. That will be the real test of our ability to regenerate the river. But one project is already underway, the Riverside Walk. White Cliffs Countryside Project, members of the group, have ordered the signs to mark the walk for which The Society has committed £250.

THE JARRETT MEMORIAL

I looked back at issue no 32 of the newsletter dated August 1998 to see what John Gerrard had to say about the memorial to Sir Clifford, who was one of our most distinguished members and former Chairman of Dover Harbour Board. My interest was stirred by a recent task undertaken by The Society, namely the replacement of the bronze geographer plaque on the memorial

situated two thirds of the way along the Prince of Wales pier. I see from the article that particular care was taken in the choice of materials using advice from the Board's experts and from Budge Adam's researches. I remember Budge clearly concerned about the corrosive effects of sea water on anything with which it came into regular contact. I am afraid that nature



Left - right: Bob Goldfield, DHB; Jeremy Cope and Derek Leach, Dover Society and Howard Holt, DHB.

cannot easily be defied, particularly the salty sea.

At the beginning of the year your committee became concerned that the bronze plaque had deteriorated to such an extent that refurbishment was not feasible and that we should, if at all possible, replace the plaque using a more durable material. Lady Jarrett was made aware of our plans and was very supportive. Advice was sought from Cleverley & Spencer, the local stone-masons, who advised that polished black granite was the best material. However the cost to replace the plaque was just under £900, a substantial sum for The Society to raise. The Harbour Board was approached, both for advice, approval and support for our plans. Both Bob Goldfield, the

Chief Executive, and Howard Holt, Head of Corporate Affairs, responded very positively and agreed to fund the whole of the project for which The Society is very grateful indeed.

The plaque was installed in late December and on February 14th Derek Leach and I joined Bob Goldfield and Howard Holt in a photo-opportunity to mark the refurbishment of the memorial. My mind went back to the original 'unveiling' and I recall making the speech in weather that blew my words to the wind and out of hearing. On this occasion we grinned in the face of a sharp winter wind, mitigated only by the bright sunlight. To my mind the pier is a better place for monuments than for men, and for black granite rather than for bronze.