

Town Centre Trees

- - - by Jack Woolford - - -



THEY WERE THERE, all ten of them, in the Market Square and at intervals all the way along to McDonald's. It has taken almost three years, from the initial suggestion by our Mike Bayley, who drew a map with pictures showing the proposed eight trees in situ, to the fruition by DDC's Horticultural primo, Darren Solley.

The word "vicissitude" suggests itself. We had no difficulty in persuading you, our members, to subscribe £1000 and A.J.Simmonds, jewellers to add £250, and, although it took a little longer, to secure a contribution of £1500 from Dover Town Council. We had also hoped to raise another £800 from the Dover (ex-coalfield) Regeneration budget but ran out of time because of the delays. Fortunately it was no longer needed.

The first problem was the method of planting. We naturally assumed that it would, as normal and as elsewhere, be in the ground and it took a whole year to establish that because of underground pipes and services this was impossible. The self-evident solution, to use planters instead,

following the excellent precedent set by Dover in Bloom, was nevertheless controversial and time-consuming. The next problem was siting and a late intervention by CCTV meant that only one of our original placings was acceptable. Another problem was the choice of a suitable species of tree, which started with Rowan and Hornbeam and went on via Gingko Beluba to the Liquid Amber (*styraciflua*) which are now praise-worthily in place, all ten of them. The last problem was (and is) the drought which, although it threatens DIB flower containers, appears to have been overcome. And there is, in fact, yet another problem: to plaque or not to plaque and if so, where.

Meanwhile five of our ten Town Centre trees have been vandalized. The CCTV, which dictated their siting, failed to identify the culprit(s). The District Council has guaranteed replacement, and we have money in hand if necessary, but the need for greater security is self-evident. Root guards are not enough. A pity that our original suggestion of ground-planting was refused.

Precinct Trees

Since the trees were planted in the precinct a while ago I have received a lot of correspondence concerned with the wanton vandalism which resulted in half of the trees being broken off near the base. Below is a small selection of some of the comments. Not all are printed in full.

Copy of Letter to Nigel Collor

The District Council recently (a couple of months ago) planted 10 trees in the precinct. These trees were paid for by the Dover Society (I think we put up £1500) and Dover Town Council. To date two of the trees have been destroyed, broken off near the base of the trunk.

This really is grim that we put up the trees to beautify the town centre and vandals and drunks

destroy them. Is there any chance of CCTV catching any of the culprits? I am at a loss to think what can be done!

Jeremy Cope

There are a couple of trees still remaining. I suggest we plant some shrubs with thorns i.e. gorse to protect them.

Mike McFarnell

May I suggest prickly, (what I call semi-wild) rose bushes - these are recommended by the police to deter intruders!!!

Lorraine Sencicle

The beauty of that solution is they could be taken from cuttings - no cost to anyone - just a little time. I have several cuttings.

Mike McFarnell

Mike Bayley told me today that he had had a phone call two days ago from Darren Solley who said he would not be defeated by the vandals, that it was the work of one man who would be identified by CCTV, and that he would replace the trees if the Dover Society & Dover Town Council would pay for them.

Jack Woolford

I would like to suggest we put the raffle money at the next meeting towards new trees. There are varieties that would bite back which may deter the vandals.

Mike McFarnell

I have read all the correspondence with reference to the vandalism of the trees in the precinct and feel that until the Parking Services Officials who look after the CCTV cameras (and also made such a fuss about us having trees in the precinct in case they covered areas covered by the cameras) come up with some pictures of the possible vandal we should not think of spending out any more money. The original agreement was that we would pay a charge for providing and planting each tree plus a nominal sum per tree for future maintenance which included replacement.

Mike Weston

Perhaps it would be best if Derek as Chairman wrote to the press and expressed the Society's dismay at this vandalism. I can hardly think that we will be able to carry out similar good works for some time to come - our members would not be happy to put up the sort of money these trees cost if there is a prospect of the project being vandalised. It may well be worth making the point that the vandalism most likely arises because of drunken behaviour.

Secondly should we ask the police/responsible authority to send a representative to our next meeting to explain how the vandalism arises and why they cannot prevent it? Most depressing

Jeremy Cope

Nigel Collor is going to look into the CCTV for us regarding identifying the culprits of the broken trees - but I don't hold up much hope.

Adeline Reidy

Your message is most interesting. Perhaps we should await replacement until the culprit is found. It would also be of value to consider how our trees could be made more vandal prone e.g. with thicker trunks from more mature specimens.

Jeremy Cope

I think that it is disgusting that people keep breaking the new trees; they should get a big fine and be made to pay for the trees to be replaced and to help replant them.

Denise Lee

I am appalled that five of the ten trees recently planted in the pedestrian precinct have been destroyed by vandals. These trees were donated jointly by The Dover Society, Dover Town Council and a local businessman at a total cost of £2,500 to soften the town centre landscape. We were looking forward to some glorious colours in the autumn.

The trees were carefully sited in order not to obstruct the CCTV coverage of the town centre, but it seems all to no avail. It is so disappointing to those of us trying to improve the town to find that a mindless few are bent on pulling it down.

Derek Leach,
Chairman, The Dover Society.

...and Finally...

To date as far as I am aware nobody has been caught or spotted on the much vaunted CCTV system which makes one wonder as to its worth. Also as to why the police have not noticed the damage and reviewed the CCTV footage for themselves is a mystery. It must have been noticeable at the time when the trees were broken as it would have taken more than a couple of minutes to snap each trunk. Or then again, do the cameras not work 24 hours a day? Were they broken down? Did the vandalism take place in a blind spot/spots?

The views expressed here are personal and are not to be taken as official Dover Society policy.

The Editor