

# Dover's Concerns

\* \* \* *by Jeremy Cope* \* \* \*

## Regeneration

As you may be aware the Society has set up a sub-committee to promote improvements in our town in the face of very considerable neglect. Dover has so many assets with much that is special but has a rundown feel to it. Many of us feel that the town is being downgraded either through ignorance or sheer carelessness.

The sub-committee, via Pat Sherratt, has now written to Dover District Council to press the case for external upgrading of several premises, using powers available to the Council should they so wish to use them. These powers allow the Council to enforce repair orders upon the owners and we understand that where towns have used them around 90% of owners comply without any further action by the Council.

Premises included on our list are 10 King Street (the old Labour Exchange), the buildings along A20 from west of the Dour to York Street, three buildings in Biggin Street and Castle Street, the former YHA building in London Road (Dr Koettlitz the Arctic explorer was once resident there), the old Granada Cinema in Castle Street, an art deco building whose designer is famous enough to have a cinema in Tooting listed grade 1 and finally the old Crypt Restaurant in Bench Street left after destruction by fire for about 30 years.

We will keep you posted.

## Loos and Tourism

With the current financial climate it is little wonder that local government services are under threat. Dover District Council is working on transferring some services such as tourism and floral displays to Dover Town Council by agreement. On 20th January a meeting was called to test Dover ratepayer opinion, required by local government rules.

But the matter and meeting took off. Shortly before the meeting the District Council had closed the Maison Dieu and Buckland toilets. Late last year they closed the Esplanade toilets. It is understood the District Council told the Town Council that unless they paid for the running costs (£90,000 per annum) then the toilets would remain closed. Loos were added to the agenda [together with a dose of anger] resulting in a rather lively meeting.

After the meeting Derek, our Chairman, wrote the following letter to Cllr Paul Watkins:-

*You will not be surprised to hear that The Dover Society is most concerned about the abrupt closure of the public toilets at Buckland Bridge and by Biggin Hall. Whilst appreciating the need for Dover District Council to make cuts in spending it is regrettable that there has been no attempt to seek the views of the public over where and how such cuts should be made. Such consultation may have produced a quite different answer since public toilets would seem to be a basic prerequisite for*

encouraging visitors to the town as well as an essential service for residents, particularly the elderly.

Whilst various stories are circulating about how and why the decision was made, if there were no meaningful discussions with Dover Town Council about the problem and how the toilets could remain open, it leaves much to be desired.

Any possible takeover by Dover Town Council would seem to require careful thought and possibly a transition period to enable the Town Council to produce an acceptable strategy, including possibly charging for upgraded facilities.

The Society hopes that the District Council will have constructive dialogue with the Town Council to find a solution that preserves and, if possible, improves existing toilets. Only by the district, town and parish councils working together can we hope to regenerate Dover. If the Society can help this process in any way, we are more than willing.

Another wait and see - at the time of writing the toilets remain closed.

Perhaps Dover will be renamed Clochemerle sur Dour.

*Clochemerle* is a 1934 French satirical novel by Gabriel Chevallier. It is set in a French village in Beaujolais inspired by Vaux-en-Beaujolais a commune in the Rhône department in eastern France and deals with the ramifications over plans to install a new pissoir, a gentleman's urinal, in the village square. Ed.

### **Dover's Hospital Services**

Following a total lack of action on new hospital/clinic facilities it seems almost as if Buckland Hospital is being saved from what was apparently to be its fate (demolition). There is now more choice available for the location of hospital appointments. It is well worth asking if you can see a consultant or have treatment at Buckland Hospital or Maison Dieu Clinic rather than at Ashford, Canterbury or Thanet.

It is not something that is being advertised but worth a try.

## **River Dour**

### **White Cliffs Countryside Working Parties**

Jeremy Cope

Our last working party in 2009 took place in October but since then the litter has started to accumulate in and around the river. Winter is a no go time in the river - we must not disturb the spawning fish. Strange to think such beautiful creatures as trout and eels trust the shelter of our dirty rubbish for their breeding.

Working parties start again in April and anyone interested should contact White Cliffs Countryside Project on 01304 241806. The work does result in a much improved river environment and makes a very positive contribution to the town.