

the climbing community and referred to as the 'Father of Mountaineering', it is sad that there is not a tribute to him in his hometown... although, I am told, there was one once in Maison Dieu House.

*This article first appeared in the Dover Mercury and the Dover Society would like to thank them for the use of this story.*  
Editor



St Peter & St Paul churchyard

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## ==== **Royal Victoria Hospital** ====

by Joan Liggett

It is ironical that the Royal Victoria Hospital was probably only built because Dover was spared during the Cholera Outbreaks in the early 1850's. Many towns were affected by the disease but somehow Dover escaped - though deaths occurred in Canterbury, Sandgate and Folkestone (Shorncliffe Barracks). As a practical "Thanksgiving" Dover decided to establish a hospital and to raise the necessary finance by public subscription.

The Hospital Fund having raised £1,760 (*equivalent to £170,000 in 2010*) a suitable site was sought. The first proposal to build on St Martin's disused burial ground having been rejected; it was decided to buy a property on the High Street named Brook House at auction for £1,336 (*£130,000 in 2010*).

Dover had had a Dispensary since 1823 (located on the east side of the Market Square) so it was decided to incorporate that with the new hospital, under the name "The Dover Hospital and Dispensary."

After undergoing extensive alterations, the original hospital building was opened in 1851; the text over the window reads; "INSTITUTED AT THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING OF MDCCXLIX" (1849).

In 1851 the hospital and grounds was surrounded by meadows; but in 1858 Wood's Meadow (the name given to the land on each side of the Dour), was bought by Developers; to prevent the hospital being hemmed in by buildings half an acre of the meadow was purchased at a cost of £740 (£68,000 in 2010). That transaction enabled the later enlargement of the hospital to take place. It was suggested in 1870 and again in 1897 that the hospital be removed to another site; but eventually it was decided to enlarge the existing site.

Monies raised by public subscription were used to build the Annexe to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887. The upper panel reads; "HOSPITAL ANNEXE" and the lower



panel: "JUBILEE OF QUEEN VICTORIA." "The Dispensary" was dropped from the name in 1893, when it became known simply as "The Dover Hospital."

In 1897 one of the women's wards was named "Victoria" in honour of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and in 1901 Edward VII gave permission for the hospital to be called Royal Victoria after his mother.

In 1927 a Centenary Fund was started and with the money raised another new wing was built in 1933. During the Second World War the hospital moved into the country, to Waldershare Mansion, the In-Patients Department, the Maternity Ward and nearly all the staff being moved there. The Out-Patient Department remained in Dover with a skeleton staff; the Nurses' Home was taken over for a Military Hospital and a First Aid Post was established in the old main block. For six years the in-patients and the majority of staff remained in

the country, only returning to Dover in 1945.

At first the Royal Victoria Hospital remained viable but with the formation of the National Health Service, Buckland Hospital gradually took over more and more, eventually leaving just a Stroke Unit and Geriatric Day Hospital at the Royal Victoria. The hospital finally closed its doors in May 1987 and spent a number of years mouldering away until converted into low cost apartments in the 1990's.

*Source material - Dover Express, J G Harman (Bygone Kent).*

