



JACK HEWITT MBE



Below is printed the text of the speech by our chairman Derek Leach on the dedication of the Jack Hewitt bench at noon on Friday 18th February 2011.

The bench was paid for out of money acquired by Town Centre Management for River Dour improvements. When TCM folded the balance of the money was transferred to Dover Town Council to be spent with approval of The Dover Society.

The bench is situated by the side of the River Dour near to the Riverside Centre off Maison Dieu Road

Jack Hewitt MBE. Who was he? What sort of man was he? Why honour him today?

He was born in 1912 in Crafford Street where his father ran a bakery. Thwarted in love when his one and only girlfriend ditched him for somebody else, he never married. Instead, he gave a lifetime of service to others mainly, but not only, through his very many years in the scout movement, which he joined aged 12 and in the Order of St. John (over 70 years). In both organisations he held high office locally and was held in high esteem nationally. He was invited to a royal garden party, received the MBE in 1996 and in 2002 Maundy money from the Queen in Canterbury Cathedral. His 29 years in the County Ambulance Service also enabled Jack to serve through his paid work, which he loved and for which he was commended several times. Raising money for charity was a regular activity and it was easy for him - nobody could resist his collecting tin.

Jack also travelled widely all over the world, both as a courier for many

years for Raymond Cook Tours and as a seeker of unusual experiences. These lasted all his life from flying across the Channel as a young man to taking a hot air balloon ride on his 80th birthday and a trip to the Arctic on his 90th!

My book about his life is packed with amusing anecdotes, some of which are hard to believe, but Jack assured me that they were true. He was a cheeky chappie and often got away with murder to have his way or to do what he thought was right.

An early example was a visit to Binfields, a grocer at the bottom of Crafford Street. Jack would go there in the hope of being given some broken biscuits. On this occasion Jack was told that there were none. Whereupon Jack kicked over a biscuit tin and said, 'You've got some now!' His cheekiness often got him into hot water during his RAF years and he was promoted to Corporal and demoted several times. He was also a cheerful chappie, often about town giving a cheerful word to everyone he met, always beginning, Greetings! His laugh was unmistakable!

Jack died, aged 92, in 2004. Dover did him proud. His death and his funeral made the front page of the Dover Express and the Mercury. A guard of honour of scouts and St. John Ambulance Brigade members welcomed him to a packed congregation at St. Mary's which

included the Mayor and the Leader of DDC. As the hearse pulled away afterwards the mourners, including those lining the route, applauded. Jack would have liked that and he would appreciate this event today because in addition to all his other qualities he was a showman.

Regeneration . . . Jeremy Cope

Since my last report we have been facing up to two significant developments on a national scale that will impact upon us locally. They are government cuts to local authority funding and the Localism Bill, with its aim to give power to the people over their localities. Both matters represent considerable threats to us but at the same time they offer opportunities.

First the cuts

Dover has suffered from a lack of proper control of standards in new buildings, maintenance of old buildings, litter control and anti social behaviour. The great fear is that a lack of funds is the perfect excuse for doing nothing to uphold standards. The Society sees a way forward in the use of volunteers to help monitor lapses and in maintenance work - Cowgate is a good example as is the work of the Western Heights Preservation Society at the Drop Redoubt. However, volunteering on its own is not enough. There must be a positive response and support from local government if volunteers are not to be disheartened. An excellent example of such co-operation is the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership with its volunteers led by its professional staff. Anyone who has worked on the Dour can see what can be done with the right organisation and will.

The Society has responded to the Localism Bill with a submission on the original green paper and the discussion at the meeting held on 17th January reported elsewhere in this issue. The Society awaits a response from District Council on its original submission, a copy of which was sent to them by Charlie Elphicke our MP. Again, possibilities but only if...

Matters we are pursuing

There is a meeting due between Derek Leach and KCC on the ARP post. We are pursuing the matter of upkeep of the planters in Dover Town Centre. Roger Marples has information from Kirk Alexander of White Cliffs Countryside Partnership on the possibilities and problems of the footpath on the north side of the Castle - sounds interesting. We continue to pester DTC about the public toilets and have still to get a response from KCC Highways on plans for Dover's street trees despite reminders. Members of our committee continue to chase property owners about the state of their properties. Sheila and Jim Pople have a promise from Stagecoach to repair a damaged and dangerous signboard on their Pencester Road premises - top marks for persistence.

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