

# APRIL MEETING

## Annual General Meeting of the Dover Society 2011

reported by the Chairman Derek Leach

### **MATTER ARISING FROM 2010 AGM**

Following the financial failure of the Civic Trust last year and the setting up of Civic Voice, you voted last year not to join Civic Voice but to seek affiliation. However, this proved to be impossible and, whilst the Executive reconsidered our position, we continued to feel that we should not join at least for the time being.

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

This is my 7th annual report and The Society has been busier than ever. A few years ago a member said 'The Society does not do anything'. I leave you to judge the accuracy of that after this report. Time means that I concentrate upon the main issues of the year but this should not devalue the hard bread and butter work that goes on year in and year out.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Dover Town Council exercised its regained right to appoint honorary Freemen during the year and we were delighted that 2 of the first 3 were Society members - Jack Woolford and John Turnpenny. Our membership shows a slight net increase from last year 425 to 444. Whilst this is still a healthy number, the more members

we have, the stronger our voice becomes. So please encourage relatives, friends and work colleagues to join. Our thanks go to our membership secretary, Sheila Cope. Now may I invite you to stand whilst we remember those members who have died in the past year.

### **PLANNING**

Our Planning Committee and indeed your Executive has missed the valuable input of its tireless chairman, Jack Woolford, for most of the year due to bad health and we are fortunate that Patrick Sherratt has acted as a very effective and energetic chairman. With yet another scheme for the St James area we met DDC Director of Planning to discuss it and all the other regeneration schemes that are apparently 'bubbling away'. We still await some evidence on the ground of progress!

The future ownership and development of the port again took up a great deal of time. We met the Chairman and CEO of Dover Harbour Board twice and made several submissions to the Secretary of State. Once the Dover People's Port Trust and its bid were launched we

examined the scheme and met its Chairman to satisfy ourselves about the viability of the scheme and the benefits for the town. Finally, we urged the Secretary of State to give the bid serious consideration. With a referendum for the electorate of Dover Town only, we decided to give our members wherever they lived an opportunity to express their views in a Society 'postal referendum'. 68% of members responded (compared with 25% turnout in the DTC vote) with 94% of them in favour of opposing the sale of the Port of Dover as proposed by DHB and support its transfer to the Community of Dover instead.

The planning application for the first phase of the Whitfield expansion was scrutinised and we raised a number of concerns including traffic congestion and possible adverse impact upon shopping in Dover, DDC sought views on over 100 new sites offered by owners for development. We objected to the possible loss of Crabble Athletic Ground and gave conditional approval to some sympathetic development on the Western Heights and at Farthingloe.

The government's Localism Bill exercised our minds and the views that you expressed at our public meeting were put to a regional meeting attended by the minister responsible. During the year we also submitted views on the government's plans to change the planning process.

A grave matter was the siting of a new cemetery at Elms Vale, which

appeared to be the most suitable of those available.

Bearing in mind that we scrutinise planning applications for not only Dover but also the surrounding villages, we would like a representative from River, Whitfield and Temple Ewell to join the Planning Committee.

### **REFURBISHMENT COMMITTEE**

Our Refurbishment Committee, chaired by Jeremy Cope, is making an impact with its survey of the condition of our many listed buildings, conservation areas and empty properties. Unfortunately, the prospect of getting DDC to take enforcement action in the present financial climate is doubtful. The state and lack of public toilets continue to give concern especially on the seafront.

### **HERITAGE**

The success of Heritage Open Days in Dover continued with the Town Hall and the Painted House joining the scheme last year making 10 properties open free of charge for the September weekend. Providing guided tours of the Town Hall for HODS has led to a programme of regular guided tours this year from April to October with guides provided by The Society and Kent Greeters.

The Society has also initiated a group to consider the feasibility of restoring the Town Hall with the aid of a Heritage Lottery Fund grant, making its history better known and increasing access to the building.

Progress is being made, although it is a very big challenge to consider.

During the year we erected a new Dover Society plaque to commemorate the life of Dover diarist Thomas Pattenden. We also replaced the plaque commemorating the site of Charlton Boys' School in Granville Road, destroyed by enemy action during World War II. Following our successful attempt with others to have listed the rare Air Raid Warden's Post by Priory Station, we met with the KCC Heritage Team to suggest ways of improving the building. As a consequence we have agreed to adopt the site and to cooperate with improvements.

A disappointment was the sudden demolition of one of the Swingate WW2 radar masts, leading to us lobbying for listing the remaining two. Another disappointment was the English Heritage decision, due to substantial cuts in government funding, to restrict winter opening of the Castle to the weekends.

### **MORE OF THE SAME**

Now I turn to what you may call 'more of the same' - regular activities which are part and parcel of The Society and perhaps taken for granted, but no less important.

### **SOCIAL PROGRAMME**

Our winter series of meetings continue to be well supported and I thank Patricia Sherratt, Jack Woolford, Georgette Rapley and the happy band of kitchen helpers - not to mention the wine waiter - for all their hard work.

The Christmas Feast was a victim of the weather and had to be cancelled. Our summer outing to the Inns of Court was well supported and we are offering two outings this year plus the opportunity to join the Friends of Dover Museum on their outings.

### **PROJECTS**

Our regular working parties at Cowgate Cemetery, led by Jeremy Cope, continue to keep the whole cemetery attractive as a haven for wildlife and for people, both living and dead. Barry Late must be thanked for covering for Jeremy whilst he was indisposed. There is always a warm welcome to newcomers. The Society continues to play a leading role in the River Dour Steering Group.

### **PUBLICITY**

Our Newsletter expertly edited by Alan Lee continues to be highly regarded by members and others. We are indebted to all the contributors, Jean Marsh our advertising manager, the envelope stuffers and all our distributors for their efforts.

The excellent website, managed by Mike McFarnell keeps members up to date and helps to interest internet browsers not only in the Society but in Dover as well. Its popularity has soared with the extensive Dover History Scrapbook, and Lorraine Sencicle's 'Dovers around the world'. Mike is changing the website to data driven making it far easier to use and providing much more space.

Terry Sutton's regular press reports helps to keep The Society in the public

eye. A new venture is providing a Dover Society page in the free Dover Life magazine.

### EVENTS

As usual I represented The Society at the St. George's Day commemoration of the Zeebrugge Raid and we also laid wreaths at the Remembrance Services at the Town war memorial and at The Society's plaque to the Unknown Warrior at the Western Docks.

As Chairman I was invited to the Rolls Centenary celebration and the opening of the refurbished Charlton Green pond area. We also arranged a ceremony to mark the provision of a new bench by Riverside in memory of Jack Hewitt.

### CONCLUSION

I have not mentioned the sterling efforts of our Treasurer, but Mike Weston will shortly dazzle you with his annual accounts. That concludes my report of a very hectic year for The Society except for thanking every member of the Executive, including Maureen Morris who is not seeking re-election, our minutes secretary, Barbara Stapleton, our Audit Committee, and all those members who have contributed in some way to the work of The Society during the past year.

I submit my report for your consideration and welcome any questions.

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## COWGATE CEMETERY

Jeremy Cope

Things are ticking along rather well, the paths are mown and the piles of waste resulting from our mowing and pruning over many years have now all been taken away by DDC's contractors. The grass is summer tall and wild flowers, trees and shrubs a joy. A couple of young adders were seen. The general appearance continues to improve, whilst the amount of litter has dropped to a minimum, hopefully the result of walkers realising the cemetery is cared for. I would judge we have got it where we want it after about 10 years work. Our

thanks are due to all those who have worked or helped us over the years. All I hope is that we are able to keep up the effort to maintain the cemetery in its present state, so if you have just a few hours to spare each month, a warm welcome, a cup of tea and a chocolate biscuit await.

Over the last few months Barry Late has taken over not only as tea maker but also as organiser. Anyone wishing to join us please contact Barry on 01304 826286 or email [barry@late697.plus.com](mailto:barry@late697.plus.com)