

## Changes in Dover since the 1953 Coronation

*A Talk by Terry Sutton - Reported by Peter Sherred*

Members of the Rotary Club of South Foreland and their guests, including members of the Society, were treated to a most enjoyable trip down memory lane when the third and last of the Rotary Club's speakers to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee addressed a well attended meeting on 14th March. Dover Society Vice President and veteran local journalist Terry Sutton, himself an Honorary Freeman of Dover, reminded his audience of Dover's circumstances in 1952 when the present Queen acceded to the throne. Post war Dover was in a sad state with many areas ruined after the devastation of the wartime bombing and shelling and some rationing was still in place but Dover had a main street of little shops and a two way traffic system was in place both transformed by the development of

larger out of town shopping facilities and the current one way system.

Over the years, Terry reminded those present, there had been many changes affecting the population and employment prospects for local people. Gatic Engineering at Charlton Green developed and died, the local coalmines all closed and opening of the Channel Tunnel impacted heavily on the port. The centre of operations for ferries moved from the Western Docks to the Eastern docks with the move away from passenger-only ferries to vehicle-carrying vessels, whose development was aided by the construction of drive on/off berths in the Eastern Docks then in Boulogne and Calais. The hovercraft came and went and many more women were employed in and around the port and on the various types of crafts operating from it and the cruise liner terminal had developed. Proposals for the development of the flats that were eventually to be The Gateway dominated local considerations for some years in the 1950s. Terry referred to the dreadful fire that gutted the once popular Crypt restaurant and bar with its attendant loss of life, including a fireman, and lamented on the fact the site remains derelict to this day.



*Terry Sutton and President Keith Playforth at South Foreland Rotary Club*

Terry reminded those listening to his talk of the development of things we now all take for granted – by reference to the number of the electrical gadgets now in use necessitating many more electric sockets in homes than would have been the case in 1952. The pill,

miniskirts, hot-pants and the development of mobile phones all were referred to in a wide ranging address in which Terry also commented on the highs and lows of reporting as a journalist over the last sixty years, mentioning in the latter category the Herald of Free Enterprise, the 25th anniversary of its sinking having only recently been commemorated in Dover before his talk and fresh in peoples' minds. On a contemporary note Terry mused on the progress that had been made by people in material terms but built up on the mountain of debt that would be with us for well into the future. It was a bravado performance in which Terry expressed his regret over a decline in morals over the period in question and the decline in the fortunes

and current state of his home town. In many ways his talk gave credence to the view that, in respect of the sad state of the town in 1952 and 2012, everything changes and yet remains the same! There followed a question and answer session which Terry coped with in masterly fashion.

The President of the Rotary Club of South Foreland, Keith Playforth, both introduced Terry before and thanked him after his talk inviting him back on another occasion and commented on his foresight in bringing his own supply of whisky to add to the water he was drinking during his talk. No wonder Terry gave an interesting talk on the fortunes of Dover over sixty years - for it was clearly delivered with spirit!

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## COWGATE CEMETERY

Jeremy Cope

This winter's dry weather meant I guess, that plant growth has been slowed so that we are able to fool ourselves a little with the idea that we are getting in control. Does anyone control nature for long? But our volunteers really are doing well and the cemetery looks fine. A very real reward is illustrated by an email from Art Brewer, a Canadian, who wrote "So, my thanks to all of the volunteers in the Dover Society for their good work. Visiting the site of my five-times great grandfather, his wife and several of their children was a very moving experience for me." Art also very generously gave a donation for the Society's work for which we are very grateful.

We welcome volunteers - either phone 01304 211348 or email me at [jeremycope@willersley.plus.com](mailto:jeremycope@willersley.plus.com)

### Cowgate working parties 2012

Thursday 2nd August  
 Thursday 6th September  
 Thursday 4th October  
 Thursday 1st November  
 Thursday 6th December

Saturday 11th August  
 Saturday 15th September  
 Saturday 13th October  
 Saturday 10th November  
 Saturday 15th December