

# EVACUATE

Terry Sutton

Memories of the wartime days in 1918, when preparations were made to evacuate everyone from Dover, have been rekindled with a discovery in a local house. Richard Clifton who lived in Crabble Road was clearing papers and other items belonging to his mother. The family had lived there from his grandfather's time in 1926.

One of the documents found by Mr Clifton was an instruction from the Borough of Dover's emergency committee, dated July 1918, to the civilian population of the town warning that a total evacuation might be necessary.

"It has come to the notice of the military authorities that there is some doubt on the part of the civilian population as to the preparations which have been made for the conduct and movement of the civil population in case of invasion or other emergency," says the document signed by Mayor Edwin Farley.

The reason for the warning was that the German military offensive in the summer of 1918 was progressing towards the French channel ports and there were fears of an enemy landing "in this our country."

The evacuation plans were detailed in order to keep civilians off the major highways in order not to block them, to allow for the "free movement of His Majesty's troops. Refugees will not be able to use the railways nor can furniture or baggage be conveyed in any public vehicle, added the warning. Motor cars, bikes, carts, mules and donkeys will be taken at once to assembly points where further military directions will be given. All available able-bodied men will assemble in gangs with tools to prepare for work", says the now yellowing document handed to the Society by our member Tim W. Brown.

*\*An article detailing how Dover was to be evacuated in 1918, and the routes to be taken, was included in a Dover Society newsletter in December 2006.*



*Dover Harbour 1918, painting by P Wilson Steer*