

## 1989

At the first AGM in 1989 more Vice Presidents were appointed: Lord Rees, Brigadier Maurice Atherton, Sylvia Corral (Dover Librarian), Marion Horsfield (retired Head Teacher of the Girls' Grammar School and Terry Sutton. Leo Wright began his long tenure as secretary.

Consulted about proposed development of the Western Heights, the Society took the view that it could be a major tourist asset if essential environmental safeguards were observed - 25 years on that is still the Society's policy. Relief was felt when Pencester Gardens received a reprieve from redevelopment for shopping, but a cutting blow came in August 1989 when Clement Freud declared in *The Times* that 'Dover was a nasty, surly town'!

A group was formed to remedy the neglect of the River Dour and the first clean-up took place in October 1989. It was a mammoth effort covering the whole length of the river from Temple Ewell to New Bridge, but there was no shortage of volunteers - 115 customers of 13 pubs along the route took part, assisted by brewers Whitbread and Shepherd Neame providing essential refreshment in the form of 600 cans of beer. This physical effort was complemented by the Society urging DDC to care for and maintain the river and its environs (note this was long before the Dour gained 'main river' status and the Environment Agency became responsible for its biodiversity and flood risk but not for litter clearance). With the Dover Engineering Works site being redeveloped for retail stores, the Society urged the inclusion of a riverside access as part of its aim for a riverside walk. Much later the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership (WCCP) erected riverside signs directing walkers along a very

tortuous route, often having to move away from the river. In a Newsletter article Jeremy Cope asserted that 'the Dour should be an asset to Dover'. Over 20 years later Jeremy and the Society are still repeating those words!

A Shop Front Award was instituted to help improve the image of the town and the first Awards Evening, held in October 1989, was attended by the Mayor and Dover MP, David Shaw. The landlords of the pubs who supplied the river clean-up volunteers received framed certificates and the Shop Front Award went to Brodys of Worthington Street for its retention of original shop front features in its refurbishment. In addition the Dover Society quiz winners with entrants from 7 years upwards received their prizes.

The first members meeting, designed to raise and discuss matters of concern, was held in November and was attended by 60 people. Concerns included threatened development of the Western Heights and the B&Q development at Charlton Green. There was also anxiety over record low water levels in the chalk aquifers supplying the springs for the River Dour as well as the local drinking water.

Attendees of the second Christmas Feast were entertained to old music hall songs by a group from Dover Choral Society in Victorian dress, but Christmas cheer was negated by news of the death of well known local photographer and producer of the annual Dover film, Ray Warner.

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Primavera, 'SE England's resident professional orchestra', provided a successful concert for 400 people in the Stone Hall of the Town Hall. This was largely due to the efforts on behalf of the Society of Leo Wright who secured free use

of the hall and local business sponsorship. As it was so successful it was repeated the following year. So began the Society's tradition of supporting music in Dover.

The first Wine and Wisdom evening was held in February with Clive Taylor as quizmaster. This popular event became a Society tradition every year and Clive is still asking the questions! It is also customary for half the net proceeds to be donated to Crabble Corn Mill. Later in the year 100 members visited Crabble Corn Mill to see the restoration work by the Corn Mill Trust. A framed Society certificate in recognition of the work was presented and members present donated another £100. The Chairman's guided walk around historic Dover attracted 85 members and summer outings further afield became an established feature of the annual programme.

A Projects Group led by John Owen was formed. This small enthusiastic group, prepared to get their hands dirty and their muscles aching, tackled an incredible range of projects over the next ten years. Almost always the group involved some young people, helping to give them a sense of community. Its first challenge came in March 1990 when, to celebrate Tidy Britain Year, litter clearing was organised involving Dover sea and air cadets competing to see who could collect most rubbish. In 70 minutes 70 sacks of litter were collected plus assorted trolleys etc. including part of an artificial leg! This challenge to local cadets became an annual event organised by the Society and sponsored by various businesses including McDonald's that supplied welcome refreshments. The winning team was usually presented with a silver trophy. National Environment Week in April saw some members helping to survey a section of the Western Heights for orchids.

On the planning front the Society joined opposition to Eurotunnel's plans for a huge cooling plant at the foot of Shakespeare Cliff; the battle was lost but a reduction in height was achieved. A warm welcome was given to the opening of the Hellfire Corner tunnels at the castle and the formation of the White Cliffs Countryside Project (later Partnership) to protect and manage the chalk grasslands around the town including the Western Heights, assisted by grazing Dexter cattle. A planned multi-storey car park on the empty Russell Street site to serve the new White Cliffs Experience was considered an unavoidable necessity by the Society, but suggestions were made to soften its impact; somewhat typical of Dover, it was never built.

Despite the Home Office being rebuked by the Ombudsman in 1980 when the New Dover Group complained that it had demolished without consultation a powder magazine on the Western Heights to build a new boiler house and chimney, disfiguring the skyline, the Home Office again did something similar. Jack Woolford prepared the Society's case to the Ombudsman against the Home Office for building a new accommodation block for the Young Offenders' Institution at the Citadel, part of the scheduled ancient monument, without consulting English Heritage or the Department of the Environment (informing DDC was thought sufficient). Once again the Home Office was criticised by the Ombudsman.

A milestone was hosting the Kent Federation of Amenity Society's 1990 spring conference with its theme of 'From Roman occupation to Channel Tunnel'.

In July 1990 a group of members was invited to see the renovation work being carried out at the Town Hall to arrest decay. When this work was completed our

editor welcomed the unveiling of the Town Hall in its 'newly cleaned and restored glory'. The roof had been replaced, the Stone Hall repainted, the High Street frontage stonework repaired, new toilets installed, a lift for the disabled and a furniture lift from the basement. Complete renovation would apparently take 10 years and cost up to £10 million. It never happened.

By now the annual pattern of the Society's activities emerged with monthly meetings of some sort from October to April, including the ever popular February Wine and Wisdom evening, presentation of annual awards in October and the Christmas Feast in December. Current local issues were discussed at members only meetings. Several summer outings became the norm, including a trip to France in September.

### *Lousyberry Wood*



*Following the disastrous hurricane of 1987, the Society decided to replace the many trees lost from Lousyberry Wood close to the top of*

*Whitfield Hill. The Project Group with the assistance of some Temple Ewell residents and pupils from the primary school carried out site clearance and preparation, which was followed by the planting of 200 mainly beech trees. A start was made during National Tree Week and continued at weekends during the rest of November and December. The work was fully funded by a KCC grant, sponsors and a 'whip round' of Society members. Subsequently, the Society was presented with the Civic Trust 1990 Community Pride Award. Following the planting, every year thereafter a Sunday in November was devoted to 'aftercare', ensuring that brambles did not smother the saplings.*

At the Society's 1990 Awards Evening the renovation of new premises in Dour Street for A R Adams & Sons (Printers) Ltd was recognised. The framed certificate still hangs in their reception area. DDC was also rewarded for their Dover Town Trail interpretation panels sited throughout the town. The Society, Ivan Green and Joe Harman were consulted about the content. Sadly, many of the panels now need replacing. Kingsley Shipping Ltd also received an award for the renovation of their 'Old Brewery' building in Dolphin Passage. At the other extreme the MFI building on the corner of Castle Street and Woolcomber Street was highlighted as an example of what the Society did not want!

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## 1991

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In February 1991 the Society held a public meeting entitled 'Save our sewage; rescue our river', to discuss the threat to health from unsatisfactory sewage disposal, polluted beaches as well as the neglected appearance and low level of the river. Representatives from Southern Water, the National River Authority, Friends of the Earth and DDC spoke and a lively discussion followed! A survey of the river from Castle Street to Ladywell was