

Heritage Open Days



Every year Heritage Open Days are organised when places of historic interest not normally open to the public are opened free of charge for up to four days in September. The Unitarian Church in Adrian Street had participated since 2000 - the only Dover property to do so and in 2003 the Society was asked to help staff it, which it did, but also included a guided walk round nearby Cowgate Cemetery. This taster led to a new project for the Society with Derek Leach encouraging other properties to participate in future years by taking on the administration involved and the local and national publicity. This resulted in five properties opening their doors in 2005: St. Edmund's Chapel, Maison Dieu House complete with town regalia, Archcliffe Fort, the Grand Shaft and the Unitarian Church. This has continued every year since with one or two new venues added each year (St. Mary's Church, St. Mary's Bell Tower, Town Hall, Roman Painted House and St. Radigund's Abbey) now totalling 10. This acts as a shop window for Dover with visitors from near and far.

Once again the Society was inundated with consultation documents - the South East Plan, Kent and Medway Structure Plan, Local Development Framework, DTC's Five Year Plan, St. James' area scheme (now known as Dover Town Investment Zone or DTIZ), White Cliffs Business Park Phase 2 etc. The Dover Pride partners were employing consultants to produce a

Dover master plan to feed into the Local Development Framework. The Society was quite clear on its priorities - extending the high speed rail link to Dover, a rail link to the docks, dualling of the A2, improvement of Townwall Street and upgrading of Dover Priory station, not to mention the need for jobs by the thousand to stimulate everything else! DDC sought views on the number of houses to be built in the District between 2006 and 2026 - 5900, 7900 or 9900.

To celebrate the 400th anniversary of Dover Harbour Board in 2006 we suggested that they should erect (once again) a bandstand in Granville Gardens.

A brainstorming meeting wanted better access to the Bleriot Memorial in time for the centenary of the first flight across the Channel in 1909, a new exit road from the Eastern Docks to ease congestion and a lorry holding area on the M20/A20 to keep traffic moving in Townwall Street at peak times, port expansion, docks rail link, new water supplies, a hospital and a higher education centre. No grand schemes were felt to be needed merely to make the most of what Dover already had.

2006

At the 2006 AGM Sheila Cope took a well earned rest after many years as 'Queen of the Raffle' held at every Society meeting, but retained her Membership Secretary role, reporting a record membership of 444. Another record was very worrying - Dover had 500 houses and 50 shops empty. The closure of Connaught Barracks meant the end of a military presence in Dover except for the Deputy Constable still living in Constable's Tower and the Society was concerned about the future of Fort Burgoyne within the site. The AGM heard how the Chairman's role extended beyond charring meetings of the

Society and its Executive since he (we have still not had a female Chairperson) also represented the Society at functions such as the installation of the Lord Warden, the annual Zeebrugge Raid ceremonies, the mayor making and the Remembrance Services. Something completely new was Society Christmas cards using images from Budge Adams' Collection.

The Society continued to make modest grants to local projects such as £250 toward publication of the Townwall Street dig report, £300 to the Painted House appeal and £200 toward the cost of the Bronze Age Boat Conference.

To cope with an expected doubling of traffic in the next 25 years, DHB produced an ambitious masterplan which would eventually provide four new ferry berths at the Western Docks and would require the filling-in of the Granville Dock and the Tidal Basin. Wellington Dock would be landlocked and surrounded by a hotel, restaurants, shops and apartments. To compensate for the loss of the yachting marina a new marina would be sited to the east of the Prince of Wales Pier. The Society wanted to retain the Customs Watchhouse and remnants of the historic North and South Piers and we were pleased that our submission for a water link between the Wellington Dock and any new marina in the harbour was accepted.

A spate of welcome news came before the end of 2006: Priory Station was to be upgraded at long last and the high speed rail link would be extended to Dover despite the cost of enabling trains to go through the Shakespeare tunnels; Wetherspoons would be moving into the derelict cinema site (we are still waiting), the Netto superstore opened and the Seasports Centre was to be built. However, the Society joined in the many protests

against Connaught Barracks becoming an open prison. The proposal was eventually dropped for a number of reasons, but the proximity of the Duke of York's Royal Military School being the most compelling. Instead, 500 carbon neutral houses were planned - not the hospital or university campus as some hoped. We did not object but repeated our concerns about the future of Fort Burgoyne.

2007



At the 2007 AGM a record membership of 450 was reported. Joan Liggett retired as Social Secretary and refused any presentation, but agreed to become a Vice President. Pat Hooper stepped into her shoes. Tribute was paid to member Joe Harman, Freeman of Dover, who had died, aged 92, in January.

The website, managed by Mike McFarnell, became much more popular when Lorraine Sencicle's articles on the many Dovers around the world, first published in the *Dover Mercury*, were included. A Dover history scrapbook was added soon afterwards making use of Kathleen and Bob Hollingsbee's extensive archive.