

2008

The 2008 AGM saw the membership record broken again at 464.

As its contribution to the 2008 Dover Festival, the Society underwrote and organised an expensive Tallis Concert in the ancient refectory of Dover College where Thomas Tallis (born 1505) would have eaten during his six years as organist at St. Martin's Priory. It was a unique occasion with a 40 strong Canterbury Cathedral choir. The Festival included yet another Dover Pageant, which celebrated its centenary. Member and Pageant Master, Mike McFarnell, vowed that it was his last!

It was good to hear that several empty properties were to be brought back into use by converting them to dwellings: the Salvation Army Citadel, the Churchill Club (former Buckland School), the former college in Ladywell and the URC church in High Street - tragically the last was burnt down just before completion. Plans to improve Station Approach were welcomed, but we lobbied for many more station parking spaces than the existing 29 to cope with the expected increase in commuters using the high speed trains. Air quality concerns caused by ships and lorries were voiced as were worries over so many new houses planned without new jobs. We supported Langdon Action Group's opposition to a wind farm so close to dwellings which eventually succeeded after a public inquiry.

Recognising the 125th anniversary of the opening of Connaught Park in 1883 the Society planted a holm oak.

Lorraine Sencicle's long battle to secure a new hospital for Dover appeared to be reaching a successful outcome in 2008, but subsequent controversy over a suitable site

(Whitfield or town centre) caused lengthy delays. The official choice of the town centre was scuppered by Environment Agency concerns over flood risk and the Buckland Hospital site, despite its access problems, was eventually chosen.

Our attempt to tidy up the area at the foot of Mote Bulwark and possibly open the historic site to the public was frustrated by no co-operation from the private owner and Kent Highways opposing any access off the A20. We had better luck with refurbishing a plaque in Saxon Street commemorating the help Belgian workers gave in 1946 repairing war-damaged houses in the area.

A proposal to create a lorry park for 3000 vehicles to replace Operation Stack and to reduce congestion in Townwall Street when ferries were disrupted was considered, but - guess what - it never happened! We also objected to too many houses proposed for the Westmount site in Folkestone Road, which is still derelict.

Town Hall project

A talk during the Dover Film Festival by John Clayton, retired DDC Director of Technical Services, led to the Society approaching the owner, DDC, as to whether a major lottery bid to refurbish the Town Hall might be possible after the 2012 Olympic Games (when lottery funds might be more plentiful); DDC agreed. A modest Society Town Hall Restoration Fund was opened using a block of shares donated by a member. The Town Mayor, Sue Jones, was enthusiastic about our hopes for the restoration of the Town Hall and a joint approach was discussed with Jon Iveson, Museum Curator. As a result the Society convened a meeting with representatives from DDC (the owner), Sue Jones (the Town Mayor), Dover Rotary Club and Thanet Leisure Force (the Town Hall operator) which agreed to form a group to consider

the feasibility of restoring the Town Hall to something like its Victorian splendour aided, it was hoped, by a major Heritage Lottery Fund grant, making its history better known and increasing access to the building.



The first task was to make the public both near and far more aware of the building and its history. A modest start was made in May 2011 with guided tours every Wednesday morning once a month with guides provided by the Society and Kent Greeters. From September, with the opening of the new History Room in the old Court Room, tours are now available every Wednesday. By May 2012 500 people had visited. With this increased momentum, publicity was aimed also at groups attracting up to 40 people at a time. Attracting cruise passengers proved more difficult!

The project is now in its second and more difficult phase of preparing the ground for a major lottery fund bid considering what should be restored and how it should be used and managed in the future to maximise its potential for commercial, community and heritage use.

A short, sharp campaign was waged to save a Second World War ARP post in Station Approach - one of the few surviving - which resulted in its listing. The Society pursued with KCC, thought to be the owner, the possibility of us cleaning it up

and keeping the area around it tidy. Unresolved ownership frustrated our offer to adopt the site.

2009

Having persuaded DDC to celebrate the centenary of Louis Bleriot's historic 37 minute first cross Channel flight on 25 July 1909 and to have a lasting legacy of the celebration by improving the memorial site and access to it, we were pleased with the work done and the ceremony on the day. The event was made more special by an original Bleriot XI plane flying across, a fly past by the Red Arrows and their French counterpart and a display of veteran aircraft at the Duke of York's School followed by dinner in the castle grounds and fireworks.



Concerned about the neglected state of the town's historic interpretation panels and with DDC too cash-strapped to help, we urged, with only partial success, DTC to take on their maintenance and we offered to fund the replacement of the Bleriot panel in time for the centenary. Our suggestions that the empty B&Q premises at Charlton Green should become a bowling alley and /or ice rink and that Snoops (the empty former cinema) should be compulsorily purchased for a community centre both came to nothing.

The proposed Local Development Framework taxed us - particularly the plan