

2011



With the Society's funds receiving virtually no interest consideration was given to increasing membership subscriptions which had not changed since 1996 - £6 or £10 for a couple. Fearful of losing members who would not change their standing orders, it was not pursued.

Barry Smith, the Society's first secretary, died during 2011.

The old and almost illegible stone plaque commemorating the Granville Street Boys' School, destroyed by enemy action in 1943, was replaced by The Society and unveiled in February 2011, funded by Charlton Primary School, Charlton Church and our members.

With Jack Woolford in a poor state of health, Patrick Sherratt became acting Planning Committee Chairman. Our reaction to the government's Big Society policy (to offset the effects of necessary cuts in public finance by increased efforts by volunteers) was that there was already a massive contribution by volunteers and without the support of cash-strapped local authorities volunteers would become disheartened.

Land owners submitted over 100 new sites for possible development to be considered

for inclusion in the Local Development Framework. The Society's comments included objections to the possible loss of Crabble Athletic Ground. An unusual consultation was that for a new cemetery with the Society opting for Elms Vale as the most suitable site on offer.

One of the three remaining Swingate Second World War radar masts was demolished without warning, resulting in the Society lobbying for the listing of the remaining two. Another unwelcome surprise was the proposed closure of Dover Castle during the winter months (except at weekends). The many objections, including ours, proved pointless. A meeting with DDC's Roger Walton discussed our concerns about the lack of seafront toilets, the sad state of the seafront Lindemann plaque, Connaught Pond, cleaning contracts, increasing traffic wardens' duties to include litter offending and antisocial behaviour, the new rubbish/recycling collection arrangements as well as flower beds and planters.

We responded to DTC's draft Ambition Plan (or wish list) which was a mixture of tasks that DTC could undertake and lobbying others.

Western Heights development

A highly controversial and ambitious scheme was floated by China Gateway International which envisaged some visitor facilities for the Western Heights fortifications, but also a hotel and housing, plus more housing at Farthingloe coupled with a country club and park. Our initial reaction was that the Western Heights Ancient Monument should be protected; however, since private money appeared to be the only way to preserve and promote this valuable heritage asset, we should not close the door without considering some sensitive, limited development if there were a substantial gain for the Ancient Monument that outweighed any drawbacks.

The original proposals were substantially modified, following consultations, in the subsequent outline planning application submitted in July 2012. The Society could not support it without a guarantee that the benefits for the Drop Redoubt were guaranteed as well as concerns over quality of materials and design. English Heritage opposed the application, but with DDC keen to regenerate the area, negotiations with the parties continue.

We continued to meet the DDC Director of Community and Development informally to discuss progress - or lack of - on all the major regeneration schemes. A start on redeveloping the Buckland Paper Mill site at long last brought sighs of relief. Meetings were attended about, or we submitted views upon, DDC's draft Heritage Strategy, its Open Space Policy, its standards for shop fronts in conservation areas, the Green Infrastructure Plan, the Dover Surface Water Drainage Scheme, the proposed River Dour cycle route and the Localism Bill (now an Act). At long last DTC and DDC were taking legal action on our aim to see neglected properties improved or repaired and the Society nominated 60 for some attention. We were also lobbying about the need to bring the many empty homes back into use and were keeping a close eye on the derelict former cinema in Castle Street hoping that its proximity to the St. James' development would at long last galvanise Wetherspoons into action.

Our response to the Local Government Resource Review with its proposals for business rates to be retained locally was that it would be good for thriving towns, but could put struggling towns like Dover at a disadvantage. We were, however, pleased to see that some of our major concerns about the government's controversial national planning reforms were alleviated somewhat in the final

version of the National Planning Policy Framework - the automatic presumption in favour of development was omitted, brownfield sites and town centres should once again be considered before green spaces are used and the term 'sustainable development' was at least defined, but would probably create a load of legal wrangles.

Member Alan Sencicle sets a fine example litter picking voluntarily in the town, but one man cannot do it all! Our request for DDC's civil enforcement officers' (parking attendants) duties to be extended to include certain antisocial behaviour and litter dropping eventually resulted in DDC implementing a zero tolerance policy early in 2013. On a brighter note, we were pleased to congratulate Morrison's for the much improved area around their store. The state and lack of public toilets continued to give concern especially on the seafront. Efforts to get Kent Highways to replace any diseased street trees removed were rebuffed due to financial constraints. The need for an easily accessible and safe footpath to link the castle to Langdon Cliffs via the Bleriot Memorial resulted in the Society proposing a route. The cost of repairing Connaught Park pond meant that its future was in doubt, but after constant lobbying DDC eventually found the money.

Talks

Talks given at Society meetings, free of charge to the public, have ranged far and wide over the 25 years with many covering aspects of Dover's long and fascinating history, some highly topical or controversial such as regenerating Dover and the future of the Harbour Board. Perhaps just a few may be mentioned as particularly memorable. Dick Bolton's unusual History of Bricks proved fascinating. The most moving was almost certainly by Richard Sturt, former Dover Coroner, about his most difficult and

controversial inquest on 187 of the 193 people who died when the Herald of Free Enterprise capsized off Zeebrugge in 1987. On the other hand, the most convivial has to be the talk on beer by the Head Brewer of Shepherd Neame, helped considerably by all the free samples! 'Who Hung the Monkey' was surely the strangest title when Jack Woolford told the story of his home town of Hartlepool. Finally, the prize for the longest talk goes to Budge Adams when he took us on a walk from Shakespeare Cliff to Langdon Bay, which ended at 10.45pm!

2012



The 2012 AGM saw the election of an Executive Committee without Jack Woolford for the first time since the Society was formed in 1988. Failing health meant that he played little part in Society affairs during 2011 and at 94 the time had come for him to retire. Jack, with Philomena Kennedy and Peter Johnson, were the founding fathers of the Society which had been the centre of Jack's life ever since. The Chairman paid tribute to his outstanding contribution and added that we would miss his enthusiasm, wisdom, experience, wit, command of the English language - plus the champagne on his many birthdays! A presentation of a kindle was made by the President later. Jack remains a Vice President.

Yet more Society historic plaques were being considered with the first in memory

of Doctor Koettlitz to be placed on the newly restored Charlton House.

Despite poor weather during the summer, the vision and hard work of member Mike McFarnell was well rewarded when thousands of Dovorians and others enjoyed the fantastic Military Tattoo at Connaught Barracks to help celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee in June. The Olympic Torch arrived in July and, despite the rain, huge crowds thronged the seafront to see it, the entertainment and the fireworks display.

and finally...

At the 2012 AGM when introducing his annual report Chairman, Derek Leach, said, 'When asked, "What is The Society for?" I always summarise our objectives by saying that we care about Dover's past, its present and its future. To do this we have to react and comment upon what is going on around us both locally and nationally, but we are also proactive by taking the initiative ourselves or by influencing others. A common thread running through our efforts...is making the best of what Dover already has. As usual, time will only allow me to give you the headlines of all the activities carried out on your behalf, but underlying them all is the continual and dedicated bread and butter work that goes on year in and year out by a relatively small number of members. All taken together makes The Dover Society what I hope, indeed I know it is: a force for good in Dover, a force to be reckoned with and a force respected.'

Long may it continue.