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also advertise on websites such as Visit Kent and in the Kent History Journal. On sale are sets of specially produced postcards of the six glorious stained glass windows in the Stone Hall. During 2013 requests for a guide book were satisfied by producing a very attractive 32 page full colour guide cum history, which is also available in the Museum shop and at WH Smith or direct from me. It was financed from the Society's publication fund but the cost will be recouped from sales. Any profit will go into our Town Hall Restoration Fund which has benefited from a generous donation of £1,000 from Jack Woolford, from income on shares donated to the Society and the value of the shares. The Fund now totals £4,643.

A disappointment has been failure to obtain permission for regular access to the old cells in the basement, which many visitors ask to see, particularly

those who remember the Old Town Gaol attraction. Most of the cells are full of museum items in store, but at least one cell is empty plus the fascinating passageway with cells on either side, but there are health and safety and security issues. We did, however, manage to have them open specially for the Kent History Conference last May when 150 members of history societies throughout Kent spent the morning in the Town Hall listening to three presentations on Dover - its Town Hall, its caves and tunnels and the Western Heights. In the afternoon people chose one of several guided tours on offer around the town including the Town Hall.

Now we would like to share the building with school groups. To achieve this we are thinking of producing a package of activities for primary school groups using the history and architecture of the Town Hall.

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barometer, thermometer, two life jackets and, most necessary, a bottle of brandy.

The place of take-off was near the site where once stood the Queen Elizabeth Pocket Pistol (not far from the present NAAFI building) and soon after one o'clock the balloon began to rise. When clear of the castle M. Blanchard stood in the basket and bowed to the crowd of spectators.

Soon things began to go wrong and those watching from the cliffs saw the balloon dipping towards the sea. To prevent an unwanted swim the duo in the basket began hurling out the ballast and the balloon rose again. But, mid-Channel, the balloon dipped towards the sea once more and other items had to be ditched to lighten the load. An anchor went - and even Blanchard's trousers!

Just in time there was a change in air pressure. The balloon went up and was able to drift comfortably over the French cliffs.

The balloon landed in a forest near Calais soon after three o'clock-the crossing taking about two hours.

The French were waiting for them and they carried the intrepid flyers in triumph to Calais where Blanchard was awarded the Freedom of the Town. There was a scheme to erect a statue in honour of Blanchard in Calais but it is doubtful if this was ever done.

*\*Some 24 years later M. Blanchard was up in a balloon again at The Hague when he suffered a heart attack, resulting in him falling to the ground. The fall caused serious injuries from which he died a year later.*

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Flooding of the A20 underpass has been a problem several times in the last year, the worst event being during the recent tidal surge when the river over-topped its channel. Through our membership of the catchment partnership we are aware that the Highways Agency and Environment Agency are working towards a solution to prevent repeats of these occurrences, and hopefully there will soon be some announcements about this work.

Leaving the best news to last, at the DDC/KCC You Decide event at the town hall in November our project to secure funds for new safety and work equipment for the River Dour clean-up volunteers was not only successful but came top of the public vote, so when the clean-ups start again in April we will have a whole new set of waders, buoyancy aids, litter pickers etc for our volunteers to use. A big thank you is due

to our volunteers (who had a jolly pre-Christmas get together at the White Horse) and to the public for voting for us. It was also a good networking event: following on we picked up some new volunteers, received a small grant from Cllr Sue Jones of DTC towards our project, and I will hopefully be speaking to Dover Town Council and other local bodies shortly about our plans for the future.



*River Dour*



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