

MARCH MEETING

First Speaker

Dover District Volunteering Centre

A talk by Roisin Murray - Head of Volunteering

Reported by Alan Lee

Roisin began her talk by informing the meeting of her background including the fact that Roisin is an old Irish name meaning little rose.

The Dover District Volunteering Centre (DDVC) is a registered charity, founded in the 1980's by a social worker based in Dover who saw the need of an organisation that could support voluntary organisations and to help individuals to access volunteering opportunities. The two main areas of activity are volunteering and a community transport scheme.

One of only 15 Volunteer Centres in the county they cover the whole of Dover District Council's area. Originally with offices in Deal, Dover and Sandwich, their one remaining office is in Deal. They are in Dover at the Big Local Hub, Charlton Centre every Tuesday 9.30am to 1pm. People can drop in to discuss any aspect of volunteering or volunteers. If they cannot make that day they will always try to see them on another day.

The DDVC recruit and support volunteers, across all age groups and abilities, by advertising and promoting volunteering opportunities and offer support once they have a placement. Advice, support in good practice, promotional materials and taking on volunteers is given to organisations.

Forums are run to share good practice and knowledge. The new Dover forum will

meet quarterly, the next meeting is on 1st June. They attend volunteering and jobs fairs as well as recruitment events. They help promote mental and physical health, build a good CV for those wanting to gain employment and offer an outlet for those wanting to socialise whilst giving something to their community and society. A service is offered as a lead body for DBS (was CRB) checks for organisations.

Any individual or organisation can join DDVC free of charge, this gives them voting rights at the AGM and access to the newsletters and full range of services. A huge range of voluntary opportunities over many areas is covered so they are well placed to help find something to suit everyone.

A community transport scheme has been running throughout the Dover District area for over 20 years. Funding changes over the years mean that only a small grant of less than £5,000, from the South Kent Coast Clinical Commissioning Group, is received so they rely heavily on donations. This service is essential for people who cannot readily access local transport or are ineligible for patient transport. The majority of clients use it for medical appointments. Social trips can be arranged as social inclusion in the life of society aids mental health in all ages. The majority of users are over 70 but there is no age or means limit to the service. Drivers and trips are booked by a "call-

centre" arrangement with a small paid staff and office volunteers who to answer calls.

All the drivers are volunteers, use their own cars and give up their time for free. They are paid (by the clients) 45p per mile for fuel and running costs. This is not a free service but costs are kept down with a low one-off joining fee (£10 at present) and £3 per trip administration fee.

Between 65 and 80 drivers are on the books with about 60 available at any one time. There is no upper or lower limit for the amount of commitment from each driver.

Throughout the District the DDVC has approximately 1600 clients at any one time. The demand for their services is growing, last year 367 new clients signed up for and recently there has been an average increase of 30 per month.

Last year 7 new drivers were recruited but more are always needed. Over the course of last year the drivers made 11,460 journeys which covered 105,363 miles in total. Most were short journeys to local hospitals but some were longer, London and beyond.

If anyone is interested in knowing more about volunteering or in the transport service the contact details are:

General enquiries tel: 01304 367898 or email office@ddvc.org.uk

Transport enquiries tel: 01304 380513

Website: <http://www.doverdistrictvolunteering.org.uk>

Facebook: [volunteeringdoverdistrict](#)

MARCH MEETING

— Second Speaker —

Dover's Forgotten Commando Raid

A talk by Phil Eyden

Reported by Terry Sutton

Called in as our speaker at the last minute, Western Heights' researcher Phil Eyden thrilled our March meeting with his talk about the wartime Operation Abercrombie in which Dover-based Commando played the leading role in a raid on the French coast in April 1942.

Phil, a leading member of the Western Heights Preservation Society, researched the Abercrombie raid after it was revealed the Commando unit and a Canadian force prepared for the secret attack while stationed at the Drop Redoubt on the Western Heights.



Lord Lovat Briefing Officers at the Drop Redoubt