

Looking Back Forty Years

Terry Sutton

When Dover Film Society screens its next film show, in March, one of the films to be shown will take us back forty years to 1976. Which made me think of the similarities of that year and this year, similarities but how different!

In 1976 the then Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson suddenly, without warning, resigned. In 2016 the Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron suddenly resigned without too much warning! In 1976 the government had imposed an austerity regime. There was a similar drive in 2016.

But in 1976 inflation was running at around 20 per cent (in October that year it topped 23.35 per cent). Today it's around one per cent. The bank rate in October in 1976 stood at 15 per cent. Today it floats around 0.25 per cent. How different.

In 1976, because of the national financial situation, the pound slumped in value. As a result scores of Continental shoppers, mostly from France and Belgium, arrived in Dover to get good value for their money. Dover shopkeepers enjoyed a boom time. In 2016, as a result of Brexit, the value of the



SR British Rail Dover Poster



Harold Wilson Resigns 1976



Prince Charles 1976



Great Britain II 1976

pound slumped for a while. A few extra shoppers arrived from the Continent to buy more cheaply in the shops. But Dover shopkeepers hardly had a boom time.

The year 1976 kicked off with the official opening of Dover's indoor sports centre in Townwall Street. In 2016 plans were being made for a new sports centre, possibly at Whitfield. Presumably the 1976-built sports centre in Woolcomber Street will be demolished.

What else was happening in 1976! A young Royal Navy officer steered HMS Bronington into the Eastern Arm of Dover harbour. He was Prince Charles in command of the navy ship charged with ensuring channel shipping kept to the "one-way" traffic system in the English Channel. *He was surprised to see me (and a couple of other reporters) there to greet him!*

In 1976 Dover was selected as the finishing point for the Financial Times race for yachts from Sydney, Australia to the UK. The winner was Great Britain II which covered the distance in 67 days.

1976 proved to be one of the hottest summers for centuries with the temperature in June approaching the nineties. There was very little rain resulting in a drought, with reservoirs drying up and, in some places, water stand points in the streets.



Dover Carnival Firemen 1976



Jubilee Way Construction Started 1976



Installation Deputy Constable Brigadier Maurice Atherton

In 1976 work was in progress constructing the A2 bypass from the top of Lydden Hill to the Eastern Docks via a viaduct that was later to be named Jubilee Way. Dover people walked some of the seven mile route before the road builders took over.

And, we were told, the new highway would be widened to dual carriageway in a few years. Forty years later we are still waiting.

In 1976 there was a new senior officer in charge of Dover Castle. He was Brigadier Maurice Atherton appointed Deputy Constable of Dover Castle and who proved to be a good friend of members of The Dover Society. He remained our President for many years.

Its good fun looking back and I hope you enjoy the film which our Dover Society member Mike McFarnell screens for us every year.