

OCTOBER MEETING

—Second Speaker—

The Love Dover Project

A talk by Graham Tutthill

Reported by Terry Sutton

St Mary's parish centre was well filled with an audience of about 80 on Monday, October 16, for two different talks arranged by The Dover Society.

One of the speakers was retired journalist Graham Tutthill who is now the chairman of the Love Dover Regeneration charity. Graham spent 48 years serving on the staff of the Dover Express and later on the Dover Mercury.

He told how Love Dover, with a grant from Dover Town Council, had bought one iconic building in Dover, Dickens Corner in the Market Square, and had plans to use it to benefit the local community.

"Basically we want to encourage the people of Dover, especially those who are finding life a challenge, to raise their aspirations, to learn new skills, to find jobs, and to have somewhere to live," he said.

Explaining proposals for purchased Dickens Corner he said plans were being drawn up to convert the two top floors into an apartment and to upgrade the ground floor and basement for retail and community use. When the work on the apartment was completed the aim was to sell it and to use the income for the purchase of other town centre property.

One of the reasons for this approach was to reduce the burden of the existing business rate on the property because the residential council tax rate, for the flat,

would not be so high.

He revealed Love Dover was looking to buy other main street, or London Road, property when it came on the market. The team had hoped to buy two adjoining Biggin Street shops but they were outbid when the price went up to £272,000 which was well above what Love Dover could afford. "But we are keeping our eyes open for other property that might come on the market," he added.

He believed some out-of-town developers or financiers were buying town centre retail properties in Dover in the expectation that the value would increase when the beneficial effects of the St James' development became apparent.

Mr Tutthill did not hide his views on some Dover folk who are always ready to criticise.

He had this to say: "There are those who sit behind their keyboards, some using false names, who seem to use most of their time to criticise everyone else, making sarcastic comments and generally running Dover down.

"There is a danger that those involved in doing worthwhile things will become discouraged and decide it's just not worth the hassle. Dover would be a much better place if people offered their time to help rather than being so negative and vindictive."