

Dover's Volunteers Keep The Town Tidy

Peter Sherred

Despite being surrounded by a plethora of historical and scenic assets, arguably the most important asset possessed by our town of Dover is quite simply the people who make up this great town of ours. This came to me forcibly once again this year in the nature of the town's response to the Keep Britain Tidy Spring Clean Campaign which ran formally between March and April nationwide. The response of Dover was truly remarkable with many Dover Society members being involved. In short, the KBT Campaign galvanised an incredible volunteer response from the people of Dover which I was privileged to observe, or form a part of, in my role as a Keep Britain Tidy Litter Heroes Ambassador.

Along with several other individuals I have been a litter picking activist for years both within and outside of the town and I was pleased to be appointed by Keep Britain Tidy to my new role during 2018.



*John Morgan, Peter Sherred and Ken Read
promote the campaign*

Just ahead of the official start of the 2019 campaign members of the town's two Rotary clubs, the Rotary Club of Dover and the Rotary Club of South Foreland, undertook a substantial clean-up project in the Buckland Estate targeting Green Lane from its top entrance, almost opposite Christ Church Academy, down into the Estate and over the railway bridge then down as far as Brookfield Avenue. This entire route had been thoroughly cleared by Rotarians just two years previously so it was somewhat disappointing to find that at the end of the exercise a whopping total of over 70 full refuse bags had been collected along with a large number of individual items such as a widescreen television, a push chair, large children's toys, a chair, vases and other artefacts. The bulk of the bag rubbish contents included tin cans, plastic and glass bottles and other items associated with fast food or take away outlets but also included several domestic rubbish bags that had been filled and simply thrown away into the verges of the route. The Rotary effort was a good kickstart to the following Campaign.

Prior to the commencement date of the Campaign itself I delivered to every Primary and Secondary School in the town a personal letter addressed to the Headteacher highlighting the Campaign and encouraging participation in it in some form. Hopefully, the perils of the litter epidemic focussed in the environmental studies of these institutions but as only one school responded it is hard to know. A large A3 sized poster promoting the Campaign was delivered at the same time to each school.

In addition, I emailed the clerks of as many local parish councils as I could to encourage community participation in the Campaign and promotion of it. There were a few responses one of which was particularly heart-warming coming from Temple Ewell where I was advised a local organisation for people under a disability would be participating with their charges.

When the Campaign began officially volunteers in groups or associations and individuals rose to the occasion magnificently. Members of the London Road Community Form, under the leadership of its charismatic leader Deacon Michelle Legumi of the Beacon Church, were immediately active picking up litter in the top end of the town and painting out graffiti which had been placed on the walls of a local business. It was amazing to see the quantity of drink containers (cans and bottles) that had been dumped in the front area of the old former Methodist Church in London Road. Full marks to our town mayor, The Right Worshipful the Town Mayor of Dover, Mrs Sue Jones, who participated in the exercise. Over in St Margaret's Bay the local Women's Institute members, with local leader Brenda Paul and WI County Chairman Gill Crone, held the first of a series of litter picks conducted over the whole period of the Campaign.

As the days passed people, both young and not so young, gathered together to clear Barton Path alongside the River Dour while the Tower Hamlets Forum members undertook a significant litter pick over a wide area within Tower Hamlets and in that activity were two other Town Councillors - Ann Jenner and Pam Brivio - as well as Paul Pearson who is well known for his regular litter picking activities in the town area adjoining Bridge Street. Paths and roads were not the only subjects of clean ups by volunteers for Dover Society

members, led by Jeremy Cope, descended upon Cowgate Cemetery (which is regularly cleared by Society members) and then more volunteers, including Society member John Morgan, took to the waters of the River Dour, under the leadership and direction of Iona Dubieniec of the White Cliffs Countryside Partnership, to clear our lovely chalk river of rubbish thrown in to it or on its banks by thoughtless or uncaring people. The Land Trust tidied up the Fort Burgoyne boundary near Burgoyne Heights while unsightly redundant banners were removed from street side railings at the top of Connaught Hill and Castle Hill. Why do organisations who erect these banners not take them down again once an event has passed?

Volunteers undertook beach cleaning as well as Promenade clearing, while other volunteers undertook work at Shakespeare Beach. Rubbish collected from Castle Hill Road, from its junction with Dover Road, Guston down to Laureston Place, filled seven big bags with cans and bottles as well as yielding up some half a dozen car wheel hub caps! How sad such a principal route for tourists to our main tourist attraction in the form of the Castle should be so heavily



Castle Hill Road Clearance 15 April

despoiled by rubbish with no-one bothering to pick it up!

The volunteers of Dover responded to the challenge of the Campaign magnificently and, of course, many individuals and others continue these civic activities throughout the year. It is to be hoped that many others will consider undertaking more frequent clean ups rather than just making an annual appearance because those who drop all this rubbish do not rest on their laurels as it were continuing with their anti-social behaviour all year round.

Two notable negatives in this Campaign were lack of participation by Network Rail and the Highways Agency with Dover District Council the latter in respect of the A2. Having contacted Network Rail and shown officials around black spots at Priory Hill, Tower Hamlets and Green Lane, it was disappointing to learn no steps would be taken to clear the piles of rubbish shown to the officials because of the nature of the sites concerned. In fairness the condition of these sites was not caused by Network Rail but by local people. However I intend

to keep pressing for action. This is also the case for the A2 which must look like a third world country condition to visitors or tourists to this Country. The practical problem seems to be the division of responsibility between DDC (the litter collection authority) and HE (as the strategic route operator) as well as cost. Despite promises from HE of clearance as at the time of writing nothing has materialised but why should the condition of verges and the central reservation of this principal route be allowed to fall into such a parlous state in the first place? Continuing monitoring and clearance are needed or, perhaps, HE should lose its responsibility for the major routes in the first instance?

But these negatives should not be allowed to distract from the wonderful response of the volunteers who participated in the Campaign and made such a significant contribution to the improvement of the amenities and the environment of the town. Well done Dover's Champion Volunteers for where would we or the town be without them?



Dover Society members at Cowgate Cemetery