

Refurbishment Committee Jenny Olpin

Not to be daunted by the edict to restrict face to face meetings, the Refurbishment Committee has continued to flourish on-line via the auspices of Zoom. This strange on - screen world sadly resulted in omitting some of our members who chose to abstain due to not being 'au fait' with the virtual world. We hope they will be able to return to us soon. It has taken a lot of investment and determination to educate ourselves with the technology and I am sure that many of us have (and indeed still are) learning how to communicate and improve our digital literacy. There are good on-line digital skills learning platforms available if you would like to know more, so just google digital skills where there is a plethora of choice available to you.

As our monthly refurbishment meetings have progressed our lack of engagement in the activities of day to day life in Dover required us to re-consider our agenda. Our priorities have changed, and our focus was, and is, very much on the well-being of the town and where there might be gaps in the support and help being given to our various communities. We have linked with Ashley Payne, Community Development Officer with Dover District Council, who was co-ordinating information about shopping, prescription collection, foodbank operation, GP surgeries etc. It became apparent that across the various Dover communities volunteers have been recruited from diverse backgrounds to become active with many aspects of support, even providing a friendly face to those suddenly isolated by age or health.

There was, we noted, in the early months a definite change in the air quality. The lack of traffic resulted in a silence that

seemed to draw our attention to the vibrant bird song, which, of course, is always there but we can't hear it!

We monitored the tourist venues, such as Langdon Cliffs and the Castle, and were relieved how Dover began to awake with the 'staycation' visitors which was further stimulated by the 'eat out to help out' initiative. Of course, this was not perfect, but the town was beginning to operate in the term we've all come to know as the 'new normal'. Hairdressers, hotels and public houses began to open however, we are still concerned, but hopeful, that they can all survive the coming winter months.

Our regular agenda includes discussions about our rough sleepers, many of whom are known to our Cowgate Cemetery volunteers. A positive factor of the 'lockdown' was the support they were given by Porchlight and Canterbury City Council in finding accommodation that afforded them protection. At our last meeting we were pleased to hear that there have been no 'rough sleepers' returning to the cemetery despite the fabulous summer weather we have been fortunate to experience this year.

Toilet facilities in the town continue to be a priority for many forums. Despite the letters, campaigns and high-level profiling of this issue nothing appears to have changed. Refurbishment will re-visit the provision and opening times of our town's conveniences during the next months and publish our results on our website so as we all know what is currently operational.

Another benefit to the town of the decrease in pedestrians has been less litter being deposited. This has been particularly

noticeable in the vicinity of the Schools..... just saying!

Another focus for refurbishment is the suggestion of a tree planting scheme for Dover which enhances the corners, rough land and general appearance of several of our streets. We will keep you informed as to how we progress with this.

If you are interested in joining our Refurbishment Committee which will be 'virtual' for the foreseeable future, then please email me. We have good discussions and it's good to be able to have a chance to make a difference. My contact details are inside of the front cover of this newsletter and on the Society website at thedoversociety.co.uk

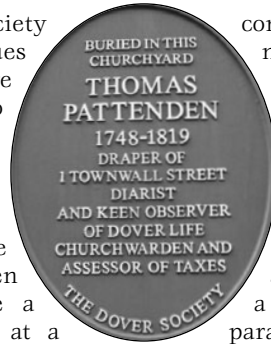
Thomas Pattenden

Derek Leach

Why did The Dover Society erect one of its blue plaques to Thomas Pattenden? For more than 20 years from 1797 to 1819 Thomas, a draper and stocking seller of 1 Townwall Street recorded, in small notebooks, daily 'remarks and occurrences' he deemed to be of interest. Being such a keen observer, his notes provide a fascinating record of Dover at a critical time in history.

Thomas was born in Dover on 21 May 1748. Hard working, with a head for commerce, his business thrived. In addition, part of his house was let and his wife took in children needing to take the sea air for their health. Investing wisely, Thomas became one of the wealthiest citizens, an assessor of taxes, churchwarden and patron of charities. In his spare time he followed world affairs, read widely, sketched and painted. Housebound toward the end of his life, he wrote a history from Noah's flood to the Middle Ages.

In his diaries he noted the passing of ships and fleets in the Channel with almost poetic descriptions. Thomas often



commented on the state of the national finances during this Napoleonic Wars period, and closer to home, noted the sharp increase in the cost of candles as war threatened. In 1803, he noted that Dover had raised eight companies of volunteers, providing their own arms, on duty for three weeks at a time but being paid. They

paraded on the Rope Walk and marched with William Pitt, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, at their head to Maison Dieu Fields. In 1805 Thomas could see from the cliff tops the enemy camped on each side of Boulogne. He was asked by the Customs Collector to make a drawing of the Boulogne area and to copy a map of the coast and batteries of the town plus the harbour entrance.

The Dover defences were substantially strengthened and recorded in detail by Thomas in 1795-97, including the underground barracks at the castle and, later, the construction of the incredible Grand Shaft staircases. Local troop movements did not escape his eye and he saw something of the battles at sea. Following the 1805 Battle of Trafalgar, the Victory, with Nelson's body on board,