

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

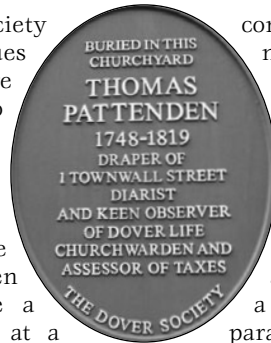
Thomas Pattenden

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,

anchored off Dover. National victories were celebrated in the town with parades, balls and grand suppers. The town was illuminated and candles placed in windows. Thomas noted that two captured French generals attended one of these balls! Captured French sailors were usually kept in the town goal; occasionally old and infirm prisoners were sent back to France and released.

Despite the wars, Thomas carried on his business, ordering goods and sometimes travelling to Canterbury, usually by chaise, but sometimes walking part way to Bridge or the Halfway House. On one occasion he describes walking all the way, commenting finally, 'got home at six and thank God met Mrs. P again in health and safety'. He describes his visits to London by coach via Rochester or by water from Whitstable, combining business with sightseeing.

Thomas expresses concern for individuals fallen on hard times: debtors held in Dover Castle and a man held in the Market Place stocks being pelted by the crowd. In 1807 he witnessed a riot when a crowd demanded the release of four smugglers; magistrates read the Riot Act and mounted soldiers quickly cleared the Market Place. A crime took place in his own home when Thomas had to sack a servant for stealing a pair of stockings.

Many odd incidents are recorded, including Dovorians towing a whale, stranded on the Goodwins, back to Dover, where it was put on display for 6d; later, it was boiled for oil and its gigantic skull displayed at the top of a cliff. A pig was buried in a cave following a cliff fall, but was dug out alive after six months, still able to walk. Whilst there is no record of Thomas playing any sports, he attended horse racing at Priory Fields, Barham

Downs and Buckland Valley and watched cricket matches in Northfall Meadow.

Thomas retired from his drapery business in 1804 and in 1806 his wife died. He recorded her last hours, 'She called me to her bedside and said, "Give me your hand. I am dying. Send for the doctor"... at 12 she was failing fast...at five I could scarce feel a pulse remaining. At six I felt the parting pang and saw her breathe for the last time, when she expired without a struggle and fell asleep'. Mrs. Pattenden was buried alongside Thomas's parents in St. Mary's Churchyard. He lived another 13 years, still taking a keen interest in life, writing, sketching and recording events in his notebooks, most of which survive.

Source: The Pattenden Diaries 1797-1819 by A.L.Macfie, Archaeologia Cantiana, Vol. XCIV, 1978.

Dover Society Badges



Available at £2 each

Contact the editor at:

8 Cherry Tree Avenue

Dover, CT16 2NL

Tel: 01304 213668

Email: Alan.Lee1947@ntlworld.com

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