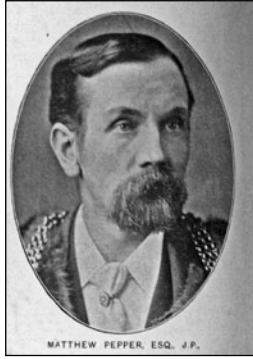


The Mayor and the Pepper Stones

Barry O'Brien - Dover Tales

Sited on the small grass area to the side of the Pay & Display car park in Castle Hill Road, just outside the fence of the former Connaught Barracks and opposite Upper Road, is a boundary marker, referred to as a 'Pepper' stone, one of a series of 'new' boundary stones set to delineate the town's boundary during the office of Mayor Matthew Pepper in 1895-6. Many Pepper Stones are still visible around town today, including those by the Coastguard Cottages, overlooking Coombe Hole by Fort Burgoyne, and at Shakespeare Cliff.

Matthew Pepper was elected Mayor in 1895 and was at the same time Chairman of the Dover Board of Guardians. An established Dover family his ancestors had variously occupied the posts of Town Mayor, Town Clerk, and Clerk to the Court



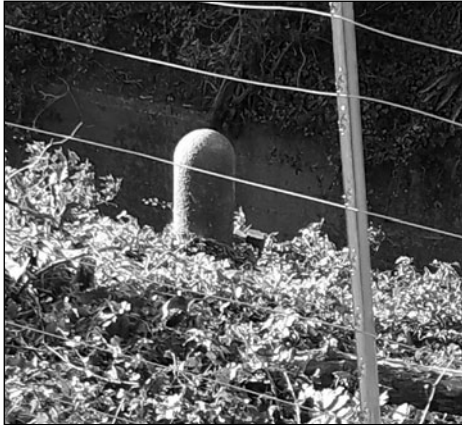
Matthew Pepper JP 1841-1921

of Brotherhood and Guestling, a high ranking Cinque Ports office.

Alderman Matthew Pepper owned a considerable amount of property in the town centre at one time including a residence and ironmongery warehouse at 49, 51 and 53 High Street, the site now opposite the Charlton Centre. It was at his High Street address that three cannons, said to have

been brought back from the Battle of Waterloo, were displayed, today these cannons, gifted to the town by Alderman Pepper, are displayed at the top end of Biggin Street, next to the Maison Dieu.

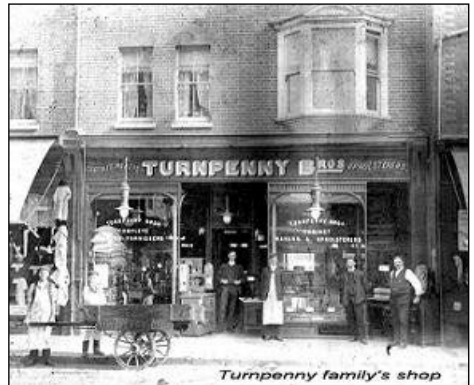
Born in 1841 Matthew Pepper trained, in Suffolk, as an engineer before opening the wholesale and retail ironmongery store in Dover.



*Pepper Stone at Fort Burgoyne's West Wing
Courtesy Chris Valdus*

In 1883, he stood in the local elections as a Conservative candidate for Castle Ward but, at the request of the Party Executive, withdrew in order to make way for another candidate, William Crundall. Although Crundall's nomination was though questionable as his papers described him as a 'Timber Merchant', which was, technically, incorrect as he was not yet in partnership with his father in the highly successful family timber business. Crundall did, though, eventually win the seat which he went on to retain until his 1913 retirement from local politics having been elected Mayor of Dover 13 times, the first time in 1886, and receiving a Knighthood for his services.

In November 1885, Matthew Pepper was finally elected for Castle Ward, unopposed, in a by election caused by the death of Philip Stiff. Like Crundall Pepper also remained on the council until 1913 and was described as keen, witty, original and enterprising. He became a magistrate in 1889, was appointed Alderman in 1892 and elected Mayor in 1895-6. That same year saw Dover's boundaries extended and marked, as was tradition, by boundary stones suitably inscribed Dover Pepper Mayor 1895 which stones became known as Pepper Stones.



Turnpenny Bros Shop

In local politics, Matthew was principally concerned with the administration of the Poor Law, holding office on the Board of Guardians for Charlton as well a position which included his role as Chairman of the Dover Union, the workhouse located at Buckland Bottom that eventually became Buckland Hospital; under his stewardship the number of jobs provided by the council was increased so as to address the issue of unemployment in the town.

On September 17th, 1907, Pepper's business was ravaged by fire following which he slowly withdrew from taking such an active role in local affairs before finally resigning in 1913.

All flags on municipal buildings were lowered with news of Pepper's death on April 24th, 1921.

By 1925 Turnpenny's had taken over the High Street premises; three years later Sarah Pepper, Matthew's wife, died on May 18th, 1928, aged 86.

The three 200 year old cannon that once stood outside Pepper's High Street emporium were restored in 2018 and replaced by Dover's Maison Dieu, the cannons themselves having been cleaned and placed on new gun carriages built from English Oak.

Recent clearances around Fort Burgoyne's restored West Wing have uncovered a 'lost' Pepper Stone completing one more link in the chain of stones placed around Dover in during Matthew Pepper's Mayoral term of office.



Cannons From Battle of Waterloo by the Maison Dieu



FORT BURGOYNE

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