

Dover in 1858

Edited by Derek Leach

On 7th August 1858 the Dover Express published its first issue and in August 1933 it celebrated its 75th birthday with an article about what Dover was like in 1858 - what existed, some of what had disappeared and some of what was to come.

In 1858 there was a seafront built on the shingle ridge, with Marine Parade dating from 1820, the Esplanade from 1830 and Waterloo Crescent from 1834. The bay was still unenclosed, but work had started, in 1847, on constructing the Admiralty Pier.

Mains drainage had recently been installed in the town and the waterworks were only four years old. People were still talking about the banquet celebrating the completion, which was held in the grand, underground water reservoir before it was filled.

The railway had arrived via Folkestone in 1844, terminating at the Town Station in the Pier District. The adjacent, grand Lord Warden Hotel had opened in 1851. In 1858 stage coaches still ran to Canterbury until the railway line from Canterbury opened in 1861, with its Priory Station in the fields of Priory Farm. The Deal stage coach ran until 1880. Telegrams could be sent in 1858, but only from the railway station. Dover's Post Office

was not connected to the system until 1869, following the government's takeover of the telegraph system. A public telephone service was not introduced in Dover until 1886, although a private line had earlier connected the fire station and the waterworks; connection to London came in 1887.

Folkestone Road had not been developed beyond Christ Church, which was opened in 1844. Neither had the slopes below the castle been built upon; Victoria Park dates from 1864. Charlton Back Lane ran through Maison Dieu Fields, becoming Maison Dieu Road when New St. James' Church was built in 1860 on Tinkers' Close, as it was known. This was a sort of no man's land where 'navvies' cutting the Shakespeare railway tunnel organized a big, illegal, prize fight, seemingly beyond police jurisdiction. Circuses were also held there (now it is St. Mary's School playing field). Pencester Road did not exist, since access to Biggin Street was blocked by the Gunman family mansion. Nearer the sea, the old, heavily built up area of Trevanion Street and Woolcomber Street survived until 1894 when Woolcomber Street was widened.

Beyond the Maison Dieu in High Street, the Royal Victoria Hospital had opened in 1851 with money raised by Doverians to celebrate



Shakespeare Beach



Western Dover Harbour Docks

escaping the recent cholera epidemic. The former home of papermaker Dickenson, called Brook House, was purchased for the purpose.

Charlton still existed as a village up to the Maison Dieu, and Charlton Green was connected to the High Street by Black Horse Lane (now Bridge Street) with its own church by the river, the Red Lion pub, a watermill, Barton Farm and a few cottages. Beyond was countryside until the latter part of the century when Castle Estate and Barton Estate houses appeared.

On the main road to Canterbury (London Road), connecting Charlton to Buckland village, there were some desirable residences, but the area was not completely built up. The turnpike gate across the main road at the junction with Black Horse Lane had only been removed in 1855. The Black Horse hostelry stood where the Eagle now stands, with its very popular tea gardens (later Templar Street and De Burgh Street). This corner was also popular for an entirely different reason: watching public executions until 1839. Black Horse Lane continued across High Street to the little hamlet that existed before 1860, when the bridge over the new railway line caused the road to be realigned to use it; the railway company having failed to gain approval for its preferred level crossing. The large scale development of Tower Hamlets followed.

The ancient church of St. Andrew at Buckland had been restored and altered in 1851/52. It has the distinction of being the only church in Dover's current boundaries to be mentioned in the 1086 Domesday Book. During the alterations, Buckland worshippers had to walk to the Maison Dieu for church services. There were no trams, of course, until 1896 and even the hourly omnibus service from The Bull to the Pier District did not start until 1881. The omnibus ended its

days as a field shelter between Dover and Canterbury.

Buckland Village was still partially isolated. Buckland schools in London Road date from 1860, although there were church schools earlier in Willow Walk, on the site of Brookfield House. The greyhound racing stadium in Willow Walk was very popular at the time. An annual horse race meeting was also held on Swingate Downs. The lane from London Road along the Coombe Valley had become Union Road following the construction of the Union Workhouse in 1836. At its junction with London Road was a farm on one side and Kingsford's Brewery on the other. Across the road was Buckland flour mill, still powered by its water wheel, with Harding's brewery behind it.

Dover was well off for breweries. At the other end of town was Archcliffe Fort brewery, Satchell's in Limekiln Street, Leney and Evenden's midtown, Poulter's off Russell Street and yet another at Maxton. There was no shortage of public houses either, with one per 100 inhabitants compared with one per 262 in 1933. Other amusements were few, although there was a Clarence Theatre in Snargate Street, the predecessor of The Hippodrome. Travelling theatrical companies, concerts and amateur dramatic productions could be seen at the Wellington Hall and the Apollonian Hall, also in Snargate Street. School entertainments were not at all frivolous; plays were excluded. On one occasion parents were entertained by a dissertation on astronomy with a number of small boys each giving information about a star or planet.

Reading opportunities were many: the Proprietary Library in Castle Street, Working Men's Institute in Market Street, the Philosophical Society's library, a reading room in the newly built Museum, Waterer's Library on Marine Parade, Batchellor's

Library at New Bridge and Licence's Marine Library in Woolcomber Street.

Cricket was played on the meadows where Beaconsfield Road was built. Football does not get a mention, but skating was popular in hard winters, using Priory Ponds, at Effingham, as well as Maison Dieu Fields, which were deliberately flooded for the purpose.



Early Ferry at Admiralty Pier

Cross channel traffic in 1858 was carried out by Mr. Churchward's local company on behalf of the government's Mail Service, although the South Eastern Railway also operated a vessel to Calais. The Admiralty Pier was not completed until 1875, but it was put into partial use in 1851. The paddle steamers, assisted at times with a lug sail, took on average one hour and twenty-five minutes for the crossing.

The Crimean War had ended in 1856, but what we call the Indian Mutiny was not over, although Queen Victoria's speech proroguing parliament, reported in the first issue of the Dover Express on 7th August 1858, expressed hopes for an early end. That happened and in January 1859, 'in the still dilapidated Maison Dieu', officers of the Dover garrison gave a dramatic entertainment to raise funds to provide a window, which is a memorial to soldiers who fell in both conflicts.

Curiosity of Dover

17 Cannon Street, Dover CT16 1BZ Tel 01304 202621

A Long Lasting Business
Of 30 Years

We have a wonderful collection of
Bears for the established collector
A wide range of gifts and some beautiful art
From some very talented
Artists which include amazing photography
Come and have a browse I am sure there will be
Something for you