

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

To be Presented at The Dover Society Annual General Meeting 2025

Jenny Olpin - Chairman

The Dover Society continues to be busy with various meetings, projects and Society development activities. Our Membership remains steady but, as with my predecessor, I still aspire to break the 500-membership ceiling!

The Society Executive have recently taken the difficult decision to propose an increase in the subscription to The Society for the first time in 30 years and, should this be agreed, I hope that it does not impact too greatly on our membership. The rationale for the proposal was explained and perhaps I can take this opportunity to give further substance to that rationale.

We have been pleased to have had our Dour Street Appraisal passed and accepted by the Dover District Council. Following this we now await the outcome from our Town Centre Appraisal which, following some update, it is hoped will also meet full approval during the coming year. This is work that The Society is commissioned to accomplish in partnership with our District Council colleagues.

On behalf of The Society my colleagues and I attend and lay a wreath on Remembrance Sunday, the Zeebrugge Memorial at St James' Cemetery, Merchant Navy Day on the Seafront and the Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial on the Marine Station (Cruise Terminal 1). These are Civic events at which we are proud to represent you.

The Society still has members who are working hard to maintain the Cowgate Cemetery and we have a range of our equipment that is still in use. The Cowgate Team numbers have been depleting, and we have been encouraged to

have the assistance of the White Cliffs Countryside Project team. We also have two members who have further interests in the Cemetery. Martyn Webster, who has researched in depth those interred there and Patsy Allen who regularly posts her research on Facebook.

We have been delighted to have our member Paul Wells, of Facebook's 'The Dover History Pages', join our Executive. He was keen to resurrect the Heritage Open Days which had fallen into abeyance during Covid and this he successfully achieved last September. The Heritage Open Days for 2025 are shaping up to be even better with not only venues to explore but also walks and talks, so do look out for these. The Maison Dieu Project has supported these with promotion leaflets and to them we are grateful.

As your Executive we have been extremely pleased to have been invited to the re-opening of The Roman Painted House. Along with many we have persisted in promoting and campaigning for this vital piece of heritage to be available to the public once again. It will be open to the public Tuesday to Saturday, closed Sunday and Monday.

Due to our long-term involvement with the Maison Dieu, our President, Derek Leach, continues to be a member of the project Core Management Team. Derek regularly updates us on the progress of the stunning refurbishment of this beautiful building of which we are extremely proud to have been a key partner in accessing the Heritage Lottery funding that has made this viable. We are, as I am sure you as members are, excited as to the future of the Maison Dieu as a future major attraction for our Town.

We are honoured to be about to install, in Wyndham Road, our 19th Plaque to commemorate Dover's first lady Mayor, Mrs Dorothy Bushell. The blue plaque project has been increasingly costly, and we have been pleased to have received financial contributions to help with our last two plaques. Our Executive maintains a very fluid list of potential recipients of a blue plaque and each one that reaches the stage of installation has been subject to much deliberation. Martyn Webster, who manages and operates our Blue Plaque installations, has also worked tirelessly, along with our Planning Team, to instigate a Memorial Plinth at Charlton Cemetery to commemorate those burials that were transferred from the 'old ruin' preceding the building of the demolished Leisure Centre.

Last December 83 Members enjoyed another Christmas lunch at the Marina Hotel with entertainment by Graham Mart. It is hoped that we can repeat this again this Christmas so do look out for the details later in the year. We are also in

discussion with Iain Robertson regarding some trips this Summer. He has 40 years of experience with the travel industry, and I am sure we can look forward to an interesting trip or two.

As your Chairman I am conscious that you rightly keep us accountable in maintaining the Objectives of The Society. Our Environment Team continues to monitor and intervene on the aesthetic and quality issues, whilst the Planning Teams work hard, especially with the MacDonalds Development, to ensure that we remain focussed and operational within our Constitution, as do us the Executive. My grateful thanks to all our teams and certainly should any member wish to join then please contact us.

During the coming year we will hopefully begin to see a change in the town as the Town Hall and the Painted House now open. I look forward to our next year's report which I am confident will reflect an energy that will ignite investment in our future.

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