

Minutes of the 37th Annual General Meeting of The Dover Society 7.30pm Monday 21st April 2025 At St Mary's Parish Centre

1. Apologies: Alan Sencicle, Jill Tutthill,

2. Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting. Carried unanimously.

3. Matters arising. Alan Lee requested an update on the maple tree in Pencester Gardens. This was answered by the Chair as an update to the previous March Minutes. Jenny Olpin and Deborah Gasking met with Emma Jane Allan and Darran Solley (DDC) and agreed to concrete around the plaque in the ground in front of the maple tree, The Society's commemoration of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

4 Chairman's report, Jenny Olpin

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 five hundred plus 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 thirty 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 updates, 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 attended and laid wreaths on Remembrance Sunday, for 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 eighty-three members enjoyed another Christmas lunch at the Marina Hotel and Spa 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 forty years of experience with the travel industry, and I am sure we can look forward to an interesting trip or two in the near future.

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 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 the Executive. My grateful thanks to all our Executive members and teams. Should any member wish to join the Executive or join one of our teams 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.

We are, as indeed so are you, really excited about the opening of the Maison Dieu in May. Many of you are volunteers and have been busy cleaning and preparing for its opening. We are also pleased that so many of you have committed to being Ambassadors or Friends of the Maison Dieu. In addition, the re-opening of the Roman Painted House coincides with that of the Maison Dieu and we will be watching with great interest how this hopefully begins to increase visitors into the town.

I would like to also take this opportunity to share with you some changes ahead for the delivery of our Newsletter. Jeremy and Sheila Cope, who have been involved with the distribution of the Newsletter for many decades are now due to take a long-earned rest. Therefore, we have taken the decision to deliver the Newsletter without an envelope from now on. Further to this, and this is the last call (!!), we still urgently need support with the collection from the printers, sorting and delivery to the distributors of the Newsletter. Do speak to me or one of the Executive should you have an interest in taking on this role which is required only three times per year.

To all of my colleagues on the Executive, Planning and Environment teams my sincere thanks for your support, commitment and hard work in promoting The Society and its objectives. My special thanks go to Mike Weston who has been our treasurer and Executive member for many years but is now stepping back. He will be continuing as a member of the Planning Team. Thank you, Mike. And finally, to those members who support these monthly gatherings by arranging the hall, providing us with refreshments and organising the raffle:

Thank you.

5. Treasurer's Report, Jane Jones

Membership proposal and Dover Society remit. Before sketching in the broader picture, at the Executive Committee meeting on 9th January, in accordance with the Society's constitution, we agreed to propose at the 2025 April AGM that The Dover Society annual membership fee be increased from 1st April 2026 – from £6 to £10 for individual members, and from £10 to £14 for couples. To put this proposal in context, the membership subscription has been fixed for thirty years. During that time there have been significant increases in our outgoings, especially recently. These include, room hire, public liability insurance, blue plaques, three editions of the newsletter per annum, three wreaths per annum, website design and maintenance (incidentally, the Society also has a Facebook page), equipment for maintaining Cowgate Cemetery and Society promotions. For example, we had to buy a gazebo for our outdoor events.

In addition, our annual activities include Members' meetings, with speakers, raffle and refreshments running from October to April, here at St. Mary's Parish Hall on the third Monday of the month. In February, we hold the Wine & Wisdom quiz night. We have four meetings annually with Dover District Council (DDC) with the Chief Executive and officers, regular meetings with the DDC Planning Director and Officer, two meetings annually with Kent Police and, Executive monthly meetings. The Environment Team meet, bi-monthly, plus a regular WhatsApp group. There is a monthly Planning Team and submission of comments to DDC. A Blue Plaque is installed annually, nineteen to date. We have a Cowgate Cemetery working party. The Christmas Feast, summer trips (currently on hold) and co-ordinate the annual Dover Heritage Open Days. We work in partnership with DDC and Dover Town Council (DTC) managing the

Maison Dieu project. The Society led the Dover Bluebird Heritage Trail community project, and undertakes conservation area appraisals for DDC. A hefty agenda!

Income/Expenses.

In the previous financial year – April 2023 to March 2024 – we had a shortfall of £784.05. This has been reduced by approximately £200.00 to £562.32 this financial year. Our accounts are audited each year and the auditors have commented that expenditure has been exceeding income. We have been taking steps to address this. However, had Gift Aid been shown in the 24/25, accounts, the Society would have broken even this year. With regard to Gift Aid, this is now being administered by Beverton Accountants. It does not show in the 24/25 figures but should show in the 25/26 accounts. As ever, we would urge anyone who pays tax, and who has not signed up to Gift Aid, to consider doing so. (To do this, please see the membership form in the newsletter.) Additionally, Beverton Accountants will produce the profit and loss statement for 2024/25, which will be circulated to members later, either via email or in the newsletter. However, the Charity Commission only requires a copy of the Income and Expenditure report, which was sent to members via email, copies are also available here tonight.

Capital Reserves.

After reserves held for the Town Hall Fund [£13,716.90 approx £14,000.00], the Publications Fund [£4,339.99 approx £4,400.00], the River Dour Partnership Fund [£6,545.40], and the Bluebird Trail [£774.44] have been taken into consideration, there is approximately £30,000.00 in the General Fund.

Members' meetings.

Good news! We made a profit of £175.24 so do please continue to splurge out on the raffles.

Subscriptions.

Last year, subscriptions' standing orders went through in March rather than April, so this year we are not comparing like with like. Overall, income from subs was £3,202.00. Many thanks to Ann, our Membership Secretary, for her tenacity in chasing up payments. Thirty-three new members have signed up which has kept pace with the natural drop off. Currently our membership stands at four hundred and fifty-four members.

The Newsletter.

Printing costs for the newsletter have still not been increased. In fact, with more new members choosing to take electronic copies, expenses have and will slightly decrease. Please let the Membership Secretary know if you would prefer to receive the newsletter electronically. Advertisements placed in the newsletter brought in £410.00. Thanks, as ever, to Jean Marsh for bringing in advertisers and collecting the revenue.

Administration.

Room hire costs for committee meetings have increased by £150.00 since the last financial year. This includes slight increases for the Planning Committee, the Executive Committee and bi-monthly Environment Committee meetings. In the past, meetings generally took place in private

houses, but this is no longer feasible. Website maintenance costs are £30.00 pcm. I would add that a considerable amount of not-inexpensive invisible admin costs – stationery, printer cartridges, postage etc – are borne by the executive members. Miscellaneous costs this year included the usual wreaths for the Remembrance Day and the Zeebrugge Memorial Day services, planning meeting reference material and equipment for maintaining Cowgate cemetery.

Donations.

We have donated £50.00 to the Dover Film Society, £50 to the Unitarian church (sadly struggling – a cause which has now been taken up by Dover Town Council), and £80.00 to the Dover branch of Emmaus to be used specifically for local projects. We have received £148.40 in donations.

Finally, thanks to Jeremy Cope for helping to circulate the accounts and his back-up support. Thanks also to Beverton Accountants for administering Gift Aid and offering to prepare the annual profit and loss account. Last but not least, thanks to our members for their continued support.

A comprehensive Financial Statement was circulated at the meeting.

Chair thanked Jane for her diligent efforts in supplying these figures.

President Derek Leach gave a vote of thanks to Chair Jenny Olpin and Vice Chair Graham Margery for their diligent efforts in continuing with delivering the objectives of the Society along with other members of the teams.

6. Society Membership Subscription Proposal

The Executive at its meeting on 9th January, agreed to propose at the 2025 AGM meeting in April, in accordance with the Society's constitution, that,

The Annual Membership fee of The Dover Society from 1st April 2026 be increased as follows, Individual Subscription, from £6 to £10. Couple Subscription, at same address, from £10 to £14.

Please read the notes in this newsletter that go with this proposal.

The proposal was carried by a majority: two against, the remainder of the meeting for.

7. Election of Officers -

Chairman - Jenny Olpin.

Proposed Derek Leach, seconded Alan Lee. **Carried unanimously.**

Treasurer - Jane Jones.

Proposed Jenny Olpin Seconded Alan Lee. **Carried unanimously.**

Vice Chairman - Graham Margery.

Proposed Jenny Olpin Seconded Alan Lee. **Carried unanimously.**

Hon. Secretary - Carol Duffield.

Proposed Jenny Olpin Seconded Alan Lee.

Carried unanimously.

8. Election of the Executive Committee, Existing Members

Ann Burke, Alan Lee, Jean Marsh, Lyn Smith, Deborah Gasking, Martyn Webster, Paul Wells and Alan Sencicle.

Proposed Jenny Olpin, seconded Graham Margery. **Carried unanimously.**

8a. Election of New Members to the Executive Committee

Pam Male and Ben Elsey.

Proposed Alan Lee, seconded Carol Duffield. **Carried unanimously.**

9. Appointment of Audit Committee

John Widgery, John Morgan.

Proposed Alan Lee, seconded Jenny Olpin. **Carried unanimously.**

10. Any Other Business

Sheila Cope enquired about the Zeebrugge plaque at the Townhall. G. Margery responded that it will be in place for the event on Wednesday.

M Webster gave information on Sub Mariners Association blue plaque.

Then the meeting broke for refreshments followed by drawing of the raffle.

After interval, the speaker was Barry O'Brien on Marconi's links to Dover.

Reminder - Membership Subscriptions Due

Jane Jones - Honorary Treasurer

Dear Dover Society Members

It was agreed at the Annual General Meeting on 21st April 2025 that subscriptions for 2026-27 would be increased from 1st April 2026.

The new subscription fees are as follows:

Couples (living at the same address) - £14.00 per annum

Single membership - £10.00 per annum

Please ensure that you contact your bank as soon as possible to change direct debits/standing orders as well as the due date - 1st April.

Our details are: Barclays Bank Account number: 80864803, Sort code: 20-02-62, Pay "The Dover Society"

NB you can also renew your membership at the Annual General Meeting on Monday 20th April which is taking place in a different venue this year. It will be at the Silver Screen Cinema in Gaol Lane (behind the Museum).

Many thanks for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Jane Jones