

The  
Dover  
Society  
1787

# Newsletter

No. 54

December

2005



*Captain James Cook*

# THE DOVER SOCIETY

FOUNDED IN 1988

Registered with the Civic Trust, Affiliated to the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies  
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## *The Objectives of the Dover Society*

*founded in 1988.*

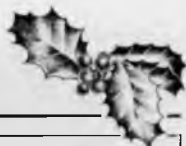
- to promote high standards of planning and architecture
- to interest and inform the public in the geography, history, archaeology, natural history and architecture of the area
- to secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest
- and commitment to the belief that a good environment is a good investment.

The area we cover comprises the parishes or wards of Barton, Buckland, Castle, Lydden, Temple Ewell, Maxton, Pineham, Priory, River, St. Radigund's, Town & Pier and Tower Hamlets.

All members receive three Newsletters a year and in each year the Committee organises about ten interesting events - talks, tours, visits, Members' Meetings and usually a Christmas Feast.

The Society gives Awards for improvements to the area, monitors planning proposals and supports, joins in or initiates civic projects and arts events.

## Editorial



*The committee and editorial staff wish to extend seasonal greetings to all of our readers and to all of our advertisers*

The next meeting will be held on January 16th, with Lea Oakley speaking on *Wallett's Court* and Philip Wyborn-Brown on *Hubert de Burgh*. I would also like to bring to your attention the article *More Houses* by Terry Sutton as this will hopefully start a discussion, both for and against, by way of a reply to the editor for inclusion in the next newsletter.

The next social event is our annual Christmas Feast held on December 17th in the Refectory in Dover College. We hope to see as many of you as possible and if you have not yet done so then why not come along, a booking form is included in this issue. An excellent evening is in prospect with Joan having procured the services of *Quodlibet* to provide the evening's entertainment. Would any members who intend to attend please contact Joan Liggett, Social Secretary, as soon as possible.

We would like to thank Sheila Cope for the many successful years of running the society raffle and to wish the same success to Adeline Reidy who has taken over the role. Any offers of prizes for the raffle are always welcome and should be addressed to Adeline.

As the next Annual General Meeting is to be held earlier than usual the next newsletter will be published in the middle of March. This will then reach the membership in plenty of time to remind them that any nominations for elected posts within the committee must be received by the secretary no later than 14 days before the meeting.

Congratulations to the small Cowgate cemetery recording team, through their work the society has achieved its aim of recording all gravestones, and mapping them. This has been an excellent project and should be of great benefit to the community in years to come. We must also extend our congratulations to all of the volunteers

who have managed to keep Cowgate cemetery in such a wonderful condition, this has been hard work in the last few years clearing the site and has proved a very rewarding project for the society. It now requires ongoing commitment to keep it in such a good condition.

On Wednesday 2nd November, Cllr Ken Tranter, the Mayor of Dover unveiled two mile "plaques" on the SPAR shop in London Road. The cast iron plaques, probably date from before 1836 and once adorned the Milestone Inn which stood on the same spot. Later this became Vaughan's

Outfitters which is featured in a 1923 picture in the London Road Community Forum 2006 calendar. About 15 years ago the plaques were removed but Pete McGrino retrieved them and kept them safe. Members of the forum cleaned them up and Eddie Sall, owner of the shop agreed to have the freshly repainted plaques put back. One plaque states "70 MILES TO LONDON 14 MILES TO CANTERBURY" the other "1 MILE TO DOVOR" which refers to when this was the edge of Charlton Village and it was green fields between here and what is now the High Street.

*Editor*

### **WANTED**

A volunteer to take over the post of Advertising Manager for the Society Newsletter. If you are interested in this role, or you know of anyone else who may be, then contact the Chairman or any member of the committee. (See inside cover of newsletter for contact details)

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### **DEADLINE for contributions**

The last date for the receipt of copy for issue 55 will be Wednesday 1st February 2006. The Editor welcomes contributions and interesting drawings or photographs. 'Paper copy' should be typed at double spacing. Handwritten copy should be clear with wide line spacing. Accurate fully proof-read copy on computer discs is acceptable; please ring 01304 213668 to discuss details.

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### **EDITORIAL AND PRODUCTION TEAM**

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## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

We have 444 members, much the same number as a year ago. We appear to have reached a plateau but at least numbers of new recruits balance losses, and we are obliged to be realistic, although never complacent. During the Autumn I hope to produce information about the Society to be displayed in, for example, the Discovery Centre. We should also be included in future editions of the *Coastal Guide* recently produced to inform older people of services and activities available in the local area and which, incidentally, I recommend since its contents might be useful for any age group. New members include:- Mr A King, Mrs S Mills, Mr P and Mrs K Garstin.

Please remember our raffles if you receive unwanted Christmas Gifts or have other acceptable items to donate.

*Sheila Cope, Membership Secretary*

# SOCIETY PROJECTS

## RIVER DOUR

Report by Jeremy Cope

MATTERS PROCEED, if not apace, then bit by bit. For those who follow the local press the River Dour Steering Group has been characterised by inaction, paralysed by an inability to agree a constitution. I regret that there is some truth in this. It is so very often the case that once we become enmeshed in legal affairs then finding an answer takes time. The nub of the problem is reconciling the conflicting views and requirements of the group whose members include statutory bodies, local government councils, commercial concerns and voluntary bodies. There is one common strand though; each party needs its potential liabilities quantified and hence, limited.

But there has been progress.

**Bit 1.** At the recent Steering Group meeting Jeremy Burgess of the Environment Agency talked to us on the implications of Main River status that apply to the Dour since 1st April. The implications are far reaching. The Agency

is to be the driver and implementer of changes to the river, responsible for biodiversity and flood risk management with a team carrying out essential maintenance. We have already seen the team at work on the stretch from Cherry Tree Avenue to B&Q cutting a path through the weeds to channel the flow of the river.

The Agency also has a mandate to maintain, improve and develop fisheries and that now includes the Dour. A survey in 2000 found brown trout, eels and a salmon kelt and we were told that the Dour is the best brown trout river in Kent.

**Bit 2.** At the meeting we agreed that the riverside signs, paid for by the Society, will now be erected by The White Cliffs Countryside Project.

**Bit 3.** That the volunteers will get back to working in the river. There was a "hoo ha" with about a hundred volunteers planning to work on the river but stopped by the Environment Agency on safety grounds. We hope that there will now be a

constructive liaison between the local Agency team and our volunteers to both clarify what may safely be done and to co-ordinate each other's work.

It has been suggested that our volunteers may carry out some improvement work at B&Q lake. However Paul Marshall, the local Agency team leader, is unhappy about this because of silt pockets in the river. Whilst watching the weed clearance I saw an EA worker start to sink and understood the river's hidden dangers.

The Agency is not responsible for litter. I guess this is where the volunteers' primary role will lie.

**Bit 4.** At least I think it is an advance. I am helping Mike Webb to use the Riverwatch grant to further the work on the Dour, but the £8,500 must be committed by 31st December, not an easy task in the circumstances.

**Bit 5.** We agreed to press DDC to help provide a map of riparian owners. I understand from a press report DDC have agreed to do so.

I hope my report demonstrates that

things are moving forward, albeit slowly. I am afraid that when we started local people did not understand the way things work in riverworld. We thought that the first report, financially supported by the Society and other local bodies, would set out a detailed plan of action. However, all it did was to summarise the known facts and outline a strategy. Then there was a topographical survey, now completed by the Agency, to determine the river's reaction to any work undertaken. And now I understand that a further report is being prepared by Agency consultants to prepare a detailed programme of works. This, I guess, will draw on but supersede Paul Solas's report.

What becomes clearer to me is the Environment Agency's dominant role. We, as locals, can lobby and influence and through our volunteers help on the margins (literally). We, particularly DDC, will have a crucial role ensuring sympathetic development of the banks through the planning process. But so long as the river is saved for Dover then I, for one, will be more than content.

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## COWGATE

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### Report by Jeremy Cope

The year rolls on and nature having given us the summer growth tells us it is time to mow. We are now cutting the grass which we will pile into stacks, a winter home for the living inhabitants of Cowgate Cemetery. Our thanks to Peter who provided the highlight of last Thursday's meeting with almond macaroons and home grown grapes - delicious!

We would very much welcome members joining our working parties. We meet one Thursday morning and one Saturday morning each month so that you can choose the day to best suit your circumstances. Interested? We do

get stuck into the job but also take time to laugh and enjoy each others' company. Please phone Jeremy Cope on 211348.





# More Musical Magic

by Jack Woolford

The fourth free concert given by the Dover Music Society in the Connaught Hall on Saturday 1st October more than matched its predecessors in scope and execution. It was also even better attended. Robert Poole's policy of coupling young players with mature and established performers was again splendidly vindicated. Pianist Catherine Wright and cellist Katie Cattell are, unbelievably, still school girls. Boris Petrushanky, on the other hand, is one of the world's leading concert pianists, notably teaching master classes alongside Vladimir Ashkenazy.

Catherine Wright began, very unusually, with a late (and therefore demanding) Beethoven sonata movement and astonishingly followed it with an even more technically demanding Chopin Scherzo. Both were played with power and precision. Debussy's *Reflections in the Water*, however, could not have been more delicately and quietly contrasted, whilst Liszt's (prodigiously virtuosic) *Etude on the Paganini theme* made so well known by Rachmaninov's *Variations*, was breathtakingly dispatched. Not only is Catherine note-perfect. She is maturing into a sensitive interpreter.

Elgar's Cello Concerto inevitably recalls the acrobatic head-tossing performance of Jacqueline du Pre; Katie Cattell could not have been more different. Her performance (of the first movement) was physically undemonstrative, head still and eyes looking steadfastly forward, surprisingly almost never on the fingerboard, as little demonstrative as is possible to imagine. Yet the sound she produced, from the mighty opening chords across the strings, through the saddest lyrical pathos, to the flashing semi quavers of the climax were worthy of

Jacqueline. The Mendelssohn *Song Without Words* with which she began and the Hindemith *Meditation* (both requiring extremes of technical virtuosity) with which she concluded made a fitting framework for the Elgar.

I shall not be surprised, though delighted, to see both girls competing in the BBC's *Young Musician of the Year*.

The Boris Petrushansky pictured in the (excellent) programme is young and beardless. The Boris Petrushansky who appeared on the platform is a bearded giant of a man and a giant of a performer, a very Russian giant virtuoso. He began with Chopin's Polonaise *Fantasia*, as challenging a test as it is mighty in Polish national fervour, and followed it with three works by Scriabin who was taught by the same teacher as Rachmaninov as it well showed. These, however, were mere preludes to the three movements from Stravinsky's gigantic ballet *Petrushka*, which stretches the capabilities of full symphony orchestras. Some genius (Stravinsky himself? ... Petrushansky?) has incredibly arranged it for solo piano, with all its tempestuous changes of volume, key, tempo, rhythm - and colour - and it was assaulted and conquered by a superhuman virtuoso. Even this was not the whole of it. Insistent and persistent applause twice brought him back to play two equally prodigiously difficult encores, the first (I think) referring to Paganini and the second (I know) a fantastically unbelievable sequence of variations - on Rossini's *Largo Al Factotum* from the Barber of Seville. I never saw such prodigious finger work or heard anything to match it in seventy years of piano recitals. I pity Robert Poole. What can he find to match this in next year's three (FREE) recitals?



# *Philomena Kennedy Art Prize*



Sheila R Cope



On 28th June at the Girls Grammar School Jeremy and I attended the A2 and AS art exhibition. This was a display of examination work entered by Lower Vith and Upper Vith (A-level) students. We were very impressed by the immense variety and vitality of the exhibits. Explanations about techniques and thought processes accompanying the exhibits demonstrated how much hard work this one subject had demanded.

Since the prize, awarded by the Society in memory of our founder Philomena Kennedy, is intended as a means of encouragement for the Lower Vith, fellow students and volunteers to the exhibition were asked to record an assessment of each individual presentation. Thus the element of evaluation by the peer group, which has always been the criterion for choice, was maintained.

Gina Berisford and Jade Everett were equal winners and both received a Society cheque for £25 to be spent on art materials. Last year the prize was not taken up and therefore the committee was content with the two awarded this time. Our Chairman, Derek Leach, attended the final art lesson of the term to present the prizes and the Society has received letters of thanks from both winners.

## **DOVER SOCIETY WEBSITE UPDATE**

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Mike McFarnell  
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### **LONDON 2012**

I have included the London 2012 website because the Olympics will provide Dover with many opportunities but only if we have the vision and enthusiasm to exploit the potential benefits. The new fast link will from Ashford to Stratford will make it possible to travel from Dover to the Olympic Stadium in an hour. Dover Castle could provide the venue for a major pre Olympic Archery Tournament. Mayor Ken Tranter has agreed to host a power point presentation to make the case to English Heritage, the Olympic Archery Committee and all the bodies involved, that Dover Castle must be a venue to benefit from the Olympics. The Friends of Dover Castle have agreed to provide a purse of 500 guineas for "Archer of the Realm" in the Olympic year. There is the potential to increase the size of the purse to attract the very best in Archery from all over the world. Dover College has expressed an interest in hosting a "Long Bow" Tournament on the same weekend. Archery is a "Cinderella sport" but with the right personality (Olga Corbet) could emerge like gymnastics.

### **DOVER FILM FESTIVAL**

From 1st December, 10,000 programmes will be given away free to promote the 2006 Dover Film Festival which takes place at Dover Town Hall on Monday 6th February 2006 and Tuesday 7th February 2006 at 3.00pm and 7.30pm. 350 tickets were sold for the 2005 Dover Film Festival so please give your support to increase the numbers attending for 2006. The event includes the installation of the Lord Warden, visit by the Queen, Dover Pageant, Dover Carnival, Hospital fete and Dover Regatta to name but a few. The 1965 Ray Warner Film will be shown to give a glimpse of Dover 40 years ago.

# HERITAGE OPEN DAYS IN DOVER

Thursday 8th to Sunday 11th September 2005

• • • *Report by Derek Leach* • • •

**HERITAGE OPEN DAYS**, organised by English Heritage and the Civic Trust every year, celebrates England's fantastic architecture by encouraging free access to buildings that are usually closed to the public or would normally charge an admission fee.

Dover has a great wealth of historic buildings, but only some are normally open to the public such as Dover Castle and the Roman Painted House. I suggested to The Dover Society that it was about time Dover made an effort to have more buildings open, if only for a few days. The Executive Committee agreed and I approached the owners of ten sites. As a result five buildings were opened this year to the public free of charge. The Dover Society coordinated the local arrangements and publicity, whilst the Heritage Open Days publicised via their regional booklet and the on line service.

The buildings that were open this year were:

## Maison Dieu House



This fine Jacobean house in Biggin Street is the oldest domestic building in Dover. It was built in 1665 as the Agent Victualler's residence close to the Maison Dieu, which Henry VIII had requisitioned as a store for the Navy Victualling Office following the Dissolution. In 1834 it became the residence of the commander of the Royal Engineers in Dover before becoming a

private residence. The Kingsford brewing and milling family and the Mummery family who owned the Stembrook tannery lived here during the 19th century. Bought by the Corporation in 1899, the house became council offices until after the Second World War when it became the public library. Following the move of the library to the Discovery Centre, the premises were purchased and beautifully restored by Dover Town Council for its use. Some of the town's regalia, including the magnificent 1676 mace, was on display and Brian Walker, the Town Sergeant, was on hand with a knowledgeable guided tour.

## Archcliffe Fort



1928 with more track required part of the fort was demolished. It ceased to be a military installation in 1956 and was transferred to the Department of the Environment in 1979 and scheduled as an ancient monument. In 1991 the new A20 dual carriageway removed part of the entrance gateway and dry moat. The surviving bastions

The site was first used for defensive purposes in 1370 when a watch tower was built surrounded by a chalk bank and ditch. In 1540 Henry VIII built the fort, which was strengthened and altered over the centuries to meet changing needs. From 1834 it was the Dover HQ of the Royal Engineers. The railway from Folkestone tunnelled underneath it, but in

and parapets date from the 17th century. The fort is now owned by English Heritage, but is occupied by the St. Martin's Emmaus Community, which celebrated ten years in Dover during the Open Days weekend and attracted many visitors, including Terry Waite, the president of UK Emmaus. Terry Sutton provided guided tours of the fort's remains.



## St. Edmund's Chapel

This tiny chapel in Priory Road was consecrated by St Richard of Chichester in 1253 in memory of his friend, St. Edmund, Archbishop of Canterbury 1234-45, and was probably used as a cemetery chapel for the Maison Dieu close by. Hidden for many years by development around it and used as a workshop, it was revealed again following war damage to the surrounding buildings. The chapel was restored and reconsecrated in 1968.



## Unitarian Church

This brick-built octagonal church sitting above York Street was constructed in 1820 and its worship area reflects the shape of the building. The origins of the church go back to 1643 to a local community of Baptists who established a meeting house in 1655, but were persecuted following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. In 1692 Samuel Taverner made part of his house available for worship and part of the garden as a burial ground. Freedom of belief and form of worship as a Unitarian Church was agreed by members in 1916.



Following Second World War damage, the chapel reopened in 1952.

\* \* \* \* \*



## Grand Shaft Staircase

This unique triple staircase was started in 1804 and finished in 1807. It connected the barracks and fortifications on the Western Heights through the 250 foot high cliff to sea level, Snargate Street and the Pier District, enabling troops to move quickly up or down its 140 steps within the cliff plus another 59 into the barrack yard. In 1812 a Mr Leith of Walmer rode a horse up the staircase for a bet. The Western Heights Preservation Society also took the opportunity to open the Drop Redoubt at the same time for a small fee.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the time of writing I am waiting for feedback from the property owners etc. but from my own visits to all the sites, I am hopeful that everybody will be willing to repeat the exercise in September 2006. I am very grateful to the property owners for their cooperation and for their

volunteers who manned the sites. This is a new initiative for The Dover Society and, if successful, we hope to increase the number of properties participating next year, including possibly the Gun Turret on Admiralty Pier.

*The work of the*

# PLANNING

*Sub-Committee*

Reported by JACK WOOLFORD, Chairman

The response to our appeal to members for contributions towards our share of the costs for Town Centre Trees was very generous. So is the £1500 from Dover Town Council. Unfortunately, however, the essential £800 from the Regeneration Unit is delayed by new CCTV conditions and uncertainty about the rival merits of ground planting and containers.

Dover Town Council has persistently opposed applications for conversions of houses into flats in Folkestone Road, formerly controversial for housing asylum seekers and now associated with fears of crime. Dover District Council is now fighting an appeal against the refusal of permission to convert a hotel into flats. Yet this is what the market, following on long-term and widespread population trends, prefers. In the last six months there have been literally scores of similar applications. As a Dover Express correspondent asked: what alternative option is feasible?

Meanwhile Dover is showered with good intentions. These include the South East Plan, the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, the Local Development Framework, the Dover Town Council Five Year Plan, not to mention Dover Pride, DTIZ, WCBP Phase II, etc., etc. All agree on strengthening and diversifying the

economy, the need for employment, the expansion of the port, the dualling of A2/M2, the reconstruction of a rail link to the Western Docks, new water supplies and a hospital, a further education centre, etc, etc. All agree that infrastructure should come first: but none can say what or when the Treasury will contribute to kick-start the process.

Meanwhile (again) on the positive side, Dover Harbour Board has not only refurbished the finials on the Prince of Wales Pier lamp posts but has also undertaken to finance a dock exit road to reduce congestion at the Eastern Docks roundabout. Would that they might also support our suggestion that the slip road in front of the Britannia Inn, the Light of India, the County Hotel and Burlington House be prolonged to Russell Street and fenced off from Townwall Street to provide an alternative route to the town centre from the York Street Roundabout. Prompted by the Society, the Kent Highway Agency will finance reconstruction of the Crabble Hill traffic lights to overcome the problem of right turns. Apparently the Town Council has now appointed a new Town Clerk. Relations between the Environment Agency and the River Dour Steering Group may (!) have improved. Every little helps...



# THE OCTOBER MEETING

## CAPTAIN COOK

A talk by Harry Ward - Reported by Merril Lilley

The first indoor meeting of the autumn was held at St. Mary's Parish Centre on Monday, 24th October, with a talk on Captain Cook, an appropriate topic for 'the year of the sea'.

Our speaker began by saying that, in his opinion, Cook was as a seafarer, without doubt, 'the best thing to come out of Britain', a combination of cartographer, explorer and seaman, the best the world had ever seen.

James Cook was born on 27th October 1728 in a little village in Yorkshire. When he knew he wanted to go to sea his father arranged for him to go to Whitby to a ship owner called Walker, who took him in and taught him his trade. Young Cook worked on several ships, some taking coal from Newcastle to London. He worked his way up to the position of mate, and could have become the captain of a Whitby trawler. However, he turned this down and in 1775 he went to Wapping and joined the Royal Navy as an able seaman.

As his talk continued Mr. Ward gradually built up on some display boards a series of pictures to illustrate his story. He also told many anecdotes which added interest to the topic. For instance, in the year Cook joined the navy, 1775, his father had a cottage built. This cottage now stands in Melbourne, Australia, where it was transported brick by brick. In return they sent back 30 cases of granite used on the site where the cottage once stood.

In the navy Cook did well. His captains thought highly of him and he became a master, responsible for navigation, charts, stores and the ship's log. He went to Trinity House for his interview for the post. On a voyage to Canada he charted the

St. Lawrence and was mentioned in despatches by General Wolfe. These charts were sent to London to the Admiralty. They were published there and were still in use 120 years later.

When he got home Cook married Elizabeth Banks and, despite Cook's frequent absence from home, the marriage produced six children. Sadly, James and Elizabeth never had any grandchildren. Two of their sons were drowned at sea in tragic accidents when they were in their twenties.

Cook got his first command of the *Endeavour* and set off on his first voyage to the southern hemisphere. Some maps had been made by a cartographer called Dalrymple and the Admiralty wanted to send an expedition to find out if an undiscovered land mass existed. There were other reasons. Members of the Royal Society wanted to observe the transit of Venus and Joseph Banks, one of the party, wanted to collect botanical specimens.

The *Endeavour*, together with the *Adventure*, sailed for the Pacific in 1768, and proceeded, by way of Madeira, Rio, Tierra del Fuego, Cape Horn and Tahiti, to the South Pacific. They saw the transit of Venus, then headed west and reached New Zealand where they landed in several places, naming them and making charts wherever they went, the South Island, Queen Charlotte Sound, Cook Strait, Stuart Island. Striking west they reached Australia and landed at Botany Bay, (named by Banks who collected a profusion of plants). Sailing north they reached the Barrier Reef and later returned home via Indonesia and St. Helena. Having lost no men from scurvy

in all this time Cook now lost a third of his crew from typhoid on the homeward voyage.

Cook's second voyage was on the *Resolution* in 1772. This expedition explored Antarctic waters and the New Hebrides, going further south into the ice than any other ship. Once again they visited Tahiti, New Zealand, Tasmania and Easter Island, always discovering, charting and naming. Returning home via South America and South Georgia they saw an abundance of whales. On his return Cook received great acclaim and was made Captain of Greenwich Hospital. He took time to write up all his voyages to date.

In 1778 the *Resolution* set sail again, in company with the *Discovery*. They went to Tasmania, New Zealand, the Friendly Islands, Tahiti and Christmas Island, charting, as ever, as they went. Then they headed for Oregon, followed by Alaska and explored the North Pacific and attempted to find a north-west passage.

However, this was to be Cook's last voyage. Returning to Tahiti he was killed there in an incident with the natives and his ship returned home without him.

The talk lasted for the whole evening, with the customary break for refreshments and raffle, now organised by Adeline Reidy. Harry Ward infected us all with his enthusiasm for his subject. His told countless anecdotes and provided a comprehensive collection of pictures and maps to illustrate his talk. He ended by showing us his own collection of rare stamps associated with Captain Cook.



*An offering before Captain Cook in the Sandwich Islands*



*View of Christmas Harbour, in Kerguelen's Land*



*A view of Karakakooa in Owyhee*



*The Resolution in Christmas Sound*

# Rogue... or Local Hero?

by Terry Sutton

**I** have never been able decide if Sir William Crundall, thirteen times mayor of Dover, was a hero who devoted his life to improving the town or a rogue who was more interested in feathering his own nest. He was certainly a hard worker throughout his 86 years, making a huge impact on Dover, the town where he was born on Midsummer's Day.

William (1846-1934) left school when he was 14 and started work, receiving £5 a week for a 10 hour day. He soon became involved with his father's timber business and toiled in Dover docks where he gained the inspiration of an expanding future for the port. His vision was of a great seaborne trade for Dover.

In his youth he was an active oarsman and later a volunteer officer with the East Kent Rifles (later a battalion of The Buffs). He retired from the unit in 1878 with the rank of captain.

In 1883 he was elected to Dover Town Council, representing Castle Ward, at a time when elections were fought between Conservatives and Liberals, the latter often having a majority. Young William Crundall, leading a group of other Conservatives, decided to change that. But, in his early years in local government, he ran into a problem. He was nominated for Castle Ward and his papers described him as a timber merchant, which he was not at that stage. He was not then in partnership with his father. So his nomination was declared invalid. Three years later, then in partnership with his father, he put up against John Finnis, another timber merchant, and won the seat which he retained until his retirement from local government in 1913.

He was first elected mayor in 1886,

again in the following two years and it was during his time as mayor in 1883-89 that he received his knighthood. There followed other years as mayor, 13 times in total, creating a record in Dover's history never yet beaten.

Sir William, always to be seen with a rose in his button hole, seemed to have his finger in every pie and he had widespread influence. It was during his time in office that the main street, from the Market Square to Worthington Street (as we see it today), was widened, despite strong opposition. Other streets in the town centre were also widened with the frontages rebuilt.

By this time he was an extensive landowner and he pushed through big housing development schemes on the Castle and Barton estates, none of which did his pocket any harm. He was responsible for bringing electric lighting to Dover in 1893 which he and his fellow shareholders later sold to Dover Corporation. He was a pioneer in introducing electric trams to Dover, made possible by his street widening policy. Dover Technical Institute and the School of Art were built during one of his years as mayor. His wife Lady Crundall laid the foundation stone that can still be seen in Ladywell.

He was a member of Dover Harbour Board for nearly 50 years and became its chairman. He persuaded the Board to invest more heavily in the port. A poll tax



Sir William Crundall  
© Dover Museum



on cross-Channel passengers was his idea and this provided funds for the Prince of Wales' Pier. He also saw to it that the Admiralty Pier was widened.

One of his most ambitious moves was to visit Germany's Kaiser at Potsdam Palace when he talked him into making Dover a port of call for the Hamburg America Line. He schemed with Councillor Ryeland of George Hammond in attracting other liner business to Dover.

Sir William was the senior magistrate in Dover for many years, having been appointed when only 33 years old. By 1922 he was a Deputy Lieutenant of Kent. He was a popular President of the Governors of the Royal Victoria Hospital for more than 20 years.

All this time his business interests were expanding. He was Governing Director of William Crundall and Co, timber merchants, which in time had branches in London and other towns.

The decision to transfer the Duke of York's Royal Military School to Dover followed his offer to provide a suitable site at Guston. One can be sure his company was then in a prime position to provide the timber. Strangely the town's leading newspaper the Dover Express, founded with Liberal leanings, became a strong advocate of Sir William and his Conservative-backed policies. What was his influence on the editor?

Just before Sir William died, while suffering from a fatal chill, as chairman of Dover Harbour Board he



*"Lady Crundall" with the Prince of Wales Pier behind.  
Courtesy of Mr david Dixon.*

convened a meeting of the board at his home, Woodside, the property that still stands at the bottom of Whitfield Hill. He died in February 1934 still making plans to create a bigger and better Dover. There's no doubt Dover progressed greatly while he was pulling the strings, and so did his timber company and land-owning enterprises!

Today, in local government, such a link would not be permitted. Those with a financial interest are debarred from taking part in any debate on such issues. Today's codes of conduct can stifle input by those with personal knowledge on the subject.

Rogue or hero? If he did make a small fortune because he ran the town, good luck to him. At least Dover progressed through his enthusiasm, enterprise and business acumen.

\*One thing still puzzles me. Why was Dover-born Sir William cremated at Golders Green? Was it the nearest crematorium available? His last wish was to be cremated.



*Sir William Crundall  
Courtesy of Mr david Dixon.*

# Summer Outings

## VISIT TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM

◆ ◆ ◆ Report by Lesley Gordon ◆ ◆ ◆

ON 25TH AUGUST 2005, as our party set off by coach for its trip to London, it occurred to me with some embarrassment, that I had managed to reach my advanced years (including 3 spent in London) without once setting foot in that august establishment, The British Museum. Soundings taken during the day revealed that I was not alone. No problem, we were about to put matters right and attempt to fill this yawning gap in our education.

On arrival a small difficulty delayed our start. The second entrance by the coach park at the back of the museum was closed, due to recent terrorist activities, necessitating a swift trek to the main entrance at the front (it's a large building!) There, we were treated to a view of the African garden created in the courtyard by the ground force team.



*The Seven Doors to Heaven*



*The African Garden*

Inside, and at leisure to wander at will, those of us new to the building were spoilt for choice. So much to see, so little time, it was, after all, only a morning visit. We were too early for the new exhibition of Persian Treasures and other things, like the Sutton Hoo medieval burial finds, will have to wait another day. Time enough though, to view the Elgin Marbles, the Rosetta stone, the famous Round Reading Room and the recently covered Central Court, the latter a miracle of modern engineering and superb use of space. It now houses refreshment areas and museum shops, whilst preserving the feeling of great space and giving easy access to the rest of the

*Cow and Herdsman from the south frieze of the Parthenon. The Elgin collection*



museum. The Elgin Marbles, housed in a huge rectangular room, had attracted a large number of foreign visitors, many of them young Greek women with children and grandparents, there to see their lost heritage, presumably. Many of the beautifully carved stones removed from the Parthenon, in part for their own safety, were quite badly damaged.

*Above: Horsemen, below: part of the east Frieze of the Parthenon. The Elgin Collection*



The Rosetta stone, carved (in ancient Egypt) with the same priestly decree in three different languages, including hieroglyphics, then not understood, and a Greek administrative language which had led, after 14 centuries, to the gradual deciphering of Egyptian hieroglyphics. The stone was found by Napoleon's army in 1799, passed to the English by way of treaty, and was eventually given to the museum by George III.

After lunch the coach moved to the West End, where some chose to visit the Theatre Museum at Covent Garden, with others continuing to Apsley House, No.1 London, the home of the Duke of Wellington.

The Theatre Museum was, as might have been expected, dim and crowded (with exhibits rather than visitors). It is a rambling site with long subterranean corridors showing the history of every type of theatre and performance. The advent of film and video means that modern stars and theatrical dynasties fare better than those of yesteryear, who only have programmes or reviews to recall their dramatic achievements.

Then it was outside into Covent Garden and its dependable offering of retail therapy, refreshments and live performance. A contented group made its way home singing, as usual, the praises of our organiser, Joan Liggett.

## SAINT OMER WITH (ST) JOAN

◆ ◆ ◆ Report by Jack Woolford ◆ ◆ ◆

**SATURDAY SEPT 24TH SEPTEMBER** added yet another to Social Secretary Joan Liggett's sequence of triumphal trips. The magic began when, instead of driving into the centre of St Omer, we zigzagged round endless narrow country lanes to end up at what looked like a rural dead-end. In fact,

the restaurant/pub and parked coaches concealed a narrow stretch of water lined with rowing boats equipped with both oars and outboard engines. As it was by now raining heavily, our prospective boat trip looked dangerous as well as grim: but shortly, after enquiries at the

restaurant/pub, Joan led us along a long narrow path to the strangest ever pleasure cruiser. It was long and thin with only one seat on each side of the gangway, but it was roofed with canvas and went out, backwards... into a paradise of watered greenery. The recorded commentary explained that the area had been a massive marshy swamp, which medieval generations of monks and 17th





century Dutch engineers had drained and channelled into canals and fertile islands, linked to the River Aa and thus contributing to St Omer's commercial communications with the sea (mer). The boat's engine was noiseless and so for an hour we floated slowly and silently from green tunnels of trees, only just open to the sky, to broad tree-lined stretches of water, back to green tunnels, round enchanting bends revealing surprising odd houses with gardens and friendly natives who waved to us ...

...back to the restaurant/pub where Joan had thoughtfully but secretly arranged we should lunch. The friendly dining barn was already full of clients but they packed us in and whilst we awaited lunch, of ham and/or chips (frites), the pub kept us going with glasses or bottles of wine and small (or large) glasses of beer.

We were greeted with loud bangs when we arrived in (now sunny) St Omer where Joan had thoughtfully arranged a posh wedding to emerge from the Town Hall with welcoming fireworks as we decanted from the coach. We then had two hours to savour the delights of shops, a Gothic cathedral, museums and art galleries (etc, etc) before the return

journey to Calais and Dover. As on many previous occasions Driver Owen was superb.

A little bird has whispered that Joan contemplates retiring from the Social Secretaryship. Fair enough, she has superbly organised our feasts and our outings for ten years or more, but I cannot help hoping that she can be persuaded to postpone her retirement.

Don't you agree?



# Captain Osmond File

1882 - 1956

Trinity House, Cinque Ports Pilot

By Captain G J G Francis MN. (Rtd.)

WHEN SYBIL STANDING and husband Dick became immediate neighbours, I was particularly interested in Sybil's father, Captain Osmond File, who had not only been a Cinque Ports Pilot like myself but had also served on and survived the sinking of the *SS Empress of Ireland*. Having been provided with a few particulars concerning his career, I was sure that a brief record of his life deserved recording.

Osmond File was born in 1882, in Elham, near Canterbury. Following a payment of £10 by his father to cover his

four-year apprenticeship, he was aged 15 when he made his first voyage in 1898 as a Navigation Apprentice on the barque sailing vessel *Vimera*. His first letter home suggested that he could have had grave doubts concerning his chosen profession. "Squally weather with snow, all sail set. Heavy squall from the S.W. with hail and sleet and in ten minutes it was blowing a whole gale. Clewed up main to gallant sail and upper topsails and hauled up foresail. I went aloft to make them fast. Wind still freshening. While we were aloft trying to furl the fore topsail she stuck the lee fore yard-arm under water in a squall and we were called down from aloft to let go the lower topsail sheets, ship nearly on her beam ends, wind blowing with hurricane force and a mountainous sea running. We could not furl the sails for they were banging about and had carried away all the gear and as they were heeling the ship over to an alarming degree and we thought we should lose the masts, we cut them adrift. Vessel shipping a quantity of water and rolling terrific... Damage estimated at about £700".

For the next four years Osmond studied seamanship, navigation, basic medicine and survival which included how to treat hanging 'treat as for drowning', dog bites, apparent death from cold, frostbite, poison and drunken behaviour.

His first appointment as an officer was that as 4th mate on the barque *Condor*. The cargoes carried were the highly dangerous nitrate and saltpetre. When in port the *Condor* was untouched when moored close



Captain Osmond File

to a similarly-loaded barque *Dunslaw* which caught fire, exploded and sank.

Later, Osmond joined the King Line serving on the *King Bleddyn* and then promoted to mate on the *King Lud*, finally leaving to pass as Master in 1906. These were hard times in the Merchant Navy for officers. Accounts from Osmond's diary mentioned having to turn-to after watch-keeping for painting and scraping with the crew day-workers. In 1908, when serving on the *SS Pericles* as a junior officer, the vessel was lost off Cape Lewin after striking an uncharted rock. Being a strong swimmer, Osmond fortunately finally found some floating debris and was eventually picked up.

In 1903, the Canadian Pacific Railways Company had decided to turn itself into a transatlantic shipping company and bought the Elder Dempster group's Beaver Line. In 1904 the C. P. R. C. decided to tackle the competition head on and placed orders in Scotland for two passenger-liners, the *Empress of Britain* and the *Empress of Ireland*. It is therefore easy to understand the attractions of joining such a company and Osmond File joined the C. P. R. as a junior officer in 1909.

Promotion was slow in the C. P. R. and Osmond File was still a junior officer within the company when he was appointed to the *Empress of Ireland* in 1914, commanded by Captain Kendall. It is worth mentioning that four years earlier, Captain Kendall was master of the *SS Montrose*. He was curious about the identity of passengers Mr and Master Robinson, whose conduct on the slow crossing from Antwerp to Canada was not that which he would have expected from father and son. Captain Kendall advised his suspicions by wireless to the authorities in London. In one

of the most dramatic episodes in criminal history, Chief Inspector Dew of Scotland Yard boarded the White Star liner *Lawentic*, overtook the *Montrose* with hours to spare and was waiting at the little St Lawrence riverside town of Rimouski to arrest a mild-mannered Michigan dentist named Hawley Havey Crippen for the murder of his wife in a respectable villa in Camden Town. Captain Kendall's alertness and initiative earned him a police reward of £250. He never cashed the cheque; instead had it framed, and hung it on his stateroom bulkhead.

On the *Empress of Ireland*, in addition to Captain Kendall there were three senior navigation watch-keeping officers, the chief officer, first officer and second officer. The three junior watch-keepers were the extra second officer, third officer and forth officer. On the 15th May 1914 Third Officer File was promoted to extra second officer and was therefore the Junior Officer on the 0400 to 0800 watch with the chief officer on departure from Liverpool for Quebec.

On 28th May 1914, the *Empress of Ireland* left Quebec on the return passage to Liverpool with a crew of 420 including two very important young men who practised wireless telegraphy. They were the senior

radio officer aged 23 years and the junior who had been at sea for only six months. There were also 1057 passengers. At 0135, the outward sea pilot disembarked at Father Point and the *Empress of Ireland* under the command of Captain Kendall headed down the Gulf of St. Lawrence at 17 knots. At this time Extra Second Officer File was fast asleep in his cabin, unaware of an impending disaster. Shortly, the *Empress of Ireland* entered a



fog bank and the captain stopped his ship. In the silence between the soundings of the International Signals on the ships whistle, the fog horn of an approaching vessel was heard. It was soon recognised as a loaded Norwegian-owned collier bound up the St Lawrence.

The first time that Captain Kendall saw the collier *Storstad* was when she was 100 feet away. He watched, with horror, as the reinforced steel stem sliced into the *Empress's* unprotected side like a chisel into a tin. Water entered the doomed *Empress's* after-boiler-room at the rate of 60,000 gallons a second, causing the *Empress* to list swiftly and irresistibly over onto her right hand side. This brought the off duty officers onto the bridge, including Osmond File, clad in his night attire, while rapid orders were issued by Captain Kendall to launch the life-boats as fast as possible. The two young operators in the wireless room sent out a distress call without orders, "SOS, we have hit something, sinking fast, send help", they gave the ship's position. By this time, Osmond File had put on his jacket, trousers and overcoat. It did not occur to him then that very shortly he would be swimming in these clothes. With the rest of the crew, he joined in attempting to launch the life-boats. Then, ten minutes after the collision the final lurch of the dying liner flung File into the water where he struggled to keep afloat before a lifeboat found him. At about nine minutes past two a.m. the *Empress of Ireland* lifted her stern and slid below the dark waters of the St Lawrence. It was just fourteen minutes since the *Storstad* had struck her. With her, trapped below decks, also went some 800 people, most of whom had probably never got clear of their cabins.

Osmond File took command of the lifeboat and started to rescue the struggling human beings, who, minutes before, had been passengers and crew on the *Empress of Ireland*. Toiling in the darkness, his men hauled in survivor after survivor until about sixty men and women were in the boat and

there was no room for more. Others clung to life-lines looped around the boat. Some distance away Osmond File could see the lights of a ship and painfully ordered the lifeboat to be pulled towards the stranger. As the boat came alongside the *Storstad*, the survivors were helped up the wooden companionway, rope ladders and anything else they could find.

Osmond File then called for volunteers from among his crew to go back and search for more survivors. Taking an oar he helped to row back to the spot where the *Empress* had gone down. Osmond File and his crew spent several hours looking for live human beings; each bundle was hauled alongside only abandoning it if there was no spark of life. Many lives were saved until one final effort proved that no more could be dragged alive from the river.

The mathematics of the disaster were shocking. Of 1477 men, women and children who had left Quebec the previous afternoon, 1012 were dead of which 840 had been passengers and 172 crew.

The Chairman at the Public Inquiry was Lord Mersy who declared that the stopping of the *Empress of Ireland* in fog was not an unseamanlike act. Lord Mersy also found that the officer in charge of the *Storstad* was negligent in omitting to call the captain when the fog was coming on. At that time the captain was asleep in his room and there was a standing order on his ship to this effect. We therefore have to impute blame on the *Storstad* for this lamentable disaster.

During the inquiry Extra Second Officer File was called upon to explain the British and Norwegian merchant navies' archaic and confusing practice of giving helm orders, not rudder orders. These were precisely the opposite of modern orders, and the effect was that if the officer of the watch wished to turn his vessel to port he would order starboard helm or vice-versa. The Court of Inquiry was 'confused by this illogical but time-honoured practice'.



The Norwegians held their own inquiry in their Consulate at Montreal. It was held in private and the Norwegian crew gave their evidence. The Norwegian Maritime Court absolved the officers of the *Storstad* from all their responsibilities for the accident.

The *Storstad* joined the *Empress of Ireland* when she was torpedoed off the south-west coast of Ireland on 8th March 1917. The same Norwegian captain took his thirty-eight men to the boats and steered them to safety. Captain Kendall never had another command but took up an appointment as a C. P. R. Marine Superintendent. Extra Second Officer File had his discharge book stamped under date and place of discharge. Shipwrecked. 29th May 1914. Father Point. Discharged 5th June 1914. Liverpool.

Osmond File finally achieving the rank of chief officer on the *Missanabie* during which time he was married on the 17th September 1915 when the officers of this ship gave him a wedding present of a canteen of cutlery. He finally left the C. P. R. on the 24th November 1915 to become a

Cinque Ports Pilot, South Channel (Inwards) with the Corporation of the Trinity House of Deptford Strond, London District, to commence his initial training in February 1916.

So what was Mr File going to find in his new profession as a Marine Pilot on the River Thames? With a world war of hitherto unparalleled destructiveness in progress, a taste of what was to come came when he joined his first ship, the *Elgic Manor*. It was torpedoed before entering the River Thames. He must then have appreciated that the responsibilities in his new profession as a marine pilot were under conditions which had added greatly to their responsibilities and increased infinitely the risks which normally a marine pilot would have had to face. Life ashore also held risks. His house on Priory Hill in Dover was damaged when a German parachute-mine demolished the next-door house. Fortunately it did not explode and after minor repairs Captain File was able to continue to reside in his home.

The situation in 1914 was that in peacetime, prior to the declaration of war,



RMS *Missanabie*

the headquarters of the Cinque Ports Pilots were in Dover with an average complement of 70 pilots. Their cruising ground in a pilot cutter was off Dungeness. However, with the advent of war and the increased demand for their services, it became necessary to increase the numbers by the addition of provisional pilots up to a total of 130. On the outbreak of hostilities, the pilot steamers cruised off Dover for a time, rendering important services to transports crossing the channel to Dunkerque, Ostend and Zeebrugge. Several of the pilots living at Deal and Dover were, at the beginning of the war, attached to the Naval Examination vessels in the Downs where their local knowledge was of great use.

From December 1914 to March 1915, headquarters were transferred to St Helen's, Isle of Wight and the pilots were employed in conducting ships from the compulsory pilotage station there to Yarmouth. These duties by no means represented the limits of their pilotage works for the pilots of the Cinque Ports were also engaged in conducting vessels from as far west as the Bristol Channel to as far North as Scapa Flow. The vessels conducted included men-of-war, transports, hospital ships and merchant vessels of various nationalities.

So whether Trinity House Pilot Captain File made a wise choice to become a Cinque Ports Pilot is questionable. The work was done in one of the most dangerous of all war areas and many were their adventures and narrow escapes from mines and hostile submarines. In fact, six Cinque Ports Pilots lost their lives through the sinking by enemy action of the vessels in their charge. Altogether some 56 of the pilots had their vessels mined or torpedoed and some pilots experienced these disasters three or more times, sometimes on successive voyages. Several were thrown into the water and immersed as long as an hour before being rescued. In one case a pilot was in charge of a Greek steamer which struck a mine. The crew abandoned their vessel leaving the

pilot to his fate. The pilot was eventually rescued by a trawler and then it was found possible to get the vessel into port. There were also encounters with enemy U-boats and aircraft.

During the 1914-1918 conflict the Cinque Ports Pilots conducted 40,238 vessels.

(Note:- In the summer of 1918 a station was opened at Weymouth for conducting foreign vessels from the Solent to Weymouth. This was abolished shortly after the signing of the Armistice. All vessels going down Channel to the Westward and those going to foreign ports were in charge of Cinque Ports pilots.)

In a letter dated 8th April 1919 Ref. L.57247/18. Signed by O. Murray, The Secretary to the Admiralty expressly wrote - "The Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty are desirous of conveying to the Trinity House Pilots their gratitude for their valuable services that they have rendered during the war. The services performed by the pilots have been very meritorious and have been carried out with conspicuous success".

Between the two world wars there was a depression similar to that in many other industries. In the Merchant Navy it was difficult sometimes for a qualified deck officer to get a position on a ship as an able seaman. However, a marine pilot service was certainly required. The North Sea and English Channel are nowhere deep, but the Thames Estuary is particularly shallow. While there were hazards in the river itself, the main problem was to negotiate the sands, channels and the shallows of the outer Thames Estuary. Geographically, the V-shaped area where the Thames opens out at the Nore and the Kent coast stretches east towards the North Foreland, there is also a wide band of attendant sands. There are areas thirty or forty miles from the shore which are uncovered at some tides. Sands and channels were and are constantly changing owing to natural causes. Sudden

storms and bad visibility are added navigational hazards.

It followed that the dangers of navigation through unknown shoals and channels were such that the services of a professional Marine Pilot with local knowledge would provide a secure livelihood for Captain File until the age of seventy, providing he could pass the annual medical and pass the examination covering the changes in the district. Being self employed but held responsible to the Corporation of Trinity House London, there would be Committee responsibilities for the correct administration of the General Purposes Fund. On matters of major changes of working conditions, the Committee would be required to seek the Cinque Ports Pilots' opinion by ballot. There were also many other important matters concerning the efficient running of a pilot station.

On the outbreak of the Second World War once again unbearable strains were placed on the Cinque Ports Pilots causing a number to retire early particularly in the months of preparation and after the evacuation at Dunkirk. One such pilot, Captain Fletcher, was on the *Monas Queen* when she was sunk during the evacuation and after swimming for some considerable time was only then rescued by a destroyer.

With dozens of ships waiting in the Thames, pilots were expected to do three men's work whatever the consequences to themselves they managed to carry on. Danger was always close by. On April 17th 1941, while Pilot File was talking to a Pilot Arnold on the *P/V Pioneer*, a German aircraft machine-gunned and bombed the cutter. Pilot Arnold was wounded when a bullet passed through the shell plating and another pilot was killed.

From early in 1944, the pilots were employed to move units which later formed the famous Mulburry Harbour. The pilots were employed to the limit of their physical powers and although their work was never

officially mentioned all these units were towed through the Channel to their final assembly places under Cinque Ports Pilotage. After the landings, the conducting of ships back and forth through the Straits and across to the continental ports, maintained the pressure of work at its highest level. Captain File had served throughout two world wars and during this time joined forces to prevent the concentrated efforts the enemy had made to close both the Straits of Dover and the Port of London.

With the relaxation which followed the end of the war in Europe, the tremendous strain under which he had worked began to show. After a lengthy illness in which the hope of a return to duty was sustained as long as possible, Captain File had to inform Trinity House in 1947 of his physical inability to continue working.

In September 1947, at a retirement party, he was presented with an inscribed silver tankard. Making the presentation Mr Magub said that it was an honour to be asked to do so, but he could not call it a pleasure, because it meant the parting of the ways. He saw Captain File come into the Service and he must blame the war for his retirement. While recognising the fact that thousands of members of the sea-faring profession made similar or greater sacrifices, it is none the less true that Captain File whom we are honouring today, did all that he was called upon to do and beyond the limit of his strength - he was one of the best. Well, I am sure you will all agree that to be one the best of the Cinque Ports Pilots is to be pretty good. Captain File returned thanks and spoke of the happy years he had spent in the service.

Captain File together with Mrs File spent the rest of his retirement in Dover. It was noticeable in the cases of many of the older pilots that once they have 'swallowed the anchor' they seemed to gain a new lease of life. Happily this also happened in the case of Captain Osmond File.

# The Western Heights Preservation Society

*Report from Chris Taft*

*The Western Heights Preservation Society (WHPS) is once again pleased to be able to offer a brief update on its activities.*

## Heritage Open Days

September saw the Western Heights Preservation Society (WHPS) become involved with the annual Heritage Open Days (HOD). These have run for a number of years now and have been organised by English Heritage. The intention behind the event is to open buildings to the public that are not normally accessible, for free over a specific weekend. The Dover Society organised Dover's contribution to this year's event and for its part the WHPS worked with English Heritage to open the Grand Shaft. As an additional attraction the WHPS also opened the Drop Redoubt making use of the interpretation panels produced for the June event, as reported in August's issue of this Newsletter. The weather was not fantastic over the weekend although thankfully dry. Never the less all who visited thoroughly enjoyed the day and once again the Drop Redoubt never failed to impress both first time and more regular visitors, although the fact that this was just one of many sites open over this weekend did mean visitor numbers were not as high as they might have been.



*Staircase inside Drop Redoubt*



*Entertainment in the Drop Redoubt*

## New Projects

The WHPS is currently launching a couple of new projects for the coming months. These include working towards registering the Society as a Charity. The WHPS has now been established for five years and it is felt that with the size of the group now registration is the next natural step. By the next issue of The Dover Society Newsletter we hope to be able to report further progress.

Following an invitation to speak at the AGM of a local

society in Kent the publicity arm of the WHPS is currently developing a presentation on the history of the Western Heights and the work of the WHPS, which it hopes can then be used again and taken to introduce a wider audience to the Western Heights. The presentation will use photographs and maps from a number of national and local collections to present the history and development of the fortifications and will show how they played their part in the defence of Britain during more than one significant period in British history. As part of this project the WHPS is currently working on applying for a grant to purchase a laptop computer and projector to use for this and other presentations, to lend a much more professional feel to the talks.

The August issue of The Dover Society Newsletter reported the launch of the WHPS's new leaflet. Work is now well underway in developing a strategy for distributing this leaflet and target audiences have been identified to be amongst the first to receive copies.

A further project at present is one to widen community involvement in the WHPS. The Society is hoping to involve more local groups in Western Heights by encouraging them to use the Heights as a focus for their work. This might include photographic or art clubs who could use the Heights as a subject for a study, school or youth groups who might want to look at the Heights in terms of its history and be able to explore some of the vast site or regional and national societies who would perhaps be interested in learning more about the site and might want to either host the interpretation panels produced for the open days or have a member of the WHPS talk to them about the site. Anyone with ideas on this project or who thinks they know of any group who may be interested should contact [publicity@dover-western-heights.org](mailto:publicity@dover-western-heights.org), or write to the address below, marking it for the attention of Chris Taft.

## Work Days

The regular programme of work days is continuing at the Heights with a dedicated team turning up in all weathers to help maintain and improve the site. Much work has recently been focused on the Drop Redoubt in preparation for the open days and in the coming months work will be continued there and at other points around the Heights. Extra volunteers are always welcome so anyone wishing to become involved should look at the website [www.dover-western-heights.org](http://www.dover-western-heights.org) for details of dates of forthcoming work days.



*Aerial view of Drop Redoubt*

## Getting Involved

The WHPS is keen for people to become involved at all levels with all sorts of work and would welcome hearing from anyone who wishes to help.

The Society is at present especially keen to recruit more people to assist on more administrative levels, most especially helping to work on developing the Society. People are needed to assist with and help run some of the projects mentioned above and also to work on forthcoming open days.

If you feel you can help at any level please get in touch with the Society through the website at:

**[www.dover-western-heights.org](http://www.dover-western-heights.org)**

or write to:-

**WHPS, Pox 366, DEAL, Kent CT14 9XY**

# *The Murder of* **PC Couchman**

By Derek Leach

*"From the Joe Harman archive"*

On 8 September 1844 Dover had a severe storm, but something else happened which was remembered for many a year - the murder of PC Samuel Couchman in Bridge Street at about 11.30pm when he and PC John Smith were trying to quell unrest that had been brewing all day.

Apparently there was a long-running feud between two families, the Clarks and the Beers, who lived in what was the village of Charlton. The Clarks lived in Paper Alley, replaced now by Pauls Place and Matthews Place off Bridge Street. James Clark, a chimney sweep aged 63, had five sons and three daughters. The boys followed the same trade and three of them, William, Thomas and John, moved to Canterbury. These three came to Dover apparently intent upon having a scrap with the Beers. Scuffles broke out between them during the afternoon. The Clarks went into the *Admiral Harvey* pub and one of them challenged Richard Beer to fight him for a sovereign, but said that he would kill him in four rounds! PC Pine, who lived in the street, made several attempts to disperse the crowd, but, when the mob reached a hundred, he sent his son to the Station House in Queen Street for assistance. After the arrival of extra police the crowd melted away.

At 9pm, however, there was trouble at the *Admiral Harvey* until the Clarks moved over to the *Three Colts* pub at the end of Paper Alley. The landlady soon asked the police to move them on. Old James Clark was the worse for wear and

very obstinate. Fortunately, PC Couchman at the start of his shift, expecting trouble, had asked PC Smith to stay within earshot on his Buckland beat. Smith answered Couchman's call for assistance and they met outside the *Royal Standard* in London Road near the toll gate where they put down their lanterns (lanterns) ready for the fray. Smith tried to take old man Clark into custody, but was knocked to the ground by three men while Couchman was dealing with the others in the alley. Thomas Clark managed to get his father into his house and then emerged with a broomstick, striking Couchman a violent blow across the face, which knocked him to the ground. This stick was in fact a sweep's three foot cane with metal ends. Smith, showing great bravery, tackled Thomas with his staff and succeeded in disarming him. Somebody cried, 'Murder!' and the troublemakers ran off.

At the subsequent inquest the surgeon stated that death was caused by a violent blow to the head from a blunt instrument. The affray took place under a gaslight and so the assailants had been recognised. The coroner said that those who had aided and abetted the crime were equally guilty as he who had struck the blow, especially as they knew it was a policeman doing his duty. Old James Clark and his son Stephen were committed for trial at Maidstone Assizes and a reward of £20 was offered for the apprehension of the Clark brothers from Canterbury and a

William Smith. In late October William and John Clark were caught in a wood at Stockbury and brought back to Dover, but there was no sign of Thomas.

To everybody's surprise, Old James Clark and Stephen were acquitted, but the law caught up with Stephen in 1846 when he was sentenced to transportation for life for stealing a 40lb cheese from a baker's shop in Priory Street. He had his opportunity when Mrs Kennett, the baker's wife, had nipped over to the *Golden Lion* for her supper beer while her husband was drinking at the *Comet*! In 1853 Frederick Clark was sentenced to 20 years transportation after having been convicted of rape and robbery committed in 1848.

There is a twist to this tale. In 1853 a Ramsgate sweep named Bishop who had once known the elusive Thomas Clark, a fellow sweep, spotted him when drinking at the *Bell* at Ivychurch on Romney Marsh. The man was taken into custody and brought to Dover.



*End of sweep's cane*



*Constable's uniform of that period*

Although Bishop was convinced that the man was Thomas Clark, others could not identify him, including one of the Beers who had fought with him on that fatal day. Mr Portwine, who had known Thomas all his life, knew that he had tattoos on his arms, but this man was unmarked and was also too tall. The man claimed to have a brother in London and so the case was adjourned until the brother could appear. When he did so, he declared that the man was his twin brother, John Merritt. The likeness was obvious and a baptismal register entry convinced the magistrates. The prisoner was released.

There were no further sightings of Thomas Clark.

Poor Samuel Couchman was 43 years old and had served in the Dover police force for two years, one of the 12 constables, after 26 years in the Royal Marines. He left a widow and two children. The Mayor and Corporation attended the funeral at St. James' Church where Samuel was buried.

*The following article by Terry Sutton is intended to provoke and stimulate the membership of the Dover Society into discussion as to the future housing issues within Dover and District. To that end the Editor would like to ask for contributions from members, to appear in the next newsletter, either for against or somewhere in between.*

## MORE HOUSES

*by Terry Sutton*

Just how many new homes should be built in the Dover area in the next 20 years? That's a planning decision that is awaited from the office of John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister.

The government has called for a massive home building programme in the south east of England and the South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) has decided that in the region as whole 28,900 dwellings should be provided each year between 2006-2016.

Kent County Council was called on to make recommendations on how many of these houses should be built in the county.

Three options were suggested over the 20 years for the Dover district - a low level of 5,900, a medium range of 7,900 or a massive 9,900. Most of these, it is suggested, should be provided in and around the town of Dover. Dover District Council, after consultations with parish councils and others, recommended ?? (still to be decided).

It is claimed by county planners there is a potential land supply in the

immediate Dover area for 4,780 new homes, a number of which could be built in the town itself. But, if the planned house building goes ahead, it is obvious any new estates will have to be located out of the Dover valley probably to the north and towards the Whitfield area. Some green fields will be lost to housing estates, although how much will be reduced if Connaught Barracks is sold by the Ministry of Defence and made available for homes.

The planners at district, county and regional levels are not only investigating land supply for homes but also the creation of new jobs for workers (and that means more land for business parks) to fill the homes and the necessary infrastructure required for the new estates.

There are already calls, especially from the parishes, for roads, sewers, community centres - even a new Dover hospital - to be provided in advance to serve the expected population growth if all this planning goes ahead by the year 2026.





## Poor Emma - *largely forgotten*

by Terry Sutton

In Calais in a side street off the Rue Royale there's a weather-worn plaque that tells of the last resting place of a woman who was once a sought after beauty in 19th century England.

Emma Lyon, as she was when born in 1765 the daughter of a blacksmith, was a real beauty who used her sexuality to climb out of poverty to become a leading socialite. She was the mistress of various men until she married the diplomat who gave her the title.

She met Horatio Nelson in Italy when he was recovering from war wounds and soon became his lover. Emma bore Nelson's daughter Horatia in 1801. At that stage Emma, still a great beauty, was the subject of portraits by several leading painters.

But after Nelson's death life began to go down hill for Emma and she was soon in debt and suffering from ill-health. To escape her creditors Emma quietly slipped across the Channel from Dover to Calais where, penniless, she took rooms in a lodging house not far from the docks. Where, 10 years after Nelson's death, she died.

The spot where she died in 1815 is today marked by the difficult-to-find and obscure plaque. It is said it was placed on the site by some British officers on wartime duty at the French port. The plaque is seen by very few tourists and largely ignored by the people of Calais.

Today poor Emma is practically forgotten while her lover Nelson - 200 years after his death at the Battle of Trafalgar - remains a national hero.

## LONDON ROAD COMMUNITY FORUM

by Alan Lee

Formed following a meeting held in October 2003 with the aim of become a pressure group and to foster a community spirit, the membership is open to all who live or work in the area including all the businesses. The forum initially covered London Road and Cherry Tree Avenue but this has now been extended and covers an area from Buckland Bridge down Barton Road on to Ladywell and back via London Road.

The majority of the meetings and events are held in the Kings Hall with many thanks to the owner Brian. Some popular events have been Quiz Nights and a Children's Halloween Night as well as clearing the litter.

A calendar for 2006 has been produced featuring old photographs of shops, buildings and transport from the area. The next major project will to introduce a wider audience to the history of the area by the creation of an internet site.



# The Dover Society Website

[www.doversociety.homestead.com](http://www.doversociety.homestead.com)

*Please visit the site.*

*Read reports on meetings, check the programme of events.*

Your comments and observations would be appreciated.

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Visits to  
**The Dover Society Website**  
**2005** (up to 24.10.05) 939 visits  
**2004** 1,587 visits  
**2003** 606 visits

## Dover Websites

- Charlton Shopping Centre: [www.charltonshopping.co.uk](http://www.charltonshopping.co.uk)
- Dover Carnival: [www.dovercarnival.co.uk](http://www.dovercarnival.co.uk)
- Dover Castle: [www.dover-castle-friends.org](http://www.dover-castle-friends.org)
- Dover District Council: [www.dover.gov.uk](http://www.dover.gov.uk)
- Dover Hospital Fete: [www.doverhospitalfete.homestead.com](http://www.doverhospitalfete.homestead.com)
- Dover Operatic Society: [www.dods.org.uk](http://www.dods.org.uk)
- Dover Pageant: [www.doverpageant.com](http://www.doverpageant.com)
- Dover Town Centre Management: [www.dovertcm.homestead.com](http://www.dovertcm.homestead.com)
- Dover Town Council: [www.dovertown.com](http://www.dovertown.com)
- Dover Transport Museum: [www.dovertransportmuseum.homestead.com](http://www.dovertransportmuseum.homestead.com)
- Dover Web: [www.doverweb.co.uk](http://www.doverweb.co.uk)
- Gateway Hospital Radio: [www.ghbs.org.uk](http://www.ghbs.org.uk)
- Accommodation: [www.stayindover.co.uk](http://www.stayindover.co.uk)

## Venturing outside Dover

- British Olympic Association: [www.boa.org.uk](http://www.boa.org.uk)
- Confederation of Cinque Ports: [www.cinqueports.net](http://www.cinqueports.net)
- Kent County Council: [www.kenttourism.co.uk](http://www.kenttourism.co.uk)
- Kent Federation Civic Amenity Society: [www.kfas.org.uk](http://www.kfas.org.uk)
- St Peter's Village Tour: [www.villagetour.co.uk](http://www.villagetour.co.uk)

**Contact the editor, Mike McFarnell or a member of the committee  
 if you want more information.**

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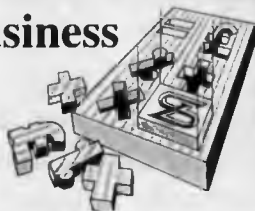
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I/We could sometimes give practical help with the following (*please tick boxes*)

Social events  Writing for newsletter

Projects e.g. clearance, surveys, photography

Any other interests or expertise .....

---

# PROGRAMME 2005 - 2006

*Guests are welcome at all meetings except the Annual General Meeting which is for members only.*

## 2005

DECEMBER 17      Christmas Feast  
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## 2006

JANUARY 16      **Speakers:** Lea Oakley "Wallett's Court"  
Monday 7.30                                  Philip Wyborn-Brown "Hubert de Burgh"

FEBRUARY 20      **Wine and Wisdom** with Clive Taylor. A light-hearted quiz. £4.00 to  
Monday 7 for 7.30      include refreshments, wine, soft drinks, coffee and tea. Prizes for first and second places.

MARCH 20              **Speakers:** Brian Madderson "Babanas to Dover"  
Monday 7.30                                  David Iron "Irons, Crundles and Dover Harbour"

APRIL 10              **Annual General Meeting**  
Monday 7.30              **Speaker:** Martyn Webster "Steiber's Clocks, Dover"

MAY                      **The Powell-Cotton Museum, Quex House and Gardens**

JUNE                      Morning cruise on **Bowl Water** and buffet lunch in their restaurant followed by afternoon visit to **Lamberhurst Vineyard** for tour and wine tasting.

JULY                      **Kensington Palace**

AUGUST                  **Lullingstone Castle**

SEPTEMBER              **France**

OCTOBER 16              **Speakers:** Bryan Walker "Dover Regalia"  
Monday 7.30                                  Derek Leach OBE "Dover Harbour Board 400 Years"

NOVEMBER 13              **Speaker:** Paul Watkins "Dover Pride"  
Monday 7.30              **Brainstorming Session**

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