

The  
Dover  
Society

# Newsletter

No. 66

December 2009



*Camden Crescent, Dover*

*Camden Crescent*



# 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, archæology, 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 would like to wish  
all of our members, advertisers and  
the staff of Adams the Printers  
a very merry Christmas and may  
2010 be a happy and prosperous  
year for all.*

The Christmas feast this year takes place on Saturday 12th December. This year there will be a hot carvery. Although this has meant an increase in the price of a ticket, I am sure that it will be well worth the extra. Entertainment for the evening will be pianist Nicholas Harby accompanied by soprano Madeline Mee.

Over the coming months we have some diverse and interesting talks lined up, so please do try and come along to the indoor meetings. You may bring non-members along with you, if they enjoy the meetings they may be willing to join.

This year saw the local celebrations to mark the 100th anniversary of Louis Bleriot's flight. Next year, although still in the early planning stage, it is hoped to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first two-way flight by Charles Stewart Rolls. His statue stands along the promenade. This once again follows an initial idea by the Dover Society.

Heritage Open Days this year once again proved to be a great success. This annual event is excellent in introducing people to properties that they might otherwise never visit.

Jack and the planning committee continue to work hard to monitor and attempt to curb the poorer planning applications submitted to Dover District Council.

The Society still take the lead in keeping the vegetation in check at Cowgate cemetery. If you have some spare time,

Jeremy and the work party will be very pleased to see you. You can do as much or as little as suits you.

Finally it is hoped that over the next couple of years we will see some changes for the better taking place in Dover. Sea Change has plans for various projects, some that have already started. Let us hope that after our meeting with the organizers, at Whitfield, they will take heed of some of the points put forward by us.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEADLINE for contributions

The last date for the receipt of copy for issue 67 will be Wednesday 13th January 2010.

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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# Peter Johnson

R. I. P.

1922 - 2009

VICE PRESIDENT OF THE DOVER SOCIETY



## A Personal Reflection by Fr. Peter Sherred

It was a great privilege to know Peter Johnson. As I recall the many facets of his life and the various ways in which we interacted over the years I am reminded of Christ's comments when He saw Nathanael approaching Him and He said "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false" (John 1: 47).

If we substitute *Englishman* for *Israelite* this is a fair summary of the Peter I was privileged to know and call a friend. I knew him over three decades when we were both members of Dover Rotary club, he a chairman of the R V Coleman Trust and I the clerk (at his invitation) and members of this Society. He was on the bench as a JP as I was an advocate before him and then there was our common allegiance to church - just some of the many areas where our paths crossed or ran together. Peter was a person for whom the words 'Service above Self' were not simply a statement or a philosophy but an act of faith to be lived out in his life and that is what he did in his quiet, professional and honest way.

From his arrival in Dover, in 1953, he was deeply involved in many aspects of Dover life. He was also a member of Dover Film Society.

I had the privilege of ministering at his wife Pauline's funeral, at Peter's express request, so I know just how blessed they were in their marriage of over 50 years before Pauline

died. Peter, the quintessential Englishman always looked dapper in his trademark grey flannels and blazer, a man whose standards provide a benchmark for others. There was no side or guile, nothing false. It was a great privilege to minister to him in his last weeks and months. In all the home masses, despite a clear decline in his mental capacity and faculties, he remembered the words of his prayers. He was not simply a 'church' person as with so many others but a true Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, a person willing and able to serve others less fortunate than himself, a man who eschewed status or recognition and who had faith in the promises of Christ and the resurrection heritage offered by Him.

His compassionate nature was often on display and shown in his work as a J. P. where, as a chairman, he would listen carefully to all aspects of a case and then, where circumstances demanded, make clear and firm decisions. He also understood the frailty of human nature which enabled him to make those judgements that gave people a chance to pick up their lives and to mend their ways. He was to serve as a magistrate for more than twenty years, chairing the juvenile panel in addition to sitting often as a Chairman of the Bench of magistrates. He was also on the Board of Visitors at Dover Borstal so could be aware from his own experience of the conditions that juveniles

would experience when sentenced to a period or periods of custody.

His amazing strength of character was demonstrated by his recovery from the severe stroke he experienced in the early 1990's which, he confided, laid him out for a year and which nearly laid him out, period. With the support of Kate, his daughter, Pauline and his own quiet determination, he was to recover sufficiently to have a good quality of life for well over a decade. In the first stages of recovery he could be seen taking little walks from his home in Castle Avenue going just a little further each day aided by his stick. This was an example of true grit. Dogged by the onset of dementia in recent years he retained his calm and

placid persona. He is re-united with Pauline, his earthly companion for so many years. We should extend our sympathies to Kate, his son Matthew and extended family in the loss of such a decent good person. He spent his final days in Kearsney Manor nursing home where he died on Tuesday 4th August.

Peter, it was a real privilege to have known you and to be a friend - you have enriched our lives immeasurably and we will try to uphold your standards of life and belief. Thank you for the example.

*"Here is a true [Englishman] in whom there is nothing false"*

*May he rest in peace*

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### A Tribute by Jack Woolford

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It was during the early 1960's that I first came to know Peter Johnson, because as an adult-educational advisory member of Dover Borough Council's Library and Museum Committee I became involved in a number of projects and invariably found that he, too, was a participant - quietly-spoken, friendly, cooperative, very well-informed on all matters Dovorian, widely connected and quintessentially professional. A chartered quantity surveyor, he ran the firm of Bristow Johnson and Partners in Folkestone Road. His campaigns included moving Dover Museum from the basement of the Town Hall to purpose-built accommodation (now in Market Square) and the establishment of the Community Centre, now Cleary House in Maison Dieu Road.

Consequently, when invited, in 1988, to chair the newly formed Dover Society I was delighted, but not surprised, to find that Peter Johnson was already quietly but deeply involved. He was Chairman of the

Magistrates and of the Governors of Dover College, hence the Society's Christmas Feast link with the College and the use of the Menzies Hall for our Inaugural Public Meeting. There he set the tone by firmly stressing that the Society was not nimby and negative but as committed to Dover's future as to its past, an undertaking we have done our utmost to follow.

Until his unfortunate illness, he never missed a committee meeting and was the author and director of our successful appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman to rebuke the Home Office for erecting an obtrusive building on the Citadel skyline. He was also responsible for the happy presidential invitations to the Countess of Guilford and to her successor, Brigadier Maurice Atherton. He also continued to grace our public meetings for as long as possible.

*Monumentally we are indeed his debtors*

# Death of a Dover Frequent Visitor

Fr. Peter Sherred

In the middle of May Fred Palmer, who appeared in Dover Society newsletter in August 2007, died in the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford aged 89. His association with Dover stretched back over 70 years from his early involvement with summer staff at the western docks. Starting work with the railways in the mid 1930's he retired as senior stores inspector for British Railways, Southern Region, having been responsible for an area from Thanet to Weymouth embracing Dover.

Although born in Ashford and a resident of Kennington his frequent visits to Dover were occasioned by his employment and in his capacity as long time secretary of The St Michael the Archangel Chapter of the Guild of Servants of the Sanctuary. He held this post from 1948 and in 2008 he celebrated 60 years as secretary, a period of time unlikely to be overtaken. Fittingly his celebration took place at the church of St Peter and St Paul, Charlton in Dover. This was when Fred was presented with a special framed certificate and a gift for his services to the Guild by the former Lord Bishop of Durham, the Right Reverend Michael Turnbull, (now in retirement an assistant Bishop of Canterbury Diocese) and Fr Paul Christian, Parish Priest of Temple Ewell and Lydden and Chaplain to the local Guild Chapter.

Guild members from three East Kent Chapters were present to celebrate with Fred on that



occasion, especially gratifying because Fred was a Councillor for the Provincial Group. Later the same year he was honoured nationally by the members of the General Council of the Guild, who, unanimously agreed to make Fred Grand Councillor in recognition of the tremendous service he had contributed to the running and organisation of the Guild.

His funeral service was held in his parish church of St Mary in Ashford on Monday 1st June, his coffin having been received

into church the night before in the setting of a funeral mass. Both services were well attended by both clergy and laity.

He leaves a widow, Kathleen, to whom he was married for 50 years and two sons. May he rest in peace after his lifetime of devoted service and commitment to his beloved Guild.





*The work of the*

# PLANNING

*Sub-Committee*

Report by JACK WOOLFORD,  
Chairman

In our August 2009 Newsletter (No. 65) we contrasted the breathtaking speed of Morrison's take-over and rebuild of the B&Q store on Charlton Green with the endless delays to almost everything else. That is, except the unwanted Giant TV Screen in the Market Square (which no one looks at) for which KCC & DDC forgot to tell DTC to pay its £10,000 whack. Moreover, Kent Highways has told DTC to send the bill for any repainting of the Bridge Street bridge to Netto or Morrison and not them. Contrariwise, DTC has refused. A retrospective planning permission request has now been received from English Heritage to erect direction signs on a public highway! What next?

On the other hand, we would have preferred the £2m Sea Change grant for the new Esplanade on the sea front to have been spent on improving the grotty underpass to the Town Centre, etc. At least we are to be spared the proposed shingle beach (which would have been washed away in any case) and our fingers stay crossed for the future of the Seafront Annual Regatta, one of DTC's best achievements. DTC has also sensibly pointed out that the burnt-down house at 78 London Road could not be restored,

even though it is in a (so-called) Conservation Area.

We have not appeared at the Core Strategy Local Development Framework Public Inquiry, having already expressed to the Inspector our marked preference for employment opportunities over the building of houses by the thousand. We have drawn DDC's attention to the Compulsory Purchase Orders used by Hastings Borough Council to clear the town of eyesores - of which Dover has many - but are informed of the complexity of legal implications and reminded of the Recession....

We applaud and support the efforts of the Civic Trust Initiative to rekindle a national amenity organization - provided we do not have to raise our membership subscriptions or cut any of our current commitments.

We continue to await hospitals and highways and welcome the addition to Dover's dental services. There should also be an Innovation Centre, Sure Start Centres, Academy Schools, a new E-On Power Station, NHS Healthy Living Centres and a new University for the Creative Arts, 40,000 new jobs, 16,000 homes and 50,000 more people ...

# Sea Change Dover

by Jeremy Cope

The Society requested a meeting with Sea Change Dover organisers to inform ourselves more fully of the scheme and, if appropriate, to make an input into its work. The meeting was held at Dover District Council Chamber at Whitfield with David Hughes and Amanda Lumley from Sea Change and approximately 16 Society members.

## The Scheme Overall

Sea Change is a government funded initiative in which participants must match the government contribution. Three seaside towns have been awarded the first tranche of money, one of which is Dover. The government funding element must be spent by the end of this financial year. The government has refused to allow any funds to be used for purposes other than those specified in the bid. The participants (and providers of matched funding) in the scheme are KCC, DDC, SEEDA, EH and DHB. KCC are the organisers and Dover Pride is a forum for Sea Change.

The purpose of the scheme is regeneration of seaside towns. The 'in words' for the scheme are 'connections' and 'connections through culture'. Culture is seen as a key to bringing people together to make a more cohesive town.

## The elements of the Dover Scheme

English Heritage's refurbishment of the Castle, renovation of the old Officers Mess for use as an archive and the new reception building, all of which have

been completed. Dover District Council has renovated the Bleriot Memorial. A feasibility study of a cable car from the Wellington Dock area to the Castle is being carried out. Dover Harbour Board is refurbishing and upgrading part of the seafront promenade. A cultural survey is being undertaken which is part of a 10 year process to promote community engagement.

Amongst the matters we raised were:-

- Why the promenade scheme? - The promenade is excellent in its present form - why not use the money elsewhere to better effect?
- Why not make more of Shakespeare Beach with a walkway to Samphire Hoe?
- The Admiralty pier needs upgrading.
- Could the semi derelict Snoops Night Club be turned into an Arts Centre? David Hughes had thoughts on the use of Discovery Centre as such a centre.
- We understand English Heritage are carrying out a survey of buildings in Dover to list them, here The Society needs to contact English Heritage on this one.
- We should make more of the Dover Painted House -response - It is likely to be part of the cultural survey.
- Importance of the Western Heights. David Hughes said that the potential cost of improvements would be £18m - £20m.
- That the promenade plans did not address its use for the regatta or loss of beach likely with the development of

new cruise terminal and yacht marina.

- Could the seafront toilets be reopened?
- Within the connections concept safe walking paths were needed from the Bleriot memorial to Langdon Cliffs and from Langdon Cliffs to the town.
- There was a general concern that Sea Change was doing nothing to address the run down nature of the town centre and unless this was addressed the value of Sea Change would be very much reduced.

The general response to questions was that the schemes were already decided upon and could not be exchanged for alternatives. Government funding was fixed on the current schemes. Originally the bid had to be made in a three-week period which gave no time for public consultation. All that the Society could do was to make any objections to plans for the promenade in the normal way and to participate in the cultural survey. Most of the concerns expressed would have to be addressed in a different forum. Sea

Change has its limits in what it can achieve and it has to be recognised that participants who put up the matched funding have aims that may not necessarily mirror or coincide with Society members' views. The Society is grateful to David Hughes and Amanda Lumley who gave positive presentations within the limits of what Sea Change sets out to achieve.

It is disappointing that Sea Change, described as regeneration of seaside towns, tends to be cosmetic and does not seek to address the real problems of towns such as Dover. Plus ça change. But the Society is here to challenge this plus ça change. It has set up a sub-committee whose job is to see what we can do to help make the best of what Dover has, and Dover has a very great deal. This is not about the grandiose schemes but simple housekeeping, litter, buildings repair, antisocial matters etc. The first meeting has been held and members will hear more as things develop and this will, no doubt, include a request for their inputs.

## *Thanking the Emergency Services*

A celebration for the life and work of the Emergency Services will take place on Sunday 6th December in the Church of Our Lady of Dover, Roosevelt Road, Buckland Estate at 3pm.

The programme will comprise readings, Advent and festive carols and musical contributions. Members of the Emergency Services will be participating and the Town Mayor and other civic dignitaries will be present as will the brass ensemble 'The Fortuners' and the Pharos Choir. All are welcome, admission free. This biennial event provides an opportunity to thank those who work so hard for us all year round in these services while at the same time enjoying a wide and varied programme in word and music.

# Society Outings

## GROOMBRIDGE PLACE GARDENS AND THE ENCHANTED FOREST

Reported by Pat Hooper

A splendid day was had by all at this combination of traditional English gardens with the unique creativity of the Enchanted Forest.

Of course, the magnificent Groombridge Place House is not open to the public, being under different ownership.

The gardens are based on traditional formal gardens so popular in the sixteenth century, the style being set by the Italians and French with grand designs such as Versailles. These were copied on a smaller scale by the English landed classes.

Over the years major landscaping was carried out by owners such as William Camfield who purchased Groombridge Place in 1754 and later the Saint family in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

With these influences the garden took shape as "outside rooms" to the house, each of the various gardens being self contained within walls or hedging.

The "Drunken Garden" consists of juniper shrubs grown into strange shapes with an appearance of staggering drunkenly around the pool. In contrast the "Oriental Garden" has plenty of movement

with finely shaped leaves of ornamental trees and a border garden. The gardens have many peacocks and a favourite rendezvous area is the Oriental garden.

Other self contained areas are the herbaceous border and "Bowling Alley", the "White Rose" garden being a relatively new landscaping project being planted in 1994 amongst several old and mature apple trees.

The "Secret Garden" is a lovely retreat and the yew hedge was planted as recently as 1994 although the actual garden is documented as the place where, in 1686, Philip Packer died whilst sitting reading a book.

Away from the formal gardens the vineyard that was planted in 1993 (Seyval



Blanc and Schoenberger grapes) is thriving well, indeed the first vintage was harvested in 1996.

Leaving the vineyard you enter the "Enchanted Forest" created after much of the forest was destroyed in the Great Storm of 1987. This is a magical haven for all young at heart (whether 5 or 105 years old) with such creations as "The Mystic Pool" creating Celtic images or the "Serpents Lair" with its intricate ropes creating the serpent images.

There is also the wonderful "Wicked" dragon and "Dinosaur Valley" with its enormous nest and dinosaur eggs. More traditional are the Romany caravans and an Indian Tepee and totem pole (carved in 1997 from cedar wood) conjure up the thoughts of intrepid travel to those far away places.

For the energetic the Swing Walk and Dark Walk is a must: This won a prestigious design award in 2000.



Underneath the swing walk roam the deer and if lucky you may even see the unusual Zeedonk (zebra-donkey cross). Twice a day the Raptor Centre puts on a flying display with birds of prey and afterwards the opportunity exists to see the wonderful birds close up. The owner (Eddie Hare) is a Dovorian.

So on that co-incidental note I conclude with the thought that all enjoyed this visit to a garden of beauty and a forest that places no bounds on one's imagination.





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## DOWN HOUSE

Reported by Pat Hooper

2009 is the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Darwin, a man born into a privileged wealthy family, having no financial problems throughout his life but in the beginning having no real idea of where his vocation lay. He started school at Shrewsbury but was not happy with the classical education preferring to investigate the insects, plants and animals in the surrounding Shropshire countryside. His father who was a physician then sent him to study medicine at Edinburgh, and, when that did not appeal, sent him to Cambridge to prepare for a career in the Church. That was not right for him either.

Nothing seemed to satisfy him but he continued to take a great interest in the natural world about him and attended lectures on plant biology at the university. So when the opportunity arose for him to join HMS Beagle as a natural history observer alongside Captain Robert Fitzroy he readily agreed. At the age of twenty-two he had at last found his niche and his role in life for the next sixty years. For forty of those years he lived almost exclusively at Down House in Kent. This is where he worked on his theory of evolution carrying out his experiments with plants and animals to test his ideas.

This was the house our Dover Society group had come to see and to help us understand how his dedication and work in this place caused such a mind changing revolution in the way we all think about life on earth today. Only two hundred years ago people had little idea of the age of the earth and most still held a religious



belief that everything had been created at one time in its existing form. There had been other thinkers who were questioning these beliefs but it required a genius to gather the information and bring all the observations together to prove his theory of life evolving over millions of years; 'the survival of the fittest'.

On the arrival at Down House we were directed up to the first floor rooms, which would have been bedrooms in Darwin's time. Here displays showed his early life and his family tree indicated how both he and his wife were grandchildren of Josiah Wedgwood of pottery fame. He married his cousin Emma after returning from his worldwide journeys aboard the 'Beagle'. He had made a list of what he would look for in a wife and Emma was the perfect answer, and proved to remain so all of their days together.

After two years living in London they bought Down House in 1842 and moved in with their two children. He liked the idea of the property being quiet and away from the noise and bustle of London and yet close enough for access to the city when required. Over the years he went on to make improvements in the building adding

extra rooms and altering accommodation to suit their growing family. They had ten children but three died in childhood and he was devastated at the death of his oldest and most loved daughter, Annie, at the age of ten. He had entered wholeheartedly into family life involving his children in many of his investigations and ongoing experiments on plants and animals in his house and grounds. He kept dozens of pigeons of all shapes and kinds so that he could observe how Man had carried out his own form of evolution by cross breeding the birds over a period of time.

Displays in other first floor rooms illustrated Darwin's life as a young man. A reconstruction of his overcrowded cabin aboard the 'Beagle' brought to life its cramped conditions where he had to carry out his research and work on specimens that he was collecting, recording, preserving and sending back to England. During the five years that they circumnavigated the world Darwin would go ashore sometimes for many weeks at a time to make his observations, writing copious notes and making sketches in a series of small pocket books. Many of these were on display in this part of the house.

On arrival back in England in 1836 Darwin started to meet with members of the scientific world and he began to acquire a considerable reputation not only for his authoritative understanding of the living world but also for his geological knowledge and his observations and thoughts about the fossils found in the rocks. At the time some people believed that the Creator had put these interesting shaped objects there for decoration.

The ground floor rooms in the house



where the Darwins lived a normal family life have been retained in much of their original form with some actual furniture and fabrics and wall coverings accurately reproduced. Darwin had added a fine dining room for his large family and their many visiting relations and friends. The pleasant sitting room contains Emma's grand piano and comfortable chairs some of which had been specially adapted by Darwin to accommodate his large stature. He was over six feet tall. In his study, now faithfully reconstructed, can be seen all the desks, chairs, tables and equipment necessary for observing, measuring, weighing and writing up his findings. Many of these items are originals used by Darwin. Although Down House was finally given up by the family at the turn of the century some twenty-five years after Darwin's death, many pieces of furniture were kept elsewhere by family members and were returned to the house when it opened to the public in 1998. In this bicentenary year even more has been done to bring the whole house and grounds to life and present it as it would have appeared in Darwin's time.

Going out into the garden viewed so pleasantly from the living rooms it was good to see that the flowerbeds at the side of the lawn have plants which Emma



Darwin would have recognised and would herself have chosen. Darwin's work was not all done sitting in his study. The garden and grounds were of great importance. He spent time thinking, walking and working in his eighteen-acre estate. He had constructed some extensive greenhouses where he could carry out his biological experiments. These structures still exist and have been stocked with plants similar to those he would have been studying. Leading away from the walled kitchen garden he laid out the Sand Walk known to the family as his 'thinking path'. This half mile round trip allowed him to walk with his dog, sometimes twice in a day, and think about what he was learning from all his observations. These parts of the garden are still there to be experienced by the present day visitor. It is possible by wandering down the Sand Path to go back a century and half and imagine Darwin walking there and pondering on the huge reaction that his discoveries were going to make, not only on the scientific community but in the minds of ordinary



*The Thinking Path*

people who still believed in what the Bible told them about a Creator. Emma was sorely at odds with his new beliefs and he was concerned that it upset her. For these reasons he delayed publishing his findings knowing it would cause so much opposition and disbelief. However, he was forced to go into print in 1859 after much hesitation when in the year previous a young naturalist, Alfred Russell Wallace, wrote to him to say that he had come to same conclusions as Darwin about natural selection. This spurred Darwin into taking action to get his work published. He could not allow over nearly thirty years of his painstaking research to be overtaken, unrecognised and unrewarded.

Visiting Down House made it more possible to get a little closer to the man we have heard so much about in this his centenary year. He appeared to be a very gentle man who lived with his family always around him. He was concerned greatly for the welfare of other people, was against slavery when it was not popular to be so and wished not to harm animals even when he had to use them for his studies. He was a man dedicated to his scientific discoveries which have affected profoundly the way we think about life on earth. He laid the foundations for the preservation of the natural world which is so much a part of our environmental concern today.

After we left Down House we had a pleasant drive through the Kentish lanes to Tunbridge Wells where we sat in the sunshine at the Pantiles having afternoon tea and in some cases a welcome glass of Kentish beer. Some of us discovered a real treasure trove of a shop filled from top to bottom with every bit of kitchen equipment you could think of. Wonderful if this is what fires your imagination! Quite a few of us got lost in there!

# OCTOBER MEETING

## 1st Talk

### Haunted Dover

A talk by Lorraine Sencicle reported by Alan Lee

The start of our winter season of meetings saw one of our members Lorraine Sencicle begin the first talk with an introduction that mentioned her earlier book 'Banking on Dover'. It was while researching this that she had her first supernatural experience. Here in Dover we have, reputedly, the most haunted castle in the country. Lorraine was stopped by English Heritage from researching more than a couple of episodes. They seem to be under the impression that they own the rights to them; they do not.

Lorraine told the story of the old lady and her dog placed alive in the walls within the castle grounds at Peverell's Tower and sealed in to stop the supposed curse on the building of the tower. At the Officers' Mess the Lady in Red has often been seen. In one incident there she proved to be the key figure in saving the lives of the men from fire in December 1897.

Over on the Western Heights at the Drop Redoubt we find Peter Watson 'The Drummer Boy'. He was murdered 1804 after ascending the Grand Shaft carrying some of the garrison's payroll. His beheaded body was later found but there was no sign of the money; his murderer was never caught. The beating of his drum is still heard to this day echoing around the Drop Redoubt. Back in the town, at Camden Crescent, are four ghostly soldiers who guard and protect the Rifles Monument and have done so since 1861.

Near the junction of Queen Street and York Street Agnes Jaoman is frequently seen sitting whittling. In 1588 she owned the local pub,

the Black Horse; in 1826 the name was changed to the Cause is Altered. The last drink was served there on 22nd March 1969 prior to the pub being demolished, a sad end to a friendly establishment.

William de la Pole, born in 1396, was beheaded as his ship crossed the channel on 2nd May 1450. His headless body is seen walking from the Market Square towards Church Street still looking for his head.

A very young urchin, Jack, haunts Buckland House on Crabble Hill. He had a lovely singing voice but after his voice broke he returned to the workhouse where he later died of T.B.

Rarely seen but often heard near the old Metropole Hotel in Cannon Street is Adele, another singing ghost, looking for her love.

The last story Lorraine told was of Jimmy, a young man who volunteered to fight for his country at the start of World War One. Killed on the Somme battlefields, he was first seen on the Admiralty Pier wearing a tattered uniform waving the troops off to war and greeting them on their return. One of the reasons the war memorial at the cruise terminal, the old Marine Station, was not moved in 1992 was the fear that Jimmy would be left behind. It is here that he is still seen to this day.

These were just some of the tales Lorraine enthralled her audience with. The full accounts along with many more interesting stories can be read in her new book *Haunted Dover*.

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## 2nd Talk

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# The Forgotten Aviator

A talk by Dr Barbara Walsh reported by Terry Sutton

Dr Barbara Walsh made the journey from County Kildare in Ireland to provide our members with an outstanding talk at our October meeting about the major role Dover played in the early days of aviation. Mrs Walsh, the author of several books, concentrated mainly on the exploits of Hubert Latham: *The Forgotten Aviator*.

She had visited Dover before when she gave a talk about her hero Latham at an event organised by Dover District Council but this time she widened her lecture to mention various ways the Dover Strait has been crossed by air.

The first was by Jean Blanchard and Dr John Jeffreys in 1785 who crossed the water from Dover Castle to France, landing in the Forest of Guines, in three hours. She told how, to escape coming down in the sea, they had to discard virtually everything including parts of their clothing, to gain height. However, they retained an official letter they had been given which made this the first airmail flight, she commented.

Other early flights she mentioned were by Count Jacques de Lessups who made the second aircraft flight of the Channel in 1910, the Honourable Charles Rolls who in July 1910 made the first "there and back" flight between Dover and Calais, Cecil Grace who, the same year, set off to fly the Strait and was never seen again, and the first woman to fly the Channel, Miss Harriet Quimbley who crossed from Dover to Boulogne in April 1912. She, said Mrs Walsh, never received the worldwide

publicity she expected because of the news of the sinking of the Titanic.

Another interesting crossing was by Cowboy William Frederick "Buffalo Bill" Cody in 1903 who used a 15 foot kite to haul his 12 foot boat from France to land near the Lord Warden Hotel, Dover in 13 hours.

But, of course, Dr Walsh's main interest was in the wealthy Anglo-Frenchman Hubert Latham whose Channel flight attempts, she believes, were sabotaged for various commercial and political reasons, especially after it was discovered he had family links with Germany. As he prepared, in advance of Louis Bleriot, to make his attempt on the Strait, there was a "strong catalogue of setbacks" which have never been explained. When he crashed in the sea it was discovered he had virtually an empty fuel tank. Another strange fact was there was a loose piece of wire in his engine. His machine was also vandalised overnight needing a replacement. "There were moves by the dirty tricks department," claims Dr Walsh.

She went on to tell how this wealthy explorer, sportsman and "high-flying gentleman", while on a mission for the French government, was allegedly killed by a wild animal in the Congo while he was out shooting. She expressed her doubts about the way he died believing some people with Latham at the time did not want him to report back to the French government on the way the natives were being treated.

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# SOCIETY PROJECTS

Report by Jeremy Cope

## COWGATE CEMETERY

We continue our work in keeping the Cemetery both as a nature reserve and as an area open to the public to enjoy and for local historians and genealogists. The cemetery has been a delight during the summer months, not in the tidily mown style of most cemeteries but of a semi wild area. It is an asset for Dover with its proximity to the town centre and is well worth a visit.

We have started the autumn mowing of the long grass and hope to complete the task by November, thanks to Paul Willmott of White Cliffs Countryside Project. All members are welcome to join our working parties by initially contacting Jeremy Cope on 01304 211348.

Provisional dates for our 2010 working parties are as follows:-

<b>Thursdays</b>	<b>Saturdays</b>
9.00am to 12.30pm	9.00am to 12.30pm
7th January	16th January
4th February	13th February
4th March	13th March
1st April	10th April
6th May	15th May
3rd June	12th June
1st July	10th July
5th August	14th August
2nd September	11th September
7th October	16th October
4th November	13th November
2nd December	11th December

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## RIVER DOUR

The Dour is one of Dover's prime ecological assets being one of the best trout streams in Kent.

The White Cliffs Countryside Project runs working parties from April to October to clear the litter from the river. I have helped in the work, stumbled in the river and got wet trousers, which I put down to old age but am determined it will not put me off. I find working on the river can be quite peaceful and therapeutic and I was really taken by seeing an eel which looked nearly two feet in length.

The River Dour Steering Group held its October meeting which was open to the public. I emailed our members to inform them that they were welcome to attend and we had a very pleasing turnout. One of the most important elements was a presentation by the Environment Agency of their work. The questions and answer session that followed showed the keen interest local people have in our river. I will be sending round copies of the minutes to our members on email but anyone else may have a copy (phone 01304 211348)

*From Joe Harman's files...*

## FREEMEN OF DOVER

by Derek Leach

Joe Harman was admitted as a Freeman of Dover on 28 July 1989 by marrying the right girl! His wife's father, Arthur Cloke, was a Freeman and whilst it was not possible for the daughter of a Freeman to claim this ancient privilege, her husband could, provided that she was born 'free' i.e. born after her father was made a Freeman. Sons of Freeman could claim the privilege once they were 21 and had been born 'free' in Dover. It could also be claimed by those completing an apprenticeship to a Freeman. Joe Harman's right can be traced back to 1715 after which it was passed on from generation to generation. Failure by any generation to claim the Freedom deprived succeeding generations of the privilege. It was also possible to buy it for £20, which before 1836 was important because only Freeman were allowed to trade in the town. The ability to purchase was abolished in 1933.

The Freedom could also be conferred as an honour by the town on men who rendered special service to the town or to the country, such as the 72 Dovorians made Honorary Freeman for volunteering to serve in the Boer War, Lord Montgomery and Sir Winston Churchill. The Freedom of Dover goes back to Saxon times when the monarch, in exchange for



ship service, granted Dover certain privileges. Ship service meant that Dover was obliged to provide for 15 days each year 20 ships each manned by 21 men either to carry the king's army across the Channel or to wage naval warfare when their ships would be fitted with castles. These men were Dover Freeman who 'worked the Passage' (i.e. carried people and goods across the Channel) or fished for a living. The privileges granted included

the Barony which is still exercised at coronations when Barons from Dover and the other Cinque Ports carry a symbolic canopy to protect the monarch. More importantly, the men (sorry not the ladies) of Dover were granted personal liberty, their own courts, possession of land and to trade free of the king's taxes. Other privileges included the right to sell shrimps and fish in the town on Sundays and to graze sheep on the sidewalks! During the tram era Freeman could ride without paying! Until 1835 Freeman elected the Mayor and until 1920 they also had a special parliamentary vote.

In 1953 the Mayor and Corporation invited the 63 surviving Hereditary Freeman and the 26 Honorary Freeman to a lunch at the Town Hall to mark the coronation of Elizabeth II. Of these 47 Hereditary and 15 Honorary Freeman attended, including eight survivors of the

Dovorians made Honorary Freemen for volunteering to serve in the Boer War and two holders of the Victoria Cross. Joe Harman's father-in-law, Arthur Cloke, was one of those invited. Another lunch was held in 1963 attended by 45 Hereditary Freemen.

With the reorganisation of local government in 1974 and the demise of the Borough Council of Dover, Dover town lost its ancient right to admit Honorary Freemen. This was tested in 1989 when the Dover Charter Trustees wished to make Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, an Honorary Freeman. The Act setting up the Dover Charter Trustees gave powers to appoint 'officers of dignity' but apparently excluded the appointment of Honorary Freemen.

Fortunately, the ability to admit new Hereditary Freemen survived the 1974 reorganisation, although authority was vested in Dover District Council. Having applied unsuccessfully in 1972 to the old Borough, Joe tried again in 1989 and was subsequently added to the roll of Dover Freemen by Paul Watkins, Chairman of Dover District Council. Joe signed the following declaration:

*I do sincerely promise and declare that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and lawful successors, and the Charters, Liberties, Free Customs, Decrees and Ordinances, of the whole Ports and of the Liberties and Precincts thereof and especially this town of Dover which to my power I will well and truly maintain and keep.*

*I will be obedient and assistant to the Chairman for the time being as well in keeping the Queen's Majesty's Peace as also observing all good Orders and Decrees heretofore made or to be made for the most benefit and better Government of this Town which belong to a Freeman thereof.*

Joe received the following certificate:

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT  
JOSEPH GEORGE HARMAN  
of 23 St. Radigund's Road, Dover  
was by virtue of his right by marriage  
and having made the declaration  
required by law admitted as a Freeman  
of the Town of Dover on 26 July 1989  
and his name added to the  
Roll of Freemen.

Dear Joe, who loved Dover so much, is no longer with us. I wonder how many Freemen there are left? I also wonder how many people may still be eligible to claim the ancient Freedom of Dover?

1953 *Freemen's Lunch*



## *Dover Society Commemorative Plaque*

*The executive committee on behalf of the members of the society are attempting to have a plaque erected by St. Mary's Churchyard in honour of Thomas Pattenden, all traces of his grave having been removed.*

*From Joe Harman's files...*

# THOMAS PATTENDEN

## *Dover's Diarist*

This is a summary by Derek Leach of an article by  
A. L. Macfie in *Archaeologia Cantiana* Vol. 4 XCIV 1978.

For more than 20 years (1797 to 1819) Thomas Pattenden recorded interesting 'daily remarks and occurrences' about what was happening in Dover, the country and the world. Being English he always mentioned the weather! Thomas, born in Dover in 1748, was a draper and stocking seller living at 1 Townwall Street where his wife took in children needing sea air or seawater! Eventually Thomas became one of the wealthiest and respected men in Dover, a Freeman (by purchase), an assessor of taxes, a churchwarden and doer of good works. He was well read, sketched, painted, collected coins and fossils, but above all perhaps was a keen observer of Dover life.

In his diaries he made careful note of ships passing Dover, especially great fleets, including one that took six hours to pass. A watchful eye was kept on the British economy noting in 1797 that the Privy Council had suspended the gold standard and in 1800 that the price of candles and soap had risen sharply because of an expected war with Russia.

So keen was he that he bought the three volumes of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* when published in 1797.

During the French wars Thomas noted the recruitment and training of volunteers for local militia service and in 1803 recorded that the volunteers paraded in their scarlet uniforms on the Rope Walk and then marched with William Pitt, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports at the time, at their head to Maison Dieu Fields. In 1804 he made drawings of the French coast and Boulogne harbour for use by the military. Apparently, with the help of his spy glass he could even see horses ploughing on the French cliff tops, The strengthening of Dover's defences to counter the Napoleonic threat were also recorded in detail as well as troop movements from the town. He also managed to see several sea battles from the cliff tops. Captured French sailors were kept in the town gaol; in 1808 Thomas recorded that three of them escaped in a boat, but they were pursued and recaptured way out in the Channel despite a thick fog!



The great sea and land battles of the period were also recorded, including Trafalgar and Waterloo, which were celebrated in Dover by parades, gunfire and a grand ball or supper with candles in all the house windows illuminating the town. Thomas was certain that God was on England's side and was punishing France for its wicked ways.

During these historic times Thomas carried on his business as usual, ordering his goods from various parts of the country, including Canterbury. Occasionally he walked part of the way to the Halfway House or to Bridge. He recorded walking all the way back from Canterbury, leaving at 8am, reaching the Halfway House at 11am, where he rested for an hour, and then on to Lydden where he took tea at a friend's house. He reached home soon after 6pm 'and thank God met Mrs. P. again in health and safety.' When Thomas had to travel to London he either went by coach via Canterbury and Rochester or by boat from Whitstable. This was sometimes difficult since he could reach Whitstable when a storm was raging or the wind was in the wrong direction and would be forced to return to Canterbury and travel by coach.

Crime and punishment did not escape his notice. A debtor confined in the castle prison caused him some concern and he delivered personally a pound note from a well-wisher. He notes another debtor released after four years and yet another who escaped and was sentenced to a further four years; Thomas gained his release by paying the £8 owing himself. The pillory was still in use in Dover in 1800 and Thomas records the crowd pelting some unfortunate. In 1807 he witnessed a riot when a great crowd demanded the release of four smugglers.

Magistrates read the Riot Act and mounted troops quickly cleared the Market Square. Thomas also dispensed his own justice when he sacked his servant girl for stealing a pair of stockings.

The diary is interspersed with unusual incidents, including the landing of a stranded whale which the public could see for 6d. Later it was cut up and boiled producing 1000 gallons of oil. On another occasion a pig was buried in a cave by a cliff fall, but was apparently dug out six months later still alive albeit emaciated!

Thomas recorded local sporting events, attending horse races at Priory Fields, Barham Downs and Buckland Valley as well as watching cricket matches at Northfall Meadow.

Recipes to remedy ailments were also included: for whooping cough, dropsy, sore throat as well as Dr. Lewis's recipe for making ink!

He retired from his drapery business in 1804 and his wife died two years later. Thomas sat with her during her last hours and noted, 'At six I felt the parting pang and saw her breath for the last time, when she expired without a struggle and fell asleep..' She was buried with her husband's father and mother in St. Mary's churchyard. Thomas, aged 71, joined her in 1819. During these 13 years of widowhood he still took a keen interest in life and continued to record it in his diary.

Postscript: Thomas left money for the grave to be maintained, but in 1978, as part of a 'tidying up' by the District Council (responsible for maintaining closed churchyards) the gravestones were removed. There followed an item in the Dover Express in memoriam page: 'PATTENDEN - Thomas. Diarist and Freeman of Dover. Not forgotten.'

# CHARLES NORRIS BECKER

## *Town Crier of Dover*

• • • *by Derek Leach* • • •

Recently David Atwood loaned me a small book of 23 pages entitled, 'The True History of the Life and Times of Charles Norris Becker, Town Crier for Dover' and printed by the Dover Express in 1912 when Charles was 78 years old and still Town Crier after 44 years.

He was born at 25 Commercial Quay on 27 February 1834. His father was a guard on a Dover to London coach that left Dover at 6pm and reached the City at 6am! Charles relates that on one trip the coach was loaded with contraband, but father heard that Customs men knew about it and so the goods were offloaded at Wootton and the subsequent Customs search found nothing. Father was not so lucky later when he and some others hired a boat, loaded it with smuggled goods, sailed it to London and were arrested on arrival. He was fined £4,700 or 18 months in jail, serving his sentence in Dover Castle prison! With the coming of the railway in 1844 father lost his coach job and with a wife and five children to feed he opened a greengrocer's shop at 164 Snargate Street.

Charles started work for 3s 6d a week at another greengrocer's in Bench Street when he was 12, but soon moved on to Winter's in Snargate Street as an assistant pastry cook for 4s a week. After being up all night making hot cross buns

for Good Friday he asked for a raise and was promptly sacked! Nothing daunted, Charles became a tailor's assistant at Killick and Back's in Market Square for 5s 6d, but he messed up a pair of trousers, resulting in a box round the ears, which made him fall over and knock two teeth out, as well as the sack again! He then became a butcher's boy at Mrs Wood's in Worthington Street for 5s a week plus food, but the business was taken over and Charles was no longer required.

Somewhat disappointed with his career in Dover, Charles tried his luck in London, but soon returned to Dover and became an assistant to Mr Harding, a dyer in Castle Street, for 7s a week. Throughout this history Charles makes no secret of his liking for girls, but one of his approaches backfired when he received a slap for asking for a kiss when delivering a parcel. He describes a visit to Dover Races at Swingate before indulging in an affair with a sailor's wife. Hearing that the sailor was coming home, Charles went back to London for several more adventures with young ladies.

Returning to Dover yet again, he turned down the chance of a lift on a sailing hoy to walk home. Staying the night at Chatham and Canterbury, he reached Dover at the same time as the hoy! His

situation improved when he rejoined Mr Harding at 16s a week. After more romances he settled down at the age of 27 when he married Sally Tutt, a dressmaker, at Old St. James Church and rented a house at 1 Trevanion Street. Disaster came when he asked for a raise as he was married and was told by bachelor Mr Harding that he 'had no business to be married!' Sacked again, he became a temporary porter at 16s a week at the station, but tips increased his money to 30s a week. This job only lasted nine months. He then took a general shop and house at 28 London Road, but moved two years later, in 1864, to 52 Biggin Street where he sold tobacco, sweets and newspapers.

Mr Marsh, the Town Crier, lived next door. When he became ill Charles 'cried' for him for two years until he died and was then appointed crier himself in 1869. Income was supplemented by sticking up posters around the town. At this time he went to see Wollaston Knocker, the Town Clerk, to take up his Freemanship. With things going well his wife died leaving him with a four year old daughter, but after a few months he married again - a widow with an adopted son living at 1 Priory Hill. They moved to yet another shop at 59 Biggin Street and two years later to 122 Snargate Street. By this time he also had a smart horse and cart for his poster sticking work. Following the death of his second wife, he married yet again in 1882 and honeymooned in Tunbridge Wells and Hastings.

Another move took him to 5 Snargate Street where he seemed to buy and sell

anything and everything, but burnt his fingers when he bought eight 5s shares in the Dover Promenade Pier Company. He fared much better with property, buying 30 Council House Street for £350 and letting it for £30 a year. Number 14 Park Street was his next home, which he bought for £450 with no shop, but still with a poster business and his town crier job. Later, he sold the poster business for £375 and bought 10 Lorne Road for himself at a cost of £300 and let 14 Park Street. Still not content he bought 130 Buckland Avenue and stayed there, selling the Council House Street and Park Street properties.

Charles belonged to the United Bill-Posters Association which took him to meetings all over the country and gave him the opportunity to see things like the Giant's Causeway, the Boat Race and the Derby. Although his 5s bet on the Derby should have brought him winnings, the bookmaker absconded and Charles vowed never to gamble again! He also saw a man hanged at the Old Bailey.

His history concludes by telling his readers that his grandfather, Peter Becker, was a First Lieutenant in the Dover Volunteers in 1790 and kept the Mulberry Tree by the entrance to Shakespeare Cliff tunnel where apparently much smuggling went on. It was Peter who arranged for steps to be built down the cliff to the inn and named Peter Becker steps.

After 23 pages Charles' story ends with not one word about his town crier duties - what a pity!

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# *Richard Vincent Coleman*

## *A Significant Dover Benefactor*

**BENCH COMMEMORATION 5th July 2009**

By Fr Peter Sherred

On a beautiful summer afternoon on a Sunday in July The Right Worshipful the Town Mayor of Dover, Councillor Mrs Sue Jones, together with her Mayoress, Councillor Mrs Ronnie Philpott, unveiled a magnificent wooden commemorative bench in Maison Dieu Gardens facing the Riverside Centre in memory of one of Dover's most notable benefactors. The Mayor then pronounced the bench available for public use. Fr. Paul Christian, priest of Temple Ewell and Lydden, (the location of some nursing and other homes that have benefited from the R V Coleman Trust) blessed the bench and offered prayers in thanksgiving for the generosity of Richard Vincent Coleman. Present were the Chairman of the trust Dr. Walter Mason, all the Trustees and members of the public. The event commemorated 100 years, to the day, since the death of R V Coleman at The Shrubbery, Brookfield Avenue, where he moved after leaving Priory Farm (now Dover College).

Few people can have done so much for so many and for such a long time after his death, for his legacy still remains very much used. The Trust has provided funds for among other things, respite care in nursing and residential homes, wheelchairs, special equipment for people



in need, such as a tandem for a blind autistic person, computer equipment for disadvantaged people, riser chairs and basic medical aids. Operated through its welfare officer and trustees, the hospice movement and Aspen centre have received significant donations.

The Trust derives its income from two principal sources - rent from the R V Coleman Home in Brookfield Avenue and its share portfolio. Despite difficult times, it is responding to a considerable number of referrals but has had to reduce the period of funding for each respite case to two weeks per year. The Trust will maintain and likely enhance its relevance locally as more people live longer, with resources used wisely. In 2008 it funded 99 referrals worth £58,194.00 and in 2007 106 worth £66,938. Its advantage and

importance lies in the immediacy of its response to requests for help.

Did Richard, the nineteenth century farmer, foresee or realise that 100 years after his death his spirit, name, money and generosity would continue to be put to such good use? I would like to think he hoped so. We can all be grateful that Dover has such a wonderful heritage of humanity from the benefactor remembered at this simple ceremony. To have the ability to lighten the burden of others is not to be underestimated and it is hoped that the Trust will continue this aim for the next 100 years.



If you have no need to use the Trust facilities at least go and rest awhile on the bench, which is now another feature of the Dover landscape.

## Remembrance Day



# Education in Victorian Dover

Colin Friend

In 1870, with the growing competition from other nations who were getting ahead in all forms of commerce and engineering, the need to educate this country's children was felt. The British Government, with the energy of W. E. Forster, a Liberal minister under Gladstone, tried to push through compulsory education on the town rates. These schools were to be called Board Schools. The bill in Parliament was eventually watered down to appease the protestors. It was only accepted, because it became voluntary for each town. Forster had to concede a clause in his bill called the Cowper Temple Clause. This allowed pupils in government Board Schools to read the Bible without any theology, or doctrine attached.

The advantages of joining the government scheme meant that old school buildings would be renovated, there would be more books, increased grants, and more help for the poor. The disadvantages seemed negligible compared with the advantages. One organisation opposing the scheme was the Church of England, on the grounds that religious education might be taken away, and a secular approach would creep in. Basically it was one big power struggle; the losers would be the trustees who sat on the charity boards. The government's plan was to have elections to decide who should sit on the boards of the grant-aided schools. This would mean that some people might be voted off, whereas previously money and status controlled which members sat on a charity school committee. The other



Buckland School, London Road

losers in the government plan would be the school managers, the people appointed by the trustees for a wage to attract funds and run the schools like companies.

The trustees were in a position to abuse their position of trust, as teachers appointed by the trustees and managers would be under pressure to give a better education to a child of a trustee than to a pupil with no means to pay the school fees. A poor child had to register with the poorhouse for a token each day to pay the fees. This led to open discrimination. Middle class parents who sent their son or daughter to an elementary charity school would pay nine pence a day on average. Why did they send them to an elementary school and not a private one? Because in those days the dame schools or small private schools very often did not have a qualified teacher with the capacity to teach the children well. The elementary schools, although rigidly run with a mechanical style of teaching, were the next best thing.

The hypocrisy of the fund raising was shown in the newspaper reports of the day, "a fabulous garden party where everyone enjoyed themselves, and raised £100 for the school." This might sound good, but the government after 1870, decreed that the annual grant to voluntary schools would not be increased. In effect this would mean that as each year went by the charity school grants would diminish with inflation whilst those schools that joined the government scheme would have their grants increased.

Although much less was spent, namely £6,457,162, on the government scheme there were far fewer board schools compared to voluntary ones at that time.

The basis for the government action was not only to make sure proper education reached the poor, it was also to ensure that the grants would be spent on schools, and not slipped away privately. The government wanted proper professional bodies to handle any ratepayers' money that went to the schools. That was the national scheme.

In Dover, the town council, as in most places in the country was against the government plan. Education on the rates would not be a vote winner, and some of the town councillors were on various committees of elementary schools. Religion was a strong consideration with the Church of England, but Dover, with its record of non-conformity and low church attitude had an opposite view. Nationally in the 1870s the Church of England had good attendance figures, and a letter now stored in the East Kent Archives shows the concern of Austin Farmer M.C.P., Associate of the University of Oxford and member of the University of London, who wrote to the Dover School Attendance Committee on the 31st March 1884. 'I beg further to remind you that when better class children were admitted to these schools, the argument used was that the poor children should benefit by being taught with those of superior homes and I draw your attention to the present definition of a public elementary school: one that is not kept for private profit. You will find the schools referred to are as much kept for private profit of the masters as any others.' He goes on to make the accusation that better off children were educated to a higher standard in great measure apart from the poor who were recognised by their tokens.

By March 1896, however, the Dover Express reported that the church elementary schools were in financial crisis. Dover's middle class response to the government directive was to stifle attempts at



compulsory education. This is shown by the length of time they dithered before replying to the government boards, and it was becoming crucial, as the number of places for pupils in the classrooms was dwindling whilst the population of Dover was increasing. The Dover Express showed quite clearly that for the last quarter of 1869 Dover was at the top of the East Kent population table with double the number of births compared to Canterbury, which had one more marriage.

<i>Town</i>	<i>Births</i>	<i>Marriages</i>	<i>Deaths</i>
Dover	259	79	123
Canterbury	128	80	80
West Ashford	143	23	94
East Ashford	111	10	55

A letter to the Dover Express on 2nd September 1870 from Mr Woodcraft, suggested that Dover was not prosperous with its run down shops and empty houses. Yet Dover was developing new housing estates. Tower Hamlets, Folkestone Road, Castle Hill, Charlton and Buckland were all areas around Dover that were developed between 1870 and 1900. This meant that a hasty plan was needed to satisfy the government inspectors for school places. If Dover could prove they could manage, and every pupil have a place then Dover would not be forced to have a school board.

The Dover Year Book of 1877 showed that there was a shortage of school places, on pages 16 and 17 stating 'There is a shortfall of 460 places. If not supplied it will become necessary to form a school board.'

Although not prosperous, Dover's middle class formed a Chamber of Commerce in the same year as the Forster Bill of 1870. The result was significant, because one of the early moves of this chamber was to form the Dover College Company with a £10 subscription from each of the 300 members making a total of £3000 pounds. This was a

blow to the poor of Dover as it meant that the elementary schools would be run down, all the while these same middle class parents were giving their children a top class education. This was Victorian hypocrisy at its worst, making sure that their own children got the best, whilst ignoring the pleas of the Government to educate the poor.

The College was proposed and opened the following year, 1871, and its curriculum was based on a classical education, compared to the mechanical monitorial style in the elementary schools. The problem with this style of teaching was described by Charles Dickens in his book *Hard Times*, in that it drummed out any artistic gift in a child. This became important when Dover started its first art school in August 1870 in a building at Cambridge Terrace. This was not a permanent site but in his opening speech Mr Buckmaster, representing the Government, tried to point out that the school was open to all. In a press statement he asked 'How are we going to teach Stonemasons and Carpenters to draw?' It went on 'No doubt plenty among the middle and upper classes would be glad of the opportunities such a school could offer, but it was specifically designed for those youngsters engaged in manual labour wanting to attend night school. This would improve their chances in life and would keep them away from gambling and drunkenness.'

Dover held out against the board schools longer than any other town until the Balfour Act of 1902, when finally state run schools had to be accepted. How much this affected education there we do not know. However, with hindsight the town could probably have been more prosperous if only it had nurtured its young talent.

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# Dover's Motorbike Priest

by Fr Peter Sherred

It is not often (fortunately perhaps) that a former Dover priest is the subject of a full page obituary in *The Times* but this occurred on Saturday 23rd May 2009. Archbishops perhaps could expect to be accorded a page or two in the obituary stakes while bishops, suffragan or diocesan, would be fortunate to qualify for a half page but this was no ordinary priest as the honour was to reveal. The Reverend William Frank Shergold had made an impact of national and international significance as well as having made a significant impact locally on Dover where he was a priest from 1969 to 1974.

Bill Shergold, Father Bill or 'Farv' as he was variously known, was born in 1919 and his early years were spent in Enfield. He was ordained deacon in 1942 after studying at St Chad's College, Durham and the theological College of the Resurrection, Mirfield in Yorkshire. He was ordained priest in 1943 and served a curacy in the East End of London at All Saints with St Frideswide Poplar, before moving to West London and All Saints Hanworth. It was in 1959 when he moved to St Mary of Eton with St Augustine Hackney Wick that he was to become a 'sensation' or, in modern parlance, a

'celebrity'. Prior to his arriving there the Reverend John Oates had founded the 1959 club as a youth club to attract young people to church.

Bill Shergold's vision for the club was to expand its horizons beyond the traditional youth club to attract alienated young people associated with the leather clad motorcyclists known as 'The Rockers'. He was a motorcyclist himself and utilised his machine for visiting parishioners because of its cost effectiveness. Ironically, for someone to become so famous for his biker involvement, he would reminisce on the fact that he failed his first test, "I was unlucky to have to face a woman examiner who had a great dislike of parsons and an even greater dislike of motorcyclists! As if to turn the knife in the wound she told me I was a menace to the public!"



In 1962 he decided to hold a church service for motorcyclists and visited The Ace Café on the North Circular Road, where many bikers congregated to listen to the juke box and drink coffee, to invite people to join him in a service. The 59 club became such a success it claimed to be the largest motorcycle club in the world and the media went sensationalist as



some of the motorbikes were brought into church to be blessed. Even the famous cartoonist Giles immortalised the club in one of his cartoons. When 'Farv' moved parishes the club moved with him. As The Times recorded in his obituary, (The 59 club had turned round the aimless life of many a young man. Dance halls and bowling alleys refused them entry. Youth clubs were terrified of them. Shergold welcomed them, married them, buried them and saw them through many a court case).

In 1969 Father Bill moved to Dover to be Vicar of St Bartholomew's church (at the junction of Templar Street and London Road) and St Peter and St Paul Charlton in Dover. St Bartholomew's was a lovely church of the Anglo Catholic tradition and the first midnight mass Fr. Bill celebrated was an event that lives long in the memory. As the service began there was a tremendous cacophony of noise outside, the doors of the church burst open and an army of leather clad youngsters burst in, to the apprehension of the congregation. They filled all the side aisles of the church

and their contribution to the singing of that mass was amazing, It was the 59 club members who had decided to come down to 'Farv' for his first midnight mass in Dover. They stayed overnight in his vicarage bedding down wherever there was a space. It was an amazing experience for all of us privileged to be in attendance on the night.

His impact on Dover was at the least two fold. Firstly, he established the 69 club of motorcyclists and 2009 saw the fortieth anniversary of the founding of the club with a commemorative service planned at the Church of St Peter and St Paul on Saturday June 20th. Sadly, 'Farv' was not destined to be there, due to frailty initially and then his subsequent death, but he had managed to send a card before he died with his good wishes. The service proceeded as a celebration of his life and a commemoration of the club. It was attended by the Mayor of Dover Councillor Mrs Sue Jones and her Mayoress, Councillor Ronnie Philpott, as well as members of his beloved 59 club, the 69 club and even the 79 club which he

established when he move on from Dover to Tunstall. The service was lead by Fr Colin Johnson, Rector of Charlton in Dover, who himself, a biker started the service by riding his own machine into church and straight up the main aisle! At least eight machines were in the church and outside a parade of impressive machines was testament to the pulling power of this celebrated priest even in death. He would have been quietly pleased. Fr Bill's second significant impact on Dover was his challenge of overseeing the closure of the beautiful church in Templar Street and the amalgamation of its congregation with the Church of St Peter and St Paul Charlton in Dover in St Alphege Road where he moved to The Rectory in 1972. He followed Fr James Snell as the Rector of Charlton when he was appointed in 1969 to St Bartholomew's.

St Bartholomew's Church was a prominent building in the London Road Charlton area of Dover but its history, in church existence terms, was relatively short. In 1877 the ecclesiastical district of St Bartholomew, to serve the Tower

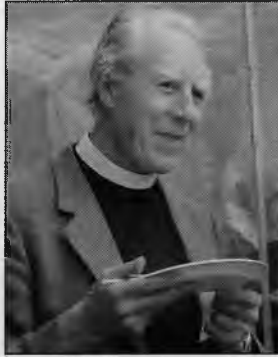
Hamlets district, was formed and the foundation stone of the church laid. The building was consecrated by the Archbishop of Canterbury on 22nd January 1879 and vested in Keble College Oxford. Constructed by W. J. Adcock of Dover, the building was 111 feet long and 55 feet wide. It comprised a clerestoried nave with five bay side aisles, apse-shaped chancel, organ chamber and a northeast chapel with later a vestry added. The church was never unfortunately destined to reach its centenary. Second World War damage was repaired but following boiler problems and, after the merger of the two parishes, the church and vicarage demolished to make way for flats.

Father Bill retired in 1984 moving to Chichester Diocese and then Bath and Wells where he was given authority to officiate. The figure 9 was prominent in his life - being born in 1919, establishing or being associated with the 59, 69, 79 clubs, then dying aged 89 in 2009!

What made this person so special? To those of us privileged to know him he came across as a rather modest, almost diffident individual who carried his shyness well. It seemed incongruous that such a man would appear posing on a motorbike under Southend Pier in an advertisement for Wrangler jeans as he did in 1991. Those jeans would no doubt be a collector's item today but Father Bill donated them to the homeless on the basis that they had more need of them than he did. What was so remarkable was that he took his ministry as a priest earnestly and did not subscribe to the view that he expected people automatically to come to church. Instead he went out to the people, especially the young, and identified with them in dress, interests and machines in the case of bikers. He was often to be seen in his



parishes walking about meeting people and knocking on doors. One such occasion gave him quite a surprise when he called at a house where the door was opened by a customs officer who announced he too was DD - "not Doctor of Divinity but on Detached Duty from Liverpool to Dover" as happened in the summer months. Father Bill was quite taken by the humour of the situation. He was courteous, kind, compassionate and driven by a desire to reach out to the marginalised and isolated from the institutionalised church. He caused a sensation in the 1950s and 1960s by taking his mission to the motorbike gangs. In so doing he recaptured a spirit of ministry the modern church, so inward looking and focussed on the management of terminal



decline, should well try to recapture for in that lies growth rather than the perpetual decline of self preservation. Bill never married and, despite his celebrity status, never forgot that first and foremost he was a priest of the church of God which was his strength and his joy. It was in that role that he made a lasting impression on the people to whom he ministered and in the communities in which he served. Despite his renown he remained a humble parish priest rather than having climbed the hierarchy of clerical careerism and in that he would have been well satisfied, knowing that the most valued recognition was to be aware he was faithful to the calling to which he came in the war years - the service of Almighty God. May he rest in peace.



## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

**Autumn 2009**

Many members have let me have their email addresses. This has allowed the Society to provide them with updates and information in between issues of our newsletter. I have sent them notification of and an invitation to attend our meeting with Sea Change Dover representatives and of the River Dour Steering Group. I have sent minutes of the Sea Change meeting and will send out minutes of the Dour Group.

We took a straw poll of members' preferences for the Christmas Feast via our members on the email register. The poll was very helpful and resulted in a change to a hot first course followed by cold puddings.

Anyone who would like to be sent Society news via email please contact me on [jeremycope@willersley.plus.com](mailto:jeremycope@willersley.plus.com). You will receive only Society news and nothing else.

*Sheila R. Cope*

## B.O.O.K R.E.V.I.E.W

*Unusually, in this edition we have included reviews for four books, all written by members.*

*Any of the three published books would all make an excellent Christmas gift. The fourth, will be kept in the societies archives and be available for loan to any of the members.*

*Yet another book 'The Forgotten Aviator', not reviewed, was the subject of one of the talks at our October meeting. If any member would like to purchase a copy, please contact the editor for details.*

### *Trawling the River of Time*

**Reviewed by Terry Sutton**

The days of high unemployment in Dover, in the 1920s-30's, when bootless young children lined up at a town centre soup kitchen, are recalled in a book donated to the archives of The Dover Society. The book, not on sale, is the work of Mrs Mary Morrison of St Mildred's Place, Canterbury who was born in Dover in 1927. Her birthplace was in Caroline Place, which she recalls was a "rather run-down area" close to the Market Square. (It's where the Stembrook car park is now).

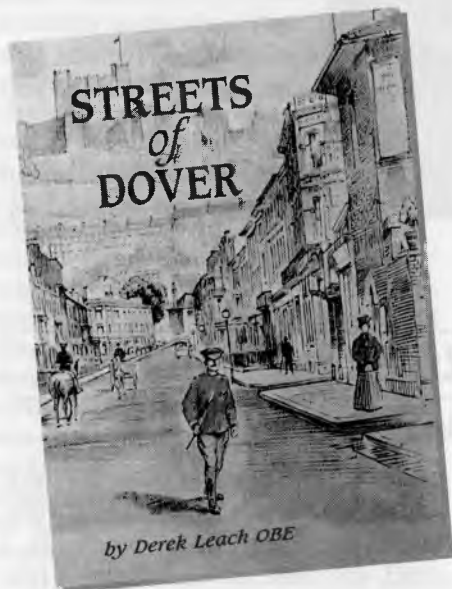
Mary decided to record her memoirs following the deaths of her dear brother Charlie (who features very much in the book) and her husband Richard.

Much of the book is of a personal family nature but the author vividly recalls her early years when, as a child, she lived in Market Street (the stub of the road still remains just off the Market Square). She remembers the social conditions of the time and her evacuation, in 1940, to Caerleon in South Wales with Dover County School (now grammar) for Girls while brother Charlie was sent to Ebbw Vale with the boys' school.

This most interesting publication, "Trawling the River of Time", is available to be read by any member of The Dover Society.

## Streets of Dover

Reviewed by Terry Sutton



I am always amazed at the energy of our chairman, Derek Leach. From his computer there rolls off what appears to be a never-ending series of books, and he still has time for his voluntary work as chairman of River Parish Council and keeping us in order as chairman of The Dover Society.

His latest book, *Streets of Dover* (£12.99), is a real joy for anyone who loves Dover. The 160-page publication, packed with 150 illustrations of which some are in colour, tells the history of our town from the Roman era right up to modern times with the long-awaited redevelopment of the St James' investment zone.

However, that is only the prelude to what, to me, is the most interesting feature of the book. Derek, after much research,

explains to readers in alphabetical order how hundreds of roads, streets and avenues in the town obtained their names. For me, who as a reporter had to know the geographical position of named Dover streets, the whereabouts and explanation of many new thoroughfares is extremely useful.

Scores of the named highways are no more, lost with the expansion of the town and especially the dock area. To read this book is like taking a tour through much of long-forgotten Dover.

For instance, I guess you didn't know where Barwick's Alley was. It was a 'notorious rookery' off the High Street where the former Salvation Army citadel now stands. It was condemned as unfit for human habitation in 1875 and demolished a few years later. That is just one of the many locations that have disappeared.

It is possible, if readers know their history, to work out when streets were brought into use by their names. Several of those in the Tower Hamlets area were named after Conservative politicians who were in power, or had just retired, during the construction of the houses.

Derek tells me that only 600 copies of this latest publication were printed so, if you haven't already obtained one, you had better hurry along to the bookshop, or buy a copy direct from Derek. The contents will give you hours of enjoyable reading.

\* *Streets of Dover*, and a free copy of Derek's book *Caring for Dover's Poor*, are available at W H Smith, British Bookshops, Dover Museum and Tyler's of Deal.



## *Haunted Dover*

Reviewed by Terry Sutton

Another member of The Dover Society who is also proving a busy author is Lorraine Sencicle whose latest book *Haunted Dover* (The History Press: £9.99) provides an interesting read. Lorraine has selected a score of ghost stories in and around Dover that over the years have grown and expanded until many people believe them to be true.

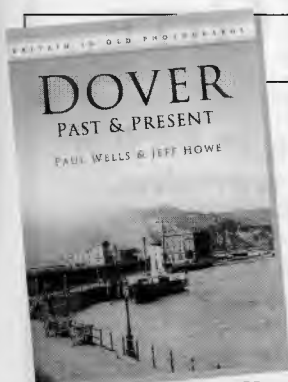
Her well-illustrated paperback includes the yarn that the ghost of Peter the drummer boy still haunts the Western Heights while, down at the cruise terminals at the western docks, passengers have seen the ghost of a soldier who sailed from Dover to die on the battlefields of Flanders.

A more traditional ghost story is about the

old woman in grey who still haunts the town council offices at Maison Dieu House, as told by Richard Barham in his *Ingoldsby Legends*.

Lorraine submits that Dover is inhabited by more ghosts than most towns, and about that, I would not be at all surprised. Don't read just before going to bed, unless you want a sleepless night!!

Available from all good bookshops and The History Press. Direct sales - telephone 01235 465577 or [www.thehistorypress.co.uk](http://www.thehistorypress.co.uk)



## *Dover Past and Present*

Reviewed by Alan Lee

This latest book on the rich and varied history of our town takes a slightly unusual direction. The authors Paul Wells and Jeff

Howe seek to compare the old with the new and the book is amply illustrated with over 150 images each accompanied by some informative text.

The nostalgic images of Dover past when compared to the modern views beg the question. Has the town improved for the better? I for one think that the answer is an emphatic no. Many different areas of the

town are covered and the comparison between the old and the new photographs is sometimes startling. The older photographs recall a time when the town was thriving and people enjoyed more simple pleasures. Dover at war, the Western Heights, the town, harbour, seafront, castle, cliffs and the garrison they are all here.

This will prove to be an excellent read and with the large number of differing views of the town, there should be something for everyone as well as another must for those with an interest in our local history.

Priced £12.99 the book is available from local retail outlets, Dover museum or Paul Wells, e-mail: [paulwells75@btinternet.com](mailto:paulwells75@btinternet.com) or tel: 07771 550730.

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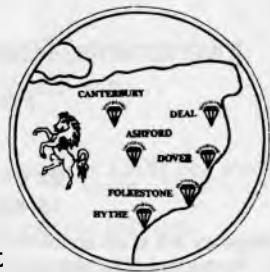
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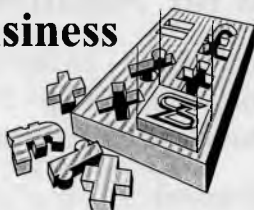
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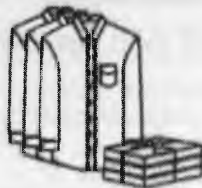
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Please make cheques payable to the Dover Society and forward the cheque or cash to the Membership Secretary, Mrs Sheila Cope, 53 Park Avenue, Dover CT16 1HD

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 .....

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# PROGRAMME 2009 - 2010

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

## 2009

DECEMBER 12

Saturday

7.00 for 7.30

£22.50

### **Christmas Feast**

This year we look forward to a hot carvery instead of a cold buffet following a request from a majority of members. Anyone requesting a vegetarian meal must let the Social Secretary know when returning the booking form. As usual the Christmas Feast will be in the Refectory at Dover College. Price includes a sherry reception, wine, soft drinks and entertainment by two of our own members, the renowned pianist Nicholas Harby accompanied by soprano Madeline Mee.

## 2010

JANUARY 18

Monday 7.30

**Speakers:** Steve Lang: "Dover Castle Renewed"

Christine Waterman: "Mr Rolls and Mr Royce;

Dover Connections"

FEBRUARY 15

Monday

7.00 for 7.30

£5.00

**Wine & Wisdom:** With Clive Taylor, a light-hearted quiz. Price to include refreshments and soft drinks. Free wine will be provided on each table. Prizes for first and second places.

MARCH 15

Monday 7.30

**Speakers:** Kirk Alexander/Melanie Wrigley: "White Cliffs

Countryside Update"

Peter Shaw: "Kent Greeters"

APRIL 19

Monday 7.30

### **Annual General Meeting**

**Speaker:** Mike Krayenbrink: "Dover Harbour Board and the Future"

MAY to

SEPTEMBER

**Summer Outings:** To be arranged

OCTOBER 18

Monday 7.30

**Speakers:** Wendi Atherton: "12th Century Life in the

Constables Tower"

Alistair Gould: "Renewable Energy at St Margaret's"

NOVEMBER 15

Monday 7.30

**Speaker:** Derek Leach: "Streets of Dover"

2nd Speaker or Brainstorming Session

*All indoor meetings are held at St Mary's Parish Centre*

*Please book as early as possible. Non-members are welcome on all Society outings.*

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