



The Festival of Dover

Maggi Waite: writing on behalf of the organising committee for
the first Festival of Dover — 18th – 31st May 1992

The idea of an Arts Festival was first conceived at a Dover Society meeting in 1989 when questions were asked about Dover and the Arts. A letter was sent from Kent Libraries to Donna Sowerby, Events Officer, Dover District Council, asking if there the possibility of a joint venture. A series of meetings was held and eventually both KCC and DDC agreed to go ahead with the festival in 1992; this was a gamble on the part of the steering group as it was not known, at a time so far in advance, whether funding would be available. The dates chosen were partly in term time to enable a series of educational events for schoolchildren to take place and partly during the Whitsun half-term when it would be more appropriate to feature street entertainment and 'fun' events.

The initial steering group included myself, Donna Sowerby and from Kent Arts and Libraries, Gavin Wright, Group Manager, and Peter Ryan, Events Officer. Members of the group liaised with local societies and artists and sought advice from many and various sources (in particular Philomena Kennedy and Michael Foad). It was intended wherever possible to involve existing groups and societies in the festival, although this was not always feasible. Dover Town Hall, Dover Library and St. Mary's Church were suitable venues and the search began for artists and performers to provide a balanced programme. Bearing in mind the previous experience of the two linked authorities, it seemed appropriate for Kent Arts & Libraries to put together the education and literature programme and for Dover District Council to concentrate on concerts and street entertainment.

This appeared to work really well. A meeting was called for all Dover schools wishing to participate; representatives from seventeen schools attended and others expressed interest. Schools were to receive generous discounts on writers' and artists' fees but, even taking this into account, they pledged large sums to emphasise their commitment to the festival. Events were organised either in schools or at the Town Hall or the Library. Brian Moses, poet and educationalist, agreed to become writer-in-residence and actors





Writer Nigel Hinton with children from Charlton Primary School



'WORDS ALIVE!'



'Words Alive!' were recruited to spend two and a half days performing poetry. The internationally famous author/illustrator Anthony Browne agreed to make one of his rare appearances and he was joined by Anthony Masters, Nigel Hinton, Robin Mellor, ESOS and Kent Music School. The highlight of the children's programme was to be two sessions with the poet and BBC broadcaster Michael Rosen. Kent Arts & Libraries mobile Art Gallery was pressed into service to take Colin the Clown to outlying schools to run puppet and craft sessions all through the first week.

Whilst the schools programme was being organised, Donna was arranging the street entertainment and a series of concerts involving Snowdown choir, the Peninsular Band of the Royal Greenjackets, the Joyfull Noyse and Dover Choral Society. Peter and Gavin worked with local artists to mount an art exhibition and workshops in the Town Hall, organised concerts in St. Mary's Church and events for the elderly in residential homes. They liaised with the Dover Society to put on a series of guided walks and organised the Kimbara Brothers' Jazz concert as part of the European Year of Music 'Heartstrings' project. I, meanwhile, was working on a dual language photographic exhibition about the history of cross-channel traffic, using material from Dover Library's local studies collection (this exhibition has since been taken to Calais), and organising children's holiday workshops and a long-awaited visit from writer P. D. James. Another opportunity presented itself when Martin Wright, the head of Dover College, approached me about the possibility of having the writer Ruth Elwin Harris as writer-in-residence at Dover



The interior of Kent County Council's mobile Arts Van, with work from Dover Schools



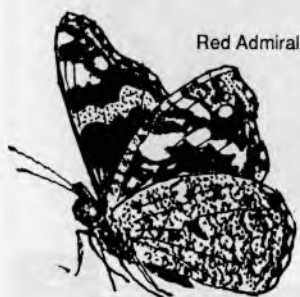
144 Our famous White Cliffs provide an excellent setting for observing a good number of butterflies and moths, including some uncommon ones. The vetches and trefoils which grow there are the food-plants of the caterpillars of the blues and one of the most spectacular members of this family is the Chalk Hill Blue. Essentially a chalk and limestone lover, which is found in restricted areas in the southern half of England, it is larger than the other blues and the male is a magnificent shining silver-blue. The female is brown with orange spots on the edges of the wings, a drab creature compared with the male; this arrangement is normal in butterflies if not in the human race! Look for this blue above the Eastern Arm from the middle of July until the beginning of September.

Two more unusual blues may also be seen in this area, the Adonis Blue and the Small Blue, both very localised insects whose haunts are presently diminishing. The Adonis, out in June and again in August, is a beautiful iridescent sky-blue whereas the Small Blue, which is about at roughly the same time, is black dusted with grey-blue. With a wing span of 18mm it is the smallest British butterfly and can easily be overlooked.

A fine member of the Brown family which can be seen on the cliffs and downs in July and August is the Marbled White (yes, it is a brown!). Quite a large butterfly, almost black in base colour with many white blotches, it is very local and has been on the decline.

In the summertime you will notice large, fast-flying moths careering back and forth across the cliffs and downs. These are male Oak Eggar and Fox moths, the former ginger and the latter fawn in colour, urgently seeking the females who give off a powerful scent. This is a good job, as the females only fly at night so the sexes would never get together! The food plants include bramble, hawthorn and ivy.

Amongst the smaller moths to be seen when walking across the cliffs and downs are the very noticeable Five-spot and Six-spot Burnets. Bright metallic greenish-black and scarlet in colour, the Five-spot is about in June and July and the Six-spot in July and August. They are quite lazy and prefer to sun themselves on the heads of knapweed to flying and will even crawl on your finger for inspection! Of course we are in a good position for migrants, both common and rare, which travel from as far as North Africa, via France. Common ones include the



Red Admiral

smart black, with red and white bars, Red Admiral (nothing nautical, once 'admirable') and the lovely rose-coloured Painted Lady. These large, strong fliers arrive

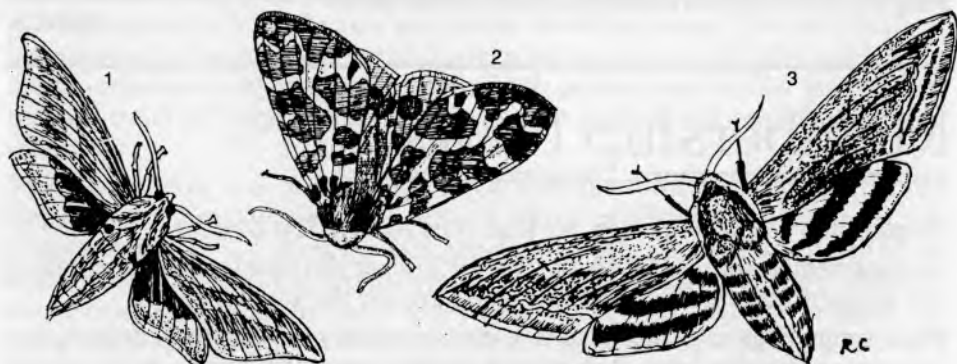


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in May and June, lay their eggs on nettles and thistles for a summer brood which you may see on your buddleia. Less common immigrants include the gamboge Clouded Yellow, which follows the schedule of the previous two insects but uses clover as a food plant. Amongst the scarce visitors are the Camberwell Beauty butterfly, a deep chestnut, black and cream bordered with blue spots, arriving from Germany or Scandinavia and the *Convolvulus* Hawk-moth, night-flying, grey, fawn and pink with a 12cm wing span. Both have been seen in my garden at Temple Ewell. The downs at Temple Ewell are the home of the rarest butterflies in the country, the small Silver-Spotted Skipper. If you are lucky you'll glimpse this little greenish yellow creature, with silver spots on its underside, as it darts from flowers to attack anything larger that comes near to it, during two weeks in the middle of August. The Skipper family are the Jack Russells of the butterfly world!

Lack of space precludes the description of many more insects which may be seen in or around Dover, the jewel-like vermillion Small Copper feeding on sorrel and dock, the beautifully fresh Orange-tip feeding on hedge garlic and the fascinating day-flying migrant Humming-bird Hawk-moth, which hovers with rapidly beating wings whilst it pushes its long proboscis into flowers. However, next time you are clearing any ground spare a thought for the common plants which are the life-blood of these harmless creatures which help to beautify the world. Of the butterflies, only the Large White and the Small White can be pests on your cabbages and a few moths may cause problems on your garden plants or shrubs. None are dangerous; and mothers who scream in the press that hairy caterpillars have given a rash to their angelic offspring and therefore should be exterminated, would do far better to clout said offspring and tell them to leave the caterpillars alone. Or is this asking *too* much?

Note: I would be interested in occasional meetings with like-minded folk to compare notes, *not* to start a society.



1 Elephant Hawk-moth 2 Garden Tiger Moth 3 Privet Hawk-moth

The illustrations by Roy Chambers were first published in *Oasis*, The Magazine of Conservation Gardening.