

13th Annual General Meeting

30th April 2001

In front of a large audience, Chairman Jeremy Cope welcomed President Maurice Atherton and three Vice Presidents to the thirteenth Annual General Meeting at St. Mary's Parish Hall.

The previous year's minutes having been approved as a correct record, members observed a short silence in memory of the six members, including committee member Budge Adams, who had died in the last year.

In his report the Chairman commented on a busy year for the society, whose membership now stood at 423, a rise of 16 over the year. He thanked all committee and sub committee members for their hard work. Budge Adams' obituary was in the April edition of the newsletter. Leo Wright was standing down as secretary, but would be remaining on the committee, with Bill Naylor taking over as secretary and minute taker. Barry Late, the projects co-ordinator had to stand down for the time being, due to commitments. Hugh Gordon was taking his place and Tessa George has agreed to serve on the committee.

The President was thanked for his role as the ultimate longstop and supplier of wise counsel. Thanks to the treasurer's caution and good sense, the society's funds were in surplus, giving security for future projects. The various committee members would report on publishing and the newsletter, historic plaques and current projects. Terry Sutton had ensured an excellent year's press coverage. The social secretary had devised a very successful series of outings and events, with the Town Mayor singing at the Christmas feast and samples of beer being made freely available at one talk. Help with teas, raffles and booking of speakers was greatly appreciated. The society relied entirely for success on its members without whom there would be no modest profits to further its work.

Relations with the Town and District

Councils, and the Dover Harbour Board remained good, even though the society was critical where necessary. The plan to commemorate the late Philomena Kennedy had been modified and discussions were taking place with the Girls' Grammar School who were enthusiastic about the offer of an art prize.

This would be his last report as chairman. He thanked his wife, Sheila, for her forbearance and was pleased to note that all committee places would be filled in the coming year.

The treasurer, Mike Weston, commented on the end of year accounts which had been made available to the meeting. The Millennium Project was now complete financially and a 'trail' leaflet had been printed. The deficit on the scheme shown in the previous annual report now showed as a surplus of over £500, with all grants received and only one plaque outstanding. One outing and a few winter meetings had operated at a loss but, overall, activities showed a profit, thanks to the hard work of Joan Liggett. Raffles had made £398, slightly up on the previous year, thanks to Sheila Cope and her helpers. The newsletter, costing £800 per issue, virtually outstripped income from subscriptions. More sponsors, like Pfizers who contributed half the cost of one edition, and more advertisers were needed. The society was very grateful to them all, and to Merrill Lilley and her husband Bruce, who worked hard to attract them. The society had made a donation as usual to the Crabble Mill Trust from the proceeds of the Wine and Wisdom evening and a further grant of £30 to the same cause. Two further flagstones for Pencester Gardens had been purchased this year, financed primarily from donations from members. Interest on society funds had been substantially increased following a switch to the Charity Aid Foundation.

Merrill Lilley, Editor, expressed her

grateful thanks to all contributors, advertisers and distributors involved with the newsletter. Two new advertisers and two new contributors had been found for the next edition but more were always needed. She reported that Jeremy and Sheila Cope had taken over the membership database and the labelling and distribution of newsletters following the death of Budge Adams. As to publications, the society's first venture had been "Dover's Hidden Fortress" (the Western Heights) in 1996. A millennium project, 'Dover Collected Memories of a Century', published in November 2000, was based largely on articles written by members for the newsletter. Ivan Green had kindly gifted all his own articles which have appeared in the newsletter, plus other writings, to the society, and these would be the basis of this year's publication. It would be about Dover's place in history, related to the monarchs between the years 1066 and 1688. She put on record the society's thanks to Ivan. Next year a memorial to Budge Adams was being planned. This would take the form of a book or CD, or both, based on his collected writings or slides. She finished by announcing that back copies of most newsletters were available for purchase, if required.

An update on the society's latest project - the clearance of part of Cowgate Cemetery, was given by Hugh Gordon. Two teams of helpers had commenced work on this long term project and results could already be seen by visiting the cemetery. Teams met on the second Thursday or third Saturday of each month from 9am to noon. Grass clearance would cease after May, when the teams would concentrate on removing surplus trees. New volunteers would be very welcome. His wife was investigating the availability of burial records for the cemetery with Dover District Council, which might make recording of headstones unnecessary.

The chairman of the Planning Committee, Jack Woolford, updated the meeting on the report he had presented the previous year. Amongst other things, he reported that the Buckland village project

was back to square one. It needed a costed and feasible plan if it was to progress. The application to have the Buckland Paper Mill building listed had been refused by English Heritage. Party politics persisted in the new District Council cabinet system. Dover Town Council remained the sole elected body dealing exclusively with Dover matters. He reported a greater uptake in conservation activity in London Road but the St James area had failed thus far to attract developers. The decriminalisation of parking had proved less disruptive in the town than expected. The society had made representations on a number of planning and licensing issues. The fate of the White Cliffs Experience was still unknown and the Harbour Board's 'Westport' proposals were still subject to reservations and the finalisation of the local plan. He finished by appealing for a replacement on the committee for the newly appointed projects officer.

Terry Sutton was able to report that the Millennium Plaques project was all but complete. The last of the ten plaques was awaiting a decision about redevelopment proposals for the corner of Bridge Street and London Road. Together with the leaflet about the plaques, the project had cost a little over £900. The Society had also initiated a scheme for cleaning the wall plaque on the Town Hall about the Zeebrugge raid and had also commissioned a new smaller plaque which had been unveiled on St. George's Day.

At this point, the President, to warm applause, made a presentation of a print of Shakespeare Cliff to Leo Wright, retiring secretary to the society. Now over 85 years of age, Leo had been secretary for the previous ten years, missing few meetings and working tirelessly for the society.

The Chairman then submitted a proposal from the committee that Jack Woolford be appointed a vice president of the society in view of his untiring work on its behalf. He had been its first chairman, serving until 1998 and was currently Chairman of the Planning Committee and responsible for booking speakers, as well as giving talks himself. His had been a most

6 consistent and deserving long term contribution. The proposal was duly passed with acclaim. In response, the new Vice President spoke of his keen sense of pleasure and pride in his service to the society.

The election of the committee passed without dissent, as follows

OFFICERS

Chairman &

Press Secretary

Vice Chairman

Treasurer

Secretary

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Membership Secretary

Editor

Social Secretary

Mr. Terry Sutton

Mr. Derek Leach

Mr. Mike Weston

Mr. William Naylor

Mrs. Sheila Cope

Mrs. Merril Lilley

Mrs. Joan Liggett

Chairman of the

Planning Committee

Projects Coordinator

Archivist

Also Mr. Jeremy Cope, Mrs. Lesley Gordon,

Mr. Mike McFamell, Mrs. Audrey Wood, Mr.

Leo Wright and Mrs. Tessa George (new

committee member).

There being no other formal business, the former chairman reminded members of the dates for work at Cowgate Cemetery and drew attention to a (paper) boat race, due to take place in Poucester Gardens in aid of the Carnival and a number of charities. He asked interested members to contact Mike McFarnell.

The meeting closed with members looking forward to a talk by Michael Hinton after

General Elections 200 Years Ago

• • • Report by Lesley Gordon • • •

FOLLOWING THE FORMALITIES of the AGM, members relaxed in anticipation of a talk by Dr. Michael Hinton, well known as former head of The Boys' Grammar School, as scholar and as vicar, active in the community on behalf of the Church for many years.

He drew on his researches for his Reading University Doctorate to conjure up for his audience general elections held in 1806 and 1807 and compare them with more recent manifestations of the electoral process.

In the early nineteenth century, before the Great Reform Bill of 1832, there were 651 MPs for the United Kingdom and the whole of Ireland. Now there are 659 including N. Ireland. Whereas today all constituencies return a single member and a good two thirds of the entire population is eligible to vote, in 1806 most constituencies returned two MPs. In the counties, only landowners had the vote, whereas in boroughs, the electorate varied from one to many thousands and bore no relationship to the actual population. Westminster had 12,000 voters, Old Sarum 1, none of whom were

women. Today, general elections usually hinge on 90 or so marginals, and a majority of votes does not necessarily guarantee the success of a party. Although the results in a large number of constituencies are a foregone conclusion, it is a matter of honour that major parties contest every seat. In the early 19th century, contested seats were rare - only a quarter of constituencies were put to the vote. Party candidates were also rare as candidates valued their freedom. Today, voting usually follows first a party, then a leader and only then, individual policies or candidates. Then the ruling considerations were first, bribery and threats, with persuasion a poor second.

The existing government in the early 19th century invariably won general elections, which were a lot less decorous and dull than today's. They could be rowdy and violent and evasions of the law were commonplace. Then, in 1806/7, as now, the House of Commons represented the state of the nation. Power in Parliament lay with the Crown, the aristocracy and county landowners. A quarter of the House was made up of peers or their relations and a third of