

DOVERS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

A report by Alan Sencicle on a talk by Lorraine Sencicle

Lorraine introduced this well illustrated talk with the announcement that there are around 88 known Dovers around the world. Then, she said that she had spent two very happy years living near Dover.... west of Leigh in Lancashire! From where she lived



Dover, west of Leigh, Lancashire

Dover was just a walk along a branch canal that connects the Leeds and Liverpool to the Bridgewater canal. Why the hamlet was called Dover is lost in the mists of time, but it is believed that the name may have come from our Dover, as the Lords of the nearby manor of Abram, had strong military connections with our town.

A connection with Dover, Tasmania, was provided by Huon Pine imported and used in the construction of Dover Harbour piers including the Prince of Wales Pier. The town's slogan is "*Dover ... Naturally Beautiful*," and the slides shown confirmed this.

Dover Farm School, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa was founded by an emigré from our Dover, Owen Johnson, at the beginning of the twentieth century. This is now a major education establishment that consistently gets high results compared to the other 905 farm schools in the province. Farm schools

were started in the days of Natal Province on land owned by sympathetic farmers with teachers paid by the Education Department. Thus, the standard of education the children received varied considerably, as did the facilities. In the 1980s the farm manager set about making the Dover Farm School one of the best in the State and hired Siphon 'Tiger' Ndlovu, from Soweto and an activist against apartheid, as headmaster. Together they set about creating the present very successful school whose pupils would welcome contact with schools in our town.

In Scandinavia there is Dovre in Oppland Norway, famous for its musk ox and Dover in Viborg on the Danish Jutland peninsula. Dover in Danish means a ravine, gap, gorge or a crevasse between cliffs. Therefore Lorraine wondered if the name of our town really came from the Danes rather than the Romans as is generally believed. Moving across Europe to Turkey a Dover may be found in Hatay Province in the central south of the country. Part of the film '*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*' was made there.



Young schoolchildren in Dover, South Africa



Douvres-la-Délivrande

For those interested in WWII, Douvres-la-Délivrande in Calvados France is situated close to Sword Beach where British troops were landed on June 6th 1944. Lorraine showed several photos of the Normandy landings taken from her father's collection.

She then announced that there are 56 Dovers in the USA!

Dover, Massachusetts is the wealthiest of these. Each home is set in an acre of land. Nonetheless in this town, 7.1% of citizens, over 65, are living below the poverty line!



Dover, Massachusetts

Internationally, the town is known for the *Dover Demon* - a being with a disproportionately large watermelon-shaped head, bright orange eyes, long thin arms and legs with slender fingers. First seen in the town but since has been seen throughout the American continent. The last reported sighting was in 2004 in Chile!

Dover, Morris County is one of two Dovers in New Jersey, visited by our own Mayor, Cllr. Jan Tranter, in September 2006 to re-dedicate the recently restored iron Dover Dogs. The origin of the town and its prosperity rested on its iron foundries and in 1869 their Mayor was seeking to gain town status for Dover. The New York Times took up the story which eventually found its way into one of our local papers. Our Mayor at



Dover, Morris County, New Jersey

the time, John Birmingham, organised a collection from which our town bought two white mastiff dogs which were presented to Mayor Richards. Unfortunately, time and vandals have taken their toll but the dogs have now been restored.

The Dover in Kentucky has a sad story. Once a thriving small community on the Ohio River, with schools, hospitals and the promise of employment from the Dupont Company, which had purchased land and started building a large factory, disaster struck when the town was destroyed by a



Dover, Kentucky

tornado (that destroyed the town) in 1968. Lorraine showed pictures of the town before the tornado, during, its immediate aftermath and now. The reduction in size was clearly visible and she said that these days even though there are homes, there are no schools and only a few jobs. The town is now classified as a 'bedroom community'.

Lorraine then told us about Dover, Pennsylvania, which has been the centre of a national debate in the US over the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution. The theory has to be taught in State schools and no other. In many areas Darwin's theory is rejected and the alternative theory of *Intelligent Design*, which has its roots in Creation Theory, is preferred. In Dover the schools followed the politically expedient course of telling the children that there was the Intelligent Design theory before teaching Darwin's theory. There were objections and a case was brought. In a report, published last year, it was decided that the teaching of intelligent design was against the US constitution.

The talk finished with the macabre story of Ronald Gene Simmons who lived in Dover, Arkansas, and in 1987 brutally

murdered sixteen people, many of whom were members of his family. Following conviction on 10th December 1989, sanctioned by State Governor Bill Clinton, Simmons was executed on 25th June 1990, the quickest sentence-to-execution time in the USA since the death penalty was reinstated in 1976.

I know that Lorraine has spent many hours undertaking the research for this project. This has included trying to find and then making contact with potential respondents living in the various Dovers. She has constantly found that the respondents are reluctant to furnish her with perceived negative information regarding their communities. This has meant hours of trawling through the Internet and also trying to get third parties to substantiate findings. Although Lorraine's talk was lavishly illustrated, getting the photographs has not been easy. Sometimes high fees have been demanded for relatively poor quality pictures. At other times, although they may have been free, either from the Internet or provided by respondents, they were not of sufficiently good quality. Additionally, although

meaningful to them, they told very little about the town in question as one US main street looks much like another! I have therefore resolved to take a series of quality photos of our town, harbour and castle that I will be forwarding to all respondents in due course.

Lorraine Sencicle has been writing articles on the different Dovers around the world, for over a year. Following publication in the Mercury these are now published on the Dover Society website.



Ronald Gene Simmons