

Post Script

This concludes the short series about the meaning of the Town Memorial - but it certainly is no conclusion to the meaning. The Memorial has different meanings for different people (breadth), and its meaning will continue to build and grow (depth). I hope it will do so for centuries after I am gone.

If you would like to find out more - or have more to tell us - about these ordinary people, those who did extraordinary things, who were loved and lost, and the families that mourned them, visit the Dover War Memorial Project website at www.doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk. It's updated daily with information about our casualties and much more besides, and there is a forum for discussion. Or telephone 07876 240 701. I would love to hear from you.

And finally - thank you to you, the Dover Society, for your kind hospitality. I have enjoyed very much writing this series and learnt much about our beautiful Memorial. I look forward to meeting as many as possible of you again, on my next visit to Dover.

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DOVER SEWERAGE

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AS THE NUMBER OF HOMES IN DOVER is set to expand, I thought that it would be expedient to look at the story of our sewerage system, and what I found was fascinating.

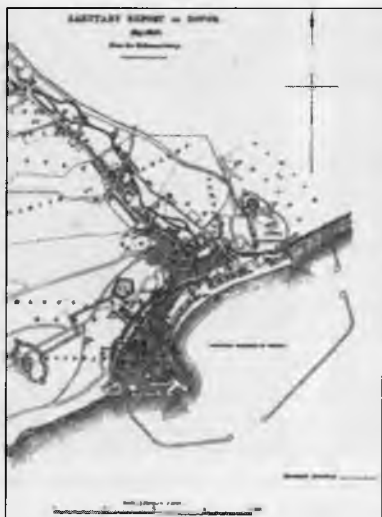
Up until the Middle Ages human waste was thrown onto unpaved streets where it was left to accumulate. However, by 1582 Dover Corporation's growing concern with the town's cleanliness resulted in Mother Edwards in 1588 given the task of cleaning the town's privy. Given the title of 'town scavenger' she was succeeded by Widow Gill in 1605 and the cleaner was paid 2s 8d (13p) for the privilege. Over the next couple of centuries the number of private and council paid scavengers increased but the cleaner of the town's privy was always a woman.

Towards the end of the 18th century the Government decided to tackle the unsanitary state of towns throughout the country, and introduced the notion of a Paving Commission. Each Commission was made up of forty 'outsiders', appointed by the Corporation to assess the state of the town and make recommendations.

Dover was, by this time, in a very bad way. The streets were narrow and crooked and although the number of scavengers had

increased, the effluent collected was thrown directly into the harbour or the Dour. Rain water ran in open ditches down the middle of the streets, which were also used to empty household sewage by those who could not afford it or refused to pay scavengers to come and collect it.

Following their investigation, the Paving Commission in 1778 recommended that, *"on every Thursday in every weeke the Inhabitants doe sweep and make cleane the streets before theire doors, and cast the dirt into an heape on paine of vid. Forfeiture for every offence. And that Mr Maior and the two Chamberlains do yearly agree with a scavenger or scavengers for to carry the same away"*. The expense was met by a tax of sixpence on every house, a shilling duty on every chaldron of coal and a toll payable at a turnpike on the London Road and an attempt was made to build a few sewers. Consequently, under the 1846 Public Health Act, Dover's sanitary conditions were again under scrutiny. Robert Rawlson led the inquiry and found that nothing had changed and expressed anger at the botched attempt at a cover up. He finished by warning that there would be *"no escape from the fatal consequences"*



Sanitary map of Dover, May 1849

The Rawlson inquiry found that most of the homes had, for toilets, an open tub under a privy seat, which was emptied during the night into the scavenger's cart. This was then emptied into the harbour. The privies of homes surrounding the harbour emptied directly into it and although there were a few isolated sewers they also ran directly into the harbour. Thus the gases from the harbour *'could be smelt throughout the town especially when the prevailing south-westerly wind blew'*!

Following the publication of the report the Corporation accepted that the construction of proper sewers was imperative. Over the next twenty years, £70,000 was spent and slowly most of the town was connected. The sewers built at this time are the basis, and for the most part, our sewerage system today.

The villages surrounding Dover had to make do with privies at the bottom of the garden, the contents of which were buried periodically until well into the twentieth century. Then cess pits became the norm with many homes today still not connected to main sewerage.



Bay and Foreshore, 1816

As for the town of Dover, the flow is predominantly by gravity towards Western Docks. Indeed, up until the 1990s all the outfall for Dover's sewers actually went directly into the sea near there. The first major modification to our sewerage system was in 1994 as a result of the new A20 being built. The original main outfall near Western Docks was replaced with a 1,500mm diameter concrete pipe. At about the same time a virtually automatic plant sewage treatment plant was built on Broomfield Bank, Farthingloe Valley. This was completed in 1999 at the same time as the pumping station in Elizabeth Street was upgraded to take the town's sewerage to Broomfield Park for treatment.

However, one of the major problems with our system, which still remains, is that it is *combined* - meaning that in heavy downpours raw sewerage could overflow into the streets. With the increased number of homes putting pressure on a system designed for a smaller population that bathed infrequently and did not have automatic washing machines, etc. it is only a matter of time until we have the one downpour which will see our streets running with raw sewerage... that is, of course, unless global warming puts the breaks on domestic/industrial use of water.