

# The Burlington Hotel

## Terry Sutton

In the near future, we all hope, a new hotel will spring up at the corner of Townwall Street and Woolcomber Street on the important site once dominated by the Burlington Hotel.

For years, after the 1939-45 war, weeds grew here where once wealthy visitors to the town looked over an attractive lawn to watch shipping steaming across Dover Bay.

The Burlington offered scores of bedrooms, dining halls and bars. There it stood for nearly 100 years, as a Dover landmark, until demolition following severe damage from bombs and shells in World War Two.

The Burlington, fronted by Clarence Lawn, had a chequered history with successive owners several times in financial difficulties.

It was here that once stood Clarence House, the residence of the wealthy Rice family, a member of which was an Admiral and a senior member of Dover Harbour Board representing the Admiralty.

The first hotel built on the site was The Clarence but that was not very successful and the owners changed the name to The Imperial. Again it was a financial failure and was closed from 1871 to 1897.

That's when Frederick Hotels stepped in, spent thousands of pounds on restoration and extensions before opening up as The Burlington. There were great expectations



*The Burlington Hotel*

in Dover when the huge structure opened with an inaugural luncheon on Saturday, July 24 in 1897.

The army in the garrison turned out for the occasion and luncheon guests were entertained by the bands of the Seaforth Highlanders and the East Surrey regiments. There was further entertainment by the "Glee Singers." For a while visiting gentry, who were not staying at the Lord Warden Hotel, spent their holidays at The Burlington but the number of clients began to fall off when the sea views were marred by the construction of Dover harbour 100 years or more ago.

At one stage the owners offered The Burlington for sale by erecting a huge "For Sale" notice on the façade of the building in the hope it would be seen by passengers arriving at Dover by ferry. This caused considerable controversy in civic quarters and the Dover Express complained it was lowering the tone of the town.

The hotel closed in the 1920s and was eventually converted into flats so that in early 1930s the building was known as Burlington Mansions.

By the time the Second World War arrived, much of the building had been turned into flats. People were still living there in 1940 when, as one resident told me, they looked out of their windows one day to see scores of ships arriving. It was the Dunkirk Evacuation.

But the days of the once proud Burlington were numbered. No doubt because of its size it was hit four times by bombs and at least a couple of times by shells fired from the French coast. One resident, Dover butcher Albert Decort, once told me of his bizarre experience during a raid. He was sitting on the toilet in his flat at The

Burlington when it was hit by a missile. The floor gave way and, he explained, he was left hanging for dear life on the pipe work of the lavatory cistern. After that he and the remaining tenants moved out but not before three people living there were killed. And so, at the end of the war, The Burlington remained a forlorn wreck with no one expecting it to be rebuilt and I watched as, over the weeks, demolition gang brought down what remained of the building and cleared the site.

Today, nearly 70 years after the empty hotel's demolition, the site is being prepared for a brand new budget-style hotel where the clientèle will no doubt be considerably different from the wealthy who once spent their holidays at The Burlington.

## Latest Dover Society Plaque Dr Reginald Koettlitz

— Alan Lee —

**A**t 10am on Monday 5th December 2016 a ceremony took place to mark the installation of the latest Dover Society blue plaque. This was in recognition of Dr

Reginald Koettlitz, a day boy at Dover College 1873-76, a Dover resident and arctic explorer. The plaque is installed at the old Gatehouse, Folkestone Road entrance to Dover College.



*left Gareth Doodles Head of Dover College with AA Gus Jones  
Old Gatehouse Dover College 5th Dec 2016*

Our Chairman Derek Leach, the Headmaster of Dover College Gareth Doodles and Gus Jones all gave short speeches before the plaque was unveiled. A bouquet of roses was presented to Ann Jones nee Koettlitz.

The Dover Society would like to thank John Hall for his work on installing the plaque in its present position for which he did not accept any payment. We are truly grateful.