

Monarchy

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The vital role played by Dover in one of the most important days in British history is recalled in a replaced wall stone at the entrance to Dover Harbour Board's new Marina Curve.

The inscribed stone tells that near that spot was where the 30-year-old Charles II stepped ashore in his kingdom in May 1660 after years of exile in the era when the nation was ruled by the two Cromwells during the Commonwealth.

Charles, whose father had his head chopped off on the orders of Oliver Cromwell's Parliament, had escaped abroad disguised as a labourer. Although virtually penniless Charles enjoyed himself as he and his small court lived in Cambrai, Mons, Liege and Spa.

With little to do, Charles spent much of his time in bath houses and brothels where he sought new mistresses.

Then came news that Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of the Commonwealth, had died

and that his son Richard had succeeded him. But Richard's popularity didn't last long and soon there were behind-the-scenes negotiations to restore the monarchy.

On liberal terms, an agreement was reached, and Charles II returned to England landing at Dover where he was welcomed ashore by national leaders, the mayor of Dover and Protestant clergy.

As king, he lived on through plagues, the great fire of London and unbridled debauchery among a string of mistresses, including the teenage actress Nell Gwynn, until his death, aged 54, in 1685.

* The Restoration of the Monarchy and Charles II landing was commemorated in 1960, the 300th anniversary, by the unveiling of the stone beneath a strongly-built canopy, by the then Lord Lieutenant of Kent. The canopy shelter has not been replaced, says Dover Harbour Board, because of its poor condition.



Clocktower Square and Marina Curve, now open