

Here are Some Memories of My Dover Childhood

Jean Cooper

My memories may not be 100% accurate, and are not in chronological order, but I have done my best.

Writing this, I was made to realise how privileged I was - because I think that a childhood such as mine no longer can happen in the modern 'civilized' world.

My Gran was born in Dover, and her son, my father, at No. 11 East Cliff.

I was born a couple of months before the war, so obviously, my memories are mostly of post-war Dover, but I can remember sleeping in the caves, in a bunk bed with a tartan rug over me.

I do not remember the trams, but I did get my first bike stuck in the tracks, twisting



Jean Cooper's Mum East Cliff 1942

the front wheel. I remember the coal truck trundling up and down the cliff at the bottom of East Cliff, carrying coal up to the Castle.

There were stories of Gran meeting a German Paratrooper up the cliff path, she did not report it to the authorities - because she said, 'Even though he had a German accent, you could tell he was a gentleman.' That was the Gran that would send me all the way up to the Co-op for a box of matches - the Co-op Divi was a big thing.

The beach played a major part of our lives. Boats were kept on the beach, and my dad had a rowing boat and nine lobster pots. The smell of nets being mended in the kitchen before the season started drove my mother mad. The lobsters, crabs and prawns were sold to the White Cliffs Hotel (large prawns made 3d. each). Some Saturday nights many who lived in the street went prawning off the Castle jetty. I was spoilt, being an only child. My dad had made me a small net and a short pole, and I had a canvas satchel to put my catch in. We gathered limpets and put them on a skewer for bait. I once caught a very large lobster in my small net, and my dad had to help me lift it in.

I remember hanging upside down on the seafront railings, why I do not know. There were excursions up to the two sets of swings at the Bleriot Monument, where the boys did their utmost to take the swings over the top.

We played Tin Can Copper up Athol Terrace.

Around the country this street game is known by various names with differing rules, including Runouts, Kick the Can, Blocky 123, Rally Ho, Tin Can Tolly and Three Stones. Editor

The bus shelter is still there - just. Some of us children would run round and round it in the evening so the courting couples would very often give us pennies to go away.



Athol Terrace, Dover

We could walk along the sea's edge dragging holey enamel buckets just where the beach and sea meet - catching sprats. My dad would roll them in flour and fry them.

Neap tides were very exciting - and muddy. Nothing valuable was ever found and there was trouble from grown-ups when you went home smothered in smelly, sticky mud - but wonderful.

Excitement was also provided on hot days by lining up jelly fish and seeing whose melted first. Sometimes there were Portuguese Man-Of-War further out and Starfish.

The only downside I can remember was the torment of my hand-knitted Fair Isle swimming costume that steamed in the sun after a swim and accumulated what felt like a ton of pebbles in the crotch when coming out of the water.

Dover Wombles

Deborah Gasking

Look out for the strip of 'garden' alongside the entire length of Morrisons supermarket.

From this Spring and hopefully well into Autumn, it should become a wonderful mass of colour and texture.

All that is required now is a little maintenance - pruning, pulling out self-seeded Buddleia which the bees certainly love, but it would take over the entire site. As it is, pollinating insects, including bees, are becoming plentiful; the whole becoming a scrumptious buzzing green corridor.

With Transition Dover, we planted thousands of bulbs in the planters in Cannon Street and Biggin Street from the Market Square through to the Town Hall. We also filled the planters in Dour Street and the boat that resides on the lawn at the back of The Duchess pub, facing York Street.

Litter picking continues along Shakespeare Beach after a couple of months during which we were planting the bulbs. Sadly, we recovered a huge amount of fishing line; in itself fatal for marine life, but with the hooks still attached it could lead to injury and disease from possible tetanus.