

Dover Plays Host to Distinguished Visitors with a Connection to the Town

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When the barque 'Katherine Stewart Forbes' sailed from London in July 1837 en route to South Australia among the two hundred or so passengers on board was a man from Dover together with his wife and some nine children. His name was Richard Hamilton, formerly a tailor who lived and worked at 119 Snargate Street, and the eldest son of a man of the same name who was a Freeman of Dover. It took some three months to reach Holdfast Bay South Australia and Richard Hamilton's subsequent history and that of the generations who followed him was recorded in Dover Society Newsletter No 98 of July 2020 and No 99 of November 2020. Dover's legacy to South Australia was the founding and subsequent development of a prominent winery family owned and run.

On Friday 26th May 2023 the great, great, grandson of the 1837 emigrant, also named Richard Hamilton, paid a visit to Dover with his wife Jette (pronounced Yetta) to



Richard and Jette Hamilton in Dover Market Square

visit some of the places associated with his ancestor who had lived and worked in Dover. The current Richard Hamilton is not only an owner of Richard Hamilton Wines and Leconfield wines but is also a plastic surgeon in Adelaide. My wife, Mary, and I had the privilege of meeting up with Richard and his wife to spend the day with this delightful couple taking them to various sites in Dover associated, in one form or the other, with the Hamilton family. The obvious place to start was Snargate Street where Richard and Jette were able to see the present site of 119 Snargate Street and the current building of which 119 forms part. (As with other areas of Dover previous buildings had been destroyed and the sites redeveloped. Enemy bombing and shelling resulted in Dover being referred to as "Hellfire Corner" in WWII.) Through the courtesy of Philip Smye-Rumsby our visitors were given a guided tour of the business premises occupied by the Smye-Rumsby business which is in a former Roman Catholic church which went by the name of Our Lady and St Martin. Richard Hamilton and his wife were then taken to a unique structure his ancestor would have known well and may even have used - The Grand Shaft - specially opened for them by Phil Eyden. The visitors were able to stand at the bottom of this triple staircase and look up to the top of the structure.

Following Snargate Street the party moved on to the ruin of Old St James's church adjacent to The White Horse and inspected this tidy ruin before making its way to the Market Square and a visit to the Dover Museum. Of interest here to our visitors was the Bronze Age boat gallery and the

images and detail of Dover in and during World War Two. A visit to the church of St Mary the Virgin in Cannon Street was on the list of requested sites and this was easily achieved en route back to Castle Street. The church had a long association with the local Town (Borough) Council in times past. The Church is a very important site in the Hamilton history as it is believed that Richard and Anne Hamilton were married, and their children baptised there in the C19th. The visit included a meeting with the current Interim Town Rector of Dover based at St Mary's church the Reverend Catherine Tucker. Prior to a break for lunch and refreshments the Hamiltons enjoyed meeting Mike McFarnell, Honorary Freeman of the Town, who interviewed them on The Curve at the seafront for the next Dover Film. This was slightly hampered by somewhat windy conditions but, with luck, an element of their visit will be included in the 2023 version of the film which will be seen in 2024.

Lunch was taken, courtesy of Jim Gleeson, at Cullins Yard where the visitors were quite interested in the restaurant with its numerous collected items on display whether on the walls or hanging from the roof. They also had the pleasure of talking with Jim who has relations in Australia.

Those familiar with the history of the development of the vineyards and the wineries in the story of the emigrant Richard Hamilton will be aware that one area utilised for these purposes was called Ewell and his great, great, grandson expressed a wish to visit Temple Ewell and, possibly, to see the source of the River Dour. The name Ewell was very important to the family because a vineyard and winery was named after it although it was not certain why that occurred. As Richard Hamilton in the C19 was in business and

lived in Dover the inference was that the name Ewell of the winery derived from Temple Ewell the village outside Dover on the road to Canterbury. This recent request necessitated a visit to the village and a walk up the main street to the church of St Peter and St Paul followed by a journey further along the Canterbury Road to Watersend and meeting up with residents to be shown a large pond deemed the source of the Dour (although another train of thought suggests the source is along the Alkham Valley). Thanks are expressed to the licensee of The Fox pub in Temple Ewell for permission to use the pub carpark as a place to park during these visits. Thanks, therefore, to Steve Grayson and his wife Alyson.

Sadly, because of the fact it is currently a massive refurbishment site/exercise, the Hamiltons were unable to visit the Maison Dieu, surrounded as it is by scaffolding, but they did view it from Priory Road as they did with St Edmund's Chapel. A compensation for this disappointment was a visit to the church of St Mary in Castro where the visitors signed the visitors' book. How could they have visited Dover without a visit to its internationally renowned castle? This was the completion of a very busy day with a packed agenda and as they were due to be driven back to London in the early evening their visit to areas of Dover concluded at the Dover Marina Hotel where they had stayed the previous evening.

This was clearly an emotional or sentimental visit to sites associated, in some way or the other, to the Hamilton name in Australia and the product of its wineries. Dover's legacy to South Australia was its burgeoning wine industry initiated by Richard Hamilton in C19. It is good to know the current Hamiltons are members of The Dover Society. Long may the connection continue!