

November 2009 Update

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Robin Green writes:

At the heart of the international financial crisis that has dominated so much of our national news for most of the last year, a national report was issued about the impact of that crisis on the nation's town centres. As major national shops went into administration and much smaller ones collapsed, concern grew about the state of the nation's high streets. Many of us were aware how even a small town like Deal could witness a rapid escalation of empty shops and closing businesses.

One of the key points that the report made was that the social and economic vitality of our town centres is bound up with the care that local authorities and local people take of the overall environment of those town centres. I thought a lot about this when I was presenting the Deal Society trophy at the Walmer in Bloom awards. The Britain in Bloom movement enhances communities all over Britain and certainly Walmer has been enhanced this year by the efforts of so many local citizens.

In contrast the planters and flower beds in the Deal pedestrian precinct and on the seafront have looked tired and neglected, just like some empty shops. The Deal Society has taken up this issue with the Deal Town Council and enquired how such a miserable situation has arisen. The budgets exist. Committee debates have taken place. Why has there been no action? Could the Town Council ensure that Deal blooms again? Perhaps Deal in Bloom can be revived in 2010.

Many of the same issues also apply to the town's bus station. The whole complex is sub-standard and is in desperate need of updating. We have taken up this issue with Dover District Council and understand that there is a long term regeneration project planned for the South Street area. Deal welcomes the stranger. That is our motto. An increasing number of visitors to the town use public transport and the bus station will be their first glimpse of the town. It is not exactly a beautiful welcome! Long term regeneration projects are welcome but some urgent improvement is needed now. We will continue to press for that.

I have written below about the invitation to the Society to take part in the design of the new flood defences. Hopefully, through consultation with the people of Deal, that can be an asset to the town. It is another critical link in the overall environment that contributes to the social and economic prosperity of this town. Without some form of new sea defence that prosperity could be damaged for decades.

Flower planters, bus stations, drains and flood defences may not seem like very glamorous topics for your Chairman to be writing about! But it is my conviction that these are the things that the Deal Society needs to bother about. It is because we care about the long term overall vitality of Deal and Walmer that we bother about them. We also care about the future economic prosperity of our town and that means embracing visitors. That is why we must work with the local authorities to achieve those goals.

SOCIETY BUSINESS

New members

Since the July News Update went to print, Audrey Skinner, Robert and Beata Brooks, Julie Softley-Latini, Jo Thompson, Martin and Eve Clark, Geoffrey and Carol Stickler, Kevin and Sally Carroll and Sylvia Dick have joined the Society – welcome to you all.

Annual subscription for 2010

A reminder that the 2010 subscription becomes due on 1 January is enclosed. To avoid unnecessary programming in my database, the reminder indicates those who should heed it and those who should ignore it. I very much hope that you will renew your membership - we need you.

Report from the Membership Secretary

I am Walking Wounded of Walmer, having fractured a collar bone, so things are taking longer than usual (ie paying in your cheques to NatWest).

Once again, I ask you to lighten my workload. Please:

- do not post-date cheques that you send me - I have to keep them aside and then remember to pay them in;
- do not to use staples or sellotape on anything that you send me - opening all your envelopes and processing the contents is enough work, without having to grapple with sticky stuff and metal;
- so long as cheques continue to exist, do not send me cash - all requests for payment ask specifically for a cheque made payable to the Deal Society.

Next mailing

In February 2010 you will receive a notice and agenda for the AGM to be held on Tuesday 6 April, together with a

detailed prospectus for the 2010 social programme.

The Deal Society Planning Policy

Robin Green writes:

The release of the Local Development Framework documents by the District Council means that the Deal Society must also update its planning policy. There has been no serious review of the Society's policy since 1998, although adjustments and changes have been made in the succeeding years. The Executive Committee has taken time in 2009 to carry out that review, and set out below is the policy document that it has now formally adopted. In the document the abbreviations are as follows: DDC Dover District Council, DTC Deal Town Council, WPC Walmer Parish Council. The Committee always welcomes feedback from members, especially as a policy of this kind shapes our responses to so many planning and development issues.

- 1 To ensure that the Society's planning policy is determined by the Society's constitutional aims.

- 2 To work with the DDC, DTC and WPC Planning Committees and to build constructive relationships with the three authorities.

- 3 To respond to planning policy within the Local Development Framework (2010-2026) and relevant regional and national planning policies.

- 4 To monitor all planning applications submitted to the planning authority within the DTC and WPC areas. If applicable a comment will be submitted to the planning authority. The same applies to enforcement notices issued by the planning authority.

- 5 To monitor, and keep under review, any major developments affecting the whole community. Potential development sites within the DTC and WPC areas will be monitored with regard to their future use.

- 6 To advocate that public buildings within the DTC and WPC areas, designed for recreation, cultural and leisure purposes, continue to be used for the good of the whole community.

- 7 To co-operate with other civic societies and voluntary bodies concerned with planning, conservation and development, wherever possible.

- 8 To monitor that all conservation areas are protected, cared for and managed.

- 9 To advocate, if possible with the Dover and Sandwich Societies, the establishment by DDC of a Conservation Areas Advisory Group.

- 10 To press for DDC to establish a monitoring group for the North and Middle Deal development study/action plan.

- 11 To support eco-friendly development initiatives and the conservation of the natural and built environment.

- 12 To monitor coastal management and flood risk policies so that those policies take into account the potential impact on existing and new buildings.

- 13 To press for a major review of the town's drainage systems and to monitor that the creation of an adequate infrastructure is included in new developments.

Deal's Flood Defences

Robin Green writes:

Many members will be aware that the Environment Agency has been drawing up new plans for flood defences, especially in the area that runs from the Royal Hotel to Deal Castle. A new wave wall is proposed along that stretch of our coast. I am very pleased to tell you that the Society has been invited to take part in the Design Group that will contribute ideas and community concerns for that project. The group will begin its work in November 2009 and there will be two public forums in the town about the proposed design in 2010. With the anticipated rises in sea levels through global warming, this is a critical piece of work for the town. We will keep you informed about its progress and about the dates of the public forums.

TALKS PROGRAMME REVIEW

"Butler to Royalty", 3 November

Sue Borley writes:

Before David Bridgen introduced us to the first speaker for the Winter Season, Robin announced that Ant had unfortunately broken a collar bone the previous day and therefore could not attend the talk. So, without the help of the sound equipment which Ant drives, Christopher Dovey proceeded to give a clear and most fascinating insight into the life of those close to members of the Royal Household.

Christopher's time in service started when he decided to become a butler at the age of 23, applying directly to Buckingham Palace. A further interview at Windsor Castle followed, with the Comptroller of the Royal Household being more interested in Christopher's ability to play golf! Three weeks later a position of first footman to Princess Marina and a young Prince Michael at Kensington Palace was offered. This post did not last for long as the Princess sadly died six months later at the age of 61. Christopher recalled how beautiful she looked, laid out surrounded by flowers and candles at the funeral at Windsor Castle.

Shortly afterwards, the position of butler to Princess Alexandra and Angus Ogilvy was offered at Thatch House Lodge in Richmond Park. Starting at 7am, Christopher's day was long and varied: Mr Ogilvy's bath to run, the breakfast tray to make up and deliver, a choice of clothes to lay out and the day's social arrangements to consider. Other household duties would include cleaning shoes and boots the hard way, with a piece of bone on the heels and toes to produce a brilliant shine. There were frequent dinner parties, before which it would take all afternoon to prepare the dinner table. Christopher noted at one time more than a thousand items were used at dinner.

It was clear that Christopher enjoyed this way of life immensely in spite of his 100 hour day and restricted social life. He recalled how no two days were the same, especially if travelling abroad with the Royal couple. Between 110 and 150 pieces of royal luggage would accompany most visits with everything being packed in tissue paper and gowns hanging in large wooden trunks in the order of each day's requirements for social events. Christopher even had his own servant in Thailand!

At the end of the talk we were shown a picture of his maternal grandmother as a parlour maid, also a beautiful photograph of Princess Alexandra taken by Cecil Beaton and a signed letter from Her Majesty the Queen thanking him for a present from the staff. In conclusion, he intimated that today's butlers do not receive the full professional training which he had, and that the days of 6 foot tall footmen in livery, powdered wigs and calf paddings for those with sparrow legs, were now over. In thanking Christopher, Una wondered if she could have his assistance in packing for her next foreign trip.

SOCIAL PROGRAMME REVIEWS

St Margaret's Bay, 19 September

Christine Hall writes:

On a beautiful sunny morning we made the short coach journey to the Pines Garden in St. Margaret's Bay for what proved to be a most enjoyable and interesting visit.

We began with coffee and biscuits in the Pines Calyx while Nick, the events manager, spoke about the building - its construction and the ideals behind it. The idea of building a sustainable events and conference centre was born in 2001. The project began in 2005 and took 2 years to complete, costing £1 million. Since it opened 2 years ago the Calyx has become the area's most famous building, winning national awards for its unique ultra-low carbon design, which cleverly uses both traditional techniques and state-of-the-art technologies. The social entrepreneur behind the project is Alistair Gould who wanted the building to be a place which inspired people to take positive steps towards reducing the impact we all make on the earth's resources. The building, set deep into the ground to keep in warmth, with its compressed chalk walls quarried from the site itself, its reclaimed wood and other materials, natural air-conditioning from an underground earth tube and grass roof is also very beautiful and wonderfully light inside, as we discovered when Nick showed us around.

After our tour of the building we wandered in the beautiful, organically run, 6-acre garden. The garden was created by the late Fred Cleary, a great environmental and conservation champion who founded the St. Margaret's Bay Trust. The kitchen garden and the reed bed filtering the waste water from the Calyx were particularly interesting, as was the prone facade of a London house used as flower beds!

Following our exploration of the garden we enjoyed a delicious lunch at the Coastguard Pub and a stroll on the seafront before returning to Deal in the early afternoon. The visit proved that we really do not have to travel miles from home to have a great day out!

Houses of Parliament, 13 October

Deryck Murray writes:

We left South Street promptly at 8.00 am, checked in by Ant, after which Pat Russell, who had researched the visit, took over and looked after us. The coach was comfortable (with plenty of space as Gillies provided a 51-seater instead of the 33-seater which had been booked) and the driver excellent.

Arriving at the bus stop close to the Victoria Tower, we made our way to the Jubilee Café for very welcome coffee and biscuits. We then entered Westminster Hall where we were split into two groups. The guide for our group was both informative and entertaining. The tour lasted about two hours. We are all familiar with the interior of the Houses through watching television, but what struck me most was how small the two chambers are. After the tour, we split up into smaller groups for lunch at various places. Some of us went to the National Gallery, to the Victoria and Albert Museum or just to the shops.

We left Westminster at 5.00 pm for the drive back to Deal, after a very pleasant day-trip to the capital – thanks to Pat and Ant.

Howard Binsted has kindly contributed this postscript:

What a memorable and pleasurable day our visit to the Palace of Westminster was - memorable because of the things we saw and pleasurable because of the way the whole trip was organised. Upon arrival we were ushered through the security system and issued with our badges before being introduced to our guide, a very knowledgeable man with a pithy sense of humour especially as we had turned up just as the row about MP's expenses was about to explode all over again after the Summer recess.

We went first to Westminster Hall, the oldest remaining part of the Palace where so many historic events - and many trials - have taken place. It was amazing to walk into the very room and to see the wonderful hammer-beam roof that is at least 600 years old, although the Palace itself is 300 years older still. From the Hall we walked through to the enrobing room where the Sovereign is dressed in full regalia for the State Opening of Parliament. This was a richly decorated room. In turn, we were able to visit both the Lords and the Commons. Whilst the latter, where it could be said it all happens, was surprisingly plain, it was quite extraordinary to walk through and see the area where the great debates down the years have taken place. The Lords is a most remarkable Chamber, richly decorated, and the Pugin throne is something to behold: there is so much gold leaf, it is almost dazzling and quite as beautiful as one had been led to believe.