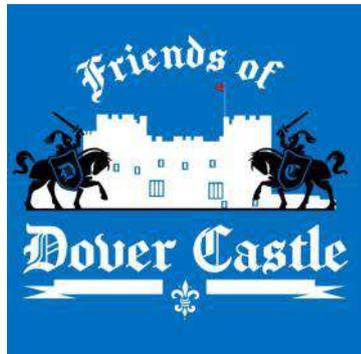


FRIENDS OF
Dover Castle



March
2026

Spring Edition

As this is our first edition of the New Year we start by wishing all our members and their families a very Happy and Prosperous 2026.

In this Edition, we aim to bring you updates on current projects, news about exciting new projects we are proposing and tours and events for the forthcoming year. 2026 is a significant year for us being the 40th Anniversary since we were formed (although not fully constituted until November 1987). In this edition we look at some important Friends events during these 40 years. We will also list a few anniversaries of globally important events.

For younger readers, do you know back in 1986 we did not have the Internet although it was in development with the first public domain company registered as symbolics.com in March 1985. The world wide web did not happen until 1989 which is when www came in to use.

The Winter Olympics are being held in February 2026 in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo (Italy) and the football World Cup is being hosted in the United States of America, Canada and Mexico - this takes place in June & July. It is 60 years since England won the World Cup in 1966. What do you remember of that tournament.

REMEMBER - this Newsletter is your publication, so please send me stories and pictures for inclusion in subsequent editions. Email me at chairman@dover-castle-friends.org or grahamhutchison1@hotmail.com

To all our Members, current, past and future.

To all our readers, contributors, stakeholders, donors

To all staff and volunteers at Dover Castle and English Heritage

Best wishes for a successful 2026

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026



Committee Festive Do



The Committee decided to combine the December meeting with Festivities where Committee Member partners were invited along with special guest Nicky, the Curator of the PWRR&QR Museum - our neighbours in the Keep Yard and with whom we hope to collaborate more going forward. Committee members Brian and Chef Mark provided a hearty spread which would have graced royal tables in times gone by.



Other members provided other bites such as cakes and drinks and it was a whole team effort which was a well deserved end of year celebration for another successful year of the Friends. Chairman Graham updated the team on recent developments and aims for exciting projects for 2026 noting that this year will be our 40th Anniversary. The spread and social occasion was well worth the £5 a head we agreed on, so that we did not incur any inappropriate expense on our charity.

Our Trustees and Committee are looking forward to this coming year and working hard to give you, the members, a memorable year.

Bring a Knight To Dover Castle

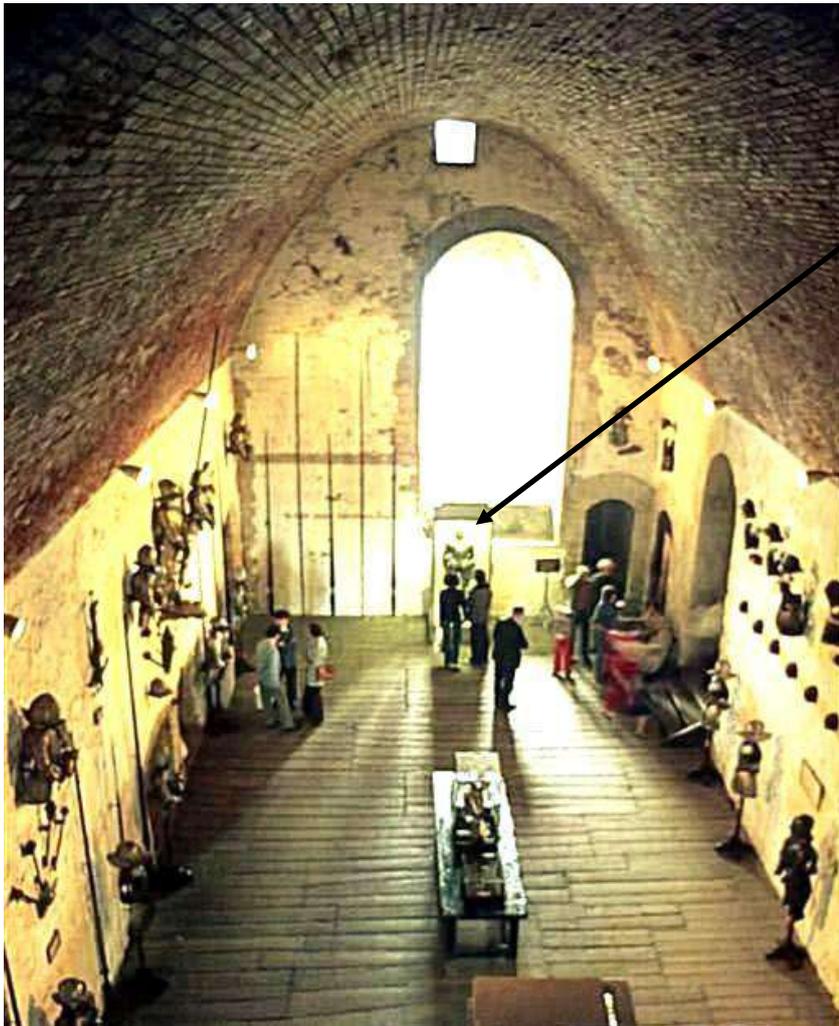


An exciting Project we have agreed is to adorn our office with a Knight which we will use to encourage more people to join as members. When I was young I always remember there being suits of armour on show - see the images below for the displays there used to be in one of the rooms in the Great Tower.

The Armour and weaponry was all moved for safe keeping and conservation to the Royal Armoury in Leeds and as the historic items need special climatically controlled conditions, it is unlikely for us to be able to borrow original Dover Castle items to display in our offices, However, the Committee have sanctioned acquiring one from alternative sources as part of a wider project aimed at increasing interest in becoming Friends and further promoting Dover Castle.

The Project will be fully announced in the New Year but will include a competition to Name our Knight, Storytelling competition to begin the Adventures of the Knight. As it is our 40 th Anniversary we will be looking at Friends Through the Ages, from the Castle's time as an Iron Age Fort, right up until current times.

The Project will be Fun, Participative, Educational, Informative and fully meet our charitable aims and be for public benefit.



Who remembers seeing these displays back in the day !

Some important anniversaries this year

- 960 **Norman Conquest** - Battle of Hastings and William the Conqueror
- 810 **Siege of Dover Castle**
- 800 Death of **Saint Francis of Assisi** - October 1226
- 360 **Great Fire of London** 2—7 September 1666
- 300 Publication of **Gulliver's Travels** by Jonathan Swift 1726
- 280 **Battle of Culloden** 16 April 1746 - last significant pitched battle on UK soil. End of Jacobite uprising.
- 270 Start of **7 Years War** - 1756 - 1763 (Great Britain and Prussia v France, Austria etc)
- 250 Declaration of Independence on **July 4th** 1776 - **United States of America**
- 250 **Bolshoi Ballet** formed in Moscow 28 March 1776
- 200 **Menai Straits Bridge** - 1st modern suspension bridge - Thomas Telford
- 200 Death of **Thomas Jefferson** - July 4th 1826. Founding Father and 3rd US President
- 190 **Dover Museum** founded in 1836 by Town Mayor Edwards Pett Thompson
- 160 Birth of **Beatrix Potter** 28 July 1666
- 150 1st telephone call - **Alexander Graham Bell** - **10th March 1876**
- 130 Modern **Olympic Games** Athens Greece Summer 1896 14 Nations, 241 athletes, 43 events.
- 125 Death of **Queen Victoria** - 22nd January 1901
- 125 Birth of **Walt Disney** - January 1901
- 110 **Battle of the Somme** 1916 -1st July to 18 November. Bloodiest battle - 1m casualties
- 100 1st **English Channel** swim by a woman - **Gertrude Ederle** (Capt. Matthew Webb was first man in 1875)
- 100 Birth of **Marilyn Monroe** - June 1926
- 100 Birth of **Queen Elizabeth II** - April 1926
- 100 1st **2-way transatlantic telephone call** - London (GPO) - New York (Bell) 6 March 1926
- 100 Publication of **Winnie the Pooh** - A A Milne
- 100 Death of **Harry Houdini** (1874—1926) he could not escape this
- 100 First Liquid **Rocket Launch** - 16 March 1926 by Robert Goddard (important for space travel)
- 100 Birth of **David Attenborough** - 8th May 1926
- 100 **General Strike** in UK May 1926
- 100 **Yuri Gagarin** 12 April 1961 First Human in Space
- 60 Death of **Walt Disney** - December 1966
- 60 England winning the **World Cup** - Wembley Stadium 30th July 1966
- 50 1st commercial **supersonic** flight - **Concord** to Bahrain - January 1976
- 50 Death of **Agatha Christie**. - 12 January 1976
- 50 Founding of **Apple** - Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne on 1st April 1976 (Microsoft started in 1975)
- 40 **Chernobyl** - Nuclear Power Plant Explosion. World's worst nuclear disaster 26 April 1986
- 40 **Friends of Dover Castle** formed July 1986 (Charity Constituted November 1987)
- 35 Dissolution of **Soviet Union** - 26 December 1991 - brought about by reforms by Mikhail Gorbachev
- 25 **9/11 Terrorist Attacks** on Twin Towers New York 11th September 2001
- 25 **Harry Potter** and the Philosopher's Stone Film released - November 2001
- 10 **BREXIT** - United Kingdom votes to leave European Union 23 June 2016



Charity No. 298203

Celebrating 40 years The Friends of Dover Castle 1986 - 2026

Special Projects 2026 - 2027

This year we have decided to run some special projects in order to celebrate that we have now been in existence for some Forty Years.



Knights have always been important to Dover Castle and there used to be examples of suits of armour on display. One project will have a Knight theme.

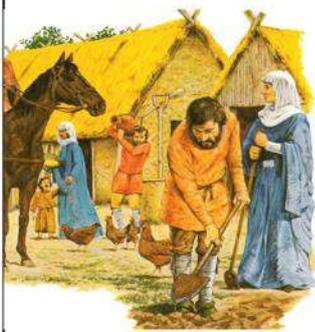
We wish to bring a suited Knight back to the Castle which we will look after in our office accommodation in the Keep Yard and have on display during our open days.

Knight of Dover Castle

1. **Summon a Knight to Dover Castle:** We will acquire a full suit of armour for a Knight.
2. **Name the Knight:** We will run a competition to name our Knight.
3. **Adventures of the Knight:** Storytelling competition - continuing saga of the Friends' Knight.

Friends through the Ages

Dover Castle is on the site of an Iron Age Hill Fort and so has been a home to local people for well over 2000 years. Another project we are initiating as part of our Anniversary Celebrations will be to tell the story of friends of Dover Castle from the Iron Age beginnings, through Roman



times, Saxons, Normans and Medieval Britain, into Tudors and Stuart Eras right up to modern days as a garrison during the Wars, right up to current status as a major tourist attraction.



Hall Of Fame We are going to create a Virtual Hall of Fame for Dover Castle. Who should we Induct into our Hall of Fame? Members will be able to vote on who deserves to be inducted.

CLARIFICATION. Please be minded that these are Friends of Dover Castle projects and not English Heritage. Any issues should be addressed to the Friends and not the Castle.

Friends Through The Ages

Our project begins with the Iron Age as historians agree that the original site of Dover Castle was an Iron Age Fort but we must consider that the World's oldest sea going boat is thought to be the Bronze Age boat which dates from 1500 BC and was discovered in 1992 during excavations as part of the construction of the A20 main road near Dover's seafront.



It is now looked after by the Dover Bronze Age Boat Trust which secured a permanent display in Dover Museum which has free entry and is well worth a visit. The image on the left is the replica which was built by the Trust and partners and underwent successful sea trials in 2013 and is now used for educational trips around the harbour and elsewhere. It is roughly half size of the original.

Dover during the Bronze Age would have been a settlement of people forming a hub rather than a Town and there would not have been a need for a Fortress at that time. Homes would have been of the Roundhouse type and there would have been clusters of these sitting on higher ground away from the sea, rivers and mudflats and marshland. There would have been fields of barley and wheat and enclosures of livestock. The people of Dover were likely to be skilled, carpenters, farmers and herders as well as fishermen and weavers. There would also have been many seafarers skilled in navigation and tides and they would have connected with communities in Northern France and beyond.

This is a recreation of a typical Bronze Age Round House of the era 3500 BC to 800 BC. In Dover, there would have been small clusters above the River and near to the shoreline.



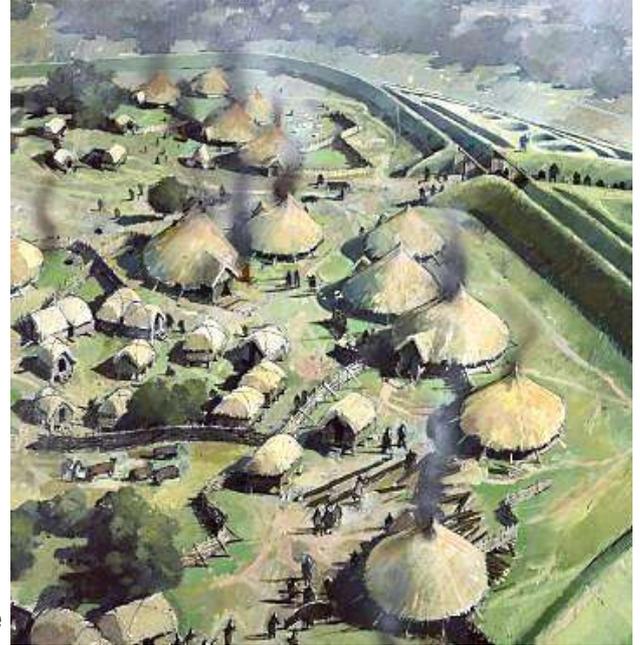
National Geographic produced images of how Must Farm in Cambridgeshire would have looked at the edge of the Fenn marshland and it is likely some small communities around Dover would have looked similar, with houses built on stilts often enclosed by fencing and walkways. Trade with France would have consisted of metal tools, jewellery, pottery, woven cloths and most likely wine.

The atmosphere would have been smokey at times as most houses would have a central fire with smoke billowing out of the centres of the roofs of the houses. There would have been fish being smoked and also metal being smelted. With the Dover Bronze Age Boat and others of the period being found elsewhere around the South East coast it is accepted this period gave rise to significant trade and travel across the sea. Tin and Copper - essential for the production of Bronze was mined predominantly in Cornwall and Wales but the sea routes from the west of England to the Continent were too difficult so the metal ores were transported by horse and cart to the Kent Ports to ship across to France as this was the shortest sea crossing. Dover would have been one of those trading ports. The Port of Dover may have received a Royal Charter in 1606 but was serving Britain as a trading port some 3000 years earlier.

Bronze Age

Iron Age

Iron Age Britain is said to have started around 800 BC and lasted until the Roman Invasion in AD43. Much was the same as during the Bronze Age, such as with similar dwellings as the Roundhouses with thatched roofs. What was maybe different was that settlements became larger with more families grouped together in villages and towns. There was also the development



of Hill Forts. These were made of embankments of earth mounds, with ditches in between to offer communities protection from possible invaders. The latter part of the Bronze Age saw an increase in the production of weapons and this continued into the Iron Age with the improved strength of Iron and Steel. Perhaps the fact that more weapons were being made, communities were becoming larger and more mobile, caused there to be a need of a fort. Previously, communities used higher grounds for burial sites and places of ceremony and worship. Now there was a need for the higher levels to be used for the creation of strongholdings and fortresses and thus Dover was no different with an Iron Age Hill Fort situated high on the cliffs. As was typical of the time, people would have lived within the confines of the hillfort whilst others, who remained in their dwellings near to the shore, would have had the chance to flee to the relative safety of the hillfort if necessary. It is recorded that Julius Caesar when invading Britain in 55 BC did not land at Dover due to the warriors lining the shores and the cliffs and decided instead to land at Walmer. The Iron Age Hillfort was therefore likely to have been well established and a deterrent to invaders especially when guarded by fierce looking Britons. This has just been a little introduction to our project - keep your eye out for more developments.



Kitchen Garden Project

by Mark Danson

I was recently asked to comment on the Kitchen Garden team's adoption of 'no-dig' principles, which was driven by our desire to optimize our limited gardening time.

Imagine a gardening revolution that empowers individuals to work and cultivate an area more efficiently, where every plant flourishes, and every harvest is abundant. No-dig gardening is a game-changer, offering numerous benefits that transform one's relationship with the earth and well-being in unprecedented ways. By adopting this innovative approach, individuals can enjoy a more ergonomic and accessible way to garden, ideal for those with physical limitations, such as arthritis, back pain, or mobility issues, allowing them to continue pursuing their passion without strain.

Furthermore, no-dig gardening preserves soil fertility, reduces synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and sequesters carbon, contributing to a healthier environment and sustainable future. The financial benefits are an added advantage - reduced water consumption, and fertilizer usage results in significant cost savings. Additionally, no-dig gardening promotes healthier plant growth, increased yields, and efficient use of space.

This approach has enabled us to unlock the full potential of the Kitchen Garden, and we feel we have joined the movement towards a more sustainable future, where gardening is not only a hobby but a means to positively impact the environment.

Imagine being part of a community that shares these values and is committed to restoring and maintaining a unique area for generations to come. We are now in our third year of 'no dig' and the Friends Kitchen Garden project continues to enhance the restored area for visitors to Dover Castle.

A bright Winters day in the Kitchen Garden so we pushed forward with our pre season tidy, repairs and the installation of a couple more raised beds. The raised beds just need levelling and bedding in and we'll be ready to add compost and top soil. The green house has a designated area with heating for our early seeds and we've begun to prepare the raised beds that we installed last year. There's still plenty to do but we're well on top of it this year ,



The Constables Kitchen Garden Project remains a major project for us and it is likely to remain so. It is into the fourth year now and is a highlight of our achievements.

Visitors to the Castle are able to experience the Garden during our Open Days and feedback is always positive.

This also gave us the opportunity of supporting Dover Castle in the recent Dover In Bloom project, run by the Future Foundry.

The entry won first prize in South and South East in Bloom competitions and was entered in the prestigious Britain in Bloom competition run by the Royal Horticultural Society. Read how we got on in a following page.

Don't forget, our Kitchen Garden also has one of only a few wormeries in the UK and also has it's own 13th Century Tower - Treasurers Tower - well worth a visit!





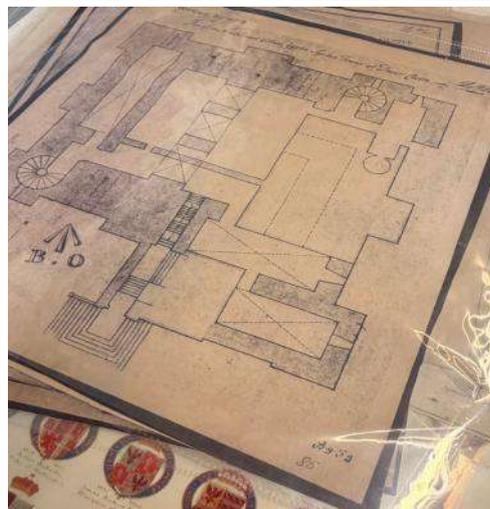
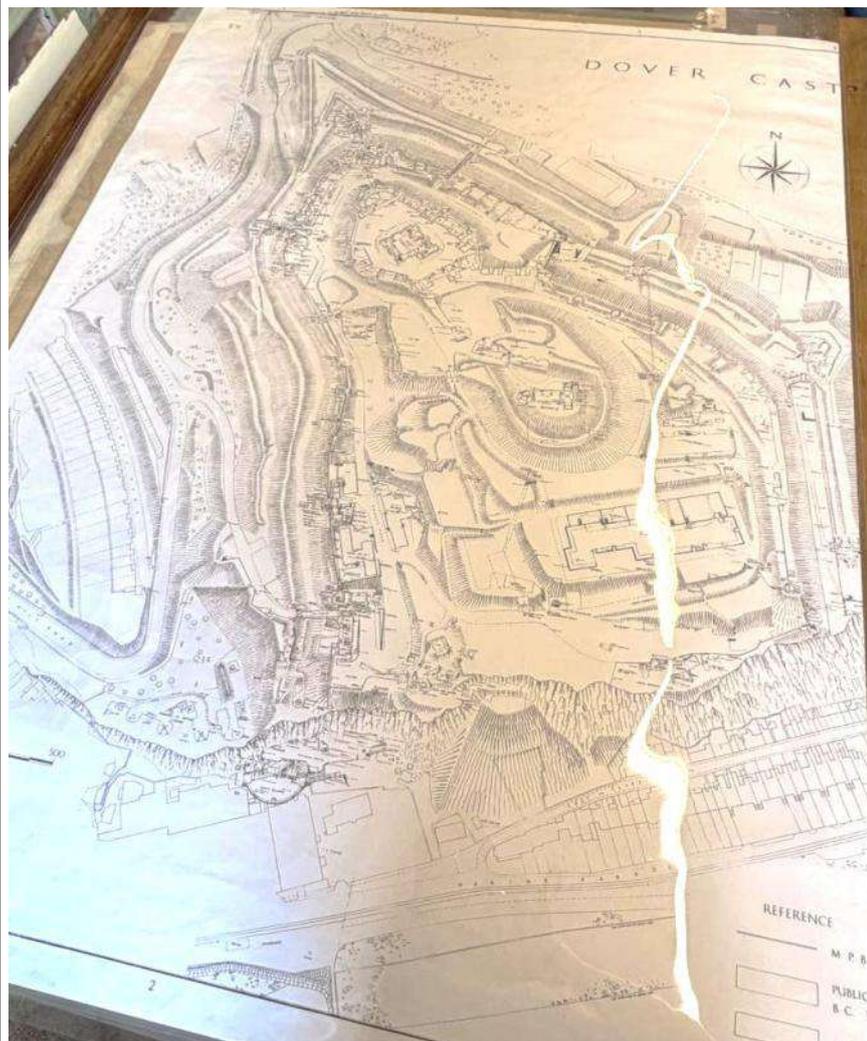
Some images Mark took during end of February Saturday workday. As you can see things are shaping up nicely - all down to the hard work of our keen Kitchen Gardeners.

National Garden Scheme

The National Garden Scheme is a fundraising charity which aims to enable members of the public to access privately owned gardens. At a Queens Nursing Institute council meeting in 1926, council member Miss Elsie Wagg came up with the idea of raising money for district nursing through the nation's obsession with gardening. A year later the National Garden Scheme was founded and garden owners were asked to open their gardens for 'a shilling a head'. Almost 600 gardens opened and raised a total of £8,191. In 2025, over 3300 gardens were involved and raised over £3.8m for charitable beneficiaries. Currently, Macmillan Cancer Support has been the biggest partner with over £19m donated.

We are trying to find a way where we could become involved in this scheme - the main issue is that the Kitchen Garden is inside a pay to enter venue but members please note the committee is working hard on finding a solution to this so that the Friends can participate in this wonderful scheme. For more information see the website www.ngs.org.uk

Historic Maps Project



Members will know that we acquired on a long term loan, a collection of Maps and Charts of Dover Castle which our Honorary Vice-President Wendi, had acquired during her time as the wife of Deputy Constable, Brigadier Maurice Atherton CBE and thus was resident in Constables Tower during that time 1976—1981. These historic documents are safely stored in our special antique map chest and have recently

been professionally photographed and digitally recorded. This will enable us to make them available to members for research purposes or to just enjoy at home. Many are A1 size and are available to see when we open the Office up during Open Days. (images - Mark Danson)



We also have an Album of historic postcards and photographs collected by the late Pat Cunningham, who had been a Custodian at Dover Castle for some 20 years and was also the Admiralty Sergeant to Lord Boyce, the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and Constable of Dover Castle. Pat had also been Chairman of the Royal Artillery Association (Dover Branch). Members will be aware that we purchased the whole collection from the Estate of Mr Cunningham and donated it to Dover Castle where it is safely stored in the Archives. Our collection is the set of duplicates and other information not wanted by English Heritage and is available to view on request when we have our open Days.

Dover in Bloom



Apparently, this is the first time in living memory that Dover have entered a Blooming competition. Having attended numerous Tourism meetings over the years, this type of campaign was always left to the Local Councils of Deal and Walmer to contest and I always thought it was a shame Dover never put itself forward. I recall both Deal and Walmer being quite successful and that had a positive impact for the wellbeing of the Community.

I was so glad this year to learn that Lisa Oulton, the Director of Future Foundry was putting together a Dover in Bloom campaign. I have known and worked with Lisa for many years and know she always delivers. Lisa says *“We launched Dover in Bloom after listening to young people at the Dover Youth Festival, where they told us they cared deeply about nature and their future,”* *“Future Foundry has led this initiative with young people front and centre. Young people in Dover are often seen as a problem,*



This wasn't just about having pretty gardens and communal areas. Future Foundry put together a complete portfolio partnering with various bodies such as local councils, English Heritage, National Trust, White Cliffs Countryside Partnership and more than 50 local organisations and schools. The Friends of Dover Castle supported the English Heritage part of the coalition but also impressed RHS Judges with the way we are not only growing a wealth of plants and produce but how we are also considering sustainability and biodiversity. We are using No Dig principles and have an active wormery!

Until we took this project on, the Kitchen Garden had been abandoned and we have had to deal with issues of poor soil quality, poor drainage and heritage constraints of working within a scheduled monument.

The portfolio features:

Biodiversity restoration from Dover Castle to Western Heights and Fort Burgoyne

Chalk stream and chalk grassland conservation efforts

Climate-smart allotments and community wildflower planting

Youth-led events, public art, and heritage site regeneration

Green infrastructure and zero-carbon transport projects



WINNERS - RHS South and South East in Bloom

GOLD AWARD

Large Coastal Town - **Category Winners**

Biodiversity - **Category Winners**

FINALISTS - RHS Britain in Bloom - judging for **2026 Britain in Bloom** will take place in the summer with results published in Autumn.

Judges praised Dover's approach as a model for the future of Britain in Bloom, spotlighting its strong environmental focus, extensive biodiversity restoration, and exceptional community engagement, especially among young people.

For more information see www.futurefoundry.org.uk

Other News



NEW CHAIR OF ENGLISH HERITAGE

Following the fairly short tenure of Lord Gerard Lemos CMG CBE (2023-2025) English Heritage have appointed Tony Hales CBE as it's new Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Tony brings to the charity more than two decades of senior leadership experience across the heritage and culture sectors. He was Chair of British Waterways and the founding Chair of its successor charity, the Canal and River Trust, before going on to serve as Chair of the Greenwich Foundation for the Old Royal Naval College.

Across all three organisations, Tony led major regeneration and conservation programmes, including the creation of a new entrance to the Lowland Canals in Scotland – featuring the landmark Kelpies sculptures – and the £8.5m conservation of the Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich.

“English Heritage is one of this country’s great national institutions,” Tony said, “one that looks after and shares with us all a remarkable collection of historic sites. I grew up visiting the castles, abbeys, and houses in its care and I am both honoured and excited to take on the role of chair” *(image and narrative © English Heritage)*

I wrote to Tony to Congratulate him on his appointment and also sent him a hard copy of our latest Chronicles. I must say I am very impressed as Tony replied to me personally saying *“Thank you for all the work you and the volunteers and friends contribute to Dover Castle. I enjoyed reading the Dover Castle Chronicles and I really appreciate the time and effort put in to run an effective friends group and regular publication”*

Tony added that the Board will be visiting Dover Castle soon and that he has never visited our Castle before. He says he is keen to meet us when he visits.

NEW (INTERIM) CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

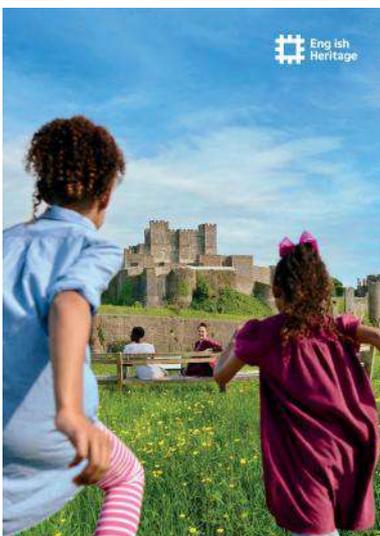


Nick Merriman stood down as CEO after only 18 months in the role during which he introduced the Reshaping of English Heritage Strategy, which created some significant turmoil. The Board have appointed Geoff Parkin as Interim Chief Executive.

Geoff Parkin brings experience from previous roles at Newmarket Holidays, VOSAIO Travel Group, Godstowe Preparatory School and Cognitive.Business.

Geoff was employed by L.E.K Consulting, a global management consultancy firm who step in when organisations are facing challenging times and help them solve issues and problems. Geoff rose through the ranks during his 26 years with the firm, rising to Senior Partner.

ENGLISH HERITAGE AT A GLANCE



- Income exceeded **£150 m** for first time since becoming an independent charity in 2014/5
- Nearly **5000** school trips (**190,000** children)
- **4791** volunteers giving **355,252** hours of their time - an increase of 42%
- **5.75** million visitors to our sites
- **1.2** million members
- **4000** Free entry visits granted to vulnerable people
- **829** events organised at free to enter sites
- **32** sites won Green Tourism Awards
- **228** sites welcomed over **8500** visitors in Heritage Open Days
- **230,000** guide books sold
- Everyday giving - Pennies - rounding up card payments raised over **£190,000**

Dear Graham,

Volunteering

Thank you for your commitment to English Heritage and for the time you've given to the charity over the last ten years. It's volunteers like you who keep English Heritage alive, and you are an integral part of our community.

I hope you enjoy wearing your new badge – although whether you do or not is completely up to you!

Once again, thank you. We're extremely grateful for your continued support and dedication.

Yours sincerely

Mick Merriman, Chief Executive



I was really pleased to receive a Long Service Award and thank you from the Chief Executive for volunteering over the last 10 years or so. I was initially a Fortress Dover Explainer operating from the Port War Signal Station and

Fire Command Post until the WW1 3inch 20 cwt Quick Fire Anti-Aircraft Gun was operational when myself and a few other enthusiasts became the first Gun Drill Re-enactment Team. For the first three years of firing, I attended almost every weekend and bank holiday and was the main gun firer. I also attended at other special events where the gun was fired such as evening events, Olympics 2016 event, Special Donor firing events and when Alice Roberts was filming about British Castles and she wanted to fire the Gun. We also fire

on Remembrance Day commemorations. We even won Best in Class in the Dover Carnival. I continued attending regularly until 2019 when I required major surgery. I returned to action during 2022 and later even attended using my wheelchair when I could not manage walking any distance due to severe sciatica. I also became a Siege Volunteer demonstrating the siege equipment as part of the new Siege of Dover Castle attraction. Unfortunately, I have not been able to attend regularly over the last couple of years but I am proud of my Volunteering at the Castle and the fact I have always gone the extra mile for English Heritage. It is a shame the Volunteer Manager has seen fit to dispense with my services rather than make any adjustments which I felt were perfectly reasonable and had worked well previously.



I have turned up really early and also in the evenings to support English Heritage events. Here I am with 2 other stalwarts who attended at 7am on 1st July 2016, at the Dover War Memorial, to commemorate the first day of the Battle of the Somme, to represent Dover Castle and try to recruit more volunteers.

Volunteering Continued.

“If we didn't have volunteers, nothing would get done” could be a Mantra describing life in Britain as we seem to rely on volunteers so much in this Country. Our keen Kitchen Gardeners, rake up hundreds of voluntary hours, weeding, sorting, planting, watering and the impact of this is the resulting flowers and plants. Much volunteering goes unseen and perhaps unrecognised, not just in gardening, such as pest and vermin control and keeping the worms happy. All our Committee Members (Trustees) are unpaid and our charity would simply not exist without them. Some of our members also volunteer for English Heritage, such as in the Dover Castle Second Hand Bookshop which is located in the Debtors Prison (opposite the NAAFI)

As mentioned previously, Tony Hales, the new Chair of English Heritage is a volunteer, as are all the Trustees who make up the Board of English Heritage. Fifteen years ago, English Heritage only had relatively small numbers of volunteers, mainly undertaking specific roles such as curatorial and research. I was one of the first volunteers in Operational Roles in 2014 and there has been a massive push to recruit volunteers with about 1500 in 2014 to over 5000 currently. As a comparison National Trust has about 50,000 volunteers.

“Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless” Sherry Anderson

“Service to others is the rent you pay for the room you have here on Earth” Muhammed Ali

“The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others” Mahatma Gandhi

“As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands - one for helping yourself, the other for helping others” Audrey Hepburn

“We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give” Winston Churchill

“There is no better exercise for your heart than reaching down and helping to lift someone up” Bernard Meltzer

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much” Helen Keller

“Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they have the heart” Elizabeth Andrews

“Even if you just change one life, you've changed the world forever” Mike Satterfield

“Helping one person might not change the whole World, but it could change the World for one person”

“No one is useless in this World who lightens the burdens of others” Charles Dickens

“Volunteers are the backbone of every great community”

“Volunteers, Make A Difference. Everyone can Make a Difference”

Opportunities



We have many opportunities for members to volunteer with the Friends of Dover Castle. We have Constables Kitchen Garden, we are aiming to participate more in Events at the Castle, such as the popular WW2 event, we run special tours and organise special events - we think this would suit someone interested in Hospitality and Tourism, perhaps someone currently studying this and the big plus here is that you get to go on the tours and attend the events you organise. So if you, or you know someone who may be interested in volunteering with us, please ask them to contact us for more information. We also have vacancies on our Board of Trustees. Please contact us for more information. Email - chairman@dover-castle-friends.org or secretary@dover-castle-friends.org

Volunteers needed

TRUSTEE
EVENTS ORGANISER / CO-ORDINATOR
PROJECTS DEVELOPER



**Free Entry
Week**



March 7th to March 15th

English Heritage is taking part in National Lottery Week to say a huge thank you to National Lottery players everywhere for their support. Since 1994, the National Lottery Heritage Fund has awarded over £ 9,5 billion to over 50,000 projects. English Heritage, including Dover Castle, has benefited from many of these. To gain Free Entry. Visitors need to prove their support for the National Lottery by showing proof of playing a National Lottery game

Easter Quest at Dover Castle

From **Saturday March 28th to Sunday April 19th** Dover Castle will be running their Easter Fun Filled Adventure Quest. You can follow the Easter Trail, hunt for eggs, answer questions to gain a chocolate reward. £2 per child in addition to entry.



The Big Brick Build at Dover Castle



From **Friday 3rd April until Sunday 12th April** mini builders can test their skills by building a piece of history out of Lego. 15 minute sessions are available throughout the 10 days on a first come first served basis, so there may be queues.

Green Impact Awards



**Choughs at
Dover Castle**

These are National Awards which celebrate the remarkable efforts of institutions and organisations across the UK in advancing sustainability and social responsibility. Dover Castle was the Winner in the Community Action Category. This was the result of partnering Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Discovery Park in the Choughs Project which saw the first wild born, fledged Chough in Kent for over 200 years. Green Impact is a UNESCO award winning programme that helps embed sustainability into operations, policies and procedures. English Heritage collaborated with Students Organising for Sustainability UK (SOS-UK) on a bespoke version of their Green Impact Awards to align with the EH Climate Action Plan. In 2025, 19 English Heritage sites were awarded Green Impact Platinum, Gold, Silver and Bronze Awards.

Further information and details on English Heritage website www.english-heritage.org.uk

English Heritage Tackles Parental Isolation



Isolation is known to be a key cause of Depression and other Mental Health issues in adults and English Heritage are introducing “bonding benches” at their properties to help visitors start up conversations.

At selected sites there will also be National Childbirth Trust (NCT) volunteer led sling and buggy walks. **(Images and story courtesy of English Heritage ©English Heritage www.english-heritage.org.uk)**

Emma Fernandes Lopes, Assistant Operations Director at English Heritage, said,

“As parents, we are hardwired to prioritise our children’s wellbeing. We bring them out to wonderful places like English Heritage sites to explore the outdoors and expand their horizons. But we often forget that the key to children’s wellbeing is actually found in whether their parents feel happy and supported.

Modern parenthood can be a really isolating experience. Many parents live a long way away from their extended families and have no support network to lean back on, and it’s often a real challenge to make friends who hold the same values and interests. With families making up more than a third of all English Heritage visits, we want to use our sites to help parents make those essential connections”

I know English Heritage have had lots of criticism recently. The restructure under Reshaping English Heritage was not popular with staff and Free Entry to Refugees was lambasted by some in the media by many stating incorrect information - Fact Check - migrants arriving by small boats do not get free entry to English Heritage sites. School Groups enjoy free entry and unpaid carers of disabled visitors also gain free entry. Many Affiliate Organisations such as National Trust, Historic Scotland , National Arts, CADW etc also gain free entry to English Heritage sites and did you know, those who have been awarded Blue Peter Badges gain free entry (code BLUE48L5IL) I’m sure not a lot of people know that!



On the theme of mental health and trying to help people with isolation, I would like to bring members attention to a new service started in Dover. The Chatty Café Scheme is about helping people who may be feeling isolated by providing Chatter and Natter tables in coffee shops, and cafeterias. Every Friday, I volunteer at the Costa Café which is situated in the Next Store in St James Retail Park in Dover. In the few months it has been running, I have supported over 70 people of all ages just by listening and being a friendly face to talk to. Another volunteer has also recently joined us and she has a Chatty Café table on Mondays and feedback has been very positive . Graham Hutchison

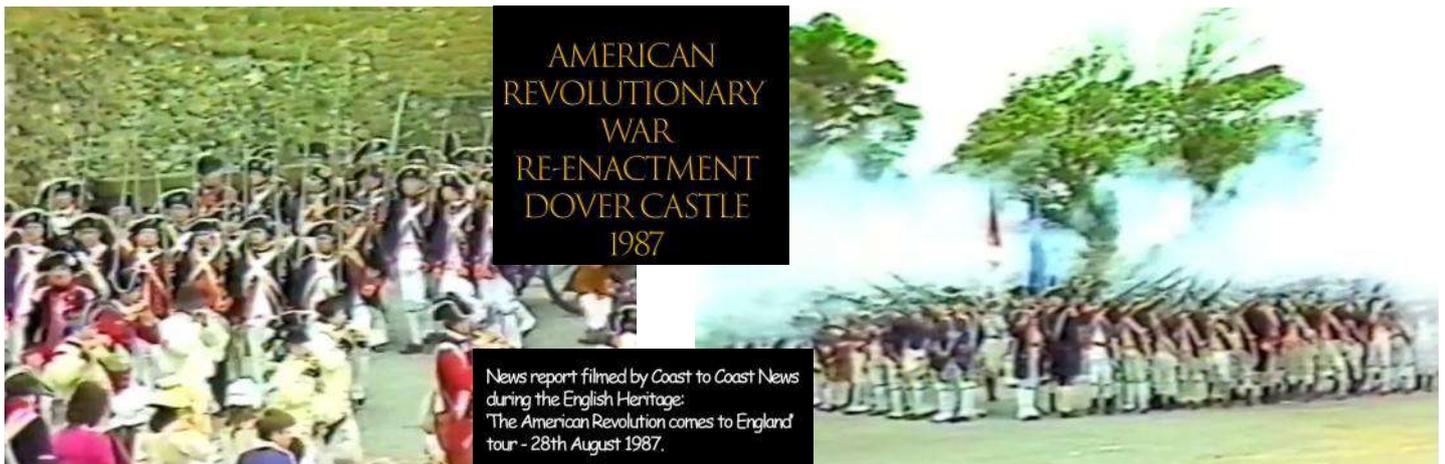
www.thechattycafescheme.co.uk

Some Friends History

There have been many events the Friends have either organised or been a part of in our 40 years. A notable event early on was in August 1987 hundreds of Americans came to Dover Castle as part of the Commemorations of the American Revolutionary War and the Friends were instrumental in organising this with English Heritage. Over 450 re-enactors participated in this with several displays and Gun Firings at Dover Castle



Dover Castle was a fitting venue for 450 American War of Independence Re-enactors in August 1987 when the Friends had been set up but not officially constituted (This happened at the first AGM in November that year). You can still see Coast to Coast Video of this on You Tube (©YouTube) One couple managed to simultaneously set up a Wedding in St Mary-in-Castro Church - Canadian John Seitz married his sweetheart Sheila with a guard of honour as they left the Church



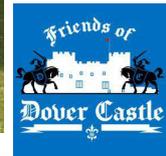
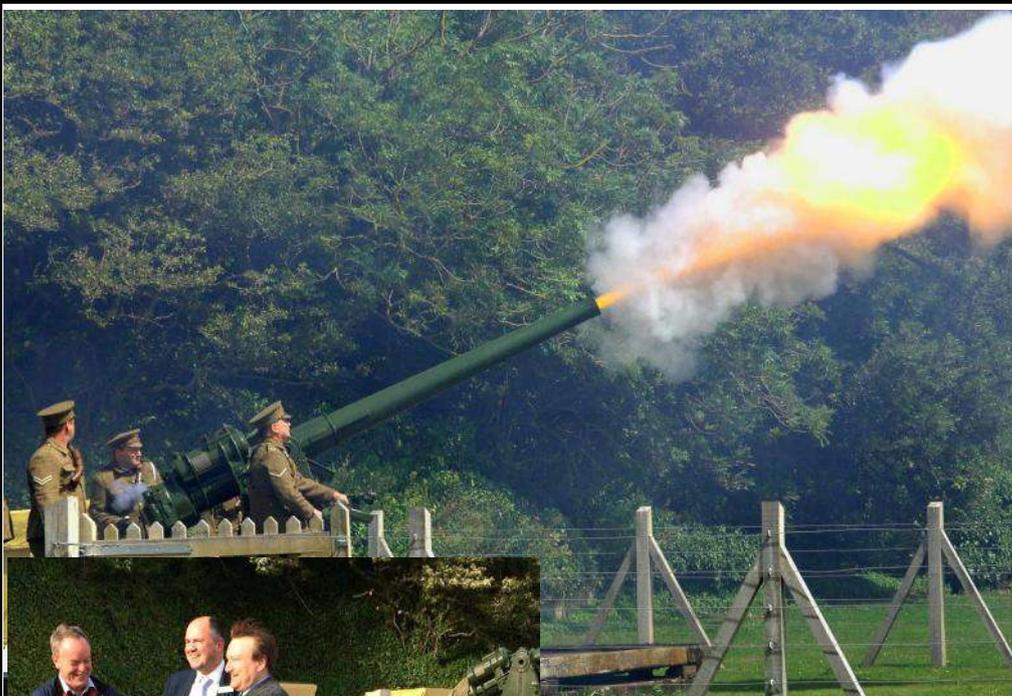
This was a big English Heritage event "The American Revolution Comes to England" tour which visited several sites around England and culminated in large re-enactments at Audley End. These events were part of a campaign to increase awareness of the significance of American Independence and it's impact on England and The United Kingdom. There are only a handful of members still alive who remember this event - our Mike McFarnell was acting Chairman of the Friends at that time.



The Friends collaborated with the Royal Engineers to restore the WW2 Bofors Anti-Aircraft Gun on the North Eastern battlements walk. This meant the Army regiment took the gun away to work on it and then bring it back and re install at Dover Castle. This was organised by the Deputy Constable of Dover Castle, Brigadier Simon Wolsey, Commander of British Army 2 (South East) Brigade – when Kent still had an Army Infantry Regiment and the Brigadier was also in charge of REME (Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers) based at Ashford. Work undertaken was estimated at £11,000 when considering all that had been involved and the time the engineers spent on it. All it actually cost us Friends was a free guided tour of Dumpy, well done to our Chairman Mike McFarnell and Brigadier Simon Wolsey

FORTRESS DOVER PROJECT

I will never tire of seeing images of this wonderful gun firing. I met with Lisa Davenport, who was tasked by English Heritage to draw up an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Fortress Dover Project which would see the Fire Command Post and Port War Signal Station be restored to how they would look in 1914 at the outbreak of World War 1. The centre piece of the project would be the restoration and installation of a genuine WW1 Anti-aircraft Gun. Historian Paul Pattison managed to persuade English Heritage to bring the Gun from Pendennis Castle to Dover and the Friends donated the £6000 requested to install the gun at Dover Castle where it began firing every weekend from June 2015. The overall project received some £250,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The image to the left shows Paul Pattison. (Senior Historian), Neil McCollum (Historic Properties Lead South) and myself Graham Hutchison, (Chairman of FODC) handing over the cheque at the site of the gun.



One of the greatest achievements I have managed during my tenure as Chairman was organising the 30th Anniversary Tours where we had something on every month of the year. We even held a special Dance event on Palace



**30th ANNIVERSARY
SPECIAL EVENTS
2017**

ANNIVERSARY TOURS

We are organising a series of special events for members this year to commemorate our 30th Anniversary.

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  RICHBOROUGH CASTLE Saturday 4 th MARCH 10 am £5 each |  MUSEUM TOUR - APRIL Tuesday 11 th April 6pm |  ST MARY-IN-CASTRO Wednesday 3 rd MAY 2pm Church Hall |
|  STONE HUT Monday 24 th JULY 2.30pm |  CONSTABLES Saturday 9 th September 10.30 am |  DUMPY Sunday 8 th October 2pm |
|  GATEHOUSE tbc |  HUDSONS EAST DEMI BASTION Wednesday 16 th AUGUST at 6.30 pm |  TOWERS & CURTAIN WALLS Friday 19 th May 2pm |
|  QUIZ NIGHT MAY |  SPECIAL BEHIND LOCKED DOORS TOUR Sunday 25 th June 2pm |  PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION |

Green, courtesy of committee member Charley Hawkins who put on a special performance with children from Temple Ewell and Northbourne Primary schools. All the Children who Danced as well as all the Children from Green Park Primary School who performed at the Carol Concert in December, received special 2017 Anniversary Medals.

There have been so many achievements and ways we have been able to support Dover Castle. We have provided mobility buggies, banners, Photo Competitions, Special Talks, Christmas Carol Concerts, we provide a Christmas Tree every year to the Church, provided benches, Muskets for the Siege Display. We have held special tours away from the Castle such as Richborough and the Shorts Tunnels at Rochester. I suppose I ought to include the important provision of the first defibrillator at Dover Castle.



What a great time to be a member of the Friends. Only £27 per year -single and £39 Joint. Annual subscription allows Free entry all year plus 10% discount in shops and cafes. All subject to accessibility and Dover Castle management and there may be others added later. See our website www.dover-castle-friends.org.uk and follow us on facebook .

Reaching Greater Heights

English Heritage have partnered with Kent Wildlife Trust, White Cliffs Countryside Partnership and Western Heights Preservation Society and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver a special project to restore 80 hectares of chalk grassland across Dover Castle and the Western Heights. This will create vital habitats for key species and enhance climate resilience. The restoration will also reveal defensive earthworks from 2000 years ago, preserving Dover's rich heritage. A mixed breed herd will be introduced for long term management through conservation grazing. The Reaching Greater Heights project will include arts and engagement activities, volunteering opportunities and community engagement.



ENGLISH
HERITAGE



Heights Not Weights

English Heritage are teaming up with Primal Runners to provide a **NO GYM, GYM CLUB**, for people to enjoy the Western Heights. These will be free outdoor sessions to relax, feel better, move more, connect with nature and meet new people.

Hike, stretch, breathe, run, and enjoy nature together. It's all about feeling good in your body and mind, with no pressure and no cost.

The sessions will take place on the last Sunday of every month from March 29th to August 30th and run from 10 am to 2pm with the meeting point as the Market Square Dover. Each session will include A welcome chat; A walk or run through nature; Simple body movement (no equipment needed); Breathing and calming exercises; Time to talk, share and connect:

Primal Runners is a social enterprise based in Kent, that offers training, competition, and a strong sense of community

www.primalrunners.com

Free sessions starting

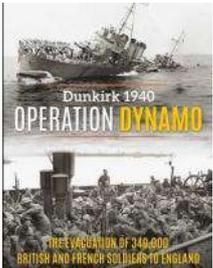
March 29th



Today (3rd March 2026) I met with Daniel Styles-Martin, the owner of the new Coffee shop in Castle Street, aptly named Castle Street Coffee. Daniel had emailed me suggesting that we become the local charity they support. I popped in to see him to discuss this and agreed this would be great for us. Basically, customers often have spare change and have asked if they have a charity donation box but at present they do not. I agreed I will supply a charity collection box with our logo and provide him with some flyers and details about the Friends for his customers information. The coffee shop is situated just before the Stembrook car park turning and is on two floors, with the downstairs snug overlooking the river Dour (I had forgotten the river passed behind the Castle Street buildings) Hopefully, this will also encourage more members to join. See <https://castlestreet.coffee>

What else are we planning?

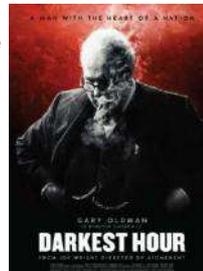
As we are celebrating our 40th Anniversary we are trying to organise some extra special events. One ideas is to have a special tour of Operation Dynamo in the Secret Wartime Tunnels and then retire to Constables Tower to enjoy the film Dunkirk. This has been agreed in principle by English Heritage and will be for Members only. Watch out for further details as I'm sure this will be popular.



Special Tour

A special guided tour of Operation Dynamo, also known as the Miracle of Dunkirk, where the successful evacuation of 340,000 allied troops was co-ordinated from the control rooms at Dover Castle.

This was so important to the allied effort in WW2 and this is a brilliant immersive display within the tunnels of Dover Castle



Plus a Film

• Darkest Hour

Starring Oscar Winner, Gary Oldman as Winston Churchill



We are planning to hold a special Hog Roast in Constables Tower Garden as part of our 40th Anniversary Events. This will most likely be in the summer months and will be invitation only as we will most likely invite local dignitaries and representatives from English Heritage and other agencies. Our members will be able to attend to but numbers will be limited so watch out for further announcements.

Garden Party



The corner turrets on top of the Great Tower are inaccessible due to the flooring being in a poor state and so they are all blocked off, for safety reasons. We have offered to pay for the flooring so that visitors are once again able to really climb to the top of our wonderful Castle

EDITOR COMMENT - Well, I didn't retire as Editor after all. The committee decided that I should keep going as feedback from members and others has always been positive. This is your newsletter, so please send me articles and images for inclusion. Please contact the Committee or email me chairman@dover-castle-friends.org