

REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA AT THE UNVEILING OF A TABLET
TO COMMEMORATE THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE
FOUNDING OF THE TOWN OF DOVER
SUNDAY 30TH SEPTEMBER 2012

It is a great pleasure for me to be here in Dover on this auspicious occasion to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the creation of the town of Dover, to unveil a plaque to record the event and to open this small but pleasant garden of indigenous flora as annotated by the French explorers who in 1792 were the first white visitors to this part of Tasmania.

As many of you know, Dover began its early life as a convict station where prisoners were put on probation and assigned to employers to work for wages. In those days it must have seemed like one of the remotest places on this planet. The convict station was closed in the mid-19th Century and it was not long afterwards that signs of prosperity in the region began to emerge as Crown land was offered for sale and the timber cutters moved in. In those days the only means of access to the area was by sea and all the timber that was cut had to be transported by boat either to Hobart Town or, in some instances, direct to overseas markets.

The 1851 census showed that there were then flickerings of permanent life here in Dover, or Port Esperance as it was then known, with 18 households already established in the area. Seven years later there was a school here with no less than 12 children in it.

(lucky Mr McKim wasn't here then or it might have been closed!) In those days saw milling and fishing flourished and in the Hobart Town Gazette published on 4th February 1862 - 150 years ago - the then Governor, Colonel Thomas Gore Browne, created the town of Dover with this proclamation:

“Whereas it is expedient to constitute and appoint a new Township to be called and known by the name of Dover, and to define the extent and limits of the name by a Proclamation, to be issued for that purpose: Now therefore I, Colonel Thomas Gore Browne, Companion of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, and Administrator of the Government as aforesaid, with the advice of the Executive Council, in pursuance and exercise of every power and authority in me in that behalf vested, do constitute and appoint all that portion of the Territory of Tasmania included within the limits mentioned in the description to this Proclamation annexed, as and to be the Township of Dover, and do define and proclaim the extent and limits of the said Township to be such and the same as are contained in the said description:”

There followed a laying out of the boundary marks of the town of Dover with reference to the numbers of lots of land created by the Crown. And so the town of Dover came to life. I don't know

whether Governor Browne ever visited Dover or whether he remained in Hobart Town and just issued his proclamation from there, but former Governor Sir George Strahan certainly visited Dover in 1884, 22 years after the publication of the proclamation. According to the Mercury newspaper account of that visit¹ Governor Strahan was greeted cordially but with complaints of isolation and lack of roads connecting Dover with the rest of Tasmania. However, His Excellency was told:

“although impassable roads have retarded our progress there are yet everywhere among us sure signs of prosperity and growing wealth. We would express the hope that this will not be the only occasion on which we shall have the pleasure of welcoming your Excellency amongst us and we trust that should you honour us with another visit we shall be able to assure you of our increasing prosperity, fostered by the generous assistance of Parliament and the continuous self -help to which we have grown accustomed.”

I am sure that if they were here today both Governor Browne and Governor Strahan would be gratified to see that in the 150 years that have passed since its founding Dover has gone from strength to strength. With a population of just under 1,000 Dover welcomes over 45,000 visitors a year, many of whom are following the popular Huon

¹ *The Mercury* Tuesday 25 March 1884 pp 1 – 6.

trail.² Although like the rest of Tasmania, the forestry industry is presently going through difficult times, Dover's fishing industry, particularly in Atlantic salmon, abalone and crayfish is holding up well. It has also become clear to me as I prepared for this event that Dover and its surrounds have an energetic and invigorative community, a considerable proportion of which has family histories that go back to long before the settlement of white people in this area. Evidence of this energy and invigoration is to be found in this commemoration, the garden and the tablet. It can also be seen in the work done by members of the Port Esperance Coast Care Group. For country communities like this one are the backbone of the State, supporting each other and supporting, as they do, small businesses and the valuable tourist industry.

So, today as I unveil this tablet to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Dover I congratulate all its inhabitants and the surrounding community on their past successes and wish them all a long and prosperous future.

²http://www.huonvalley.tas.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Council_Brochure_Huon_Valley_Vital_Signs_2012.pdf accessed 15th August 2012