

Wartime doctor to be honoured with blue plaque

A DOVER surgeon who saved the lives of scores of Dunkirk evacuation survivors is to be honoured at a simple roadside ceremony in the town tomorrow (Friday).

A blue plaque is to be unveiled in memory of Dr Gertrude Toland at Clyde House, Five Ways, Park Avenue, Dover where she was in practice for many years. During the Dunkirk evacuation in 1940 thousands of British and French soldiers were landed at Dover of whom more than 350 were badly wounded.

Dr Toland led a team of surgeons who worked without rest for several days operating on the wounded at Buckland Hospital, Dover. Many of the wounded had limbs amputated before being sent inland to other hospitals.

The Dover Society, the town's civic group, has installed the blue plaque. Members of the Toland family say they will be attending the ceremony, timed for 11 am.

The society's spokesman said: "Many in Dover at the end of the 1939-45 war were disappointed Dr Toland received no official recognition for her devotion during the evacuation and the rest of the war. We are showing she is not forgotten."

District roads get a litter clean-up

LITTER clearance on roads across Dover and Deal will start this week.

Dover District Council has confirmed seven clean-up operations in April. Lydden Hill will be targeted on April 12, Green Lane and Whitfield Hill on April 13, the A20 on April 16, the A257 on April 19 and 23, and the A258 to Deal roundabout on April 27.

It follows litter-picking which took place along the A2 – from the Whitfield roundabout to the Duke of York's roundabout and along Jubilee Way – between March 14 and 16.

MP Charlie Elphicke, who has been pressing for the clear-up, said: "I'm really pleased the council has taken action on this. Roadside litter is bad for the environment and creates a terrible impression to visitors and residents."

Distraught family still left asking why young man set himself alight

Inquest hears clever 20-year-old had dropped out of university

By **Andy Robinson**

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A FAMILY has been left searching for answers after a young man travelled to Dover before taking his own life.

Hareesh Selvachandran died just five days before his 21st birthday after he set himself on fire at the cliffs.

Maidstone Coroner's Court heard last week that he had dropped out of university and his friends found him difficult to contact just before his death.

His body was discovered on November 25 last year by a lorry driver, who was on a walk at the time.

The only indication of his identity was a wallet left nearby containing a provisional driving licence.

The court heard Mr Selvachandran, who worked at Pizza Hut, had been talking about starting his own business and had no mental health issues or medical problems.

His father, mother, brother, sister and three cousins attended the inquest in the hope of finding out why Mr Selvachandran died but were left still searching for answers.

A post-mortem examination at the Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital in Margate found the cause of death was from fatal burn injuries.

Family

The court heard that on November 24 last year, he made the train trip to Dover Priory from his family home in Stanmore in London. He bought five litres of petrol and was never seen alive again.

He was last seen by his family at 7.30pm that day. After finishing his dinner of curry and rice, he went upstairs, collected his rucksack and then put his shoes on.

It is believed that within the rucksack, Mr Selvachandran had hidden a petrol canister that he would later fill up with fuel, the court heard.

His mother told the court: "He said 'I'm off to work', and this was the last I saw of him."

That evening was also the last time his father saw him and, although he realised that something was wrong as Hareesh "was not himself", he said that he "had no reason to believe that Hareesh would commit suicide".

In a statement read out in court, Mr Selvachandran senior said: "Hareesh had left university without finishing his course. He passed first year but had problems in his second year.

"He was working two jobs after coming back from university. He started a job two or three weeks ago at Pizza Hut. I did not think there would have been any problems.

"We have never been to Dover. I can't think of any connection between Hareesh and Dover."

The inquest heard that Mr Selvachandran had been a bright student studying maths and finance at Southampton University.



Hareesh Selvachandran was last seen alive on November 24

One of his friends from school had a statement read out at the inquest, which said: "I knew from speaking to him that he enjoyed his first year of uni.

"He really got into himself. He became more social and dressed differently.

"He failed his first year of uni due to too much partying and chilling.

"Something seemed off and he seemed really down in December 2016. He seemed sick of uni and dropped out.

"He seemed down but it was nothing concerning."

Shortly before his death, Mr Selvachandran – who is of Sri Lankan descent and from a family of practicing Hindus – visited the South Asian country with his family for a month.

However, his friend said: "After his first year of uni, he said he was an atheist."

The statement continued: "After he came back from Sri Lanka, all he wanted to do was sleep.

"Hareesh complained about living at home and wanted to move out.

"I went back to uni and Hareesh became impossible to contact. At the end of November, I got a bad feeling as the lack of replies was really out of character.

"I then got a text message saying that 'things were going to get better' and that he was 'going away'.

"Then I was told he had committed suicide. I'm not surprised he picked such a scenic place."

Detective Sergeant Williams said: "The body hadn't been moved. It was on a closed path with a wooden gate

or fence making it clear you should not walk down it.

"It would be impossible to say if someone had punched him or hurt him.

"He still had his phone, watch and wallet so I didn't think there was any motive to steal.

"The wallet was left to one side for police to ID him. It had the tiniest amount of charring on one corner which made me believe it was placed deliberately to enable us to identify him."

Officers considered the possibility that he had intended to set fire to himself and then jump off the cliff but they did not believe the fall from where he was found would have been sufficient and there was no sign of recently altered rock patterns.

Assistant coroner Alan Blunsdon said: "This is a very sad death of a young man who was found dead at the cliffs of East Langdon.

"His friends in their statements talk about him being difficult to contact in the months leading up to his death and attribute that to Hareesh leaving university in his second year and going to work. He was being quiet and reserved.

"Perhaps he was more down than he let on.

"In his last day of his life, he said he was going away in a text message. There was no indication of why he would go to Dover."

Mr Blunsdon said that he had to be "satisfied beyond reasonable doubt" that Hareesh had taken his own life. He concluded: "I can be so satisfied that this is a case where Hareesh committed suicide."

He added that sadly for the family "we will never know the reasoning behind it".



Hareesh was found near the cliffs

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