

CHANNEL CROSSINGS

AN EXHIBITION

at the Dover Museum

30th November 1991 - 10th January 1992

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An extravaganza of colour applied with the freshness and vitality typical of the best of children's art covered the walls of the first-floor gallery, filled the display cases and brightened Dover's winter.

The subject of 'Channel Crossings' attracted entries from at least seventeen schools, not only from Dover District but from further afield including Ashford, Thanet and Swanley. The work was judged by representatives of P & O, the Museum and Dover District Council.

First prize in the 15-18 years group went to Dominic Jeffrey, of HARVEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL, Folkestone, for a lively painting of a ship on fire, with the rigging of another ship forming the foreground, showing a feeling for richly-textured paint. Other entries from the same school, whose flights of fancy included a Loch Ness-type monster and a desert island, left the viewer with the suspicion that they were not painted for the exhibition.

Thomas James, of DOVER COLLEGE, showed a schematic Channel in which a P & O ferry was sandwiched between cliffs. A plane and a balloon appeared in the sky, an assortment of craft in the water and, under the sea, a high-speed train. The picture was enhanced by the brilliance of paint and coloured markers.

Justina Coombs (14), also of the College, had a nice graphic approach and the ingenious idea of showing a magnifying glass picking out a detail of a ferry, with a small plane towing an advertisement for the White Cliffs Experience.

A boldly executed picture in padded fabrics, showing a seagull flying from England to France, was displayed by Victoria Wimshurst (11) of CLARENDON GRAMMAR SCHOOL, Ramsgate.

Weaving, entitled 'The Channel Swimmer' and suspended from a dowel, its interesting textures enhanced by shells, was the exhibit of Moya Young (9), of SANDOWN COUNTY PRIMARY School.

Heidi Bax (9) of BARHAM COUNTY PRIMARY produced a bold painting of a gull against a dark blue sea in which a ferry moves far below, leaving a wake. The orange of the bird's beak contrasted nicely with the cool colours.

A delightful collage by James Small of BEAUHERNE COUNTY PRIMARY, Canterbury, filled its space beautifully. (Did P & O Ferries ever have paddle wheels?)

Class 5 of EASTRY COUNTY PRIMARY produced a very nicely composed collage of work in paint, collage, embroidery and paper sculpture showing ways of crossing the Channel from early times to the present, winning a well-deserved prize.

From David Burkimsher of WHITFIELD COUNTY PRIMARY came a striking image of an orange balloon against a huge moon in a black sky.

Honey James of HIGHVIEW SPECIAL gained a First Prize with her splendid schematic view of the Channel Tunnel in blues, yellows, greens and black. Richard Chapman, of the same school, produced a delightful idea of a port, rather than a presentation – white and grey lines enclosing a harbour in which several collaged ships add to the marvellous near-abstract quality of the picture – set off by a scarlet mount.

SANDGATE COUNTY PRIMARY had been doing a project on the 'Mary Rose' and produced some pleasing work (but the viewer couldn't help thinking that that fated ship did not get very far on *her* Channel crossing).

As with some other works on display the attractive large collage by a group at ST. MARTIN'S C.P. with its paper sculptures of various craft, tunnel train and buildings, suffered from rather inferior materials; the paper was too lightweight and perhaps discouraged the children from making their cliffs three-dimensional too. However the limited and rather off-beat colours at their disposal gave a pleasantly homogeneous quality to a large group of paintings from EASTRY COUNTY PRIMARY.

Sam Roberts, of NORTHBOURNE C. E. P., showed a nice feeling for space and paint surface in his picture of hovercraft, ferry and plane and Miles Hanrahan turned his problem with an expiring marker into an asset in a textured sky.

Polly Allison's charming weaving, incorporating a drawing of a ferry, showed a good sense of texture and of contrast with a limited range of colours.

A delightful use of marbled papers and other collaged materials, combined with drawing was evident in the pictures of Giles and Duncan Barrett of ST. MARGARET'S C. P.

From SANDOWN C. P. came a picture by Charlotte Cantapher of a brightly-painted craft sailed by a happy figure, seeming unaware of the beautifully observed gull about to swoop on it. As with some of the other younger children it would have been nice to know her exact age.

Jonathan Visscher of WHITFIELD C. P. was commended for his balloon made up of uninflated balloons. Emily Visscher's archetypal ship nicely filled the sheet of paper. Bobby Clements produced a coloured concept of Dover Harbour with ferries, lighthouse and cliffs.

Work from BROCKHILL PARK SECONDARY SCHOOL showed work varied in both technique and subject matter. Brenda Allen's night scene of a ship in wartime, in pastel on black paper, was nicely conceived.

ASTOR SECONDARY SCHOOL showed some interesting and varied work from pupils aged 12–14, although in some cases it was marred by poor lettering.

Also from ASTOR, the ceramics class of the same age produced lively interpretations, glazed in browns, grey greens and milky whites, of some of the extra-ordinary ways in which people have chosen to cross the Channel.

Some inventive three-dimensional work came from EASTRY C. P. – a man swimming the Channel accompanied by a man rowing a boat by Robert Roll and Paul Craven, an impressive model of a P. & O. ferry by Paul Doel, the Castle on the cliffs below which a sailing ship passes, a wood and string plane by Ben Smith (8).

Keith Farrall (6) of SWANLEY C. P. made a splendidly chunky P. & O. ferry beneath the cliffs set in a painted sea. It did seem a remarkably sophisticated work for a child of his age.

Some children were not well-served by inadequate materials and tools. Scratchy coloured pencil does not combine well with paint. Ordinary pencil needs to be very wellhandled to produce good results on its own.

The exhibition, which took Museum staff several days to put up, was clearly popular and attracted a large number of entries, especially from primary schools. The Museum staff must be commended for their display work. Every entry was exhibited, utilising every inch of wall space, so that occasionally it was difficult to decide to which work a caption referred.

Looking forward to future exhibitions of children's art, it is hoped that more secondary Art Departments will be persuaded to submit work. Although I am aware of the problems of secondary schools, with their particular curricular constraints, perhaps more would participate if they had sufficient time to plan ahead. Maybe a few Calais schools might be invited to take part?

The success and popularity of this exhibition was such that we may well anticipate future shows of the work of school pupils in one of the best exhibition spaces in Kent.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

The Museum has announced an exhibition of Children's Art, on the theme of "The Roman Invasion." It will take place in November/December 1993.

DAISY PIG

M. J. Robson, BBC Books

DAISY PIG is a collection of five short stories about an engaging lady pig who has various everyday experiences to which young children can relate. For instance, Daisy keeps shop, visits the seaside, goes to London, goes riding and pretends to be a nurse.

The stories, written by Margaret Robson, a member of the Dover Society committee, were read on BBC's 'Jackanory' and the collection has just been published by BBC Books 1992.

The easy style, credible dialogue and amusing plots appeal to younger children. The stories are ideal for reading aloud to 5–7 year olds, of suitable length for a bedtime story or for use with an infant class. Older children, of 8–9 years, will read the stories for themselves and probably will have greater appreciation of the humour of the situations.

MERRIL LILLEY