

The Brig *Maria Asumpta*

The Wellington Dock Re-development: The Recovery of the Bronze Age Boat: Eastern Docks Plans for Environmental changes

JOHN GERRARD, *Vice-Chairman*

THE BRIG *Maria Asumpta*, 37.5 metres from bow to stern and built in 1858, arrived at the Wellington Dock on the 26th October and will be moored there for about six months whilst undergoing a winter overhaul. She is believed to be the world's oldest active sailing ship and she will be open to the public from time to time during her stay in Dover.

The *Marie Asumpta* was built in Spain specifically for the transatlantic trade and was retired from that work in 1978. She crossed the North Atlantic under her 8,500 square metres of sail as recently as 1988.

It is hoped to persuade her owners to make the Port of Dover her permanent home where she would add an exciting extra attraction to the Western Docks development.

Work on opening up the Wellington Dock is now well in hand and provides, amongst other things, for a new pedestrian entry from Cambridge Road. For safety reasons hand-railing has been provided around the dock which will be open to the public from November onwards.

At this time of recession it is encouraging to know of the great interest displayed by a large number of international developers and it has been stated that the choice of a joint developer, to work with the Harbour Board, will be made in January 1993.

British Rail has said it wants to leave the Marine Station in 1994 and the future use of this wonderful building will be the subject of exciting discussion in the years ahead.

Society members, amongst all other Doverians, will be aware of the exciting find of a Bronze Age boat at the Townwall Street/Bench Street junction. What they may not know is that the Dover Harbour Board gathered together considerable resources to help the specialists recover and preserve the vessel. Their contribution included the overnight construction of the 7,000 gallon water tank needed to preserve the remains, the provision of a large mobile crane, transport and specialist staff to lift the boat clear of the excavations and storage facilities for the boat until its future is determined.

The whole episode showed the archaeologists, Dover District Council and its Museum staff, Dover Harbour Board and NorWest Holst, the road contractors, willingly working together as an enthusiastic team, a good portent for the future.

At the Eastern Docks, where the port is having its best year ever – what a miracle in these troubled times! – it has now been agreed to carry out major improvements to the road layout and processing systems for outward bound traffic. Included in these plans are major landscaping works to provide a more customer-friendly, green environment. The work will be completed before next summer and is part of the campaign to challenge the tunnel.

The new sheds for the import of fresh fruit and vegetables have proved to be commercially viable and are working at the projected target levels.

Construction of the huge new No. 7 berth is well underway and the bridges are now being positioned. The berth, which will cost nearly £14 million and is D.H.B.'s all-time largest single contract, will come into use in February, 1992.

Membership News

Welcome to all who have joined us since our last *Newsletter*. Slowly but surely our membership continues to increase and we are now heading for 400. Please do continue to interest potential new members by inviting your friends to open meetings and by giving them a copy of the last previous *Newsletter* (available from Budge Adams, 24 Castle Avenue).

There are about fifty members who paid a 5-year subscription when the Society was formed and in so doing helped the Society to establish a sound financial base. The 5-year period expires on 31st March 1993.

If you are one of these members you will receive a letter before 1st April next year, inviting you to continue your membership of the Society on the basis of the normal subscription which is now £4 annually. Please do so, we certainly don't want to lose you.

From 1st April 1993 members will be able to pay subscriptions by Standing Order if they wish to do so and forms for that purpose will be included in the next *Newsletter*.