



FEDERATION of  
Amenity Societies

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## *The 21st Autumn Conference*

WITHERSDANE HALL, WYE COLLEGE – 18th-19th SEPT. 1993

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AS its organiser and chairman, modesty forbids me to do more than list the delights of the successful 21st Conference at Wye which, as always, was blessed with superb weather and superb cuisine. I leave appraisal to Budge Adams, who represented the Dover Society, and to Lawrence Gage, the Society's Chairman of Planning, who splendidly addressed the Conference on the 'Impact of IMPACT on Dover'. Thanks to sponsorship by Seeboard – which sedulously and properly cultivates a green image – charges were only minimally larger than last year and attendances were yet again a record.

The opening morning was devoted to transport, starting with a resounding critique of the Department of Transport, by the Chairman of the Kent Road Transport Action Forum, for neglecting rail for a century in deference to the motor car. Despite the fact that membership includes road and rail (and DHB) interests as well as environmental organisations, the Forum recommended drastic increases of car costs and massive improvements in public transport.

The Chairman of the Boxley and Penenden Action Group resoundingly criticised both the Department of Transport and Union Rail for the shambles of the still uncertain High Speed Channel Tunnel Rail Link. Although a desirable alternative to road transport, it would not be able to take continental gauge wagons; the (alleged) benefits for commuters were uncertain; there was no station strategy; the environment would be damaged; private sector finance was unlikely and the prospect was for stalemate and blight.

Partially answering for Union Rail, its Design and Consultation Manager said that Union Rail would offer new and improved services to Kent commuters and to the development of the East Thames Corridor as well as to international passengers. Public consultation had been on an unprecedented scale and there were both construction and station strategies.

After lunch a young architect explained 'Green Building'. The greenest form of building was conservation. Building resources should be sustainable and maximum use be made of solar energy, triple glazing and other insulation to make central

heating unnecessary. Greenhouse gas emissions necessitated reduced electricity consumption, achievable by economic on-the-spot generation, natural ventilation, maximising use of daylight and using (soft)wood without preservative treatment. This had been demonstrated in the refurbishing of Greenpeace headquarters and the building of 'Ecologion', a centre for (ecological) education and entertainment, on a derelict coalfield in South Yorkshire.

This refreshment of the mind was followed by a refreshment of the spirit in a tour of Romney Marsh, guided by the Romney Marsh Research Trust. In addition to clear exposition of the meaning of mere marks on the ground, as well as of the history and architecture of abandoned churches, we unexpectedly happened to be able to visit the detached campanile clad in cedarwood shingles at Brookland and were amazed and delighted to hear an improvised lecture on campanology by the Union Rail spokesman.

The after-dinner address on the 'Idea of the Picturesque' was a brilliantly illustrated *tour de force* by a senior university lecturer, which was followed on the Sunday morning by Lawrence Gage's address on Dover and a usefully comparative study of the work of the Sussex Federation of Amenity Societies.

I have already embodied the gist of the threefold contributions on the Future of Local Government in my report of our meeting on "The Future of Local Government" (on page 129 of this *Newsletter*). On the Sunday afternoon we were surprised as well as pleased to be informed in remorseless detail of SEEBOARD's determination to earn the coveted label of 'green'.

I would, in due course, be pleased to send members/readers a full report of the Conference in the next issue of "Kent Matters". Next year's Conference, 18/19 September 1994, will be equally good value for money, both residential- and entertainment-wise.

## Distribution of the *Newsletter*

In the last few weeks a certain amount of rationalisation has been effected in the pattern of the distribution of the *Newsletter* and, amongst other things, all full members living within the manual distribution area will receive a copy. Members of the Executive Committee who are anxious to maintain and/or increase our membership – and that is all of them – ask, if two copies are hand delivered to the same address and it is felt that only one is needed, that members should hand the "spare" copy to a non-member friend or to anyone who might be interested enough, or susceptible enough, to listen to your persuasion to join the Society.

The distributor has been authorised to use discretion in taking advantage of convenient distribution situations that present themselves. There is no cost saving in keeping down the number of copies hand delivered as the number produced is not a cost factor: at the same time the distributor is conscious of the cost of postal charges for out-of-town deliveries and minimises them whenever possible.

There is worthwhile benefit to the distributor in the use of the computerised membership list. The master list, in order of membership number, can be sorted with ease into any category or grouping *without compromising its accuracy*. AND it saves time!