

"Well" said Zoe, as she strolled along the Prince of Wales Pier with her grandfather and her brother Paul on the first day of their half-term holiday visit to Dover. "You say that in the early 90's Dover had above-average unemployment following the closure of the Kent coal mines and the opening of the Chunnel, leading to redundancies on the cross-channel ferries. How is it then, that fifty years on Dover is so prosperous, unemployment is down to less than 1% and the quality of life here is said to be an example for towns of this size?"

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SHORT STORY COMPETITION.

A Fantasy

— or is it?

Zoe, a first-year university student reading Business Studies and Economics, had an assignment to complete. "I want the facts", she added.

"Here are two facts", said Grandad. "As you know from your Geography lessons at school, Paul, the British Isles can be divided into four sectors as regards weather; NE, NW, SW and SE. The SE is the warmest and driest quadrant: it has the most sunshine and the least rainfall, and Dover is plumb in that quadrant. It is also, incidentally, nearest to the Continent of Europe". "Fact No. 1"

The second fact is that average hourly working wages have been rising and average weekly hours worked have been falling for the last one hundred years. In 1940 (you won't believe it, but it is true) people worked an average of forty-eight hours a week for less than an average of £4 – less than 10p an hour. Now in 2040 the average wage is £100 an hour and the average hours of work are twenty a week. The whole of Europe has seen a similar pattern of change in labour costs."

"Now, as Margaret Thatcher used to say, 'Give me the facts and I'll deduce what we should do'."

"Well, the good people of Dover in the mid 1990's considered these facts and did make the right deductions from them. They held a public meeting where they made their deductions and planned to put them into effect as a Millennium Project to mark the arrival of the year 2000. They deduced from Fact 2 that each worker in Europe would in future have a much bigger income and more leisure time in which to spend it; also each would have longer holidays – in the 90's only about three weeks a year, nowadays at least seven

weeks. They deduced from fact No. 1 that this increased spending and leisure would take place mainly in dry sunny climates (who wants to go on holiday where it is cold and wet?) and Dover offers just the right climate.

"And on this lovely sunny day, as we stroll along the Prince of Wales Pier, look around you at the hundreds at play in water-sports in this wonderfully sheltered harbour: gaze upon the gorgeous green-topped white cliffs and at the town nestling between the Eastern and Western Heights and you can see how their plans have come to fruition, how an economic miracle has come to pass."

"The Millennium Plan (2000) encouraged and supported the Dover Harbour Board (in its developments) to the full with leisure activities within the harbour; with regular cruise ships (that one just coming through the harbour entrance is, I think, the latest 'Pride of Dover' on the last leg of a round-the-world cruise); with its plans for that huge lock-gate across the inner harbour enabling over 400 yachts to come and go at all times, at all tides, to the spacious Marina. That huge building over there used to be the Marine Station – now it is a showpiece for British Inventions and Technology, British Industry, Trade and Commerce: last year over 300,000 buyers visited it from overseas."

"The latest noiseless helicopters which you see arriving every few minutes now land on top of what used to be the ugliest building in Dover – Burlington House. The 2000 Plan (adopted) recommended that the top be chopped off that offending monster to make a landing pad for the helicopters and as you see that now works well."

If you look to the east under the Castle (that ancient Castle still attracts thousands of visitors every year) you will see another example of the 2000 Plan – an Emmet train taking visitors up that long gradient to the Observation Platform at Langdon Heights. That gradient has a long history

"Oh. Not now," said Paul who saw another long lecture coming.

"O.K." said Grandad, "But I must tell you that that little railway is always fully booked with passengers and that it goes up the cliff as you can see and then on to the Bleriot monument, which crowds of French visitors are eager to see: they can take short flights in a replica of Bleriot's aeroplane which I am sure you know was the first to fly across the Channel "

"What's that elegant building on top of the Western Heights" asked Zoe. "Sacrilege, sacrilege": groaned Grandad. "That's the Casino and Leisure Centre with dry-ski runs, skating rinks (ice of course) and all the latest in entertainment technology. But then half the population of Dover work either at the Harbour Board or at the Leisure Centre up there, and a Casino is, I suppose, a natural progression from the Bingo which they all played in the '90's. There was always gambling at horseraces and then there was ERNIE and in '94 the Government introduced the National Lottery (much of the money for the 2000 Plan came from the National Lottery). Yes, I suppose the Casino was a natural development from previous forms of gambling and it does attract many rich yachtsmen from the

102 Marina and rich Europeans as well as all those thousands of folk who would have played Bingo all those years ago.”

“Of course we had to make better access to the Western Heights and the Plan envisaged the futuristic lift which you see climbing the cliff just by the Grand Shaft. You will see that the lift takes one right up to the top of the Elegant Building (as Zoe calls it) and with the binoculars you can see that there is a revolving restaurant there. Sacrilege and more sacrilege: that restaurant is built right on top of the Drop Redoubt – but it does have magnificent views.

“Now look, they have just switched on the LASERS from the CASINO to welcome the ‘Pride of Dover’. The LASER used to read ‘Welcome to Dover – Gateway to England’ but it now reads ‘Welcome to Dover – Gateway to Europe’.”

“Another thing, Paul”, said Grandad, “there is the latest ‘Virtual Reality’ up there. You have no need to travel the world. You just relax in the Studio and ‘Virtual Reality’ takes you there. Jolly good for the sick and the lame but do you know that some super-fit youngsters prefer to sit in ‘Virtual Reality’ to take in all those lovely walks around Dover. I don’t know what the younger generation is coming to.”

Grandad was talking to thin air . . . Paul and Zoe had gone to the café for an ice-cream.

A FOOTNOTE:

Historians requiring more information about the two great British inventions of the late 90’s which brought thousands to the sea-sports in the safety of Dover Harbour and many more to the Grand Shaft, should contact me through the Editor.

ARTHUR R. GOODBURN , 1st June 2040 ◇



Congratulations

Dover Society Member, Mrs G. M. Janaway, has won the *Dover Express* competition to name the platform of newly-formed land under Shakespeare Cliff

which has been constructed with soil
from the excavation of the Channel Tunnel.

The name of the platform is to be SAMPHIRE HOE.
