



The outer passenger platform at the Marine Station

# THE MARINE STATION:

TRAINS from the South Eastern line first ran on to the Admiralty Pier in 1861, followed in 1864 by trains from the London, Chatham and Dover line. The station in existence at that time was officially opened when the Admiralty Pier was completed in 1871. It consisted of two long, narrow platforms placed end to end, sloping down to rail level where they met and backed by a parapet on the seaward side. From the parapet wall there was a narrow awning, the length of the platform and some low benches.

Rixon Bucknall, in his book *Boat Trains and Channel Packets*, writes:

“When first provided, these passenger facilities at Dover were indeed appreciated by all concerned as being a tremendous advance upon anything previously known; but as time passed resentment set in at the exposure and over the cramped platform accommodation ... In really bad weather trains were sometimes damaged by heavy waves which broke right over the parapet, and the lot of passengers who found themselves in these circumstances was certainly not one to be envied.”

By the end of the century the accommodation at the station was regarded as totally inadequate and obviously a new station was needed.

The Admiralty had control of the Pier until 1892 when the Harbour Board took over responsibility. In the same year the Harbour Board began to build the

Prince of Wales Pier and had plans to extend the Admiralty Pier by 560 feet. Their intention was to build a terminal between the shore end of Admiralty Pier and the South Pierhead of the Tidal harbour.

Then in 1895 the idea of building a great National Harbour by enclosing the whole of Dover bay was revived by the Government and plans for the Admiralty Pier became incorporated into the wider scheme.

The work on the harbour began in 1897 and was completed in 1909. During this period some boats berthed on the Admiralty Pier and some on the eastern side of the Prince of Wales Pier. Liner traffic berthed at the Prince of Wales Pier, where there was a small station to which boat trains ran out. However, this liner traffic was discontinued due to an accident and to Admiralty regulations.

Finally, in 1907, the Harbour Board returned to its plans of building a new terminal on the Admiralty Pier and obtained permission to do so. The work on this much-needed terminal began in 1910 and was finished in 1913 and, subsequently, the Marine Station was built during the years 1913-1914. At this time the arrangement regarding the Marine Station was that the Railway Company (since 1899 the South Eastern and Chatham) leased the whole of the Pier (excluding the forts) from the Harbour Board, which in turn leased it from the Admiralty.

## in DOVER'S WESTERN DOCKS

The inner passenger platform at the Marine Station



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The Marine Station was opened for military traffic in January 1915 and used to the full throughout the war years. In 1919 the Admiralty gave up using Dover as a naval port. Some service was resumed between Dover and Ostend in January 1919 and a daily service by June. A service to Boulogne opened the same year and one to Calais in 1920. By 1922 the continental traffic was back to prewar level. Gradually the Marine Station came into its own as a passenger terminal, needing much renovation and restoration after four years of war with no maintenance. A 1914-18 War Memorial of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway was placed in the Marine Station.

The station's heyday was the period between the wars when it was probably the most famous railway terminal outside London, synonymous with the adventure of foreign travel and a style of travelling epitomised by the Golden Arrow Pullman, which began service in 1936 and carried first-class passengers in opulent comfort from Victoria to Dover. As John Hendy, the historian, wrote, "Anyone who was anyone used the service". Kings and queens, potentates and politicians, the rich and the famous, all passed this way, because it was the only way before the advent of air travel.

In the second World War the station once again became a clearing house for homecoming troops, notably during the Dunkirk evacuation. When it re-opened after the war the Golden Arrow service was restarted, but already had to compete with the growing popularity of air travel.

The Golden Arrow was taken out of service in 1972, though boat trains continued to run until 1980. The station, by this time re-named Dover Western Docks, gradually declined until finally it was closed on 25th September, 1994.

While Doverians must agree that the occasion is a sad one, perhaps the station is destined for a yet more splendid future as a magnificent Cruise Liner Terminal, which will bring as many visitors to Dover as passed this way at the height of the station's eminence.

MERRIL LILLEY

*Three of our members and Bob Ratcliffe have contributed their memories of the Marine Station and Dover Harbour.*



## THE GOLDEN ARROW

ALAN ASHMAN

**I**N THE EARLY post-war years the Marine Station came to life when the Golden Arrow train from Victoria arrived.

Porters lined Platform 3, baggage barrows at the ready, jostling for the privilege of carrying the luggage of the wealthy passengers to the ships.

The clever ones would have already positioned themselves exactly opposite the pre-ordained position of the Pullman carriage doors and the more experienced porters could pile suitcases and trunks so high on the barrows that their visibility forwards was severely restricted, much against the orders so often repeated by the Stationmaster.