

Report of the March Meeting

The meeting on March 25th followed the same pattern as that of the last two years, with an address by a visiting speaker in the first half of the evening and a group session for members in the second half. The speaker this year was John Turgoose of Dover Harbour Board, describing the development of the new cruise terminal. In the discussion groups which followed the main subject discussed was a "shopping list" for Dover, after the departure of the IMPACT team this summer. Members also, as usual, suggested ideas for future trips and meetings. This exercise is always an invaluable help to the social planning committee.

There follows a list of the ideas submitted by members for the IMPACT "shopping list" and an account of the talk by John Turgoose, contributed by May Jones.

Dover's Cruise Terminal – MAY JONES

As soon as I saw a superb colour slide appear on the screen I knew we were going to enjoy John Turgoose's talk. The slide showed a wonderful aerial shot of the Port of Dover from the south-west, taken under perfect conditions, with the water a deep blue-green and the cliffs at their whitest. It suggested an attractive location of a non-industrial port, which, together with Vera Lynn's wartime success with a popular song, endears the port to its main cruise customers, the Americans. There are few other ports in the world to match this setting and these factors have given it a marketing advantage since 1993, when cruise liners again began to use Dover as a Port of Call.

The speaker described the development of the Cruise Terminal and the Harbour Board's latest services, illustrating his points throughout with excellent views of the port. With the demise of the jetfoil and the train ferry, the cruise liner activity had proved a sound replacement. Cruise companies were first approached in 1990 and by the summer of 1994 both the Statendam and the Vistafjord had made Dover a port of call.

Berthing place at Eastern Docks was at a premium however and shipping movement had to be very speedy. On one day last year the Black Prince sailed at 6pm, a banana boat docked at 8pm, was cleared during the night and the berth was ready for the next arrival the following morning.

Obviously a special cruise liner terminal was essential. The Harbour Board had two options; the expensive creation of land in the relatively deep water of the harbour or the use of an existing area. They were fortunate in owning the freehold of the Dover Marine Station land, but the building was listed and much work was necessary, as it was in poor condition when it was handed back in 1995. The first report was unfavourable, but a local architect, Trevor Gibbens, appreciated the potential of the site and he proceeded with plans for the development. The Harbour Board obtained the blessing of English Heritage and the Secretary of State for the Environment. The plan could go ahead.

The Marine Station was built on one of the first pieces of harbour reclamation, begun on October 30th 1909, with granite setts laid to form a wall around the area, to be infilled with chalk. By September 21st, 1913, the railway lines were laid, the steel frames of the great station building were in place, ready for the coming of the South Eastern and Chatham Railway (later the Southern Railway). One photograph showed the Golden Arrow in 1936, with its William Shakespeare engine.

The station originally occupied three and a half acres but only a quarter of that was needed for the cruise terminal. The buildings at the southern end, additions to the original, were demolished and some brick-

work was removed to expose the steel frame which needed repair. The visible painted sections were shot blasted to clean and repair them and the red, white and blue paint removed and replaced by the former fawns and browns. A mezzanine floor was created for the passenger lounge, with a tinted glass roof. Display panels were erected in front of the boundary division. Baggage handling is now at ground level and the rest of the building provides covered car parking, with the railway lines buried (as required by English Heritage). Outside a paved area provides parking for coaches and a canopy protects passengers entering the building. The elegant War Memorial to employees of the Southern Railway, retained as a feature of the terminal, can be viewed to advantage from the departure lounge.

Dredging has made it possible to extend the quay space for the largest cruise liners. Mr. Turgoose listed some of the ships which are expected in Dover this year. The Black Prince, of Fred Olsen Lines, will be joined later in the year by the Black Watch. For these Dover will be the home port and they have the greatest number of calls, 30 in this year. Costa Line of Genoa will also use Dover as a home port for some of its ships, the Costa Allegra and the Costa Marina, running regular cruises to the Norwegian fjords, the Baltic and St. Petersburg. The Norwegian Crown, with 1200 passengers, was due to call on 4th May, and eight more times this year. The largest vessel expected in 1996, the Royal Princess, with 1300 passengers, would call nine times and the Island Princess twice. Norwegian Lines would make 21 calls altogether and Princess Lines 11s. Cunard's Royal Viking Sun, with the best rating in the world, was due to call three times.

Mr. Turgoose spoke of some of the advantages which may have disposed cruise companies in favour of Dover. In an expanding industry, Dover was as yet little known, but, in its favour, the terminal was ready for use, whereas some other ports, such as Genoa, Amsterdam, Copenhagen and Greenwich, were still building and their facilities were not complete. Although

Southampton is nearer to Heathrow, Dover has easy access to Gatwick Airport via the M20 and to routes on the eastern side of the country via the M25 Thames crossing. Every cruise line had been visited by the cruise team and these advantages made clear.

A local Cruise Welcome Group has been set up to explore ways of coping with the increased number of visitors to the town on a day when a cruise liner is calling, with sometimes up to 1200 passengers. The "ground-handlers" needed to know what coach tours have been arranged and to have details of local attractions. Many tours are pre-booked ahead from the ship, with London being a popular choice, especially for Americans. Canterbury attracts many more.

Dover Castle is one of the most popular places to visit but can accommodate only 700 people at a time, Canterbury Cathedral perhaps 1000. What happens when there are two large liners in port at the same time? Everything has to be fitted in to a 12 hour stay, normally from 7am to 7pm. Only Russian ships stay longer, for about 36 hours. Many passengers, perhaps a quarter or a third of them, like to make their own arrangements, using local taxis or buses or walking to local attractions. This is expected to grow.

While passengers are ashore, food and water supplies have to be taken aboard. Local companies (though not individual shops) provide a great deal of the fresh produce, but milk comes from the Netherlands. Water is delivered, via the new main laid through the town, at the rate of 200 tonnes per hour.

Local traders, said Mr. Turgoose, must market themselves and encourage visitors into the town itself. Often the ship's crews are the best customers. Living, as many of them do, on board for six to nine months, they want to buy basic needs like stationery, toiletries and electrical goods. The largest known purchase to date has been a washing machine!

"Tourism alone", said our speaker, "cannot solve all Dover's unemployment problems. New firms and factories are needed, then with greater employment improved shopping facilities will follow".

For local people there will be no access to the terminal when a vessel is in dock. There is a "meet and greet" area where people can contact friends among the passengers. At any time the Prince of Wales

Pier provides an ideal vantagepoint to watch the liners arrive and depart.

Note: A list of cruise ships with the dates of their visits is posted at the entrance to the Prince of Wales Pier. ◊

Shopping List for IMPACT

Suggestions made by Dover Society members at the Meeting on 25 March

Areas still in need of attention

- 1 London Rd./High St. and environs. Cherry Tree Ave. area. Beaconsfield Road.
One suggestion was that empty shops could be converted to residential use.
- 2 Remainder of the Sea Front.
- 3 Riverside Walk still needs further work. Steps/bowling green area.
- 4 Many pavements in need of attention. e.g. East Cliff and London Road.

Restoration/Conservation/Upkeep

- 1 Poster boards at York Street roundabout to go.
- 2 The Painted House needs a facelift.
- 3 Restore the fountains in the Sea Front area.
- 4 Flower beds near Law Courts.
- 5 Rosebed at the rear of St. Mary's Church.
- 6 B. & Q.'s river frontage.
- 7 Bollards to prevent parking outside Proteus House.
- 8 Remove advertisements on Kwiksave building.
- 9 Friday Market site needs attention (now abandoned??)
- 10 Woolcomber Street/Townwall Street junction.
- 11 Generally more attention to cleanliness and litter clearance everywhere.
Could the Council keep the fronts of empty shops swept clean?
Could shop owners be asked to keep their pavements clean and shop fronts smart? (Council/Chamber of Commerce?)

Ideas for new projects.

- 1 Red/Yellow/Green footprints to places of interest.
- 2 Better access to Castle - bus or lift
- 3 Car park for Connaught Park.
- 4 Big signpost and big map in the Market Square.
- 5 Dog litter bins.
- 6 Regular bus service to Castle and Connaught Park, starting at Market Square.

Pipe Dreams

- 1 Persuade Woolworths to return.
 - 2 Persuade market traders to return to the Market Square.
 - 3 Demolish Burlington House.
 - 4 Demolish 1950s properties in the Market Square and create a Millennium Square enhancing the White Cliffs Experience
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