

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-