

Letters to the Editor

45

Sandgate
June 1996

37 Tower Hamlets Road
Dover
17th June 1996

Dear Editor,

Mr Breeze's letter in the April issue of the *Newsletter* took me back to a Saturday afternoon soon after I came to Dover in 1950, when I was invited to join a group visiting the Train Ferry Dock.

We non-Dovorians were fascinated to see the skilful way in which the captain manœuvred his vessel between the dock walls with apparently only inches to spare, how the dock gates were lifted up behind it and the water gradually rose to the level at which unloading could begin.

Long before that stage was reached, however, the ship's crew had jumped ashore with their bicycles and pedalled off into the town to buy coffee and anything else un-rationed and cheaper than on their own side of the Channel, returned triumphantly with their carrier bags and resumed their duties.

The British Rail engine puffed on board to haul off the two halves of the train, neatly arranged on either side of the vessel from where the freight was taken to its initial destination (refrigerated fruit wagons, for instance, to the Hither Green sidings in South-East London).

As a student I had been intrigued by the railway carriage advertisements for the Night Ferry - the business man's train to the Continent - Dinner in London - Breakfast in Paris, but had to content myself with the daytime passenger service - a standard and at times uncomfortable alternative in the pre-stabilizer days and one which landed me at Koln about 5 am.

My last view of the Train Ferry was from the Langdon Cliffs one warm summer evening last year when a sleek red vessel crossed the harbour to No. 1 berth after the cruise liner *Costa Marina* had sailed. I was surprised that it was still operating and would not have known of its demise in December if I had not been a member of the Dover Society.

Thank you, Bill, for bringing me up-to-date.

MAY F. JONES

Dear Editor,

Reading about, and seeing, the controversial sheep in Maidstone High Street, reminds me of an idea I sent to Dover District Council about a year ago which I thought might be something useful for the tourist "think tank".

In view of Dover's connections with the famous bluebirds from the popular song, I suggested that a good boost for tourism might be some concrete silhouettes of bluebirds in flight implanted on a few green sites on the cliff tops visible in the town and out at sea. Once in place maintenance would not be costly with possible volunteers sweeping the "birds" and touching-up the paint occasionally.

My second part to supplement the above was for similar "pictures" to be embedded in, or made up from, tiles in the Biggin Street and Cannon Street precincts and the Market Square. Bluebirds in flight with captions: "There'll be bluebirds over . . ."

There could be a number of spin-offs from this, souvenir ceramics, ashtrays, key rings, T-shirts, etc. Dover seems to lack good souvenirs - why not promote the bluebirds?

Howabout a small bluebird festival yearly with competitions for the kids? I believe there is already a Bluebird dance troupe in the town! Ideas are endless.

Unfortunately, my idea was turned down. Reasons given were: town and country planning, statutes protecting the White Cliffs and impracticability.

This bizarre floral sheep, not to mention the cut-out cows now well established on the roundabout at Ashford, seem to make my idea sound all the more sane and probable.

Through this letter I hope to revive some interest and possibly to make the Council think again, especially about part two if the cliff-top "birds" are not feasible.

I only have the good of Dover at heart - we really do need more tourism. What do members think?

Yours sincerely,

A. W. WHITAMORE KNOWN AS DICK WHITAMORE

