

Two pertinent Topics – Two well-informed Speakers:

1 JOHN MOIR on “Dover Today”

Reported by R. J. MEARES

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE of Dover District Council was in humorous mood, stating that he had only been asked to come along as a warm-up act for Peter Clark of C.A.T. On a more serious note he said that over the years of his association with the Dover Society he had always found the group to be immensely constructive and helpful.

Turning to the subject matter for the evening Mr Moir said that he held a very optimistic view as Dover turned the corner and moved towards the new millennium. There had been extensive investment in Dover ensuring that it remained a vital link between this country and the continent of Europe.

The M20 currently carried some 50% of the total M2/M20 motorway link traffic and those whose job it was to know such things anticipate that this would increase by some 40% over the next five years..

One of the unfortunate side effects of the creation of the improved M20 link and the dramatic events in the Channel Tunnel had been the backlog of lorry traffic at certain times which caused problems for drivers using the Snargate St. access route. Mr Moir noted that the original emergency planning anticipated a maximum of 600 lorries per day, whilst this in practice had risen to 1700 lorries per day because of the fire in the tunnel .

Improved road links and Assisted Area Status had brought much funding into the area and additional funding was and would continue to be pursued.

Having successfully bid for SRB 1 funding the District had now been awarded SRB 3 funding, this being concerned with the regeneration of the Kent coalfield.

Mr Moir stated that the Council was being steered by the government towards extended partnership arrangements and

that SRB 3 would involve up to twelve partners. It was, however, one of the resultant problems that the more partners you have the more difficult communications become, resulting in increased costs and delays.

Mr Moir went on to review the many ongoing developments in the District. He said that Pfizer at Sandwich currently employed some 2,300 people and plans for expansion, yet to be ratified by the parent company, might result in the generation of a further 1,000 jobs. D.H.B.'s cruise liner terminal had been very successful and in excess of 10,000 cruise passengers had passed through the terminal in 1996.

The development of factory shopping in the Western Docks had in its turn been so successful that it was proposed to bring forward Phase Two of this development. Lack of car parking on D.H.B. land had to a certain extent hindered its development and the historic slipway would have to be sacrificed in order to facilitate further car parking. Plans to extend lorry parking at the Eastern docks were currently being considered by the Council which had asked for a more sympathetic style of development for the new retaining sea wall

Overseas interest in Dover's development continued to be pursued and at the time at which John Moir spoke the proposed purchase by Millennium Holdings was still a possibility.

Future proposals for Burlington House were being pursued by the Council who had engaged lawyers to assist in sorting out the situation although it was inevitable that progress will be slow,

At Archcliffe Fort, the home of the Emmaus Trust, refurbishing of the premises was progressing well, aided, we were informed, at least externally, by a herd of goats. From the floor of the meeting we were advised by Terry Sutton (goat herder in chief?) that these animals were very cheap to keep and indeed generated income from English Heritage.

The White Cliffs Experience would probably to re-open at Easter, following extensive refurbishment of the major displays, giving, it was hoped, a "tighter" visitor attraction. Some twelve months thereafter it was proposed that the Bronze Age Boat gallery would open to the public.

On a slightly less optimistic note Mr Moir expressed concern that cuts in KCC funding would inevitably impact adversely on the Town Centre Management Scheme although it was acknowledged that it was very important to sustain the scheme's momentum in spite of the financial cutbacks.

He said the formation of the Dover Town Council would be very important to the future development of the town itself.

Looking to the future John Moir noted that Dover was formulating its plans for the Millennium but was not proposing to publicise these plans until they were "fleshed out". He then itemised some of the other projects that he believed would come to the fore, all or some of which would benefit from input from the Dover Society.

In the future it was proposed to submit a bid for lottery funding to assist in the renovation of the Maison Dieu which was to be recreated as far as possible in line with William Burgess's original scheme.

Kearsney Abbey café ("not everyone's cup of tea!!") was to be repaired, not torn down and replaced, as rumours would have it.

It was felt that car parking at Dover Castle was in need of improvement and,

after lengthy discussion, Northfall Meadow was the best site. The public would then access the Castle by the Fitzwilliam Gate. It was hoped that such a development would encompass the clearance of the area around the Bleriot Memorial and the Edinburgh Bastion.

On the Western Heights the Pilots Tower site had yet to be cleared and in the longer term it was still recognised that a sympathetic development of the area around the top of the Grand Shaft was required.

There is a proposal for a Millennium woodland to be established and this project had the support of the Woodland Trust.

There then followed a short question and answer session.

In response to a request for car parking within Connaught Park Mr. Moir was able to confirm that such a proposal had been costed several years ago but at that time was felt to be prohibitively expensive. He undertook, however, to look again at such a possibility.

One of the members suggested that Dover College should be included in the list of the District's tourist attractions as he himself had experienced how our foreign visitors delighted in visiting the college. Mr Moir stated that the college authorities were involved in development planning but that in respect of the college itself any proposals regarding public access would be subject to their final decision.

'Park and Ride' in Dover was still under active consideration although as yet there was still some town centre parking space available. Mr Moir did note that Canterbury's experiences in this respect had not all been favourable.

Dirty, empty town centre shops were of concern to the Council but unfortunately it did not have the power to take enforcement action.

Finally, in response to questions regarding the Little Farthingloe site, John Moir noted that he believed the site was still zoned for industrial development although as yet there had been no movement in this respect.

I have spoken to the forward planning officers at Dover District Council who confirm that the site is identified in the Dover and Western Parishes Plan as having Employment Allocation status. This however is being reviewed as the Dover-wide plan is being prepared and unless current permissions are taken up, or renewals requested, it is likely that the current permissions as they relate to Little Farthingloe will be omitted).

Any member who has a particular interest in this site is referred to the deposit plan para. refs. 3.27 and 3.28.

PETER CLARK on

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THE DOVER BRONZE AGE BOAT

THE RESEARCH PROGRAMME

THE DISCOVERY of the Dover Bronze Age Boat in September 1992 was an unexpected and unprecedented find that captured the imagination of people around the world. Buried some seven metres below the streets of Dover, an oak boat nearly 3,000 years old, in a perfect state of preservation, was revealed during the construction of a pedestrian underpass under the A20 at the seaward end of Bench Street.

The story of its discovery and excavation is a dramatic one. A team of archaeologists from the Canterbury Archæological Trust, working alongside the contractors and staff from Dover Museum, Dover Harbour Board, English Heritage and many others recorded and lifted the boat in just fifteen days, often working fifteen hour days to retrieve this unique and internationally important find.

Once the excitement of discovery was over, and the boat safely stored in a water tank to inhibit decay, I was asked to prepare a programme of study and research so that we might realise the potential of this remarkable find. This was not as easy as it might appear; no comparable finds had been made which could guide us, and techniques used on other ancient boats were not appropriate, as they were generally much later finds of very different construction. After a great deal of consultation and discussion with a wide range of experts, a six-year programme of study was agreed with English Heritage (who funded both the excavation and the research),

involving a team of over thirty specialists. This work is expected to be completed in 1999 with the publication of a major academic monograph on all aspects of the discovery.

In essence, the boat consists of two broad, flat oak planks forming the base of the boat, with two flanking curved planks creating the beginnings of the boat's sides. Further side planks would have increased the depth of the boat, but these had been removed in antiquity. The end of the boat splayed out into a broad "V" which would originally have held a flat board - this, too, had been removed at the time of abandonment. As found, the boat was around 2.3 metres broad and about 9 metres long; the northern end of the boat was not recovered and we can only guess at its original length. Current estimates suggest that we have about two-thirds of the vessel, which would thus have been about 14 metres long. (46 feet).

No metal was used in its construction: the bottom planks were joined by a number of wedges and "transverse timbers" hammered through upstanding