

# Cruising Out of Dover

## "DOVER WILL BECOME THE GREATEST PORT OF CALL IN THE WORLD"

*A report by Keith Southey of Dover Harbour Board*

**"Dover will become the greatest port of call in the world and nothing can interfere with it on account of its geographical position as it lies in the centre of the highway between the east and the west."**

- Not my words, but those of Albert Ballin, Director General of the Hamburg-Amerika Line, at a meeting with Dover Harbour Board in 1904. In those days Dover was on the transatlantic cruising map as a main embarkation point.

Although few would argue with the second half on the quotation, the first half gives us something to which we can aspire, although Mr. Ballin did add one very important rider - "...when all the works in contemplation by the Harbour Board have been carried out..."

I wonder what the management of the port had in mind when that meeting took place almost 100 years ago.

Certainly the renovation and conversion of the Western Docks railway station into a cruise liner terminal has equipped the port with a facility envied and admired the world over. In April of this year the Board took a bold step

in deciding to invest £17.5 million in a second terminal seawards of the existing facility.

AMEC Marine, a specialist operating division of AMEC Civil Engineering Limited, commenced work on this Millennium Project in May and the terminal is due to open in April 2000. It will be

Artist's impression of the new terminal



constructed on a widened section of the Admiralty Pier. A series of tubular piles supporting a reinforced concrete deck will achieve this.

Before this work can commence the bridgeworks of the redundant train ferry berth must be dismantled and stored for possible re-use at another location at Western Docks.

AMEC will design and construct the terminal building, which will offer a first floor lounge seating 1,200 passengers. Beneath the lounge will be 2,000 square metres of baggage handling space.

While it is hoped that the architects will come up with a design pleasing to the eye, an important element will be the capability of the building to withstand the extreme adverse weather conditions, which, as we all know, occasionally affect the site.

Let us hope that Dover Harbour Board is steering a course which meets with Albert Ballin's vision for the port.

## *A Selection of Comments from Residents of Dover District on their Experiences of Cruising Out of Dover*

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THE PREVIOUS YEAR our holiday had been preceded by a long, boring road journey to Harwich, where, on arrival, we were treated to the delights of the "British Rail" type facilities which did little to convince us that a super holiday awaited us on the other side of the barrier. This year we were off on a Scandinavian cruise but we were starting and finishing at the new Dover Cruise Terminal. We did not know what to expect.

What would it be like and how would it compare to Harwich?

A short 10 minute car trip with a kind neighbour found us at the old Western Docks. The first thing we noticed was the space for car parking, so that we could unload in comfort, and the plentiful array of direction signs to ease our passage. Initially we were greeted by a friendly and helpful porter who took our luggage through to the departure point. We were then welcomed by a cruise line official who quickly and efficiently checked our reservation details and welcomed us to the departure lounge.

At once we noticed the bright, clean and comfortable area created by the architect and Dover Harbour Board for passengers to await embarkation. It would be churlish to find fault as all the facilities needed by the departing passenger were catered for, refreshments areas, comfortable and cheery seating and plenty of relevant information ensured that all passengers were in the right frame of mind to enjoy their holiday.

The holiday to Scandinavia on the Fred Olsen line "Black Prince" lived up to its well deserved reputation and the beauty and splendour of the fiords left memories that time will not dim. Life on board ship can never be boring, there is always someone willing to entertain you, whether it be a simple coffee and biscuit or a super show after a celebration dinner. The only danger is you can easily eat too much and then the clothes you have brought for the gala evenings will no longer fit!

All too soon the end of the trip was in sight and we approached Dover and the cruise terminal. Once again the service was first class, plenty of staff to help, willing porters to take your luggage to a waiting taxi and then a 10 minute journey home. Cruising from Dover has given a whole new meaning to the term "a holiday cruise"! G.P



WE HAD NEVER BEEN ON A CRUISE, but a tour around the new Dover Cruise Terminal sparked our interest, and in May 1997 we embarked on the Black Watch for a fortnight's cruise to Scandinavia. The short taxi drive from Deal to the terminal was a relaxing way to start a holiday, and progress through the boarding formalities was so much smoother than Heathrow or Gatwick.

We saw some spectacular scenery and visited four capital cities during our trip, but the most lasting memory is of the Scandinavian people and their friendly welcome - the Bergen town band's rendition of "When the Saints Come Marching In" as we docked; the teenagers we met on Mount Floyen above the city who wanted to talk football with us; Oslo on Norwegian National Day, when we had a prime view of the parades of schoolchildren in their local costumes; and the very chatty Danish couple at the next table in the Copenhagen restaurant where we had lunch (which made up for finding the Tivoli Gardens a bit tatty).

It was a joy to be able to return to our "floating hotel" after each trip ashore. We found it an incredibly relaxing way of touring but always with so much to do on board if one chose to. And the bonus was that, on arriving back at Dover, we were virtually home.

*M.R.*



The CRYSTAL SYMPHONY, one of the largest cruise ships to dock at Dover

A FEW YEARS AGO I decided to take a cruise to Norway, departing from Dover. I left home at 1.30p.m. and took a taxi to the docks, where I was met by a representative of the travel company. A bus took me to the dockside, my luggage was whisked away to my cabin and I was on holiday and it was only 2 o'clock, just half an hour from leaving home.

The cruise was splendid and after nine days of sheer luxury we arrived back in Dover. The passengers came down the gangway into waiting buses, went speedily through customs and out to the taxi rank. Within an hour I was back home again. Sheer bliss.

If you live in the Dover area, cruising from here is wonderful. When I can afford it I will do it again.

N.G.



CRUISING TO THE BALTIC from Dover Eastern Docks in 1993 aboard Cunard's VISTAFJORD and subsequently returning from an arctic cruise on the same ship in 1997 to the new cruise terminal in Western Docks invites comparative comment.

Berthing on arrival has become much slicker and the reception area ashore more attractive and welcoming, comparing most favourably with the best of other ports of call and indeed being considerably superior to many.

Staff manning the terminal were cheerfully professional and eager to help disembarking passengers. Altogether the new terminal gives a favourable first impression of the U.K., complementary to the exceptional panoramic setting of the white cliffs.

Whilst coach transfers are the norm in many cruise ports, viewed from the cruise liner passengers' perspective, Dover's infrastructure at present lacks an efficient rail link with London and the airports. This seems a pity when the mainline track and redundant railway station remain in close proximity to the cruise terminal.

Needless to say, we were thankful that for us home was but a five minute taxi ride away.

J.O.



Returning from an arctic cruise to the new terminal at the Western Docks

## Newsletter Binders

With the co-operation of Members we will be able to supply "Cordex" Binders for the *Newsletter*. The burgundy coloured binders have a capacity for 13 copies and are lettered on the spine "The Dover Society Newsletter" in gilt foil.

The minimum order we can place is 100 and a list is being complied of those who would like to have one. (At the moment we have fifteen names). When the list has, say, eighty names the binders will be placed on order. The cost, (likely to be a few pence more than last time's figure of £3.00) does not include postage for out-of-town members.

To add your name to the list write a note to the Secretary, Leo Wright, at "Beechwood", Green Lane, Dover CT16 3AR.

## DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS

The last date for the receipt of copy for issue No. 33 will be Monday 19th October.

The Editor welcomes contributions and interesting drawings or photographs.

"Paper copy" should be typed at double spacing - if it must be hand written please write clearly and at wide line spacing.

Accurate fully proof-read "copy" on computer discs is most welcome - almost all types can be handled - but a prior phone call to 01304 208008 to confirm would be helpful.

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## Society Badges

The wearing of a Society Badge reminds the general public (who really do have eyes to see) that the Society is a viable and energetic non-political voice for Dover. The beautiful little enamelled Lapel or Brooch Badges are to Philomena Kennedy's original design, in black on a white ground, surrounded by a gold line defining the shape of the badge and are available from the Treasurer, in either type, for £2 post free.

Just contact the Treasurer, Jennifer Gerrard, at 77 Castle Avenue, or phone her on 206579 (with a cheque or P.O. if possible) and she will very quickly ensure that a badge is in your hands.