

photographs of the many and varied cross channel vessels which plied over the years between Dover and the French and Belgium ports and which of course were instrumental in the development of the Port of Dover. This selection of photographs brought home dramatically to the audience how the ship types changed in size from sailing craft to small paddle steamers, to the early turbine steamers dwarfed by the Marine Station and other port installations, through to the early motor ships and eventually the coming of the huge multi-purpose ships of today which themselves now dwarf the port installations. As Bob said 'there is nothing beautiful about the present slab sided vessels'. I think I have to concur.

After the interval Terry Sutton, in his inimitable style, spoke of the half century he had been a reporter in the town. He recalled when he started work, after completing his military service, he joined the Dover Express in July 1949 at a time when there was still much rationing and much of the town remained in ruins after the war. At that time the Dover Express, based in Snargate Street, had its printing works at the back of the office and only a matter of hours divided the time of the deadline and the newspaper being sold on the streets.

Terry, still working part-time on the newspaper, recalled memories of some of the strange people he had met over the years, memories of famous people he had interviewed and of course memories of the many varied and dramatic changes which have taken place in the town and port. He also gave an insight into a number of national newspapers he had worked for and also radio and television. He still occasionally contributes to these news outlets.

An interesting evening with a wealth of information and nostalgia for the audience.

THE NOVEMBER MEETING

THERE WERE TWO SPEAKERS at the meeting at St. Mary's Parish Centre on November 22nd, John Moir and Lillian Kay. In the interval there were the usual refreshments and raffle and Lillian Kay signed copies of the new book, which she has written with Derek Leach, entitled *The Life and Times of a Dovorian*.

Millennium Dover A talk by John Moir

Reported by Lesley Gordon

The first talk of the evening was by John Moir, since 1984 Chief Executive of Dover District Council, which now runs a £60 million gross budget.

His first task was to update the members of the Society on the current state of various schemes, including the Heritage Scheme for old buildings, a joint enterprise with English Heritage and Kent Council, now progressing after a late start. As part of this scheme Dover's long shopping street could, he said, eventually be transformed, like Snargate Street.

He went on to say that he hoped the South East England Development Agency would help the Council achieve a big impact with the proposals for the St. James' area of the town. The Council's aim is to support developments which will bring people back into the town centre, both for commerce and to live, with environmental enhancement to support both. The White Cliffs Experience had helped serve this purpose by attracting people to the town but attendances were now falling after 10 years and consultants are looking at options for different attractions. With the new cruise terminal, De Bradlei Wharf and Woolworth, etc. the town centre showed signs of becoming self sufficient.

The Council is in discussion with Arjo Wiggins about the future of the paper mill. The Local Plan inspectors have reported on plans for the Royal Marines School of Music site and there is agreement with the developer on what would be acceptable. He

10 welcomed the new manager of the Town Centre Management organisation, saying that "arms length" bodies like this and the Dover Society could, together, achieve much which the District Council could not.

He reported that plans for the Millennium celebrations in the town were well underway, with a festival of clocks, processions, fireworks and the Flame of Bethlehem arriving at Dover churches. The National Trust are fearful that there might be an overload of visitors to the Cliffs to catch a sight of the first rays of the millennium dawn and he warned that traffic exclusion zones might be needed. Dover District Council has accepted decriminalisation of parking which transfers control of on street parking from police to the Council. He hoped that residents parking schemes would eventually be an additional bonus to encourage people to live in the town centre. He foresaw parking measures which would end the lorry problem on the sea front.

Some good news was that SEEDA (South East England Development Agency) had produced a regional economic strategy which placed two of its seven priority areas in East Kent. One is the A256 Sandwich corridor which affects the expanding firm of Pfizer, now the biggest single employer in the district with 1500 additional jobs now and another 1500 likely later. SEEDA, which has already been involved with the Council at the Western Heights, will be taking over the three former colliery sites

Tilmanstone first - to provide small employment units and landscaping. Housing and highway infrastructure are major concerns and KCC and other agencies are all pitching in to help solve problems.

McLaren are finally moving forward at Lydden Circuit and parts of its new sports car, being developed in conjunction with Mercedes, will be produced at Lydden and the car will be tested and demonstrated on

the circuit there. Initial expectations are of 150 jobs.

Three or four of the new small industrial units adjoining the Council's offices (provided jointly with SEEDA) are under offer and Dover Harbour Board is rapidly developing the Old Park site nearby. Only Phase three of the White Cliffs Business Park is still in need of development.

Mr. Moir hoped that the aspirations of local people over the next ten years would be high enough to take advantage of the new opportunities which would require new skills and training. The world has moved on and traditional jobs are giving way to new ones requiring these new skills, especially IT literacy.

Looking forward to the next century, Mr. Moir anticipated improvements in rail services which he hoped the High Speed Rail Link would bring. A second channel tunnel or crossing was, he felt, inevitable by 2020. He thought that Dover, with its new investments and prospects was well placed to cope and was a fitting place, in view of its long history, to see in the new millennium.

After his talk, questioned about the lack of quality hotels in the area, Mr Moir said that he thought there might be a good market for small scale conferences locally, on which first class hotels relied, but it was a chicken-and-egg situation. However, Pfizer was experiencing problems in accommodating their own conferences and he believed something might come from this.

Asked whether lack of aspiration in parts of the community was due to the fact that, since the last war, many high flown plans had come to nought, he reminded his audience that, whilst physically Dover was often of marginal interest to commercial developers, being a coastal town, the personal aspirations of its people could be a key factor in bringing prosperity, but he felt it might take two or three generations to turn matters around.

Commenting on a question about

ministerial intervention increasing the original SERPLAN estimate of new housing requirements in the South East to 1.1 million units, he felt that Ashford would be the town most affected in Kent, although Councils were being urged to loosen village "envelopes". On the future of the existing system of local government, he recalled that a regional assembly for the South East would require a referendum in favour. If that were to come about, then unitary authorities would be required and both KCC and districts like Dover would probably disappear. This was a fate he was not prepared to lament, favouring as he did an East Kent authority based on Canterbury. However, Government audit requirements that new systems should not cost additional money were unlikely to favour change.

Responding to another question on eyesores in the town which were likely to inhibit potential developers, he hinted obliquely that two of these, Burlington House and the Bench Street newsagents site, were both the subjects of negotiation, which he hoped would bring results, although he felt unable to expand further.

In proposing a vote of thanks Mrs. Lesley Gordon remarked on how cooperation between a number of different agencies seemed to be the new order of the day. She expressed gratitude to Mr. Moir for a lucid explanation of current and future plans for the district.

Christmases Remembered

A talk by Lillian Kay

Reported by Merril Lilley

Before taking us on a nostalgic trip through her memories of all the Christmases which stood out for her, Lillian Kay gave us a brief but fascinating glimpse of the history of Christmas and some of the customs that go with it.

It was in 350AD that Pope Gregory designated the 25th December Christmas Day, but it was 597AD before we in Britain knew anything about it, at which time it

was called Christ's Mass. The continent already celebrated it. Perhaps St. Augustine introduced it here.

The Vikings called it YULE and brought us the boar's head, evergreens indoors and the blazing log (hence Yule log!) After 1066 the courts held splendid spectacles at Christmas and indulged in long, extravagant feasts. In 1252 Henry V had 600 oxen roasted for a feast. In 1482, at Eltham Palace, Edward IV entertained 2000 guests for 12 days. They had 1000 sheep, 2000 swans, 6 boars, 400 peacocks, 4000 dishes of jelly, 1000 venison pasties, 500 calves, 1000 geese, 2000 hot custards and countless other delicacies.

Henry VIII spent some Christmases in Kent and accounts of the revelry include a recipe for cooking peacocks. They were stuffed with spices and sweet herbs, basted with egg yolks and when they were cool they were decorated with the King's Arms and gold leaf and the beak was gilded. Accounts of all these events include incredible lists of all the food cooked and prepared for the feasts. Queen Elizabeth the First once had seven plays by Shakespeare performed at the court at Christmas.

Under Oliver Cromwell Christmas virtually disappeared, being dubbed "part popish idolatry and part secular licentiousness". Cromwell abolished Christmas and outlawed plum puddings and mince pies in a statute which has never been repealed! Town criers were sent out, calling "No Christmas. No Christmas"

With the Restoration came wassail and games like Blind Man's Buff. With Victoria and Albert came the Christmas tree - introduced by Albert. In 1840 Christmas cards came into being, when the customary "calling cards" were printed with Christmas additions. Also in Victorian times people began to use half-penny stamps, old carols were revived, churches were decorated and people took joints to the bakers to be cooked. Characters from Dickens celebrated