

40 Experience include the popular Pavement Picasso street art competition, Victorian Stained Glass and World War II Rag Rug Making workshops.

Saturday 3 June will see an afternoon of art and music in the Guildhall Square in Sandwich. The carnival street band, Brew Ha Ha, will entertain passers by, while artists exhibit their work in the open air.

Throughout the festival week, the Open Studios and Artists' Houses scheme will be running. You will be able to explore the wealth of hidden artistic talent behind the scenes and even see artists' work in progress. A guide to the Open Studios and Houses, along with photos of the artists' work, will be featured in the *Art & Soul* Guide. Running along side this will be a gallery and exhibition programme, highlighting local galleries and exhibitions taking place across the district.

Art & Soul will coincide with the Dunkirk Sixtieth Anniversary Weekend, which takes place in Dover Town Centre and on the seafront over the May Bank Holiday Weekend. Among the attractions taking place will be a series of commemorative events including open-air concerts, a vehicle rally, fireworks, an evacuees' reunion and World War II re-enactments at Dover Castle. There will also be a chance to see the Dunkirk Little Ships in Dover Marina for most of the week.

A full Festival programme will be available from mid April at all local outlets, including libraries and Tourist Information Centres. However, if you would like to register for your advance copy of the programme, please call the Festival Hotline on 01304 375192.

'FERRY FOCUS'

REPORT

Christopher Burrows • East Kent Ferry Club

P&O STENA LINE

Dover-based P&O Stena Line which is Dover's biggest employer laid off some 290 employees from its Dover-Calais service during the course of January. The first to go were 140 employees on the company's flagship *P&OSL Aquitaine* in early January, whilst another 160 employees lost their jobs in late January, when the *P&OSL Picardy* was withdrawn.

P&O Stena has revealed that it is conducting preliminary investigations into the replacement of existing tonnage in the next couple of years by two 30,000-ton ferries. If ordered the new ferries will be the first new tonnage for Dover services since P&O European Ferries' 1993-built *Pride of Burgundy*, now the *P&OSL Burgundy*. The order for the new tonnage would most likely go to a German yard and the ferries would be in service by 2004. The introduction might see the demise of the *P&OSL Kent* and *P&OSL Canterbury* which are now the company's oldest fleet units.

SEAFRANCE

By the time you read this report, Seafrance should have completed the annual refit programme for its four passenger ferries, the Nord-Pas-de-Calais, the Cezanne, the Renoir and the Manet.

The French government has increased Seafrance's subsidies to enable the Paris-based company to counter any adverse affects, resulting from the loss of duty and tax free sales, as Seafrance derived some 40% of its operating income from the tax perk. Seafrance is also considering ordering new tonnage for its Dover-Calais service, provided the French government approve a Fr2 billion investment programme. In the meantime there is speculation as to the replacement of either the *Seafrance Renoir* or *Seafrance Manet* this summer by 'second hand' tonnage, Irish Ferries' *Isle of Inishmore* being a likely candidate.

HOVERSPEED FAST FERRIES

Hoverspeed, otherwise known as the 'faster car ferries' company, had a very successful 1999 season. The main success was the Dover-Oostende service which carried its millionth passenger in January 1999, less than two months before the first anniversary of the reinstatement of the historic service.

Hoverspeed is now the sole owner of the Dover-Oostende service operated by the 81 metre Seacats *Rapide* and *Diamant* following the sale of partner Holyman's 50% stake to Hoverspeed's US parent company Sea Containers.

A new underground car park has been completed in front of the terminal/station forecourt at Oostende which has been sealed by attractive paving and a set of fountains on the surface.

There is to be no Seacat service on the Dover-Calais route from 30th March as the existing Seacat *Atlantic II* is required for duties elsewhere meaning the two hovercraft will be maintaining Summer schedules alone once again. There will be one or two limited services from May to August using a Seacat from the Folkestone or Oostende runs.

NORFOLK LINE

Felixstowe-based Norfolk Line's new thrice daily Dover-Dunkerque service was due to commence in early March using a new chartered ro-ro ferry from the Cenargo Group so this may well be in operation by the time the Newsletter appears. The 180-metre *Northern Merchant*, with capacity for 115 unaccompanied freight units and 300 passengers, will depart from Dover daily at 05:00, 13:00 and 21:00, with return departures from Dunkerque at 02:00, 10:00 and 18:00. The ferry's 23 knot capability will enable a crossing time of two hours.

It is reported that Norfolk Line will be opening offices in Dover and Dunkerque and the new service will create employment for over 100 people. The managers responsible for the new service will be General Manager Wayne Bullen

and Senior Manager Alain Declercq and the ferry will be both British registered and crewed.

DOVER HARBOUR BOARD

Dover retained its position in 1999 as the leading cross-channel ferry terminus handling in the course of the year some 1,667,942 freight units, 156,000 coaches, 3,003,000 tourist cars and 18.2 million passengers. The decrease in both tourist car and passenger traffic was partly caused by the loss of tax and duty free sales at the end of June.



Lauritzen Reefers Mexican Reefer arriving at Dover in the company of the DHB tugs, Deft and Dextrous. Photograph by Michael Ashby.

At the time of writing there were fears of job losses at DHB's fruit import centre at the Eastern Arm, following the withdrawal of trade from Dover by two prominent shipping interests Lauritzen Reefers and Pacific Seaways. The two companies have switched their import interests to nearby Sheerness. The loss of trade amounts to about 90,000 fruit pallets per annum. Despite the companies' withdrawal, Dover will still be handling at least three imports a week from Costa Rica and West Africa.