

KFAS AUTUMN CONFERENCE

Rochester Corn Exchange and CTRL, 7 October, 2000

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— Jack Woolford —

THE OPENING TOPIC offered by the CITY OF ROCHESTER SOCIETY, our hosts, was TOURISM & THE ENVIRONMENT, subtitled "A Tale of two Cities" i.e Rochester and Canterbury. Aware that tourists can be an environmental liability (because of the wear-and-tear they inflict) as well as an economic asset, I anticipated documented analyses of pros and cons, inducements, deterrents and controls, and of the various roles of central and local government, of statutory authorities like English Heritage and the National Trust, and of voluntary associations like the Civic trust, the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies and (for example) the Dover Society.

What I got from David Hughes, Tourism Manager of Medway Council, and Robin Cooper, Head of Strategic Planning, Canterbury City Council, were enthusiastic sequences of (excellent) slides of the tourist attractions of the cities in turn, with interesting comparisons between respective castles and cathedrals. Most of the attractions shown must already have been familiar to the audience, but in both cases well-informed and probing questioners got expert replies. Robin Cooper joked, however, that Canterbury could be overcrowded with foreign school children and said that they might "do" the City in

the morning and be bussed to Herne Bay or Whitstable in the afternoon. As Chairman I interjected that Dover should have preference because it failed to persuade most of its annual 22 million passenger throughput to savour its comparable attractions. This got a laugh.

For the afternoon we were the guests of Bernard Gambrill of Union Railways, constructors of the Channel Tunnel Rail Link, who took us by coach to an excellent lunch at the Manor Hotel Singlewell, and then drove us to a sequence of construction sites, explaining, commenting and answering questions all the way. Unfortunately and unusually for a KFAS Conference the weather was foul so that we could not, as planned, walk across the new Medway Bridge or more than squint at a parade of gigantic earth-moving achievements. We got out despite the weather to look and to marvel at the Country Portal of the tunnel under the North Downs at Bluebell Hill which is awesome. We were also fascinated by lucid explanations of how tunnels were triple-bored, the niceties of balanced cantilevering, and the careful planting of native trees to obviate leaves on the line. The care taken to transplant buildings, safeguard woods and protect and encourage wild life are exemplary. It was a good day.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

AUTUMN 2000

THIS IS USUALLY a fallow time of year as far as membership is concerned. Summer outings are over and Autumn meetings have not yet gathered pace. Nevertheless, despite the expected and inevitable drop in numbers when some people fail to renew their subscriptions in July, our number is maintained at 410 members, thanks partly to the arrival of new members.

We welcome Miss J. and Mr.C.Francis, Mr. P. and Mrs.E. Collins, Mrs. F. and Mr.C. Tapley.

SHEILA R. COPE, Membership Secretary