

# Reports on SOCIETY EVENTS

## TRIP TO VERRERIE CRISTALLERIE D'ARQUES

by JIM FRANCIS

On Saturday 23rd September, an enthusiastic party of thirty Dover Society members set off from Pencester Bus Station at 6.15am, destination Arques, just outside Saint-Omer. To the relief of several members who were prone to "mal de mer", we were going via the Channel Tunnel.

At Cite d'Europe, just outside Calais, we were joined by three members of the Association France-Grande-Bretagne who provided useful leaflets to read on the well known provider of glass tableware at Arques, as we travelled along the Nord Pas de Calais with its canals and small rivers that abound in the Audomarois.

Before being guided round the factory we learnt from an introductory speech that the company had been established in 1825 by M. Durrand who had set up a glass-blowing cottage industry, employing his family. Production increased and he was able to employ local people. After the second world war, the Durrand family, eager to embrace new technology, travelled throughout America where they learnt the skills of mass-production. The company now employs 9000 in France and another 4000 overseas and we learnt of the company's development. This was followed by a ten minute film on the various stages of manufacture and how the company is represented on five continents through its liaison offices.

We then proceeded, with guides, around the large complex and obtained an overview of the complete production

process on the factory floor, from the molten gob to the finished article. We were told that the company manufactures nearly 5.5million items daily (or 1200 tons per day) and offers a collection of 6500 different products. By perfect control of its manufacturing process, a vast range of molded glassware is produced in both pressed and blown processes. Because each are of a high quality at affordable prices will explain why the company has grown and expanded to such a degree because each product is of a high quality at an affordable price.

Upon completion of the tour, we each received a small gift as a memento of our visit. Those who decided to make a purchase on any item manufactured by the company on sale in the shop on site, were allowed a 20% discount.

Soon we were in Saint-Omer seated in the Restaurant Brasserie Pizzeria. Most of us took advantage of a excellent three course meal including wine. By coincidence it was Joan Liggett's birthday so thirty voices gave a suitable rendering of a well known chorus

Travelling back to Calais, we made a short stop at a small farm which, apart from providing self catering accommodation, sold a wide choice of wines and locally produced jam and honey.

At the Cite d'Europe our French friends left and, after a brief visit to the superstore, we departed for home after having spent an excellent and instructive day in France.