

free passage to Russia for miners and their families, but there were no takers! One of the deputation commented, 'If men at Tilmanstone had to work under such conditions, there would be hell to pay!' Concern for his men extended to building 100 new homes at Elvington available at low rent which they would own after several years. Pithead baths were installed.

Richard owned Elvington Court. Its large barn was converted into a miners' leisure centre that could seat 750 people which was used for dances, staging shows, plays and boxing tournaments. As Tilmanstone expanded, miners came from all over the country. Elvington Court was turned into a hostel for single miners at 25 shillings a week for full board including packed lunches for work. He had a pig farm behind Elvington Court, supplying the local butcher but also providing cheap pork to his miners.

By late 1929 the men of Tilmanstone had something to be proud of. They were treated with respect by management, who received respect in return. A future of security and prosperity seemed assured.

On 18 December 1929 Richard Tilden Smith was lunching in the House of Commons, lobbying the government to amalgamate compulsorily all collieries under a single Coal Board. He was

laughing when he suddenly collapsed and died. His premature death at 64 robbed East Kent of an industrial future as well as a great businessman and humanitarian. All his ambitious plans were made. Many projects had started, but nobody was prepared to continue with such complex and expensive ventures. Squabbles and mistrust returned to Tilmanstone and the family estate eventually sold its interest in the colliery in 1937.

What of Richard, the family man? He married and had four daughters and one son, but met a lovely White Russian immigrant after the Russian Revolution. He banished his wife to a luxury apartment and installed his mistress in his Mayfair home. Whilst he entertained lavishly and was generous to others, he was always being careful with his own personal spending - always buying second-hand cars! The Salvation Army and Barnardos benefited from his generosity and, of course, his fortune helped to support the Tilmanstone losses.

In 1929 there were still reckoned to be possibly 1,000 million tons of coal at Tilmanstone and Snowdon - enough to last 300 years at 10,000 tons per day. I wonder whether another Richard Tilden Smith will be brave enough to try to exploit it one day?

## *Reception of President Wilson at Dover* by Martyn Webster

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The first State Visit to the United Kingdom by a President of the United States of America took place in 2004 in the person of the 43rd Incumbent of that office George W. Bush. This of course was by no means the first actual visit of an American President. The very first presidential visit took place in 1918 in the aftermath of the First World War at the time of the Peace Conference in Paris. As on so many occasions before, it was the town and port of Dover who received this

important visitor the 28th President, and on whose soil his foot was first set.

The "Dover Express" of the day reported the detail of this great occasion and the following is an edited extract: On Boxing Day Thursday December 26th, 1918, the President of the United States of America, Mr. Woodrow Wilson, accompanied by Mrs. Wilson and a large staff, landed at Dover. It was the first time that a ruler of the United States had ever landed in Great Britain and to make the

occasion more historic President Wilson came to England to confer on the question of the coming peace conference and the possibility of establishing a League of Nations that would keep the world in comparative peace for all time. The President was received at Dover on behalf of the King, by HRH the Duke of Connaught and was presented by the Mayor and Corporation of Dover with an address of welcome.



Woodrow Wilson, 28th President



Edith Bolling Galt Wilson

Although, owing to the enclosed nature of the Marine Station, it was not possible for the general public to get a view of the reception, there was a large and representative gathering at the station and the railway at the pier, where a good view can be obtained of those passing through Dover, was lined by great crowds.

The crossing from Calais was made by President Wilson on the s.s. Brighton, the President having come direct from the Front after spending Christmas Day with the American troops. It was a lovely calm, day with a bright sun and frost and the crossing, as the President stated, was made under the best of conditions. The 'Brighton' flew the flag of Vice Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, who accompanied the President, at the fore and the President's blue, with the American eagle, at the main. The vessel was escorted by the destroyer leader "Termagant" and six destroyers, the 'Meteor', 'Milne', 'Saracen', 'Afridi', 'Melpomene' and 'Mynges' which half way across the Channel had relieved the French destroyers, whilst a very imposing aerial escort accompanied it across the Channel, consisting of a dozen fast scouts, four seaplanes and a couple of Hadley Page bombers.

The 'Brighton' showed up out of the haze at a quarter to twelve and entered the harbour through the eastern entrance. The warships were all manned and decorated with flags, the Stars and Stripes being flown at the masthead of every vessel. As the vessel came between the entrance piers the saluting battery at Dover Castle fired its first salute since the war commenced. On the landing places at the Marine Station there were assembled HRH the Duke of Connaught; Lord Reading, the Lord Chief Justice of England, whose missions to America during the War had been of such importance to this country; Lord Henschell, Lord in Waiting attached to the President; the American Ambassador and very many British and American officials. The camouflaged 'Brighton', in addition to the President and Mrs Wilson, carried a very large number of those attached to the President during his European visit including pressmen and a large number of cinematograph operators all dressed in American Army uniforms, and as the boat came alongside the whirr of the cinema cameras on the boat and ashore almost drowned the buzz of the aerial escort,

which flew low over the pier, one after the other.

As soon as the gangway was made fast the President came ashore and was welcomed by the Duke of Connaught. On either side of the landing place were drawn up guards of honour of the Royal Navy and the 3rd Battalion of the Buffs with their King's Colour. To the strains of the American National anthem, the guards presented arms and the President, accompanied by the Duke of Connaught, walked up and down the lines inspecting the fine body of men on parade.

After inspecting the guards of honour the President, accompanied by the Duke of Connaught and followed by Mrs Wilson, entered the station, where the Mayor and Corporation were in waiting on the red baize carpeted platform to present their address on behalf of Dover. A large number of seats had been placed around the space where this was to take place and here were assembled a large number of Dover and East Kent people.

As Mrs Wilson walked along the carpeted way to meet the Corporation her pathway was strewn with roses thrown by the following little girls:- Freda Pudney, Freda Denne, Joan Wood, Alice Farley, Phyllis Earley, Phyllis Hookway, Jessie Igglesden, Winifred Pudney, Marjorie Turnpenny, Gladys Highley, Alma Vasse, Peggy Houlden and Winkie Heath.

The Mayor and Corporation, who wore their robes of office, included the Mayor Councillor E. Farley and the Deputy Mayor Councillor C. E. Beaufoy. Also present were the Recorder Sir A.H. Bodkin, the Chaplain W.G. Elnor, Aldermen and Corporation officials.

The address, which was read by the Recorder merits reproduction in full:

To Mr Woodrow Wilson, the President of the United States of America We the Aldermen and Burgesses of the Cinque Ports and the Borough of Dover desire to offer you our respectful and most cordial greetings on your arrival in our ancient and historic town and port. We welcome

you, Sir, at this season when thoughts of peace and goodwill are uppermost in our minds and as the President of a Republic which, though far away from Europe, determined to associate herself with our Allies, including the great Republic of France, whose shores you have just left and ourselves, in the battle for freedom and humanity, and thus to adopt and act in furthering the high ideals which you have placed before the world. The valour of the Armies of the United States, so rapidly organised, has won the admiration of all the Allied Nations and contributed in no small degree in hastening, by their co-operation, in the rapid succession of victories on the Western Front the Armistice of November 11th. But Dover the Keeper of the Gate of England and the Guardian of the Narrow Seas, has also watched and admired the closely associated measures for the safety of the seas taken by the navies of the United States and Great Britain. Our country has in gratitude noticed that towards all that can alleviate the suffering and distress of war your country since 1914 has most generously and enthusiastically contributed. This is a most memorable occasion and unique in our history for it is the first time we have had the honour of welcoming the President of the United States, a country knit to us by race and tongue and now by loss and grief suffered to a common end, -that the principles of Liberty, Righteousness, Justice and Peace may alone henceforward guide the destinies of all nations. You are passing from our Town to London as the guest of His Majesty the King and afterwards to other parts of the country. We are only tendering to you the first instalment of those feelings of respect and cordiality which you will everywhere experience. Given under our Corporate Seal in our Council Chamber at Dover this 26th day of December 1918, E.W.T. Farley, Mayor, R.E. Knocker, Town Clerk. The President at once made his reply and although in the noise of the Station he could not



SS Brighton IV, 1903-30

always be heard the general tenor of his remarks could be caught by those standing around. He said:

You have certainly extended to me, and to those who accompanied me, a very cordial and gracious welcome. Even the sea was kind to us this morning and gave us a very pleasant passage so that it tallied perfectly with our expectation of the pleasure we should have on landing in England. We have gone through many serious times together, and therefore we can regard each other in a new light as comrades and associates because nothing brings men together like a common understanding and a common purpose, I think that in spite of all the terrible sufferings and sacrifices of this war we shall some day, in looking back upon them, realise they were worthwhile not only because of the security they gave the world against unjust aggression but also because of the understanding they established between great nations which ought to act with each other in the permanent maintenance of justice and right. It is therefore with emotions of particular gratification that I find myself here. It affords the opportunity to match my mind with the minds of those who with a like intention, are purposing to do the best that can be

done in the great settlements of the struggle. I thank you for the warmth you have shown in your welcome and extend to you in the name of my countrymen a most cordial greeting.

The President was loudly cheered at the conclusion of his address. He then asked the Mayor to introduce him to the members of the Council and shook hands with each of

them. There was quite a time before the train left and after spending some time in conversation with Admiral Keyes and shaking hands with him most heartily the President entered the special train in waiting. At 12.40 p.m. it left for London, the guards of honour which had now been drawn up on the platform, saluting and the band played the American National Anthem. As the train went past the crowds standing in the streets and on the bridges at the pier hearty cheers were raised. An escort of some twenty aeroplanes accompanied the special train to London flying round and round it in circles as it travelled at considerably less than half their speed. A meeting of the Corporation was held at the Council Chamber at 11 a.m. on Thursday to order the sealing of the above address of welcome to President Wilson which would be illuminated and subsequently forwarded to him in that form. The President, after his momentous visit to these shores, returned to France from Dover the following Tuesday morning, New Year's Eve, 1918, Dover once again having played out its role in national and international history.

Perhaps some of the girls who strewed roses in the First Lady's path are still alive to tell their tale.