MARCH MEETING

A Fruity Route

A talk by Brian Madderson - *Reported by Terry Sutton*

EAT MORE BANANAS - it's good for Dover, our members were told at the March meeting held at St Mary's Parish Centre.

The suggestion was made by guest speaker Brian Madderson, managing director of George Hammond PLC whose team of stevedores discharge bananas, pineapples and melons from refrigerated ships at Dover's Eastern Docks.

Mr Madderson, in his excellent talk, said more than two BILLION bananas were expected to be offloaded at Dover's single deep sea berth at the cargo terminal this year. Dover is the third busiest fruit port in the UK, he explained.

Mr Madderson joined Hammond in May 1989 with the first task of researching the market opportunities for fresh produce handling at Dover at a time when the existing inner docks were proving too small for the larger refrigerated ships carrying fruit. Dover Harbour Board invested £6 million on a new import complex at the Eastern Docks while Hammond invested a further £1 million.

"More bananas"

George Hammond plc, Eastern Docks, Dover

Mr Madderson proved his expert knowledge about bananas, telling us how and where they are grown, cleaned, packed and exported to Europe and the UK in refrigerated (reefer) ships maintained at a temperature of 13-14° C during the voyage.

The largest sources of bananas were now Costa Rica followed by Cameroon and the Dominican Republic. Bananas, he explained, fruited all the year round so they provided a regular trade in imports at Dover.

Dover was a popular port for the shippers because it was the nearest UK dock to the English Channel shipping lanes, it has a non-tidal and deep water terminal, expertise and efficiency of the Dover stevedores and excellent motorway links to the major fruit ripening centres at Dartford and Paddock Wood.

In the questions following, Mr Madderson claimed that if the port authority could provided a second deep sea berth for the freezer ships, such was the demand by importers, more ships would be attracted to Dover creating more jobs.