

MAKE-OVER for LORD WARDEN

by Terry Sutton

The historic but deteriorating former Lord Warden Hotel at the western docks is to receive a much needed £750,000 refurbishment, thanks to owners Dover Harbour Board. However, there are no proposals to re-open the large building, now known as Southern House, as a hotel.

Dover Harbour Board acquired the building from P&O. It had come into P&O's possession as the result of the merger with Stena which inherited the premises from British Rail.

Now members of the board of Dover Harbour Board have decided to spend £750,000 on a major refurbishment of the listed building including the re-roofing of it. At present the main occupants are freight and forwarding agents working at the port.

In its time the Lord Warden Hotel numbered among its guests crowned heads, millionaires, diplomats and writers

who slept there waiting for calmer seas to cross the Channel. Charles Dickens and the 19th century novelist William Thackeray were among the hotel's clients.

A blue plaque on the building, placed there by The Dover Society, recalls the fact that the Emperor, Napoleon III was reunited with his wife Eugene there when he landed at Dover on going into exile following his defeat in the 1870/1 Franco-Prussian War.

The Lord Warden Hotel was the venue for many showy Dover occasions, including banquets and balls, early in the last century, and it was there that the mayor of Dover gave a civic luncheon to Louis Bleriot in 1909 on the day he made his 37 minute pioneer flight across the English Channel.

During the last war the hotel was requisitioned as a centre for the Royal Navy and the WRNS (Women's Royal Naval Service). At the end of the war

in 1945 the property, looking rather run down, became offices for British Rail shipping staff and for the Customs and Excise.



The Lord Warden Hotel, early 1900s