

# B.O.O.K R.E.V.I.E.W

## *The Short-Sea Route: Dover - Calais*

by Terry Sutton

When Dover-born John Hendy was taken on his first trip on a Dover ferry to France he was aged seven. "From that time I have been hooked on the ships that ply the Dover Strait," says John, now aged 61 and living in retirement on Romney Marsh.

The author was educated at River primary school, then at Castlemount and Dover Grammar School for Boys. Before embarking on a teaching career he worked at the docks for the AA and then as a humble ticket collector for Dover Harbour Board.

The former schoolmaster's deep interest in the ferries sailing out of Dover is obvious in a new book: "The Short-Sea Route: Dover - Calais (£18-50: Ferry Publications).

This 130-page hardback, illustrated with about 200 pictures, is packed with information about the history of the twin ports and the scores of ships that have regularly plied between them since the 90-ton Rob Roy sailed in 1818.

His well-researched book unravels the complicated story of the various take-overs, mergers, and name changes of the various ferry operators that confuse so many who write about the subject, including the author of this review.

John Hendy's examination of the early days of steam, dating back to 1816,

demonstrates how Dover shipowners once dominated business on the Channel and how the arrival of the railways at the ports, at Dover, Folkestone, Calais and Boulogne, impacted on the trade.

This is illustrated with the list of ferries showing the dates of introduction, the builders, tonnage, and most interestingly what eventually happened to them. Many of the later ferries were sold to Spanish or Greek interests but even more went to the scrap yards, a sad ending for some magnificent ships that conjure up so many happy memories.

The author also writes about those noisy hovercraft that proved, for many, an inspiration in the late 1960s and their replacement by Tasmanian-built Seacats. He pulls no punches in his sorrow about the policies of James Sherwood's Sea Containers that resulted in 'the protracted fall from grace' of this mode of Channel transport.

I can recommend this impressive publication to all with the slightest interest in Dover's most important industry and I suggest it is a must for any who have worked for, or on, those fleets of ferries sailing from our port.

The Book is on sale at Dover Museum and local bookshops.