



Dover in Words and Pictures

at DOVER MUSEUM

Leo Wright

Christine Waterman and her staff made a characteristically distinguished offering to the Dover Arts Festival with the special exhibition: "Dover in Words and Pictures" - pictures and quotations about Dover from Julius Caesar to Ian Fleming.

The big well-known names were of course well represented: Shakespeare, Pepys, Defoe, Byron, Cobbett, Dickens and Noel Coward, illustrated by well-chosen quotes and carefully selected pictures from the museum's very large collection. But the net was cast more widely. It is of course a historical-geographical fact that for centuries almost anyone who travelled to or from the continent stayed at the Castle, or the Maison Dieu or the Priory. Later came the hotels. The remarkable thing is how many wrote about the experience. The net could have been cast just a little wider to include Charles d'Orleans. Of course, Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" was there and plucked my heart-strings once again (quickly calmed by Anthony Hecht's "Dover Bitch"). But if as we are, I think rightly, told that Dover Beach is one of the best poems of the nineteenth century, then if just one French poem were to be included, it would be the Ballade by Charles d'Orleans (1391-1455) beginning:

En regardant le pals de France
Un jour m'avint a Dovre sur la mer.....

and it would stir the heart of any French visitors or anyone who knew French. But begin on foreign names and there would be no end. Our predecessors wrote so much more than we do, and not just "Wish you were here!"

The success of the exhibition is that it contrives to be both scholarly and popular. On an ordinary week-day there was a pleasant stream of visitors - mostly not Dorsetians on that day. The presentation is of our Museum's usual high standard. The accompanying booklet is a good buy and well worth keeping as an anthology.

There will be another chance to see the Exhibition : 3rd August - 6th September.

