

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Madam Editor,

The cessation of the Train Ferry service from Dover to France on 22nd December last seemed to cause very little stir, although for many old people who remember its inception sixty years ago it was the end of an era.

First we had the building of the train ferry dock which itself was a feature of great interest and attracted the attention of many people living in or visiting south east Kent, so much so that the Southern Railway Company allowed members of the public to visit the dock before the train ferry service commenced operations.

A surprising number of people took advantage of this. No charge was made but each individual had to sign an indemnity absolving the railway company from any responsibility for an accident or injury that might be sustained whilst on their premises.

One feature of the ferry dock that visitors found to be of special interest was the dock gates which rose from the bottom of the dock in contrast to the usual type of gate which opens and shuts like a door.

The purpose of the gates was to retain a fixed water level in the dock (by means of pumping) so that a link span could connect the ship with the railway lines at the head of the dock. The first train ferry to be delivered in 1934 was the "Twickenham Ferry". If memory is not at fault the Master who brought this ship from the builders (Swan Hunter & Wigham Richardson) was the late Captain Len Payne.

This ship was handed over to the French company A.L.A. (Angleterre-Lorraine-Alsace) who operated it with the two British owned ferries, "Hampton Ferry" and "Shepperton Ferry", which were delivered from the builders in 1935.

The train ferry service commenced between Dover and Dunkerque in 1936.

Beside rail freight wagons and roll on/roll off motor vehicles a notable innovation was the sleeping car service between London, Paris and Brussels which travelled by the night ferry service. The sleeping cars were the property of the Wagon-Lits Company which ran on trains all over Europe.

This sleeping car service ceased to run several years ago.

The three original train ferries were augmented in 1951 by a new French vessel named "Saint Germaine". It was owned by S.N.C.F. (French Railways) and was of a more advanced design. It was driven by diesel engines instead of steam turbines.

During the Second World War the T + rain Ferry Dock was used by the Royal Navy as a base for motor torpedo boats, including launches manned by the Norwegian crews in connection with which Budge Adams made his trip to Norway to present certificates to ex-crew members. The R.A.F. air-sea rescue launches also used the dock.

In the early war years the "Hampton Ferry" and "Shepperton Ferry" were taken over by the Royal Navy and were used for laying mines in the English Channel. The mines were stored in rail wagons on one track in Shakespeare Tunnel and in consequence there had to be single-track working of trains through the tunnel.

While the two train ferries were part of the Navy the crews were given R.N.R. status and the former Captains had the rank of Lieut-Commander R.N.R. and acted as navigating officers.

After the privatisation of the cross-Channel services the train ferry service was operated entirely by a French owned ship, the "Nord Pas de Calais" from a new berth at the Admiralty Pier..

Now we have said "Goodbye" to what was in its day considered to be a very innovative project.

Sincerely,

BILL BREEZE

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Dover