

Their booklet, *Tilmanstone in Old Photographs*, (£2 from 5 St. Andrew's Way, Tilmanstone CT14 0JH) contains more than 60 old photographs, each with a detailed caption. The authors say all is not lost, despite the inroads of modernity. Tilmanstone is still a unique place to live in, they say. One piece of history I learnt from the booklet is that St. Mary's

Church in Dover once owned land at Tilmanstone which was tenanted in the seventeenth century by the Boys family. The income was used by St. Mary's for charitable purposes. That ownership is remembered today by the name of St. Mary's Grove. There's a lot more of interest in this booklet. I recommend you to buy a copy. <>

Spoken in jest?

"The Grass is always Greener over Here" MILES KINGTON

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... I have just made my first Eurostar trip to Paris and I think it is worth recording my first impressions while they lie hot and sticky on my mind, a bit like the *pain au chocolat* stains on my tie. Now the one thing I knew about the Eurostar route is that while going through Kent the Eurostar express trundles along at a snail's pace and while going through Northern France to Paris it races along at supersonic speeds. The reason for this, we have always been told, is that the Tory government, in true British style, has never been able to get its act together, to build the special Channel Tunnel rail link while the French, with all the determination that has already given them a nuclear power programme, the TGV and bombs in the Pacific, built their high speed rail link many years ago.

Now it is certainly true that the Conservative Party's main remaining talent is for selling things off — the Tory government is a car boot sale on a gigantic scale — and this doesn't help to get new railways built, but I have discovered at the week end that there is another reason for the difference in Eurostar speeds in Kent and in Northern France.

It is such a dull, flat, uniform landscape between the Channel and Paris that the only natural reaction is to get through it as fast as possible. Between you and the horizon, the land barely rises or falls at all, and if it does so, it is with no more enthusiasm than a brackish pond on a dull day. And on the landscape itself there is little more to be seen than vast fields merging into each other, occasionally separated by long straight roads leading to grey little towns. There are many parts of France with delightful

scenery, as we all know, but Eurostarland (Eurostarlingrad?) is not one of them.

It is very different when you pop up in Kent from the tunnel. The first thing you see (apart from a forest of little fences) is the side of a chalk cliff. It is the tallest thing you have seen since you left Paris and looks immense. And then you start crawling through the Kentish countryside to give you a close-up slow-motion view of an extremely intimate landscape, full of gardens, and trees in blossom, and oast houses, and pub gardens and village corners.

Now I know that this is deceptive, and that Euro-regulations have forced us to convert our oast houses into stockbrokers' homes, and grub up our apple orchards, and make Kent not the garden of England so much as the ornamental border of England ... but it still looks a lot better than what you get on the other side of the Channel. Even when you get into the suburbs of London, you realise ... that there is nothing in France to rival these suburban gardens jostling next to each other, these little Kew Gardens leading up to their own Dunroamin, each exactly the same in shape and size, and each completely different in shrubs and ambience.

... Look, I am as Francophile as the next man, and I would rather spend a weekend in Paris than in London, and I know that Ashford International Station looks like a temporary arrangement of scaffolding (and so does Waterloo International) but I still think that the best advice for a Eurostar traveller from Waterloo is this: if you intend to do any sleeping on the train, do it on the French side. <>