

The Cruise Terminal

End of Season Survey

THE OPENING of the CRUISE TERMINAL

The Cruise Terminal opened this year, with the first cruise ship docking in April and the official opening on 20th June. 104 cruise calls were booked for 1996.

Now the season is over and until next spring, Doverians will see only *The Black Prince* and *The Black Watch* of FRED OLSEN LINES using the terminal throughout the winter, as Dover is the home port for these two ships. Sometimes they may be away for

three or four weeks, sailing to the Canaries, the Mediterranean or the Caribbean. What a temptation to join one of their cruises and sail into the sunshine. I notice that local travel agents are quick to advertise these!

This seems an appropriate time to review the season and ask — Has Dover benefited from the opening of the cruise terminal?

Our centre spread is devoted to this question, with four articles. The first gives the view of James Overton, Tourism Marketing Manager for Dover District Council, the second reports the result of the Dover Society Survey of 100 shops and 10 guest houses in Dover. This is followed by an article by one of our members, Dorothy

Bolton, who is a Blue Badge Guide and has worked all summer in various ways, guiding cruise passengers. The section concludes with an article by Keith Southey, of Dover Harbour Board, looking to the future of cruise ships visiting Dover. Already 108 calls are booked for 1997.

All four pieces reinforce the first impressions of the impact of the terminal on Dover, reported in *Newsletter 26*. Particularly the articles by Dorothy Bolton and James Overton give a vivid picture of the intense activity generated at the port when a cruise ship is visiting — and on some days there are two or three ships! Passengers like Dover, the White Cliffs Countryside, and they like the new terminal. [CONT



30 The increased FOOTFALL (recent Jargonesel!) in Dover, both of passengers and crews is apparent with each visit. Enthusiasm for welcoming the visitors is increasing among traders and businesses benefiting from the new source of income,

The Cruise Welcome Committee, to be chaired in 1997 by Kevin Gubbins, our new Town Centre Management Co-ordinator, will have plenty of ideas and suggestions to help their forward planning.

EDITOR

Welcoming Dover's Cruise Ships

JAMES OVERTON, *Tourism Manager, Dover District Council*

TOWARDS THE END OF 1995 I was asked by the Council to assist Dover Chamber of Commerce in setting up some kind of reception facility for the visitors on cruise ships expected at the new Cruise Terminal.

We were given an extensive briefing on what would be required by John Turgoose, General Manager Shipping, Dover Harbour Board. A Cruise Welcome Group was set up, supported by the Council, the Chamber, IMPACT, D.H.B., as well as numerous interested parties including guides, publishers, taxi operators, attractions, retailers, etc.

A considerable amount of time went into discussion and planning, but now the cruise season is over, I can reveal that not everything panned out as planned. One of the main conclusions to be drawn from last summer's experience was that commercial benefit to shops and services in Dover resulted not so much from the supposed wealthy American passengers, but from sailors and crew. My own informal survey in the town revealed that opticians, dentists, hairdressers, record shops, clothing stores, photo retailers and Asian restaurants have all benefited from this trade.

In parallel with this, we are continuing with our efforts to communicate the virtues of the Dover District as a place which the passengers should visit. The main problem is the time factor. Most of the cruise ships are using Dover as a dropping-off and picking-up

point, leaving virtually no time for passengers to explore the town. Having been to the Terminal myself on days when these operations are in progress I can confirm the lack of opportunity for commercial spin-off. These disembarkation/embarkation procedures are amazingly well organised and commercial operations. One is confronted by a scene of forty or fifty coaches, swarms of couriers armed with clip boards, and frantic activity as luggage is sorted and loaded by the passengers and baggage handlers. In no time at all, the passengers are packed onto their coaches and off they go.

It is frustrating that we cannot benefit more on these days. There is a significant number of cruise ships, however, which feature Dover as a port of call (about a dozen in the season), and these do offer good potential. Depending on the shipping company and its handling agency, there have been some excellent opportunities which we have exploited by providing "official welcomers" and information to passengers.

Our survey of the types of information on the port of call days produced the following statistics which are based on a sample of 965 responses on nine different ships.