

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

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# 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.

Attractions	39%	Churches	29%
Train	25%	Shops	16%
Taxi	9.6%	Bus	5.1%
Car Hire	0.5%	Maps	0.6%
Change	0.2%	Phone	0.4%

Armed with the conclusions from the 1996 campaign, the Cruise Welcome Group is now planning for next year. We shall be continuing to the best of our ability to distribute the "Dover first port of call" leaflet on to the ships (via handling agents or shipping companies), and there are plans to issue leaflets about Dover and its attractions in other languages such as

Russian and Italian (a requirement identified during the season). We shall be looking at ways of benefiting Deal and Sandwich.

In addition various new initiatives have arisen, for example a new bus tour operation in Dover for the summer season, and an offer by Dover College to arrange tours and tea. The Cruise Welcome Group is always open to new ideas and suggestions, and anyone with a constructive point of view to offer is always welcome to join the meetings. If you are interested, please contact the Dover Town Centre Manager's office (Tel. 225231) for details of the next meeting.

# The Coming of the Cruise Terminal:

## A SURVEY of LOCAL BUSINESSES

MERRIL LILLEY

A SURVEY WAS CARRIED OUT in a fortnight in October by six members of the Dover Society. The members of the team were Merrill Lilley, Jack Woolford, Terry Sutton, John Owen, Leo Wright and Marjorie Wright.

For this survey the team visited shops and other businesses from Bench Street to the Town Hall. In most cases it was possible to interview respondents on the spot. Where this was not possible the questionnaires were left to be collected at a later date or to be posted on.

The questionnaire stated that

*"The Dover Society is conducting this survey to find out if the town has benefited from the opening of the Cruise Terminal in 1996"*

and went on to ask eight other questions. We wanted to find out how many businesses felt that they had benefited from the opening of the terminal, how much they

had benefited, whether they had advance notice of the dates of cruise ship visits, and whether they had gained custom from passengers, or crew, or both. Lastly we asked respondents if they had any suggestions or ideas which might help businesses in Dover derive more benefit from cruise ship visits in the future.

### These are the results of the SURVEY.

100 businesses answered the questionnaire. 2 failed to return the survey sheet. 3 others were never available when we called. (We have not included betting shops, estate agents, furniture stores, pubs or butchers, as initial questioning indicated that none of these had benefited from the opening of the terminal).