

FERRY FOCUS REPORT

Christopher Burrows · East Kent Ferry Club

P&O Stena Line

Third quarter profits for 2000 were £19.8 million despite an increase of £1.5 million in fuel costs and an overall 20% decrease in traffic, though the market share remained unchanged at 31%. It has been reported that P&OSL is nearing completion of plans to replace the oldest fleet units *P&O/SL Kent* (ex - *Pride of Kent*) and *P&O/SL Canterbury* (ex - *Stena Fantasia*) both completed in 1980.

Seafrance

Seafrance celebrated its fifth anniversary during November. In the same week of the celebrations, the company's Chairman Didier Bonet died in France. Endes Riblier was appointed his successor on 10 January by the Seafrance Board.

Hoverspeed

Three 100m monohull Superseacats are to be relocated to Dover from March, reducing crossing time on the Dover/Calais service to just 35 minutes. Two of these will operate the Calais service whilst the third will operate one daily round trip on the Dover/Ostend route.

The previous Dover/Calais Seacats *Hoverspeed Great Britain* and *Danmark* will be transferred to other UK services of the parent company Sea Containers. One of the two Seacats currently employed on the Dover/Ostend service will also be transferred, probably to the Hoverspeed Newhaven/Dieppe service. The advent of the new Superseacats will create an extra fifty jobs.

Retired Hovercrafts the *Princess Anne* and *Princess Margaret*, which had lain idle at Dover Hoverport since their

last flights on 1st October, 2000, have been donated to the Hovercraft Museum and were delivered to Gosport, Hants before Christmas.

An interactive tour of both the Seacat and Superseacat can be made at www.hoverspeed.co.uk

Norfolkline

A New Year press release has predicted further growth during 2001. Forward bookings for the summer season are very encouraging and Norfolkline is hoping to build on its success in 2000. Its Dover/Dunkerque service was begun last March using the 22,000 ton *Northern Merchant* which was joined later in the year by sister ship *Midnight Merchant*. Both ships are on charter from UK shipping group Cenargo and are managed by V-Ships (UK).

Falcon Marfret

Falcon Marfret's *Neptunia*, under the Estonian flag, was involved in collision with the Caen-bound tug *Pieter*, flying a Dutch flag, on the 13th November six miles south-south east of Dover.

Neptunia had earlier departed from Folkestone on a scheduled sailing to Boulogne with 49 persons on board. She received a small hole in the port quarter and the crew deliberately listed the ferry to starboard to prevent any further ingress of water. The ferry then continued to Boulogne.

The *Pieter* received damage to the bow and one member of the crew was injured but did not require immediate medical attention. She also sustained steering problems but these were soon rectified.

The coastguard tug *Far Turbot* was in attendance.