

The Dyke Channel Causeway Project

Terry Sutton

There are occasions when the Channel Tunnel is overwhelmed by the amount of traffic that requires to cross the Dover Strait. So there must be some financiers and others who sometimes think of building a second fixed English Channel link. For the sake of the Port of Dover and its ferry owner's stakeholders I hope that never comes about. If the future should ever see a road bridge, carrying vehicles, that could see the end of the ferry ports. As far as I can recall there was agreement between the Channel Tunnel builders and the two governments that there would be no attempt to construct another fix link before 2020. That date is fast approaching so Dover and the ferry industry should be thinking about it.

I remember, back in the 1970s, there were scores of crazy schemes to take traffic between Kent and Pas de Calais. Eventually the schemes were whittled down to four, all of which were opposed by a consortium known as Flexilink, members of which included ferry companies and Dover Harbour Board.

A group calling itself Eurobridge put forward a costed scheme that would require a three mile (five kilometre) span suspension bridge with a multi-lane suspension bridge with a multi-lane suspension bridge in an enclosed tube.

A second consortium called Euroroute dreamt up a 13 mile (21 km) tunnel under the sea that would come to the surface on a series of artificial islands to be constructed mid-Channel.

A third group, Channel Expressway, argued for a large multi-layered diameter road



Proposed Qatar Bahrain Causeway 25 miles long

tunnel served by ventilation towers in mid-channel to get rid of the fumes from vehicles.

The fourth and winning team, Channel Tunnel Group and France Manche, convinced the British and French governments the most practical project was a simple rail-only system in a bored tunnel, based on a similar scheme put forward some years earlier. Channel Tunnel Group pointed out its scheme would cause the least disruption to shipping passing through the English Channel and most likely to attract private finance.

I also remember interviewing the entrepreneur behind a scheme he put forward in 1962 which would certainly have hampered channel shipping. He was engineer Philip Dyke, then living at the White House Hotel at East Cliff in Dover. The Dyke Channel Causeway Project, across the Strait from Dover to Calais, offered so many advantages over a Channel Tunnel or bridge that no one can ignore it, submitted Mr Dyke to the British government.

Looking ahead Mr Dyke's vision was for the giant 200 feet wide causeway to carry four railway tracks (one to take a hovertrain),

four motor car lanes (two of which would be for slower traffic), and two pedestrian and pedal cycle lanes on the outer edge. But one of the main advantages of his scheme was the provision of a 1,000-room hotel in the centre at the 10-mile limit that would contain a central hall for international conferences and concerts accommodating up to 3,000 people. The causeway would be wider at this point. "It would be a virtual no-man's land in the middle of the sea over which no nation could claim sovereignty, providing an atmosphere which could not be found anywhere else in the world," Mr Dyke told the prime minister. But what about the shipping that needed to pass through the Dover Strait? Mr Dyke had thought of that. "Channel shipping will be diverted through tidal locks to be built at the eastern entrance of Dover Harbour with the Western Entrance remaining open to traffic in both directions. A set of locks will also have to be built at Calais," he admitted.

Cost of construction (at 1962 valuation) would be around £80 million while it would only take two to three years to build

because of the method of construction using interlocking steel sheets to provide the outer walls of the causeway, he claimed. Every 200 feet or so there would be a transverse wall to form a caisson, filled with sands pumped from the Goodwins and, at Calais, from the silt banks.

Mr Dyke deplored the idea of building a Channel Tunnel because, he claimed, it would be vulnerable in wartime to destruction from enemy depth charges. So what happened? Whitehall didn't think much of Mr Dyke's project and, eventually, consent was given for the construction of the Tunnel we have today. I doubt if the idea of artificial islands or Mr Dyke's mid-channel conference centre, if progressed, would have lasted long.

My belief is they would have suffered the same fate as the various schemes for lighthouses on the Goodwin Sands. Most of those lighthouses sank into the Sands, were lost in storms or, as happened in 1844, when a retired sea captain's lighthouse project was destroyed when rammed by a Dutch coaster.

Christmas Feast 2016

Alan Lee

Our Christmas Feast took place in December and was held in the Stone Hall part of the Maison Dieu. In attendance were 77 members and guests who were greeted with a welcome drink of mulled wine or tropical fruit punch before sitting down to the now traditional three course meal. After lunch, we were entertained by the 'Three Yarrows', brothers Mark and Joe along with Stephen their nephew.

Beverley Hall must be specially

congratulated for her organising of the event. Denise Lee once again ran a very successful raffle raising £175. This was made possible by people being most generous in donating of some excellent raffle prizes, these were really appreciated.

Many thanks must go to the staff for preparing and serving the food and for all those who helped anyway in the planning and running of the event. Their efforts are what made this such a successful and enjoyable day.