

# Dover Steamship Company

## Newsletter no. 2 - September '11

Dear Member,

Firstly I must apologise for the delay in bringing you this communication. Since our very first newsletter which arrived with you in May this year, It has been somewhat hectic time for your now very much more *informed* committee. The pattern always seems to be the same for our type of project-and we have been no exception. Initially we gallop headlong into the unknown, not sure



Dover/Tuxedo Royale looking a little worse for wear-but standing proud –August '11  
(J.Coates)

about who we should be dealing with, carrying only basic aspirations with us, not sure what courses of action *should* or even *will* be open to us... and very often not being in control of our destiny. Well in the face of our original inexperience with ship preservation we believe we have made some headway towards achieving our goal of saving TSS Dover from oblivion. One thing we learned pretty early on was that there was no template-nobody in our position had ever attempted to rescue a vessel of 3300 tons before for operational service...we have had to create our *own* scheme from scratch and that has been the challenge to date.

...and here is how it's all been coming together...

### **The Project Formulation-training and marine apprenticeships.**

The most exciting part of this project has been the way it has developed into a 2 part plan. The idea is to carry out all the heavy work on Teesside and the fitting out at Dover. The vessel restoration is now certainly centred on an ambitious marine apprenticeship/skills regeneration scheme. On the whole we are aligning it to the current government's commitment to 'localism' and training. We feel by using this strategy we have the best possible chance of accessing the appropriate funding. We have already been liaising with the educational establishment in Kent in the form of K College who are interested creating a marine apprenticeship cadet scheme in Dover. We are very grateful for K College's initial offer to improve our web site facility which they are about to implement, thus commencing the cementation of our relationship. We have also made initial contact with Middlesbrough College and we await a formal response to our approach. Middlesbrough Council have also expressed an interest and we have been talking to their business development section. We have also written to all 6 MP's in the Teesside area lobbying for support. We already enjoy the support of Dover MP Charlie Elphicke who we are hoping will help get our message across to his colleagues in the north east.

### **Meeting at PD Ports- Middlesbrough 7th June '11**

On the above date we were invited to attend a meeting at the offices of PD Ports at Middlesbrough. Three of the DSC committee travelled up for this auspicious occasion-Andy Mclean, Pat McGeehan and the writer. We were greeted at the station by John Coates our Teesside representative, former chief engineer on the night club ship 'Tuxedo Royale'. Andy had come by road and we all proceeded to PD Ports HQ-just down river from Middlehaven . Present at the meeting, convened at 14.30hrs, were Paul Brookes (Deputy Harbourmaster) and Caroline Carsley –PD Ports *and* Colin Harrison and Andrew Jaques –Able UK. Also present were representatives from the Environment Agency, MCA, the Local Authority Emergency Planning Dept ., a representative from the Official Receiver's Office and of course Dover Steamship Company (the writer). The purpose of the meeting was to investigate a possible solution to the problem of the now sunken 'Tuxedo Royale'.

The following main points/directives came out of the meeting:-

- 1) The ship was a bankrupt negative asset and now ownerless-a prospective purchaser could now acquire her for £1-00 with the agreement of the stakeholders.
- 2) The ship would now cost double the amount to decommission her than would be realised by her scrap value.

- 3) It was agreed that in the circumstances DSC and their proposed regeneration and training scheme based around the restoration of the vessel was the best available solution.
- 4) Dover Steamship Company was tasked with approaching the various marine salvage operators to get an idea of budgeting requirements. When the meeting closed at about 16.00hrs the DSC contingent, accompanied by Colin Harrison and Paul Brookes, gathered at Central Quay to view a rather war torn yet strangely confident 'Tux/Dover'. Boarding her was no problem as her main deck now lay level with the dockside. Safety precluded us from venturing far below but most of her upper decks were accessible. John Coates disappeared for a few minutes admidships from the prom deck into his old work room store and amazingly came out with armfuls of manuals and original ships drawings which covered every era... 'Dover' - 'Earl Seward' - 'Sol Express' and 'Tuxedo Royal'. Quite a find! (We commend John on his foresight and dexterity!)

Generally we found her in the condition of disarray we expected and clearly metal thieves targeting copper wiring had been paying visits. We got down to her foredeck to inspect her mooring bitts. Looked as solid as a rock.

So, we returned south a little wiser, although further staggered by the enormity of the task laying ahead, but certainly not deflated!

### **The MOD Salvage and Marine Team**

Further to our June Middlesbrough meeting, you will see from item (4 listed above, that we had been asked to approach some leading salvage companies for advice on refloating the vessel. We spoke to several well known firms who were very helpful and even knew of 'Tuxedo' and her plight. As we expected, costings were astronomical, so we proceeded to what we thought was our best bet, the services of HM Government via the MOD salvage and marine team. They have been known to carry out recoveries such as ours as an exercise. After some positive and engaging correspondence (they are very keen on the nature and spirit of our project) it was agreed that at this stage they would visit Central Quay ASAP to make an assessment, but having to fit it all in with their busy schedule. Owing to the pressure of work and staff shortages, over the last few weeks there have unavoidably been several cancelled appointments. They are now looking at travelling to Teesside week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> Oct '11. On the costings side, owing to government cutbacks (would you believe!) and depending on the exact nature of the operation, it would appear that the refloating would *not* be FOC-we await their findings.

They consider that the best way to deal with this is to employ a MACA – Military Assistance to Civil Authority. Not sure what the implications are here-but we will find out soon enough.

*Well we weren't expecting an easy ride in the current economic climate-but we can see this through. This by what will be happening later is a storm in a teacup. Just imagine Tux/Dover in dry dock and we run out of cash just as we are reinstalling the starboard turbine!.. The biggest challenges are yet to come...*

### **Smith's No. 4 Dock-River Tees**

This dry dock lies about a mile downstream from Central Quay and is ideal for our purposes. Currently it is out of use owing to problems with its gates. PD Ports own this dock and would very much like to see it put back into use. If we can find local sponsorship to help make repairs it would be ours to use for the duration of our project requirements on Teesside.

The 3 other docks next door are in use by A&P Marine Engineering. They are also supportive of our scheme in principle.

Those of you receiving this on line click on the following video link:-  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcHzzivbRn4>

In the opening sequence, Middlesbrough Football stadium can be seen about a mile distant, away up to the right. Central Quay and 'Tux /Dover' are adjacent to this. Smith's No 4 dock is the furthest from the camera then moving to the right of the screen as the shot pans. The ship will slot nicely into it's length. It is likely that TSS Dover was repaired at this facility during BR ownership days.

John Coates our Middlesbrough rep is talking to PD Ports about the exciting possibilities at Teesside's last remaining ship repair yard. John's huge portfolio of contacts include former engineers who work for Smiths in the 60's /70's-when they still owned the yard.

### **On the South Eastern Front...**

Dover Steamship Company is about to be incorporated. By the time you read this we will be a limited company. This move has been necessary because of the potentially massive liabilities which will no doubt arise during the course of our deliberations and obviously we need to protect ourselves as individuals.

Our sales/promotion team SJ, Ralph and Paul have been out and about over the summer months and done sterling work-in spite of nearly being

blown away at Whitstable Regatta... and that is very much a story for another time.

**October '11 Member's Meeting.**

Our long awaited next member's meeting is to take place on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> October 19.00 for 19.30 start at the Dover Town Council Chambers, Biggin St., Dover. You go through the front doors and up the stairs... that's next door to the Town Hall. All members please get there if you can and bring a friend or 2 if they're interested-we need all the help, advice and guidance we can get.

Thankyou for your continued support... Kind Regards,  
**Richard Moffatt** *Chairman –Dover Steamship Co. Ltd*



Capt Sammy Hoare(left) on the bridge as TSS Dover gets underway on the Dover Straits Service