

The Dover Steamship Company

Newsletter no.1 - May 2011

Dear Member,

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Dover Steamship Company.

Panic at Central Quay



The first signs that something was amiss! 6-5-11

Around the country there are a number of ship preservation groups, but I guess that we are the first where the chairman alarmingly finds himself announcing in the very first newsletter that the subject of their aspirations has sunk at its moorings at Able Central Quay, Middlesbrough.

I have to inform you that over the recent May bank holiday weekend vandals got aboard 'Dover' and removed/damaged vital fittings from the machinery deck. This caused a large ingress of water which initially caused her to list quite heavily to starboard and from the stern she gradually settled to the bottom in a more or less upright position. Currently at high tide her car deck is awash, which means the machinery deck is under water most of the time. This all happened over a period of 5 days or so.

So that's the end of that , you might think, time to pack up and go home...however this could well be the best thing that has happened to the

vessel with regard to securing her future. This occurrence has attracted major publicity on Teesside and focussed the minds of the ship's owners Able UK, the local authority and the population of Middlesbrough on finding a solution to what to many residents of the area has become an eyesore. Many more on the other hand hold the 'Tuxedo Royale' close to their hearts. It would appear there is great affection for the former night club where a generation has socialised, danced the night away and even met their marital partners!

By bank holiday Monday my 'inbox' was full with emails from around the country advising me of this 'disastrous' situation. Thankfully, Captain Colin Harrison of Able UK made sure we were amongst the first to know. He was reassuring and made it clear that she had sunk in water that at low tide left only 2' under her keel. This was not a hopeless situation and at some point she would have to be refloated. As a precaution against pollution a temporary boom has been placed around the ship and the environment agency had advised that water from inside her could be pumped back into the river-such was the low level of contamination. On Friday the 6th May a top level meeting took place at the dockside to discuss the situation. Present were representatives from Able UK, the local authority, the local harbour authority, the Environment Agency and the MCA.

The outcome was that 'Dover' is to be left in her current state for about 3 or 4 weeks during which time it is hoped that a way forward can be ascertained. I'd like to say at this point that interestingly the scrapping option does not appear to be at the top of anyone's agenda. To our own credit, we have been able to supply Able UK with a set of general arrangement drawings which they were very happy to receive. These drawings were researched by Andy MacLean, who recovered them from the archive of the Newcastle Industrial Museum. We trust that these will assist them with the refloating operation. We are to be invited by Able UK to another meeting taking place at Middlesbrough in about three weeks time to discuss the prospects. We look forward to the occasion with anticipation.

We have already taken considerable advantage of the resultant publicity with DSC secretary Andy Mclean getting straight onto the Middlesborough Gazette and making sure that they knew who we were and what our aspirations are. He has also been onto the local Tees ITV station, making sure that they are up to speed with our intentions. The author then did a live interview on BBC Radio Tees. The presenter seemed quite taken aback at the history of the ship and the fact that she is the last of her breed. It was quite amusing that I referred to her as 'Dover' and he as 'Tuxedo'. He was even more astounded that we wanted to bring her 'home' to Dover, restore her as an operational ship and place her at the Port of Dover as a centre piece for regeneration. He gave the impression that he considered her to be at home already...and was Middlesbrough ...missing something? Hmm competition eh? We also had a call

from our good friends at the Dover Express who were keen to report the latest developments.

Well that's the sinking debacle in a nutshell - I'm sure you'd agree that things couldn't get worse but it does appear that it is quite true that to every disadvantage, there is an equal and opposite advantage!

We intend to exploit that advantage.

The Dover People's Port Trust

By far the most important course of action that we need to take is to secure a berth for TSS Dover. Recently we were invited by Bob Goldfield, Chief Executive of Dover Harbour Board to his office to discuss the possibility of bringing 'Dover' to Dover Harbour. Also present at the meeting were several of his fellow executives. It appeared that in spite of us making our case his response was a *fait accompli* and he made it quite clear that under no circumstances would they consider accommodating a heritage vessel of 'Dover's size in the port. Predictably his reasoning was based on lack of space, lack of resources, lack of facilities and lack of will.

On the absolute plus side this has now enabled us to fully embrace an offer from Dover People's Port Trust to fully support our aspirations and to provide a berth at Dover Harbour should they succeed in taking control of the Port of Dover over the next few months. DPPT chairman Neil Wiggins has on several occasions publically reaffirmed the trust's desire to place TSS Dover as the centrepiece for the regeneration of Dover. We in return fully support the DPPT and feel that it is most likely that they will succeed in their ambitions. However, it has to be said that if delays occur then we may realistically have to consider a temporary base for our vessel. To that end, one of our tasks for this summer will be to try and find an alternative temporary berth in the South East.

The Business Plan

We currently are lucky enough to have been able to harness the expertise of international business strategist Alan Shirley who is working on the format, content and presentation of our business plan. Such a plan is essential for us to approach and attract the kind of sponsors with the professionalism that would merit a scheme of the financial magnitude which we have in store. We would like to thank Alan for his commitment. We have decided to divide the project into 2 phases...

1. Acquire, Survey, Dry Dock, Repair at Middlesbrough and Tow the vessel back to Dover.
2. Restore the vessel to full operational order and establish her as a people's centre of community and training ship, promoting maritime education and local nautical(Dover Straits) heritage and bringing TSS Dover close to our local and national population. She would serve as a steam turbine

coastal cruiser as well as a static entity-in this mode , possibly providing conference and exhibition facilities.

We have already budgeted for Phase 1 the projected cost is hovering around £350,000. We have already made contact with several promising funding sources and they have agreed to let us complete our plan before we meet them formally. Exciting Stuff!

Out and about with DSC.

At long last we have worked out how we can have a free sales and publicity stall on main street Dover. We are about to have a license (no charge for this) issued to us by Dover District Council for this purpose. We then get the chosen location rubber stamped by KCC Highways –then we proceed. Look out for our stand in the near future. We already have a selection of exclusive merchandise in our possession, especially prepared for us by David Harvey of the Remembrance Line Association of Folkestone. It is absolutely vital that we create this source of income to keep the DSC in fighting shape to 'fund the funding' and promote the expansion of our membership. Earlier in the year we were present at the Travel and Leisure show at the cruise terminal, Dover and for July we have space paid for at the Dover Regatta. We had hoped to have been ready for the Hellfire Corner show in Dover but our sales stand has just not been ready in time.

The Website - www.tssdover.co.uk

Don't forget to check out the website for general info and the latest news. Our Webmaster Ralph Hart has been working hard developing the site and has been keeping a close eye on the recently stressful situation. We are always on the lookout for photographs of 'Dover' and it's people -to place on the website. A quick attic survey is required perhaps?

The next Members/Public Meeting

By kind permission of the town clerk we have been allowed to use the Council Chamber for our next members/public meeting. This, of course, is at the Town Hall, Biggin St., Dover and will take place on Tuesday June 14th. Please arrive at 7.00 for 7.30 start. We will be circulating the agenda to members ASAP.

The DSC Committee

I would like to thank all the committee members for their dedication to date. We meet on a fortnightly basis on a Tuesday evening. I've already mentioned the sterling work of **Andy** and **Ralph**. **Sarah Jane Hart** has been conscientiously looking after our somewhat strained finances, **Neil Wiggins** has been supporting us in his area of expertise in the shipping and maritime business-and obviously the People's Port, **Pat McGeehan** has been advising us on technical matters in his role as a former chief engineer on 'Dover', **Andrew** and **Matthew Mullins** with **Ruth Parkinson** with input mainly on heritage matters. Artist **Ruth** also designed our striking poster which has been diligently

distributed by **Paul Terry**. I also would like to thank **Vic Matcham** and **Stewart Dimmock** who earlier on gave excellent guidance through the Dover local political system.

...and Finally

I would like to thank all of you for your continued support . In the future we intend to turn out regular newsletters and organise regular member's meetings.

We look forward to meeting you on the 14th June '11.

On behalf of your committee

Richard Moffatt - Chairman DSC.



Current view from the Tees north bank-as 'Dover' aka 'Tuxedo Royale' lies settled on the river bed