

# USE OF THE HARBOUR AFTER THE WAR

Development as yachting centre urged.

F. D. Lane on trips to the Continent

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**THAT it would be in every way beneficial to develop Christchurch Harbour as a yachting centre after the war was the opinion held unanimously by those who attended a meeting held, under the auspices of the Chamber of Trade on Tuesday evening, to consider the subject, introduced by Mr. F. Donovan Lane, of establishing passenger boat services between Christchurch and the Continent after the war. A proposition was passed that, the Christchurch and District Chamber of Trade should form a section for those interested in boat building and allied trades to formulate plans for the post-war development of the harbour and the provision of yachting facilities.**

## OUR HISTORICAL HARBOUR: Used in Stone Age.

Mr. Lane introduced his subject with an outline of the maritime history of Christchurch. As far back as the Stone Age our harbour, he said, was an entry for virile races and a Ministry of Works pamphlet on Stonehenge supported the contention that the stones erected there were brought in via Christchurch Harbour. From 2000 B.C. onwards the "Beaker Folk" used our harbour from the Continent and excavations on Hengistbury Head about 1911 proved that we had communications with the Continent and the Mediterranean during the Iron Age. The Vikings sailed as far as Sopley. Suggesting that Christchurch should "cash-in" on its proximity to the Continent for the good, not only of the town and its traders, but also the peoples of many nations, "thus making a contribution to the re-establishment of goodwill trade and travel throughout the world." Mr. Lane came down to practical details. "What do you think," he asked, of having passenger speed boats 60ft. long, 25ft. beam, 6ft. draught, of about 60 tons, running from the Haven Quay to Cherbourg or some Point in its neighbourhood doing about 15 knots, and availing ourselves of the weather forecasts to ply as often as the Board of Trade, and our own experience, dictate?" Mr. Lane envisaged an auxiliary air service to give passengers a choice; and cargo boats as required.

Mr. Lane's question brought forth a counter question from Mr. Elkins, "Why should people want to start from Christchurch for the Continent when, in peace time, there were fully developed services of pleasure steamers from Weymouth, Bournemouth and Southampton?"

## POSSIBILITIES: A Route to Alaska?

Before the meeting got down to a discussion on developing yachting facilities in the harbour, Mr. Lane pointed out his scheme had even wider implications. "Once the Channel is crossed," he said, it opens up France, Italy, Switzerland, the Balkans, Russia and the lands of three Continents without further sea travel; and by crossing the Behring Strait, only 60 miles wide, Alaska and the Continent of America were opened up as well."

Mr. Lane said he had been in touch with the Canadian Pacific Railway Company concerning the use of their air lines from Alaska onwards.

Mr. Lane felt that his scheme should be a town enterprise and not part of some big travel or other concern whose centre was not in Christchurch.

If the meeting felt the matter was worth exploring, Mr. Lane suggested the financial side could be dealt with. Being somewhat speculative, the ex-Councillor said it was doubtful whether it was a suitable subject to be financed by the rates. As alternatives he suggested either the formation of a local company, financed by people in the town, or else that it should be run by some big travel organisation.

The walls of the room in which the meeting took place were hung with a number of charts of the harbour and coast line, a map of Canada and another of Europe and Asia. There was a blackboard and easel, and in the chair was Mr. R. C. Gayner, President of the Christchurch and District Chamber of Trade, who threw the meeting open for discussion.

## MANY DIFFICULTIES. Scheme's Practical Disadvantages.

Mr. Elkins pointed out that the Board of Trade regulations for seagoing passenger-carrying craft were most stringent. The B.o.T. would not be likely to pass a 60ft. boat for cross-Channel passengers. There was the draught difficulty: a boat big enough to cross the Channel wouldn't be able to negotiate the harbour, and the speed that had been suggested would require a large proportion of the boat being taken up with engines. The Chairman said he was afraid it would be necessary to rule out the Continent; but perhaps a beginning might be made with something less ambitious.

Mr. Elkins said he didn't want to crab the scheme right at the start; but it had to be remembered that the "Bournemouth Queen," doing 16 or 17 knots, took five hours to reach Cherbourg.

Mr. Gayner: "I think that when Mr. Lane talks of going to Alaska it is rather a flight of fancy."

"Would it not be possible to dredge the harbour?" asked one speaker.

"Where's the money coming from?" asked another.

"Couldn't we use invasion barges?"

"Why should anyone want to go in an invasion barge?"

"It would be a novelty!"

"The novelty would soon wear off."

At this point Mr. Lane quoted a short excerpt from an Act of Parliament passed in the reign of Charles II. dealing with the development of the harbour.

## DEVELOPING OUR RESOURCES.

£500,000 Scheme in Abeyance.

Mr. Elkins asked why people should want to go from Christchurch to the Continent.

Mr. Lane pointed out that as a town we should make the most of our natural advantages. Mr. Lapthorne, when on the Council, he continued, had a £500,000 scheme for the development of the harbour; but as he was no longer on the Council the scheme was in abeyance, though it might still be taken up.

Mr. Gayner: "It would be something to start with the stabilisation of the Run."

Councillor Price: "The Catchment Board has a stabilisation scheme which would be a start."

After it had been pointed out that the chief interest of the Catchment Board was to get water away as quickly as possible, Mr. Mens pointed out that nothing could be done about running sea-going craft from Christchurch until the harbour was put right.

The Chairman asked whether something could not be done about organising local trips.

Mr. Elkins suggested that trips in the bay might be tried for a start and would not mean any big expenditure.

The Board of Trade, he repeated, was very exacting in its demands for the safety of sea-going vessels.

Councillor Lane proposed that a section of the Chamber of Trade should be formed to explore the possibilities or running trips in the bay and of putting the harbour in order.

Mr. Pouncy first raised the question of yachting. "I am sure, he said, "that it would be well worth while considering some attempt to improve the harbour for yachtsmen. They are great spenders of money in a town and if you adopt some such scheme as that for your first plank, other schemes could possibly follow."

## HENGISTBURY GROYNE.

Bournemouth's "Misguided Judgment."

A question "was asked about the groyne erected by Bournemouth at Hengistbury Head.

Mr. Llewellyn said that old charts of the local coastline, some of them going back as far as Saxon times, showed the mouth of the river to the east of Hengistbury Head, with the Head itself extending to the Beerpan rocks. The tendency over periods of time had been for the Head to be continually, worn away and, as this happened, the harbour mouth receded eastwards.

"To prevent further wastage of the Head, Bournemouth Corporation decided to construct the groyne," said

Mr. Llewellyn. "That is, they attempted to replace the old headland. Whilst this may serve to build up on the western side of the groyne anything retained there is at the expense of the Mundeford Beach side."

**Mr. Llewellyn went on:— " Bournemouth Corporation will not have it that the construction of their groyne can have any ill effect on the sandspit at Mundeford; but in my own humble opinion, theirs is a misguided judgment."**

Mr. Llewellyn said that if there were a panel of expert engineers with one or two Naval men as well, he would be able to convince them that his contention was right.

### YACHTING CENTRE. Proposition Beneficial to All.

As for the future of the harbour as a yachting centre, Mr. Llewellyn said that anything done to promote this would be of benefit to all. He would like to see all houseboats cleared from the river, and facilities developed for yachting.

Councillor Lane proposed that the Town Council should be asked to formulate plans for the development of the harbour to provide yachting facilities.

It was the opinion of Councillor Price that development of the coastline was bound to come after the war. Mr. Mens recalled that some years ago Christchurch considered forming a Harbour Board. This, said Mr. Llewellyn, was in a state of suspended animation because the benefits of controlling our harbour were accompanied by obligations. The scheme was to be a joint one with Bournemouth; but as Bournemouth thought that the major part of the benefit of the scheme would accrue to Christchurch, our Borough should bear 50 per cent, of the cost. There the matter rested.

After it had been pointed out by Councillor Price, Mr. Mayner and Mr. Pouncy that the Council would require some details of any scheme before they considered it, Mr. Lane proposed that a Boat Building and Allied Trades Section of the Christchurch and District Chamber of Trade should be formed to formulate plans for the post-war development of the harbour and the provision of yachting facilities.

This proposition was carried unanimously.

### HARBOUR DEVELOPMENT.

Dear Sir, I was very pleased to read in your issue of March 4th that the local Chamber of Trade are making some effort to plan for the future, their discussion on the possibility of our harbour as a yachting centre after the war was most interesting, and in some respects amusing.

To talk of connecting our humble town with Alaska via France. Italy, Switzerland, the Balkans, Russia, and, I suppose, to the port of Vladivostock, after which there is still an expanse of water to traverse, nearly equal to that already covered between Christchurch and the Continent, or is that where the C.P.R. air lines come in. If we are to include air travel, why not board a plane nearer home, fly to America, then on to Alaska. There will be an alternative route after the war, I believe; then again we have the Queen Mary to New York, and let C.P.R. do their stuff from there. No, I think that part of the idea is, as already said by Mr. Gayner, rather a "flight of fancy," or I should say, more "like a sack of fertiliser from China," a bit far-fetched, and to call sixty-foot launches doing 15 knots, speedboats, is a bit old-fashioned; why, our pre-war cross-Channel steamers were doing twenty in some cases. Far better, I think, to leave it to those with the practical knowledge, like Mr. Elkins.

Now for personal opinion. First step is to fix a permanent entrance to the harbour, after which some dredging would be necessary for the benefit of the sea-going yachtsman; that kind are very few in Christchurch, chiefly for the very obvious reason, lack of sufficient depth of water, and I assume we are to see a larger type of vessel than can at present be seen there.

Yes, there is definitely room for improvement, couldn't we have a riverside walk, say, from Preston's Bridge to Crouch Hill, with outlets to Purewell and Stanpit, and perhaps our wealthy neighbours on the opposite bank would provide its counterpart as far as the Barn. If that could be brought about, then regular ferry system between the Town Quay, Crouch Hill, the Barn, Mudeford Sandbank, and Haven Quay, could come into being no need to look across the Channel for a means of improvement.

I don't quite agree with the idea of shifting the houseboats off the river altogether; my suggestion is move them to a place where when they become waterlogged they would settle on the bottom; when they sink in their present positions they definitely are a danger to traffic, as it is one of the deepest parts of the river. Don't move them altogether, we are catering for all comers and classes, I hope, and they do pay mooring fees, I suppose, and some of them are owned by our most prominent yachtsmen?

As regards trips in the bay, don't you think we could go the whole hog and run to the Isle of Wight, Poole and Lymington. Of course the Chamber of Trade knows these sea trips would mean that the drivers would have to hold a B.O.T. first mate's certificate; that is to know the rule of the road at sea, a complete knowledge of flags and their signal meanings, the compass and all points of navigation; but what is that,

with the Navy training men with all these qualifications, men that could more than meet the strictest of B.O.T. requirements.

Well, I could quote many other ideas, what of a half-way cafe on Crouch Hill, and perhaps a holiday camp there as well?

So much for my ideas and opinion, I hope you can afford me the space to print same.

Yours,

MUDLARK

Leading Seaman.