Brexit hangs over the port of Dover

This article is copied by kind permission of the author, Mary Kenny. It appeared in *The Oldie*, edition of March 2018

Without an ingenious deal, the place could be clogged up with thousands of becalmed freight lorries.

As an Irish citizen, I abstained from the Brexit vote, although I sympathise with the argument that a country is entitled to control its own borders and make its own laws. But, living just eight miles from Dover, I am beginning to grasp that entering and leaving Britain's major port post-Brexit could be a huge headache unless some very clever deal is accomplished.

A well-informed Doverian, Mick Tedder, who has forty years of experience of working at the port, and is a member of the Port and Community Forum, is very "pessimistic" about Dover's immediate future. The port of Dover can see more than 10,000 freight vehicles pass through daily; he worked there before 1973 when there was only a fraction of such traffic and a truck might have to park up for two or three hours while the paperwork was completed. Mr Tedder, who voted Brexit (as did most of the Dover referendum voters) predicts that if border controls are introduced, there will be "Armageddon" in the garden of England. He envisages the need for a huge parking holding area for vehicles awaiting processing, and congestion spiralling out in all directions.

Supposing everything has to be stopped and checked too, at the Channel Tunnel? Imagine the traffic jams and delays.

The local MP, Charlie Elphicke, seems to place his confidence in electronic scanning, as occurs between Canada and the US, but local lobby groups, such as EU Thinking Deal + Dover are

sceptical that this can be done at a huge maritime port such as Dover, which handles 17 per cent of Britain’s imports. There are other issues too, such as the transport of animals – animals can only be confined in lorries for a certain amount of time, and long waiting periods would be disastrous.

The authorities at the Port of Dover have little to say about the situation because it seems still so hazy. Talk about Continent cut off by fog!

Mr Tedder, a Brexit voter, is now keen on a soft Brexit to allow Britain’s major port to function effectively, although he does add, “You’re not just dealing with the EU. You’re dealing with the French!” (French industrial stoppages have been known to cause mayhem.)

On the plus side, there’s a boat in Dover Museum dating from the Bronze Age, witness the fact that there’s been trading across the narrow twenty mile Channel since the time of the Pyramids. Though not at the rate of 10,000 trucks per day.

Photo by ketmonkey