

# I'm Diana, Fly Me



One of the Basher's favourite destinations is Lydd. This is the jumping off point for the shortest channel crossing to Calais or to Le-

Touquet, and often a Basher has been stopped short at Lydd waiting for the weather to clear. Its substantial landing fee too leaves a lasting impression, especially when you realise that you are paying to be the tourist attraction, which attracts visitors to the Biggles Bar, at least during the summer months!

The story of Lydd, or Ferryfield as it was once known started in 1954, when the legendary Wg Cdr Taffy Powell noticed that his operations from Lympne were often suspended due to low cloud, whereas an airfield at sea level near Dungeness could remain open for operations. Lydd is not an ex wartime airfield like most in the south but was built in 1954 for the not inconsiderable sum of

£250000. Taffy Powell's Silver City Airways specialised in transporting cars and their passengers across the channel by air in the days before RORO ferries, hovercraft and the Chunnel. A fleet of 25 Bristol Freighters flew up to 200 flights per day from Lydd to Le-Touquet and back. The journey took a mere 20 minutes, and was fashionable and attractive to the well heeled such as Diana Dors, Dirk Bogart, John Mills and the infamous Lady Docker. Dave Skerchly remembers watching this endless stream of noisy aircraft from the beach at Camber Sands. "I always wanted to stand and watch the aircraft, but the one time we visited Lydd my

Dad could not wait to get away, so we left after mere 10 minutes, I never did see a freighter take off" complained Dave. The Air Ferries were made obsolete by the giant hovercraft operating from Ramsgate. Strangely only this month the Hovercraft too has ceased operations, made obsolete by the Tunnel, serves them right I guess!

Dave Leddy finds Lydd an interesting destination in its own right. His brother enthuses over the Romney Hythe and Dymchurch miniature railway, which runs nearby. The lighthouse at Dungeness is open for visitors, and Derek Jarman's famous garden, including obscure art and the weird hardy plants, which grow on the ness, can be seen.

Above left: Actress Diana Dors at Lydd in the 1950s, below the Basher's at Lydd half a century later.



Dave Leddy's brother at the RHD railway



Dungeness Lighthouse is open to the public.

