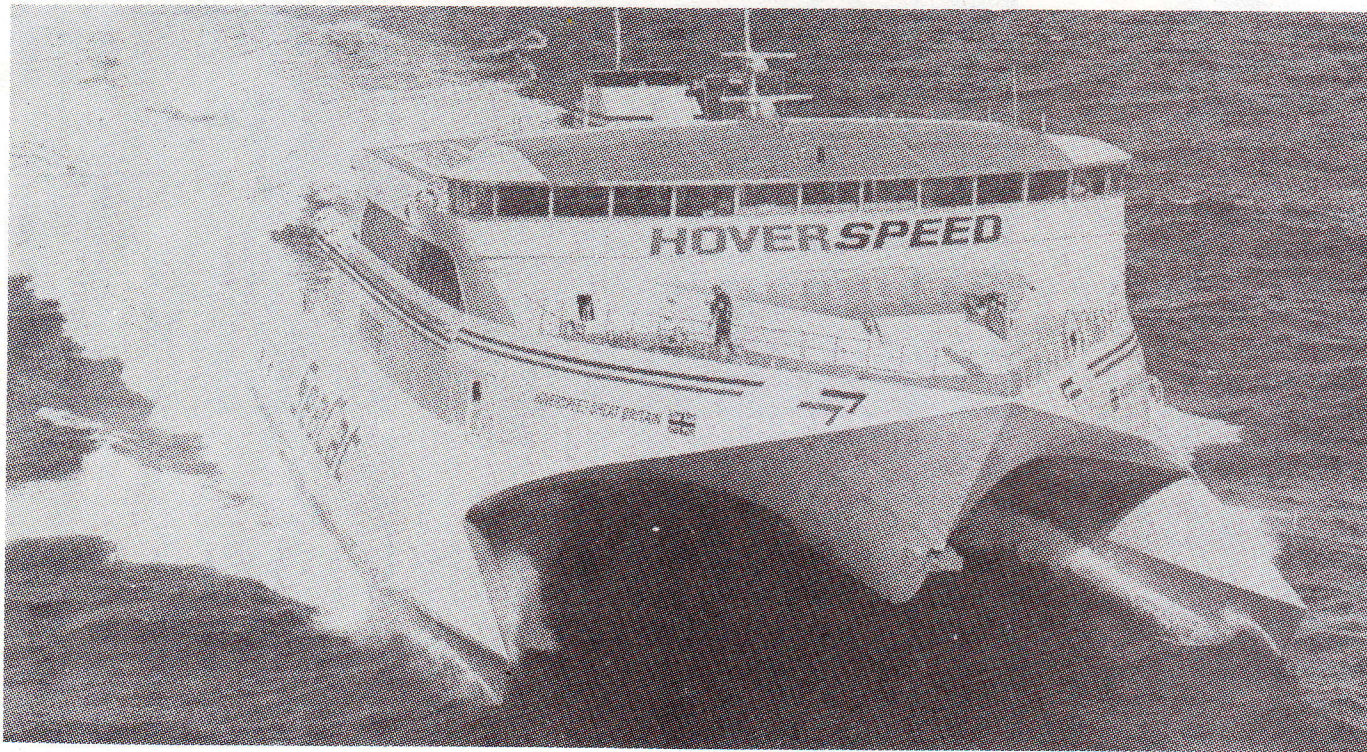


Round-a-boats and Swings



Folkestone has long been a gateway to the Continent, but at the end of this year it will lose its ferry service. However, this will be only a temporary hiccup, because in the spring, *Hoverspeed* will be implementing a new, high-speed catamaran service.

The company is a subsidiary of *Sea Containers*, which operates hovercrafts and catamarans on the Dover to Calais and Dover to Boulogne routes. The new high speed service will run between Folkestone and Boulogne from April.

According to *Hoverspeed*, in the past year, over a quarter of a million passengers and 150,000 cars have made the trip. The Swedish-owned Sealink Stena line announced that it was to close its Folkestone to Boulogne ser-

vice two months ago on account of its economic unviability. *Hoverspeed* plans to retain much of that market by offering a faster service for the same fare charged by its rival, *European Ferries*, on the Dover to Boulogne route.

The main attraction of the new service is its speed: five and a half hours from London to Paris as opposed to seven by the current service. Port of Folkestone owners, *Sea Containers* also plan to turn the harbour into a marina. The new catamaran (*SeaCat*) will have the uninspiring name *Hoverspeed Boulogne* and will carry 450 passengers and up to 80 cars. It will be the third such *SeaCat* deployed by the company on cross-Channel routes.