



DOVER 
DISTRICT COUNCIL

The Millennium Celebrations

MILLENNIUM REVIEW

from Jae Fowler of Dover District Council

If you were in Dover town centre over the New Year weekend you could hardly fail to miss the amazing 'Millennium Clocks' community celebrations. Huge numbers of people gathered in the early evening on New Year's Eve 1999 and New Year's Day 2000 to take part in or to watch the two events which were organised by Dover District Council in collaboration with Strange Cargo Arts Company.

On 31st December 1999 at 6.00pm the 'Millennium Clocks' celebration began in the grounds of Dover College with an Ecumenical Service of Reflection led by Christians Together in Dover. About 500 people attended the service, many of them bringing with them the willow and tissue lanterns they had made at the community workshops held at various venues across Dover throughout December. During the service each of

these lanterns was lit from the flame of the Bethlehem Peacelight which was brought to Dover by the Deep Sea Fellowship Scouting movement. As each lantern was lit, the congregation formed into a procession around the main Peacelight, which was carried in a beautiful, specially-designed lantern. As the procession made its way out of the grounds of Dover College and into the streets of Dover the Busker Du Street Band began to play its infectious brand of samba music.

Drawn by the music, more and more people lining the route of the procession joined in as the long trail of pyramid and fish-shaped lanterns wove its way through the town centre. By the time the procession reached the Market Square the crowd had swollen to about 2,000 people and the numbers continued to grow until the procession arrived at the sea front to meet those already waiting for the finale.

On the beach a 30ft high bonfire sculpture



One of the Sun costumes from the 'Carnival of the Planets' 1st January 2000.
Photo: Oliver O'Conner



of the Clock of the Second Millennium and a specially composed soundtrack greeted the procession. As the clock ticked through its final movements, the pendulum weight, represented by the world was carried forward to be added to the Clock of the Third Millennium the following night. The removal of the pendulum world sent the clock into meltdown, with fire, pyrotechnic effects and fireworks sending a final goodbye to the Second Millennium.

Many of the 5,000 people who had attended the previous night returned to see the second part of the Millennium Celebrations on New Year's Day 2000 when the new Millennium was welcomed in with the 'Carnival of the Planets', a spectacular mardi-gras style community carnival parade. About 300 participants from across the White Cliffs Country gathered in the grounds of Dover College wearing the costumes they had spent hours making at the free community workshops held throughout the district during October and November 1999.

Entertained by Busker Du and Brew Ha Ha street bands, each of the ten sections, created through costumes, light and colour, formed into a parade.

Large crowds lined the route through Dover town centre to the sea front to watch the 'Carnival of the Planets' pass by. Many people had also brought back their lanterns to join in the procession. If the numbers of people on New Year's Eve had been impressive, the numbers that joined the parade or waited at the sea front on New Year's Day were simply staggering. Approximately 12,000 people were drawn to the celebration, far more than had ever been anticipated. Those who had a view of the Clock of the Third Millennium on the beach watched as it was animated by the arrival of each of the ten main planet sections, whose members danced on the beach to specially composed music. The clock was well and truly in action, culminating, as on the previous evening, in a climax of sound and pyrotechnic effects. The evening rounded off with a fabulous display of fireworks from Dover Castle.