

Unveiling of the Dove of Peace

Report by Derek Leach

With over 250 others I accepted the invitation of Dover Harbour Board to attend the unveiling of the Dove of Peace at Cruise Terminal 1 (or Dover Marine Station as most of us still call it) on 22 December. It was also an opportunity to see the recently completed roof restoration, which cost ten million pounds.

We gathered in the cruise passenger departure lounge keen to see the Dove of Peace sculpture, but it was hidden in darkness beyond the glass partition and so we enjoyed traditional Christmas refreshments of mince pies and mulled wine as we were welcomed by Tim Waggott, Chief Executive of the Port of Dover. He reminded us of the vital role that the Marine Station played (even before it was completed) throughout the First World War with millions of troops passing through en route for the Western Front, returning on leave or injured.

We were then treated to a reading of "The Night Before Christmas 2014" written by Richard Davis and read by Richard Christian interspersed with carols in both English and German performed by the Pharos Chamber Choir. The story of the 1914 incredible, impromptu Christmas truce continued with a reading by Karen Steel and Emlyn Bailey of an actual letter, giving an eye witness account, sent by a soldier from the trenches.

Anthony Heywood, the sculptor of the Dove of Peace, then told us how the sculpture had been made using the famous Conqueror brand paper manufactured at Buckland Paper

Mill (which sadly closed in 2000). The Chairman of Dover Harbour Board, George Jenkins, told us how the Dove of Peace came to Dover and would stay until 2018 before he introduced the Lord de L'Isle, Lord Lieutenant of Kent. After a one minute silence he 'unveiled' the sculpture. This was no traditional unveiling, since the sculpture weighed one ton and was suspended from the roof. Instead, from the far end of the former station 'searchlights' began to play to and fro until they focused on the sculpture – a full size replica of a Second World War Spitfire fighter plane. It was an incredible and moving sight!

What, many of us asked, was the connection between a Spitfire and a dove of peace? I leave you to work that out, but George Jenkins suggested that during Dover's dark days as Hellfire Corner during the Second World War, Spitfires, circling overhead engaging the multitude of German bombers, gave the people of Dover hope of an eventual peace.



The Dover Dove of Peace