

# A Successful Celebration of Christmas for Dover

**Peter Sherred**

For the second year in succession the church of St Mary-in-Castro, Dover Castle hosted a superb 'Celebration of Christmas' event on Sunday 22nd December in the afternoon. The event was supported and promoted by the Rotary Club of South Foreland and the church was full as people attended what was clearly a popular event in the run up to Christmas.

Members of the Pharos Chamber Choir, under the direction of Stephen Yarrow, attended and led the singing for the congregation as well as performing several items on their own. Half a dozen or so Mayors from local Cinque Ports towns, together with the Chairman of Dover District Council, (Councillor Gordon Cowan), were present as well as the District Governor of Rotary District 1120, (Brian Dunne). They were joined by a number of representatives of the Dover Street Pastors Initiative.

At the start of the event all were welcomed by the Honorary Co-ordinating Chaplain of St Mary-in-Castro who thanked the civic representatives for their presence. The Speaker of the Confederation of the Cinque Ports, Sandwich Mayor Councillor Paul Carter was in attendance accompanied by his wife.

Those attending were treated to a few scripture readings, highlighting key moments leading to the birth of Jesus Christ. These were supplemented by well-known carols from both the Advent and the Christmas seasons. The event was rounded off with some popular seasonal songs including Deck the halls with boughs of holly, Rudolf the red nosed reindeer, White Christmas and Winter Wonderland. As the event came to its end

spontaneous applause broke out showing appreciation for the holding of the event. The Church Council and the Rotary Club of South Foreland shared equally voluntary donations received which will be donated to the Dover Street Pastors Initiative and other local charities.

"This event has clearly struck a chord with local people who wish to celebrate Christmas in a very inclusive way" said the co-ordinating chaplain, adding "as this was the second year in succession, we have had the pleasure of the church being full." Grateful thanks were offered for the vision of the Church Council members of St Mary-in-Castro as well for English Heritage's support of the event. Thanks were given also to Dover Community Radio and Martin Turner for promotion of the event in the weeks leading up to the date. Those attending included many who had travelled some distance from other Cinque Ports towns. No decision has been made as to whether this will become an annual local event, but it is clearly popular with the general public. In the words of one who attended: "A full Church, lovely choral pieces and hearty singing by us lot! It must happen next year, it's too good to not happen."

No pressure then!



*Capacity Congregation leaving the Church after the event*