

The Unknown Warrior Memorial Window in Dover

Marilyn Stephenson-Knight

Even on their happiest day, couples remember those who 'Fell' for their country. Royal brides, since the marriage in 1923 of Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon to Prince Albert, Duke of York, place their wedding bouquets on the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. His grave, one of the most visited war graves in the world, is in Westminster Abbey; he was buried there on Armistice Day 1920.

The day before, the Unknown Warrior had come home through Dover. A plaque erected by the Dover Society at the former Marine Station commemorates his arrival. Ninety-two years later, in 2012, with Armistice Day falling on Remembrance Day, another memorial to him and all the Fallen people he symbolises, was unveiled in Dover by Admiral the Lord Boyce KG, GCB, OBE, DL. "It gives me great pleasure," he said "on behalf of The Dover War Memorial Project, where I'm very proud to be a co-Patron with Dame Vera Lynn, to present this stained-glass window, with its profound message. *Lest We Forget.*"

The Unknown Warrior window was created in Dover by 3rd Dover Scouts and 8th Dover Brownies who meet in Eaves Hall, Eaves Road. They are named after scout leader Tommy Eaves, a schoolmaster at St Martin's, Markland Road, who died on the Somme in 1916. Tommy was one of six casualties with no known grave studied in an educational project to mark the 90th anniversary of the homecoming of the Unknown Warrior. It was produced by partners The Dover War Memorial Project, City of Westminster Archives, and Westminster Abbey, and over 1,000 schoolchildren across Kent and in London participated. The window was just one of their many activities, which included classroom sessions, exhibitions, visits to Westminster Abbey, and a specially-composed musical performed by St Martin's School on the exact anniversary of the Unknown Warrior's arrival in Dover.



Unknown Warrior window

The window is now on permanent loan to Astor College for the Arts, Astor Avenue. "I am thrilled to

bits that Astor is taking care of the exhibition and the Unknown Warrior window for us," said Marilyn Stephenson-Knight, founder of The Dover War Memorial Project (DWMP). "The window can stay in Dover, where the Unknown Warrior was welcomed home - Astor has over 1,000 young people on their roll each year and who will be able to see it and learn from it."

"Our vision," said Ed Pallent, the Principal of Astor, "is to develop students who demonstrate strong values of respect, commitment, high aspirations, loyalty, integrity duty and service through the arts and our military cadre. This is reinforced wonderfully by the Unknown Warrior stained-glass window. We will use it with students at Astor, the military cadre cadets, federation primary schools and the local community. We will remember the great sacrifice that so many made to enable us to be here today. The stained-glass window will be used as a catalyst to inspire students in numerous lessons and we feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to permanently exhibit it."

The window is displayed in the theatre foyer at Astor College, where abundant natural light reveals the beautiful colours of its two-dimensioned story. The six panes are dedicated to the six casualties, with pictures and key aspects of their lives included. One, dedicated to Dovorian Cecil Bromley was an experimental aviator, and the window pane and the Unknown Warrior educational resources, downloadable from Dover's Virtual Memorial at www.doverwarmemorialproject.org.uk, feature the role of Dover in the early days of flight. Shining through all the panes, from the other side of the

window, is a depiction of a soldier, standing on the White Cliffs watching HMS Verdun as she brings the Unknown Warrior's body into Dover Harbour.

The presentation and unveiling took place in the theatre itself, where master of ceremonies Mike Webb reflected on the continuing sacrifices of war-time. Calling them "terrifying" and "spine-chilling", he showed a 1940 map and photographs pinpointing Dover when Unternehmen Seelöwe (Operation Sealion) threatened Britain with invasion.

During World War II Dover was often machine-gunned from enemy aircraft - one such attack happened in the fields just below Astor College. Fortunately the two young ladies survived. One became the mother of Arthur Hornby, a former Astor student himself, who was due to present to Major Tony Leighton, representing Brigadier Simon Wolsey OBE, a donation for the Army Benevolent Fund. This was from monies raised in the Freemasons' hospitality tent at the Dover Military Tattoo in June 2012. Mr Hornby unfortunately had suffered a serious accident two days previously, so on his behalf the cheque was presented by Alan Shirley.

In the presence of standard bearers, Keith Atkinson, the chairman of Downs Branch, Royal British Legion, and Parade Marshall Phil Hackett conducted the Act of Remembrance. Following were two poignant 1940s songs from Astor Students. Wistfully "Cleaning My Rifle and Dreaming of You" were Jaouhar Ben Ayed and Sam Mummery, complete with superb performance on the banjo, while Courtney Wain and Sarah Mold remembered the dark times, during which Dover became a focus of

home, hope, and the wished-for peace, through Dame Vera Lynn's famous song "The White Cliffs of Dover".

"It is so important that many more young people will be able to enjoy learning more of the special part that The White Cliffs of Dover have always played in our history," wrote Dame Vera Lynn DBE, LL.D, M.Mus, in a letter read out at the presentation. "I am delighted to send my warmest wishes as the stained-glass window is placed in its new home, and I am with you in my thoughts on this special day." The DWMP also received a letter from No 10 Downing Street commending the initiative of commemoration, with the Prime Minister especially interested to read and learn of The Dover War Memorial Project. The letter concluded with his wishes for a successful day.

Over 200 honoured guests attended the presentation and the reception afterwards, including Charlie Elphicke

MP, Cllr Mrs Ronnie Philpott, the Deputy Mayor for Dover, Derek Leach, Chairman of River Parish Council and the Dover Society, Jonathan Boast, the artist who designed the window, and the families and the friends of our Fallen - with the fire-fighters arriving in style in their fire engine! For some in the audience it was the first time they had attended an Act of Remembrance and reflected on the Fallen, and they found it deeply moving. One decided that instant to learn more of his father's war-time service.

Every one here, every family, will have been touched by the wars. Since beginning The Dover War Memorial Project I have found thirteen family members who were killed in the wars. Simon Chambers, the co-founder, discovered his Great Uncle Fred, killed in 1915. They were our Unknown Warriors. Who in your family is yet to be found and remembered - who might be your Unknown Warrior?



The Lord Warden unveils the Window