

International Peace Light from Bethlehem



In 1984 the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation, ORF, launched a Christmas campaign 'Light into Darkness' with the aim of raising funds for local childrens charities. The campaign involved a young child travelling to Bethlehem to collect a flame from the Eternal Flame burning at the birthplace of Christ. The Light would be brought back to Austria and, for a small donation to the charity, people could take a light from the Flame to burn at home over Christmas. The campaign grew throughout Austria and ORF wanted to spread the Light across Europe. Austrian Scouts and Guides accepted the challenge and soon Scouts and Guides from across Europe were all involved. In 1995 the Austrian Scouts challenged the United Kingdom to join the campaign and get the Light to England, and hopefully further.

Members of The Deep Sea Scout Fellowship, part of the UK Scout Association, based in Dover took up the challenge, and with co-operation from P&O Ferries and members of British Rail Scout Fellowship, successfully brought the Light across the Channel in time for Christmas. It has been coming to Dover ever since, raising money for Demelza House Childrens Hospice, with interest growing as each year passed.

In 1999, thanks to support from Dover District Council, the Light led the parade to welcome in the New Millenium. In 2001, with co-operation from a US Petroleum Company based in the UK, we managed to get a Light to Ground Zero in the USA.

The Peace Light now covers all parts of the United Kingdom, travelling up to Scotland, across to Wales and over the Irish Sea to Northern Ireland and Eire. The UK Co-Ordinators have received many stories of how the Light has united communities, healed broken families, brought comfort to the infirm and strength to those in trouble.

www.peacelight.org.uk