

# ‘HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY!’ WALKER CONSTRUCTION

Kent-based Walker Construction (UK) Ltd celebrated its 50th anniversary on 13 September 2014. Having weathered the recession, the family-owned company is once again enjoying remarkable growth and is currently engaged on a variety of high-profile public works and rail infrastructure projects around South East England. A notable example of its recent activity is the Step Short Commemorative Arch in its home town of Folkestone which was declared open by HRH Prince Harry on Monday 4 August 2014.

The company was founded in north London in September 1964 by three brothers, Hector, Stephen and Raymond Walker, the new company relocating to Folkestone during the late-1960s to take advantage of East Kent’s growing prosperity. It has since grown to become one of the region’s leading construction companies specialising in public works and rail infrastructure projects. Typical of the projects the company has delivered recently are the refurbishment of the Denison Building in Chatham’s Brompton Barracks at a contract fee of around £4.0m, and the refurbishment of the 400m-long main roof at Waterloo International station, the multimillion pound contract being part of a long-term plan to bring the terminal back to life after Eurostar transferred to St Pancras.

Walker Construction’s success has seen a dramatic increase in its workforce, over 100 employees since March 2013, the company recognising the value its 340 employees have on its fortunes. “As a family-owned business, self-sufficiency and commitment to our employees go hand-in-hand with our success.” said Phil Webb, Walker Construction’s managing director. “We prefer to keep as much work as possible in-house and only use subcontractors for specialised tasks. Most of our employees have been with us for many years and we have a strong policy of promotion from within the company. It means that we retain experience and skills; the commitment our employees demonstrate in return is testament to the success of that guiding principle.”

As a Folkestone-based company it was fitting that Walker Construction played a major part in the construction of the Step Short Commemorative Arch that overlooks the harbour. Declared open by HRH Prince Harry on Monday, 4 August 2014, a century to the day after Britain declared war on Germany in



› The Step Short Commemorative Arch

1914, the graceful arch is a tribute to the millions of men and women who passed through Folkestone on their way to the battlefields and trenches of northern Europe during the Great War of 1914 to 1918. Many would never return.

The 14-metre tall, highly-polished steel catenary arch rises over a stone concourse designed in the shape of a compass that represents the global nature of the conflict, engraved slabs identifying the nations caught up in the ‘war to end all wars’. Concealed speakers installed next to public benches play recordings of contemporary accounts, stories, songs and poems. After darkness falls the area is illuminated by lights recessed into the arch and its surroundings: remembrance should not end with the setting of the sun. The name ‘Step Short’ is also an echo from the past, it being the order given to the columns of troops marching down the steep Slope Road, now renamed Road of Remembrance, to the troopships waiting in the harbour.

“Walker Construction is proud to have played a part in the construction of the memorial.” said technical manager, Alan Leigh. “As a Folkestone-based company the project has special significance to us so we’re incredibly proud to have helped create such a tribute in the heart of our community.”



› Above: Waterloo International Station. Below: The Denison Building, Brompton Barracks, Chatham



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