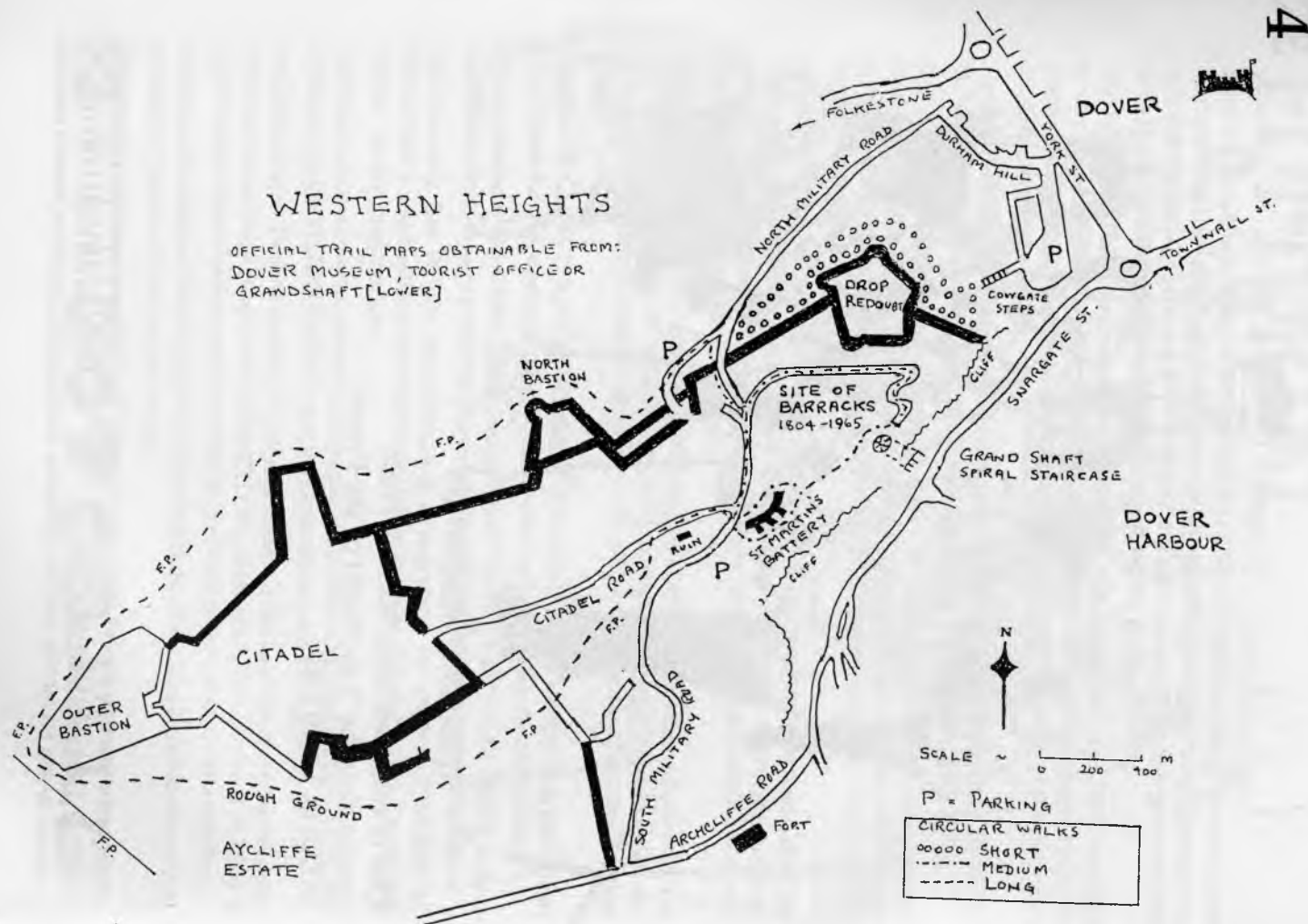


# WESTERN HEIGHTS

OFFICIAL TRAIL MAPS OBTAINABLE FROM:  
DOVER MUSEUM, TOURIST OFFICE OR  
GRANDSHAFT [LOWER]



# Wardens Walk the Western Heights

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## NEW AREAS FOR ALL TO EXPLORE AND ENJOY

A more pleasant Saturday morning would be difficult to imagine. It was 14th July in high summer at Dover, the skies were blue, the sun shining and a gentle breeze kept us cool as our small party of a dozen or so wended its way over the Western Heights.

At the invitation of Mrs Melanie Wrigley, one of the full-time officers of the White Cliffs Country Project, we had come together to share our interest in the welfare of the area.

Also present were those who have a special interest in birds, trees, butterflies, wild flowers and the like. Much formal but informed discussion took place concerning the sometimes conflicting interests of the various species. Inevitably when man changes the landscape or its use, there is a knock-on effect and we discussed how best to reconcile matters to the best advantage.

The Western Heights is largely chalk grassland in its natural state and much has been done by way of restoration by removing the scrub and introducing grazing and Mrs Wrigley stressed the importance of getting the balance right.

Perhaps some hedges could be planted in selected areas to maintain the habitat of birds as a substitute for cleared brushwood? Can some grasses be left rough for the insect life? What of the enhancement of the geological and architectural features of the fortress by judicious removal of trees? What about rotational grazing? These were some of the questions asked as we continued our walk.

To those whose knowledge of the Western Heights dates back a while, the changes have certainly resulted in a general tidying up, to become what is now an attractive and readily accessible public amenity which well merits a visit.

We found that clearance work and the provision of steps, gates and fencing have all helped bring about established pathways and circular trails, which makes for comparatively easy strolls (with or without dogs) but watch the steps! Pause awhile frequently; all the better to absorb the quite exceptional panorama of this stretch of coastline.

Many more people are beginning to discover this great fortress, which is one of the last to be built in Britain, and are enjoying it for free. A good view of the Drop Redoubt is now possible. The area, having short, medium and long circular walks is ideal for family picnics and outings. The Dexter cattle are harmless, fascinating to watch but need to be left to themselves.

Historical information panels which we found at intervals on our way are new this year. Provided by Dover Museum, they are an effective and useful addition.

What of vandalism? To be fair there is little evidence of this and it was generally felt that the more people are on the ground in the evenings and at weekends would help considerably. An exploratory visit is recommended before it becomes too crowded!

The White Cliffs Countryside Project and its officers want our help in a unique voluntary partnership to make the Western Heights a success and one of the best ways is to get ourselves there as often as possible just to walk over it and enjoy it. Those who wish to do a little more, as and when they can (for no regular commitment is expected), are invited to become volunteer wardens. Further information on Dover 241806—Mrs Melanie Wrigley, White Cliffs Countryside Project, 6 Cambridge Terrace, Dover.

Excited by the taste of somewhere new but handy some of us soon followed up this outing by walking all three trails which have been established (as shown on the accompanying map). The short walk took 35 minutes, the medium 40 minutes and the longer, more rugged walk, 90 minutes; on separate occasions, you understand, but we had lots to see and of course we had frequent rests. The long walk we think is best done anti-clockwise, at least initially.

Perhaps you would want to do each more quickly or indeed do all three in one go! Certainly there is enough to suit all tastes.

JOHN OWEN



One of the Dexter cattle hard at work clearing the Western Heights of coarse grass and scrub.