



WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT



MELANIE WRIGLEY,
(Project Officer)

In the January edition of the Dover Society's Newsletter there was an article about the White Cliffs Countryside Project's aims and about our intention to concentrate efforts on Dover's Western heights initially. Here is a brief summary of what has been achieved in the last year, much of the practical being work done by enthusiastic volunteers of all ages,

In January the Outdoor Pursuits' Groups run by Mr Adrian Visscher of Astor School started coming out on to the Western Heights twice a week to do practical conservation work. They learnt about the hand tools they were using, about the theories behind nature conservation tasks and achieved a great deal of valuable work such as scrub clearing, litter clearing and step building. Volunteers have installed more than 150 steps on the steep slopes to enable people of all ages to explore the Western Heights.

Once the fence line had been cleared of scrub and rubbish a local fencing contractor put up 1.5km of new fencing. This enabled the loveable Dexter cattle to start grazing on thirty acres of ancient chalk grassland around the Drop Redoubt.

The Dexter is a rare breed, descended from wild Irish mountain cattle. It is the smallest British breed of cattle, which, because of its small size and short legs, is able to graze the steep slopes of the Western Heights with ease and without damaging the turf. They also thrive on poor quality grazing.

The cattle have made an impressive difference to the area, grazing the knee-length grass back to ground level. The cattle will be taken off over winter, spring and early summer to allow the smaller, delicate flowers to bloom and drop seed. The cattle will be reintroduced around late July 1991 so that they can graze on the coarse grasses again, otherwise, the grasses will eventually smother the flowers.

Dover Society members helped the White Cliffs Project carry out an orchid survey on the area to be grazed. We also had volunteer help from many other sources such as a regular group of pupils from Dover College who help to



manage Cowgate Cemetery; boys from the Dover Youth Custody Centre; Community Service; individual members of the Public (volunteers and Voluntary Wardens); Duke of York's Royal Military School pupils; Individuals from Dover Grammar School for Girls and students from Walmer Social Centre also helped to manage Cowgate Cemetery as a place for wildlife and quiet remembrance. We have also received help from participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme..

A series of three circular walks is being waymarked. The short walk has been completed. In particular, access has been greatly improved and matching information panels installed at the entrances to introduce visitors to the history and wildlife of the Western Heights and to encourage them to explore along the circular walks. Dover Museum staff have designed and installed a series of information panels to create a historical trail.

We need more volunteers to help with practical work, and others to act as Voluntary Wardens to keep an eye on the Western Heights and to let us know if there is any fly-tipping, vandalism or dog worrying of cattle. We hope to arrange a wider range of walks next year. We would be very pleased to hear from anyone who feels they can offer to help us in any way. Even half an hour per month would be useful. Please contact us at the office at 6 Cambridge Terrace, Dover or call us on telephone number Dover 241806.

*If you are willing to help the White Cliffs Countryside Project
please use the loose slip inserted in this issue of The Newsletter*

DOVER MUSEUM

The new Museum opens in the Market Square (its original home before it was bombed) on 11th March 1991.

Beneath an arcade formed by the restored façade of the old Market Hall will be an entrance to a Tourist Information Centre. Behind this on the ground floor will be displays on the archaeology and geology of Dover, including the Buckland finds.

The floor above will be used for temporary exhibitions. The first, "Dover and its People", is a photographic display and doubtless you will recognise some of the subjects. In May a selection of the Museum's collection of pictures will be shown and later, an exhibition of and about the work of Noel Coward.

The main permanent exhibition on the top floor will cover the history of Dover from 1066 to the Second World War.

The amount of exhibition space will be three times that of the present Museum in Ladywell but there will be no storage space in the new building and staff office space is limited. Over the arcade there will be a Library 60 ft x 8 ft.

Museum staff will be available to answer visitors' questions about Dover and Between the Museum and the Heritage Centre will be a shop and a restaurant.

(ED. The Museum in Ladywell is now closed to visitors in preparation for the move to the Market Square but I believe that if necessary staff may be consulted by appointment.)