

ART & SOUL FESTIVAL GOES WITH A SWING!

*Report from Esme McConnell,
Arts Development Officer for Dover District Council*

The first Art & Soul Festival has received rave reviews as thousands joined in with the District Council's new programme of visual arts and community events over the half term week, 27th May - 4th June, 2000.

The Open Artists' Studios, Houses and Exhibitions programme proved very popular with artists and visitors alike. Over 30 open studios and exhibitions were held in Dover, Deal, Sandwich and the surrounding villages. Visitors were able to discover the wealth of creative talent in the district, exploring behind the scenes and meeting and talking to the artists themselves.

The streets of Dover and Sandwich played host to music, comedy cabaret, and visual theatre. Salsa in the Square in Sandwich was an afternoon of street

music featuring Sandwich's very own carnival street band — Brew Ha Ha!

Unfortunately, due to the bad weather, Picnic in the Park, due to take place on Sunday in Kearsney Abbey, had to be postponed until Sunday 30 July 2000.

Music lovers were treated to three outstanding festival concerts. The sixteen-piece jazz band Mission Impossible delighted their audience with mixture of jazz, swing, funk, blues, lively Latins and lush ballads. Geoff Achison and the Souldiggers performed world-class classic blues and R & B and the Hofners entertained with jive, hokum and swing!

Art & Soui's creative workshops were extremely popular, with Life Drawing, Drama, Paint & Sound, Victorian Stained Glass Design and Rag Rug making to choose from.

Story telling sessions were held in the district's four libraries. In Dover and Deal Jim Bywater combined music and story telling in a magical way with "Tales from the Book of Life", and in Aylesham and Sandwich Charlotte Firmin created books which the audience helped to write and in which they then appeared.

Following the success of the first Art & Soul Festival, Dover District Council's Arts & Events Department has received many requests from artists and members of the community for the Festival to take place again next year. One Open Studios visitor said, "At a stroke you have turned three towns into established arts centres!"

The dates for next years Festival are 26 May - 3 June 2001. Any one interested in taking part in any aspect of the festival next year should contact Esme McConnell, Arts Development Officer on 01304 872058.

