

# THE ROMAN PAINTED HOUSE

## *...to get New Entrance*

By Terry Sutton

Dover's famous Painted House, discovered in 1971 and opened to the public in 1977, is set to get new access from the Market Square. The scheme has received support from the district council's cabinet, which is recommending a grant of £3,645 towards the estimated cost of more than £8,000.

The present entrance to the excavated Roman villa is via New Street, a tiny lane off Cannon Street, opposite St. Mary's Church. Visitors often complain that they have difficulty finding it, although the centre still draws in thousands of tourists from all over the world.

The closure of the White Cliffs Experience and the Old Town Goal have highlighted the need for more exposure for the Painted House. Access to the new entrance will be across a corner of the lawn previously used by visitors to the White Cliffs Experience. An agreement will ensure the access path remains in the ownership of the district council.

The trustees of the Painted House are negotiating, or have reached, agreement

with others, to help fund the project. These include Dover Town Council (£500) and Kent Archaeological Trust (£1,000). Signposts will be changed to point the ways into the attraction. The existing entrance will remain open and both ways in will be manned.

The house was discovered by Brian Philp and his team of archaeologists and the centre was constructed to cocoon the discovery of the Roman villa which had been remarkably preserved beneath the town for nearly 2000 years.

*Editor's Note. The Painted House is open from 10am to 5pm, April to September daily except Mondays. Admission prices are £2 for adults and 80p for children and OAPs.*

*The Painted House is best known for its unique wall paintings which cover over 400sq.ft. of painted plaster, the most extensive ever found north of the Alps. Above the dado of red or green, visitors can still see a scheme of coloured panels framed by fluted columns. Parts of 28 panels survive, each with a motif relating to Bacchus, the Roman God of wine.*

*The house also provides a good example of Roman central heating, seen in the arched flues, the heating channels and the wall-flues that kept the building warm 1,800 years ago.*

*Painted design on south wall, Room 2, Painted House, as reconstructed from the remaining wall in situ and fallen plaster fragments.*

*(Courtesy of the Painted House)*

