

The Western Heights Preservation Society

report from Chris Taft

Since the last edition of the Dover Society Newsletter, the Western Heights Preservation Society (WHPS) has remained busy. This time of year is when we plan the summer activities and so are busy working away behind the scenes. Despite this we have still found time to undertake some more project work at the Town Ditch and have been able to arrange a visit to the Citadel - now the Immigrant Removal Centre. For more details of what we have been planning and working on see the summaries below.

Town Ditch Work Days

Last year work began on clearing the ditch leading from the Drop Redoubt to the cliff edge. Since then, more projects days have been undertaken and more are planned with the aim of clearing this ditch completely - opening up Western Heights and improving access. Prior to completing the clearance work, however, a fence will need to be erected at the far end to prevent accidents. So far, work is progressing very well and by the next update I hope to be able report that this work is complete.

Planning for this year's Lecture and Open Day

The Western Heights Open Day 2003 will hopefully be the biggest and best ever. This year's event, organised by the White Cliffs Countryside Project, will be on Sunday 8th June 2003. As in the past, the WHPS will run a stall on the site of the former Grand Shaft Barracks and, as last year, we shall be opening the Grand Shaft. On top of all this we have approached English Heritage to investigate the possibility of a one-day-only opening of the Drop Redoubt. Should permission be granted, more details of this will be available from the WHPS at the below address. With all this extra work planned we shall be requiring more and more members to help out - if you are not a member already, now would be the time to join.

Memories Project

As part of our continuing commitment to preserve the history of the Western Heights, our Chair for Publicity and Promotions, Tamsyn Edwards, has launched a project to capture memories people have of the Heights as it once was. For more information see the footnote to this article and find out how you may be able to help.

Citadel Visit

Owing to the change of use at the former Young Offenders Institution, visits to the Citadel Bastion were, for a time, not possible. Now the changeover is complete, however, the WHPS is once more able to offer its members the chance to visit this fascinating part of the Heights. The first trip is set for mid February and, at the time of writing, places are filling fast. If you would be interested in joining the next visit, contact the Society at the address below to join the WHPS for news of the next trip.

* * * * *

Information Sheets

In preparation for the Open Day, and as grounding for future work, the WHPS is producing a series of historical information sheets on various parts of Western Heights. There is a lot of work involved but it is hoped the first batch (which will include the Drop Redoubt, St. Martin's Battery and North Entrance) will be ready for the Open Day in June.

* * * * *

To continue our work the Society needs the support of its members, whom we thank for all their help so far. We are encouraging new members to join and welcome ideas from anyone that can further our work. To find out more or to join please contact the Hon. Secretary at: 66 Union Road, Deal, Kent CT14 6AR or visit the site www.dover-western-heights.org.uk

FOOTNOTE: Memories of the Western Heights

CAN YOU HELP? Towards the end of the working life of the Grand Shaft Barracks at Dover's Western Heights, Mr Ron White was working in the kitchen, catering for families staying at 20 Married Families Hostel, as the Grand Shaft Barracks was known at this time. Forty-three years later Mr Ron White was reliving his memories of Western Heights and sharing those experiences with the Western Heights Preservation Society (WHPS). These memories form part of a new project run by the WHPS to capture and record for posterity people's memories, experiences and stories. In furtherance of this project we are appealing for anyone with memories of Dover's Western Heights to make contact with the Society.

THINK BACK... Were you based at the barracks? Did you work at the Heights? Were you a child who played with your friends at Western Heights? Do you remember your relatives talking about Western Heights? Do your friends have memories of visiting there?

We want to hear from you to share your memories with us and help us to piece the jigsaw together. The Society is keen to find out more of the secrets the Heights may hold. If you feel that you can assist us with our research then please do not hesitate to contact Tamsyn Edwards, Chair of Publicity and Promotions at: 8 Astor Avenue, Dover, Kent CT17 OAR or email tamsyne@excite.com. You may also wish to visit our website www.dover-western-heights.org.uk