



WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT



THE ENVIRONMENT and the NATIONAL CURRICULUM

One of the aims of the White Cliffs Countryside Project is to encourage local people of all ages to get involved with the Project, to find out more and help to care for their local environment. Another is to explain about the countryside, and its historical, wildlife and geological attractions, using a wide variety of means, including leaflets, outdoor information panels, viewpoints, guided walks and farm trails.

It is easy to see the connection between the Project's aims and the needs of schools and the demands of the National Curriculum.

We have been working closely with a number of primary and secondary schools in the Project area, developing ideas with teaching staff that both fulfil educational needs and also get across the message about the importance of the ancient chalk grassland, and the need for grazing management.

The Environment is one of the National Curriculum themes for cross-curricular studies. A wide range of intellectual and practical skills can be learnt in a new and interesting way. This applies to all subjects taught in schools from Maths, Craft, Biology, and Sciences to History, Geography, English and other languages.

The WCCP has been invited to a number of local schools to give illustrated talks about the project and the wildlife of the local countryside. A guided walk on one of our sites then usually follows. Some schools take the opportunity to do field work and or practical conservation work to help care for the countryside.

This year two local schools (Astor and Channel High School) have based an Activity Week around the WCCP and the local environment – both the countryside and the historical environment.

During a week in June, all of Year 7 at Astor School took part in a wide range of activities. The pupils visited a different site each morning and went back to school to do follow up studies in the afternoon.

The Western Height and Cowgate Cemetery were main sites for a host of educational activities. These included an Ecological Orienteering course where pupils had to find coordinate points and then answer questions relating to something next to them. The questions were mainly about the plants and basic maths. The pupils only had an hour

and a quarter to complete the course. Even so, this energetic activity seemed very popular with the children. 197

There was a History Trail and associated work sheets that looked more closely at the Grand Shaft, St. Martin's Battery, the North Entrance and the Drop Redoubt. The Drama teacher had groups doing interesting echos and rhythm experiments in the Grand Shaft. Some good examples of creative writing came from experiencing the steep, triple spiral staircase.

Cowgate Cemetery is a wonderful place to base school activities. The gravestones are full of interesting information about the people buried there. Information gathering gives an insight into Dover's social history and, of course, much of the data can be represented using mathematical techniques. A quiz was devised to get the pupils exploring and reading the gravestones. The visit to Cowgate resulted in some imaginative stories and poems.



Whinless Down, behind Elms Vale recreation ground, was the site for alerting the senses to nature. 'Earth Walks' - devised to experience how other animals see the world, homing in on the colours of the downland, making smelly cocktails and tree hugging were all done to get a feel for nature. The pupils also carried out tree surveys and bug hunts.

The enthusiasm and work that resulted from the week of activities was excellent and is a credit to both the hard work of Astor staff and enthusiastic pupils. From an ecologist's point of view it was great to see everyone being part of nature that week.

WELCOME TO ASTOR SCHOOL

- our first Schools Member of the Society

Much of the work referred to in Melanie Wrigley's article was done with twelve-year-olds from Astor School. As Astor has joined the Society as a Schools member we are delighted to include three representative pieces of children's work on the White Cliffs Project with Melanie. These include the outings to Whinless Down, the Western Heights and Cowgate Cemetery.

WHINLESS DOWN

Today we went to Whinless Down for an earth walk with Melanie Wrigley and also a "Bug Hunt". It was very interesting. The most interesting part was when Melanie gave out some plastic cups and then she told us that we were going to collect plants to make a cocktail. All the plants collected made a nice or horrible smell. My cocktail smelt like mint. I called it "Mint Surprise". I thought Amanda's was the best smell. Then Melanie gave us some mirrors and we pretended to be following animals:- mice, rabbits and I forget the last one.

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GERALDINE



WESTERN HEIGHTS

Today we walked up from school to the Western Heights. First we went to the Grand Shaft. This is a shaft that was made during 1806 and 1809, to allow a quick response by the troops stationed on the Heights to an attack on the harbour. With Napoleon's successful armies threatening to attack at any time this gave quick access which was very important.

Next we went to St. Martin's Battery which is situated on high ground overlooking the Grand Shaft. It was not only used in Napoleonic times but also in World Wars One and Two.

Thirdly we went to the North Entrance where we completed a work sheet and finally we went to the Caponiers area, which was referred to as a killing ground. I enjoyed my trip to the Western Heights very much.

RACHEL

COWGATE CEMETERY *THE GRAVEYARD*

As we climbed up the towering hill, there came an opening in the trees. We stepped over the brambles that were like sharp-toothed grass snakes and into a clearing, a dense patch of dead grass rather like a piece of disused carpet on top of a skip.



The grave stones were barely readable and you could only just see the inscriptions carved elaborately onto the stone or marble, whichever it was.

It read:

James Smith

Aged 2 years old

Born 18th of September 1845

Died 27th of December 1847

LISA