

28 and two bullocks to climb into, complete with equipment.

As the time grew nearer for the march, our elderly parade marshal arrived, leaning heavily on a walking stick, arranging us into lines often. Then, as happens at such moments, a police van full of uniformed police officers, pulled up beside us. The parade marshal "wasn't having none of this?" He went over to the police driver and said, "I suppose you've stopped here because we're in the Merchant Navy and we're going to get drunk and start a fight!" "Watch it", came the reply, "any trouble from you grandad, and I'll get extra 'back-up' and put you in the 'cooler.'" On his return, the marshal winked at us and said, "that's put that lot in their place! Now, how about a sing-song."

As the time passed, slowly we edged our way up towards the top end of the Mall, different groups being shuffled to and fro. Eventually, the lifeboat service were in front of us with a large craft being towed by a tractor. Behind us was the British Legion of about a hundred strong, each carrying a large banner, little did we know that when we came within sight of the T.V. cameras, David Dimbleby wouldn't give the Merchant Navy a mention with such competition fore and aft!

We were soon to find how helpful it was

to have a military band playing. Once we were in the Mall, Mary and I, together with the 138 others in our group were striding out as if we were in the Brigade of Guards. The shouting and cheering from one million spectators was unbelievable. One man shouted out, "Good old British Merchant Navy! We wouldn't have won the last war without you!" It then suddenly, seemed all worthwhile being there. As we rounded the Queen Victoria memorial, with the uniformed block marching ahead, we 'oldies' at the rear waved our flags, the captain from Palm Line raised his walking stick, the invalid in his wheelchair his cap, and the Queen and Duke of Edinburgh, both laughing, waved back.

Soon we were back at base. With farewells said, then it was onto the tube, into the car and back to Dover after a most remarkable memorable few days.

*N.B. Statements overheard from the public:*

*"How could Britain be so good at making such ceremonies run like clockwork - yet be so incapable of making trains run on time?"*

*"All those who thought the Windsor dynasty could not survive the pressure of modernity were wrong. The British monarchy is alive and well!"*

*What we will remember, most of all, is the sound of one million cheering people in the centre of London and not one cross word.*

## The Western Heights Preservation Society

*report from Chris Taft*

The Western Heights Preservation Society (WHPS) has now been in existence for almost two years. It was set up not only to help preserve Dover's Western Heights, but also to disseminate information on its history and make people more aware of the site and its fascinating and important development. At the foundation of the Society the following mission statement was adopted, which highlights our aims:

*The Western Heights Preservation Society was formed for the conservation, preservation and restoration of the Western Heights fortifications at Dover.*

Since the official foundation of the group in July 2000 we have launched several projects, both public facing and behind the scenes.

Some of our past and present work is summarised below.

### **BBC Radio Kent Broadcast**

As a launch of the WHPS BBC Radio Kent visited Dover's Western Heights and were taken on a tour of the site by Chris Taft, the Publicity Secretary of the group. This tour was then broadcast one Saturday morning.

### **Launch of Society Website**

Coinciding with the visit by the BBC the WHPS's treasurer, Jeff Howe, uploaded the first version of the society's website to the internet. Since that day [www.dover-western-heights.org](http://www.dover-western-heights.org) has been improved upon and now provides a means for members to learn of new projects and details for new members on how to join. A link is included to a sister site that provides a comprehensive, illustrated history of Dover's Western Heights.

### **Citadel Visits**

The WHPS has led two successful visits inside the Citadel. Having established links with a contact within the former Young Offender's Institution we have been able to give our members an insight into an area of the Heights rarely enjoyed by the general public. More visits are planned for the future; contact the Society for more information.

### **Regular Guided Walks**

From the foundation of the WHPS we have built up a close working partnership with the White Cliffs Countryside Project (WCCP) and Jeff Howe now regularly takes people onto the Heights on a guided walk in association with the WCCP and WHPS.

### **Formation of a regular Members' Newsletter**

Our members are informed of current work being completed by the WHPS through our newsletter, *Dover Lines*, where regular features describe the history of different parts of the fortifications

### **Representation at Western Heights' Open Days**

The group is currently preparing for its annual contribution to the Western Heights' Open Day. During the last two events a small display was put together showing some of our work and this year plans are afoot for a project on a much larger scale. This year's Open Day is on Sunday 9th June 2002.

### **North Entrance Clearance Project**

In June 2001 the WHPS commenced its first clearance project. We targeted the roadway, which leads to the bridge over the North Lines, known as the North Entrance. A day's work succeeded in removing enough of the heavily overgrown banks to reveal the original wall and pavement running alongside the road. Two later project days finished the work and returned the area to more like its former appearance.

### **Dover Mercury Newspaper Coverage**

In connection with the project work excellent publicity was achieved in one of Dover's local papers, the Dover Mercury.

### **Drop Redoubt Lines Project**

More recently a further area has been tackled by the WHPS. This work was on the lines leading from the Drop Redoubt to the cliff edge overlooking Snargate Street. This has significantly opened up these lines and allowed easier access to the stairs leading down from the top. It has also set the boundaries for a future project, clearing down to the cliff edge.

### **BBC History Magazine News Item**

The most recent project completed by the Society has been the successful publication of a news item advertising the Heights and the WHPS in the BBC History Magazine, the country's biggest selling history monthly.

*For the Western Heights Preservation Society this work is only the beginning. There is a lot more in the pipeline, projects of a much grander scale, which will see the society move even closer to realising its aims.*

The Western Heights Preservation Society welcomes new members and anyone interested in joining, or simply in finding out more should contact us on the addresses below. Our Annual General Meeting is planned for July, members and non-members are all welcome, the date will be published nearer the time on our website and in the local press.

Contact the Hon. Secretary at: 66 Union Road, Deal, Kent CT14 6AR or visit the site [www.dover-western-heights.org](http://www.dover-western-heights.org)