

Projects

Cowgate Cemetery - Gravestones

Lesley Gordon

As reported previously, the chance to record gravestones at Cowgate has expanded with work on an increasing number of plots by the Society's intrepid clearance parties. Last spring, Ian Merton, collector in chief of headstone information, became increasingly concerned at the number of stones lying dotted about, face down on the ground, their information seemingly lost. A plan began to form to see if any could be raised temporarily to yield their information before it was irrevocably lost to the damp earth and plethora of slugs and beetles underneath.

A tentative request to Dover District Council for assistance in raising the heavy stones brought an immediate offer of help from Roger Walton, the Council's Head of Property Services. So it was that, at 9am on the 23rd July, a small party from the Society stood at the cemetery gates to greet the arrival of a lorry from English Landscapes, contractors to the Council for land and ground maintenance.

Two of their men, Paul Cobbins and Darryl

Pendle, set to work with crowbars and blocks of wood, levering up the fallen stones while the rest of us peered and brushed and recorded any information thus exposed. We were pleased to find that the strength and skill of the two men in raising heavy stones, which had been lying flat and overgrown for years, was matched by their own interest in the task in hand. The presence of large numbers of slow worms and beetles, some surprisingly large, underneath the slabs, indicated what a haven for wild life the cemetery is.

Over twenty stones were raised in barely an hour. Some were too worn away to be of use and some, it later transpired, had already been captured before their fall, by Mrs. de Bourbel, who first recorded sections of the cemetery in the 1980s. The remainder yielded up their hitherto secret information, which has now been added to the Society's growing database. Thanks are gratefully recorded to the Council and English Landscapes for their help in this ongoing project.

Cowgate Cemetery - Clearance

Jeremy Cope

Our aim, as practised by The Society's project team and the White Cliffs Countryside Project (WCCP) volunteers, is to restore the cemetery to a hay meadow but one populated with trees and large shrubs. In this way Cowgate may be both a cemetery and wildlife area. It will require mowing in the autumn and again in early spring.

Five of the eight plots that make up the cemetery can be said to be at the hay meadow stage (well almost). During the summer, whilst we were clearing undergrowth and rubbish from the remaining plots and from the cemetery borders and the vaults, nature had its way with the hay meadow plants and the grass and vegeta-