

The Western Heights Preservation Society

Report from Chris Taft

The Western Heights Preservation Society (WHPS) is once again pleased to be able to offer a brief update on its activities.

Open Day

The weekend of the 4th and 5th June saw the annual Western Heights Open Day and the Western Heights Preservation Society (WHPS) were pleased to once more be involved in the event, the 6th organised by the White Cliffs Countryside Project (WCCP). Once again the event far surpassed previous years with around 6000 visitors over the two days. The WHPS managed the opening of the Drop Redoubt on both the Saturday and Sunday and this year gave visitors the opportunity to explore more freely, with marshals on hand to offer guidance. Additionally, for the first time, interpretation panels helped visitors understand more of the history of the Drop Redoubt. Even more of this impressive 19th century fortification was open thanks to the hard work and dedication of WHPS members. The Society was also involved with arranging for a free vintage bus service



1st Battalion the First Foot
Guards inside the Drop Redoubt
© Jeff Howe 2005



Interpretation panels around the
Drop Redoubt to help visitors

© WHPS 2005

to take people from the town to the Heights, courtesy of Dover's Transport Museum, and once again the Grand Shaft opened free of charge. At the Shaft and on a stall near the Drop Redoubt the WHPS were also offering for sale a number of publications and, for the first time, some specially commissioned branded merchandise such as key rings and pencils. It is hoped this product range will be built on for forthcoming events.

Lecture Evening

The weekend did not merely consist of events at the Heights however. On Saturday evening the Society welcomed visitors, members and non-members alike, to Dover Castle for two special lectures. Andrew Saunders, formally Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments at



English Heritage, delivered an interesting presentation on "*What if Nelson had lost at Trafalgar*", especially relevant this year as we mark the 200th anniversary of the great naval battle. Andrew's talk looked at the defences built up around Britain from Elizabethan times onwards and focused particularly on those that would have been used to defend Britain had Napoleon invaded, which of course included the Western Heights.

Paul Hadaway of the WCCP followed Andrew with a fascinating talk on "*From Fields of Fire to Fields of Flower*" where he described how the ancient chalk grass lands were built up and how they provide the habitat for some of this country's most important wildlife. Paul showed many illustrations of the plant and animal species, which can be seen easily on the Heights today.

Society Leaflet

The open weekend provided the ideal launch for the WHPS leaflet. The glossy colour leaflet was produced by Chris Taft and Stephen Dent and printed with the kind assistance of SAGA. This new leaflet will lend a much more professional feel to the Society and will act as an excellent

introduction to the Heights and Society for those currently unfamiliar with the area. It is hoped it can support the wider publicity of the WHPS.

Annual General Meeting

July 23rd will see the WHPS Annual General Meeting, exact details of which are still to be confirmed at the time of going to press.

Western Heights on the Television

Hopefully some readers may have seen the Western Heights and Dover Castle featured in a recent Channel 4 television programme with Dr. Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage. Dr. Thurley has in the past expressed great interest in the Heights and chose to include it in his programme looking at Britain's buildings. Viewers saw Dr. Thurley enthuse on the importance and significance of Dover's Western Heights.

Getting Involved

The last few months have been extremely busy for the Society. However nothing happens without the help and support of members. The WHPS is keen for more people to become involved and would like to recruit new members to assist on its project days, working on clearing, tidying and helping to preserve more areas of this important site. If you feel you can help at any level please get in touch with the Society through the website at: www.dover-western-heights.org or write to:



WHPS,
PO Box 366,
DEAL,
Kent
CT14 9XY