

responsible for managing these days within the WHPS are currently planning the next areas to be targeted. More equipment has been purchased to help further this work and it is through funds raised at Open Days and through membership that it has been possible to buy this equipment.

Extra volunteers are always welcome so anyone wishing to become involved should look at the website

[www.dover-western-heights.org](http://www.dover-western-heights.org) for details of dates of forthcoming work days.

### Getting Involved

The WHPS is keen for people to become involved at all levels with all sorts of work and would welcome hearing from anyone who wishes to help. The Society is at present especially keen to recruit more people to assist on administrative level, most especially helping to work on developing the Society. Every year at one of the open days visitors express how much they enjoy the day and the opportunity to see parts of the site not normally open, and every time they express the wish to see it open more often. Opening just once a year

takes up an incredible amount of the time of the core of dedicated volunteers and to open more often and do even more will require more people.

There is a great deal to be done. Much has been achieved but much more can be with more support. Other plans are in the pipeline but can only be realised with more help. The WHPS is very grateful to all its members and will always welcome hearing from others who can and will help. 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](http://www.dover-western-heights.org)

or write to:

WHPS, Pox 366, DEAL, Kent CT14 9XY



*1st Foot Guards on parade, Western Heights*

## *The Execution of William Turmaine*

by Derek Leach

*“from the Joe Harman archive”*

**W**illiam Turmaine was hung at Dover on 8th March 1813. He was born at Westgate, Canterbury in 1781, the sixth of eight children, and became a shoemaker. On 22nd March 1808 he was arrested for stealing 100lbs of butter, the property of Robert Wood, a Margate grocer. He was committed to Dover Gaol and was tried at the General Sessions on 6th June in the same year. Having been found guilty, he

was sentenced to seven years transportation. However, a search of census records in Australia did not show a William Turmaine and it would seem that he was not transported, particularly as his third daughter was baptised just two months before he was executed in 1813!

William appears again amongst prisoners committed to Dover Gaol on 31st December 1812 charged with “Feloniously

and Burglariously breaking and entering the Dwelling House of William Abbott at Margate and stealing thereout four blankets and one counterpane, the property of the said William Abbott and diverse Articles of Wearing Apparel the property of William Kosley." He was tried on 17th February 1813, found guilty and sentenced to death. An accomplice was reprieved, but was sentenced to transportation for life and sent to the prison ships moored in the River Medway.

The Kentish Gazette carried a report of the execution: "Yesterday morning, about half past eleven o'clock, the awful sentence of the law was carried into execution at Dover on the person of William Turmaine, convicted on 17 ultimo of a burglary at Margate, the gallows being erected near the first turnpike at the end of the town on the same spot where the last execution took place about 28 years hence.

About 11 o'clock the culprit was taken from the gaol and placed in a cart fitted for the occasion accompanied by Rev. Mr.



A typical hanging

Maule (who has been particularly attentive to the unfortunate man since his condemnation), the executioner being seated on the side, two constables on horseback with others two and two on foot preceded it. The cart was followed by a post coach and three post chaises in which were the Mayor, the Town Clerk and the rest of the Justices. On arriving at the fatal tree, after spending a few minutes in prayer, the Executioner then proceeded to do his duty and the unfortunate man, having taken leave of the Mayor, and those spectators who were contiguous to him, was launched into eternity.

About five minutes appeared to have terminated the sufferings of the unhappy culprit, and after hanging the usual time, his body was cut down, put into a coffin and carried to the Bone House of St. Mary's Church and from thence was removed to Canterbury for interment.

He met his fate with a considerable degree of fortitude, but by no means bordering on indifference. He died in the thirty-sixth year of his age. An immense concourse of spectators was assembled to witness this melancholy catastrophe on whom the shocking spectacle appeared to make a suitable impression."

These public hangings took place on the high ground on the left side of the entrance to Black Horse Lane (now Tower Hamlets Road) and the windows of the Black Horse Tavern on the opposite corner (rebuilt in 1839 as the Eagle Tavern), offered a vantage point for sightseers who did not want to be in the crowd. The last person to be executed there was in 1823. The Municipal Reform Act of 1835 ended public executions. The site is commemorated by one of The Dover Society's historic blue plaques.

*The research into this incident was carried out by Richard Smith, a descendant of William Turmaine's sister.*