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■ NATURE - Chairman of Adur District Council Mrs Sue Bucknall (centre), environment committee chairman Mr Peter Spruce (left), and South Eastern Orienteering Association development officer Mr David Lee with (left to right) Rowan Feldberg (ten), Ellie Cheneler (11) and Gemma Lynn (11), Buckingham Middle School pupils taking part in orienteering activities. - Order form page 4. Photo sales no. B2125-2.

Rare chalkland given new protection

TWO areas of rare chalkland - Lancing Ring and Mill Hill, Shoreham - have been declared local nature reserves.

English Nature has agreed local nature reserve status for the two beauty spots with Adur District Council.

Now the rare butterflies, orchids, wildflowers, grasses and birds, including kestrels, can thrive under the protection of the law.

The pioneering Adur Valley Project and its many sponsors and volunteers won this important new status for Lancing Ring and Mill Hill.

Since 1945, 96 per cent of the country's traditional chalk grassland has disappeared.

The Adur Valley Project, co-ordinated by the local council, will now be working hard to conserve the natural habitat of rare chalkland species, as well as encourage responsible enjoyment of the area by walkers and other visitors.

Mill Hill was formally declared

as a local nature reserve on Monday when the chairman of Adur District Council, Mrs Sue Bucknall, and the chairman of the council's environment committee, Mr Peter Spruce were joined by representatives from the Society of Sussex Downsmen, the National Rivers Authority, the Countryside Commission, the Sussex Downs Conservation Board and others.

A new information board was put up illustrating the major landmarks and species such as the chalkhill blue and marbled white butterflies, the pyramidal orchid, round-headed rampion, horseshoe vetch, St John's wort, the yellowhammer and the skylark.

Mr Spruce said: "This is another success for the Adur Valley Project and I am exceptionally pleased that we have finally got this status."

"It gives the flora and fauna more protection and has protected the site itself from development. This is one of the achievements of the Adur Valley Project."

He praised local volunteers who had made the two areas so success-

ful by implementing a work management programme through the Friends of Mill Hill and the Friends of Lancing Ring.

He added: "At Lancing Ring we have additional protection now for when the A27 improvements are implemented. The government will have to put a tunnel through as they have done at Southwick Hill."

Mr Bob Edgar, of English Nature, said that Mill Hill was a classic site for English Nature's involvement. It was a site of local importance for local people, who realised the importance of the area.

He said: "The quality was going down through lack of management at both sites, but the local authority has now brought it back through a management scheme and we are very happy to declare these two sites as nature reserves. There are now 14 in Sussex and the original ones were declared by the county council, followed by Horsham District Council, then Mid Sussex District Council, and now Adur."

Pupils from Buckingham Middle School in Shoreham were also there, with one group starting a long-term study project and another on a course organised by the British Orienteering Federation.

It is hoped the area will be mapped for orienteering in the near future.

On hand was Mr David Lee, the South Eastern Orienteering Association's development officer, who guided the youngsters in their tasks.

"Because Mill Hill is a sensitive site, only certain activities can take place. Orienteering is one which is compatible with the environment and we got along Mr Lee through the Adur Valley Project to guide the children," explained Jill Adams, who along with Richard Lord runs the project.

Last year the Adur Valley Project pioneered the re-introduction of sheep grazing on Mill Hill to help encourage wildlife.

The Swan becomes a Parrot