



Dorset's residents head Down Under

By HARRY HOGGER

harry.hogger@dorsetecho.co.uk

THOUSANDS of West Dorset residents are abandoning the area for a fresh start overseas, figures have revealed.

The district is one of the areas with the highest emigration figures in the country, according to analysis of information released by the Office of National Statistics (ONS).

West Dorset has seen 4,200 people leave the area to start a new life in foreign climes over the last five years, while only 2,900 have arrived in the region from overseas during that period.

Most people moving abroad are heading for Australia and New Zealand according to Paul Arthur, director of The Emigration Group, which helps people to relocate Down Under.

He said: "Middle England is on the move and it's well off areas like Dorset which are hot spots for emigration.

"Australia and New Zealand are among the most popular choices.

"The huge shortfalls of skilled labour in those countries are acting as a major driving force for emigration. Immigration policies in these countries have been revised to actively encourage our skilled tradespeople and professionals to emigrate."

Claire Ford, 32, a housewife from Charlton Down, says she has never considered leaving the area but knows people who have sought a better lifestyle on the other side of the world.

She said: "I have always lived here and I have never been tempted. I've got a young family and that makes a difference.

"But we had friends who moved out to Australia about 18 months ago, and they had children the same age.

"They went out because of his job and they have adjusted to life out there. It's not for me though, I've always liked it here."

Paul Swatridge, 56, a self-employed woodworker from Dorchester, said he would be tempted to a move abroad, but only as far as France.

He said: "It's a better quality of life, shorter winters, more sunshine, less stress and the general lifestyle of the French is more in keeping

with how I would like to live.

"I know lots of people who have had members of the family move to Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

"They are mostly younger families setting out on a career and they see their prospects to be more exciting out there."

Nancy Cotton, 76, who is retired and living in Cerne Abbas, said she was surprised that so many people were keen to leave the area.

She said: "I think Dorset is very nice and I would never be tempted away.

"It's a very pretty county and the people are very friendly.

"If you move away, you never know what you are moving into. It's probably the weather that tempts most people to move."

Chloe Walton, a 23-year-old veterinary nurse, has recently moved from Wool to Hampshire.

She said: "I would possibly consider moving abroad one day, when I'm older. It's the weather and just something different.

"People think it's a better quality of life, and in some cases it is.

"I would miss the countryside, but that's about it really."



