



WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT



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I know that with the clocks just changed and the evenings closing in many people will be looking forward to spring rather than winter. But there are many reasons to look forward to winter, not least of which is the latest edition of *Countryside News*. With dozens of volunteer tasks that you could join and the many walks that are listed, there are lots of ways to keep warm and make a positive contribution to the wonderful countryside and wild life around Dover.

If you enjoy walking then the guided walks programme offers over one hundred opportunities to get out of your house in the company of friendly people. The Western Heights in particular is a great place to walk. The new leaflet describing the paths and heritage of the site was published during the summer and has proved to be very popular. All of our publications are available from the White Cliffs Countryside Project at 6 Cambridge Terrace, Dover.

Recently we have been understaffed so have not been able to do as much work on the Western Heights as we wanted, or as much as the area needs, to be kept in the tip-top condition it deserves. Paul Holt joined our team recently and will be spending much of his time up there, so in the coming months you should see changes as you walk around.

Extending westwards from the Western Heights, Great Farthingloe Farm covers most of the land between the old Folkestone Road (B2011) and the new A20. Currently in the control of Eurotunnel, it is being managed as a working farm but with access, wildlife and landscape conservation as its principal aims. The most important habitat on the farm is the chalk grassland. Grazing of this started last year after several years of

neglect, helping to open up the season. This year we are beginning to clear invasive scrub to create improved conditions for the superb downland flowers with which Dover is blessed. The farm should be accepted into the Countryside Stewardship Schemes, which will provide grant aid for this habitat management work, and also enable us to recreate downland on a new field, acid grassland on another and improve public access. In addition some new hedgerows will be planted there. All in all, a busy winter lies ahead.

Below the White Cliffs at Samphire Hoe the summer has seen a colourful display of flowers as the vegetation settles in. Described as a "visual feast" by one visitor, the show has been enjoyed by hundreds of people on the regular guided walks. Now that the reinstatement works at Aycliffe and around the entrance to Samphire Hoe have begun there is a greater chance that preparation works for the opening of the site will be done for next year. We will have to see what the spring brings before we can know how the plants fared in the winter storms. If the last couple of days are anything to go by, we could be in for some big storms this winter!