

"In Search of the Templars"

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NOT UNSUNG, but perhaps not spectacular, among the events of the Festival were the Guided Walks.

For example, thirty-two people assembled at the "George and Dragon", Temple Ewell, on the evening of Thursday, 27th May, to be led by Kirk Alexander "In Search of the Templars".

We were quickly reminded that, as in the town, Dover's long history is mostly buried and, at Temple Farm, only the buried foundations of a thirteenth century Templar barn remain. But the history of the area was fascinatingly revealed to us as Kirk Alexander recounted his detective work among the flora.

In the first "not very old" sunken path we were introduced to cow parsley, garlic and the Mediterranean (Roman introduced) blackseed. High up, on the Down where the chalk grassland (Kirk's great love) is beginning to reassert itself, we followed a "very ancient" hollow way and paused to identify salad burnet, milkwort, horseshoe vetch, quaking grass and rock roses.

The nearer we got to the top, approaching the recently extended nature reserve, the more the true ancient chalk grassland asserted itself.

From the top, although it was a misty evening, we were able to follow Kirk Alexander's deductions of how the landscape would have looked around Domesday time. Scotland Common would surely have been open common. The river would have been very much larger. The Dover Society's dear Lousyberry Wood would not have been there. Indeed there is no wood shown on the Ordnance Survey of 1805. On the other hand sunken tracks and hedges are very ancient and unchanging.

On the way down the sunken track we identified stitchwort and sanicle growing under half-a-dozen species of hedgerow trees and shrubs.

En route the edible plants had been tasted and we had learnt a new way of looking at the countryside: not with the eye of the landscape artist nor of the geographer-geologist but rather as an ecological historian.

This very enjoyable walk was just more of the good work of Alexander Kirk and the White Cliffs Countryside Project.

24th May - 5th June
