



WHITE CLIFFS COUNTRYSIDE PROJECT



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But Mum, I don't want to go for a walk ...

WHILST our winter walks programme continues to be as popular as the summer's, many of the events are not specifically aimed at children. Primary school children have an enormous appetite for discovering the countryside, and yet many guided walks would seem boring to lots of children. It is not so much that the issues that many guided walks cover are too complex: Children, particularly 8 - 10 year olds, need an altogether different approach to events. Recognising this, the White Cliffs Countryside Project have produced 'Green Gang' - what you and I might call a guided walks programme for the school holidays.

Green Gang is like a small comic. There are puzzles, cartoon pictures, a few seasonal paragraphs and green advice - and of course the listings for our free Green Gang activities. The comic is distributed via schools to every child in the districts of Dover and Shepway, and can also be picked up from main libraries and Tourist Information Centres.

So you want to bring your children, or maybe your grandchildren, onto a Green Gang event. But what are you letting yourselves in for? Like the guided walks, the events within the programme are designed to cater for all tastes. A typical programme of events might include orienteering, kite flying, a bicycle ride and scavenger hunts. These activities are all aimed at making children feel at home in the great outdoors. Most of our events are educational. If your children enjoy art, why not bring them out on a Country Collage? Maybe your granddaughter has great fun with creepy crawlies - then come along to one of our bug hunts. Maybe your child would like to have a dip at rock pooling; we normally have this in our programme too.

Some of our most popular and informative events are theatrical. Take "The Little People of Lyminge", attracted nearly 70 people this summer. Led by the eccentric, story telling, Professor Picnic, they explored the evidence that a tiny race of people lived within Lyminge Forest - discovering thumbnail sized letters and envelopes, hair-like rope ladders, and even twig sized waymarking posts. In Norman the Engineer, we meet the Baron who built Castle Hill in Folkestone, and one of the archaeologists who discovered its history. By meeting these historical characters on Green Gang events, children can learn a great deal about the history of their home town. Often it is only through these more entertaining events that children gain a sense of place.

Our Earth Walks are another successful Green Gang event. On such walks children explore nature using all their senses (except taste, of course!), and enjoy the emotions which nature can inspire. These walks put the sense of mystery and excitement of the natural world back into Environmental Education. 135

Don't think Green Gang is just for children - parents normally have as much fun as the children. For some, it's a return to childhood, for others it's a joy to see their children engaged in fun activities.

Well, if you've read this far into this article, you're probably desperate to come along to a Green Gang activity. If you have problems getting hold of Green Gang, we can send you a copy. For just one pound, you can join our mailing list, and we will post a year's supply of Green Gangs to you. The listings will tell you when and where to meet, whether you can bring your family dog, and what footwear you will need.

Here are some of the Christmas events in Dover to look forward to:

Saturday 3rd December : The Man Who Planted Trees

Bring a parent on a gentle stroll around the tree trail of the Ecological Park to hear the story about the man who planted trees. Then plant your very own tree in the Ecological Park (all will be supplied) as part of National Tree Week 1994. Meet: car park, Elms Vale recreation ground, Elms Vale Rd, Dover. Distance: 2 miles Dogs on leads. Donation appreciated. Leader: Kirk Alexander.

Sunday 4th December : Natural Christmas Decorations

Make your own Christmas decorations from natural materials. We will collect natural materials which have fallen to the ground. These decorations are cheaper, greener and last longer than ones you buy in the shops. Meet: 2.00pm, West Wood car park (just off B2068), near Hythe. Distance: 3 miles. Dogs on leads. Donation appreciated. Leader: Melanie Wrigley.

Sunday 11th December : Christmas Card Collage

Come and gather some natural materials and make some exclusive green Christmas cards. Meet 2.00pm, Kearsney Abbey café car park. Distance: 2 miles. Dogs on leads. Charge 50p per card to cover costs. Leader: David Hodd

Wednesday 21st December : Christmas Capers

A seasonal children's walk to explore the wintry wildlife of Dover's Western Heights through green games and activities. Meet: 2.00pm, outside main entrance White Cliffs Experience, Market Square, Dover. Distance: 3 miles. Dogs on leads. Donation appreciated. Leader: David Hodd

Thursday 22nd December : Christmas Celtic Tales

Tall tales of Celtic heroes and dastardly deeds on the shortest day of the year. Meet: 2.00pm, junction of Castle Hill and Crete Road West, off A260 Canterbury Hill, near Folkestone. Distance: 3 miles. Dogs on leads. Donation appreciated. Leader: David Hodd.

Wednesday 28th December : Walk Off Your Christmas Dinners!

A bracing walk over the famous white cliffs with striking views as you burn off those Christmas calories! Meet: 2.00pm, outside Coastguard public house, St Margaret's Bay, near Dover. Please use the public car park and not the public house's. Distance: 5 miles. Dogs on leads. Donation appreciated. Leader: Kirk Alexander.

For further information, contact us at White Cliffs Countryside Project, 6 Cambridge Terrace, Dover, CT16 1JT, or telephone (01304) 241806