

# Walmer Parish Council

## Hawkshill Freedown Newsletter

### Spring 2011

2011 Events & Activities



We hold a series of talks and events on the Freedown over the summer.

#### Including the following:

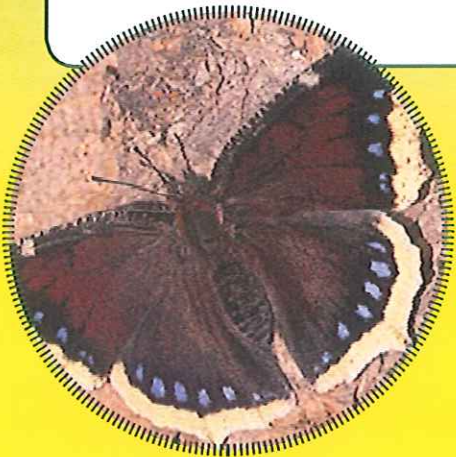
- Sunday 22 May 10am til 12pm Flora and Fauna with Eddy Turner
- Sunday 7 August 11am Butterfly walk with Dr Mike Sykes
- Sunday 2 October 2pm "Fungi, Fruits and mosses" walk with Martin Newcombe

### More events to be confirmed soon!

For all events please meet in the car park, wear suitable shoes and clothing and in hot weather bring a drink.

For more information please contact the Parish Clerk on

**01304 381506**



## WALMER PARISH COUNCIL

A group of volunteers meet on a twice monthly basis to maintain the Walmer Hawkshill Freedown. The Freedown consists of five hectares of rare chalk grassland that supports a host of flora and fauna. It is used by the local community for quiet enjoyment and relaxation. In order that the long term future of the Freedown is secured many tasks are undertaken by the volunteers. These tasks include maintenance, monitoring and community projects. The maintenance work consists primarily of clearing blackthorn, brambles and ash saplings from the Freedown's perimeter to reclaim lost grassland. They also undertake the removal of invasive ragwort during the summer months to manageable proportions. The work of the volunteers is supported by the Parish Council with provision of training, protective equipment and contractor's services where necessary.

Community events are organised throughout the year. These can include bird observation, food for free and wild flower walks. All are led by local experts and attendance is free.

**If you would like to join the group of volunteers or obtain more information please contact the Parish Office on 01304 381506. Work party sessions take place on the first Sunday and third Monday of each month. Group members meet at the Liverpool Road car park (adjacent Grams Road) for 10.30am.**



Photo taken on the Freedown  
Marbled White Butterfly.

### Our Butterflies

For such a relatively small area, Hawkshill Freedown has a remarkably rich diversity of butterfly species, mainly because of the different habitats that occur there.

Over the past ten years 28 species of butterfly have been recorded there and another was found only a short distance away; a very uncommon visitor from Europe, the fabulous Camberwell Beauty.

The most numerous are the grass-loving species and those that prefer the field and scrub margins; these include Marbled White, Meadow Brown, Ringlet and Gatekeeper.

The short chalk escarpment is home to small numbers of Adonis and Chalkhill

blue, which are uncommon and restricted to isolated areas of chalk downland in the South of England.

The top field holds a good population of Common Blue and Brown Argus.

Small numbers of migrants from Europe such as Red Admiral and Clouded Yellow and occasionally as in 2009, large numbers of Painted Ladies can be found anywhere. In 2007 another rare visitor, a Swallowtail, was seen and an extremely rare variant [ab formosa] of Green-veined White only the 2nd ever seen in the U.K.

The wooded areas to the North of the Freedown hold good numbers of Holly Blue and Speckled Wood, though the latter was scarce last year.

Small Tortoiseshell, Peacock and Comma can be found anywhere.

The best time to see most of the butterflies of Hawkshill is in late July and early August though Orange-tip can only be seen in Spring.

**Butterfly Walktime 11am August 7th**



Photo taken on the Freedown  
Camberwell.

### Did You Know?

- Without human intervention or grazing animals the freedown would soon revert to impenetrable scrub and bramble.
- The west facing bank is a very rare habitat for chalk downland plants and animals.
- Most of the maintenance of the freedown is undertaken by a small group of volunteers who meet twice monthly.

### Dog Fouling on the Freedown

The Freedown is a beautiful and peaceful location away from traffic which is much enjoyed by dogs and their owners. Whilst the majority of dog owners are responsible and clear up after their animals, dog fouling continues to be a problem. Apart from the obvious unpleasant effects of dog fouling there are potential health risks. Dogs can be affected by several types of worm one of which can cause serious illness in children. Walmer Parish Council takes this very seriously, particularly in light of the fact that several children's events take place on the Freedown over the summer.

Dover District Council Dog Wardens will be patrolling on the Freedown over the coming months, chatting to dog walkers and ensuring that the area remains pleasant and safe for all to use.

## **Our Flora and Fauna** by Eddie Turner

Hawkshill is of particular interest for its flora due to the fact it is an area of chalk grassland. This means it attracts a plant community which is easily threatened if neglected.

To encourage rich diversity it is necessary to keep grass short at appropriate times, thus creating a suitable habitat.

Continuing the work done in previous years I was happy to survey Hawkshill in 2010 and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

There are a number of species worth mentioning in this brief summary.

**Pyramidal Orchids:** These have increased year on year for the last 10 years. Though not exclusively a chalk plant, it is a very attractive floral asset on the common.

**On the west facing slope may be found some interesting examples of chalk growing plants:**

**Squinancywort:** This delightful little plant grows on the slope in the summer months. It's intriguing name refers to it's use in previous times as a remedy for Quinsey (sore throat).

**Salad Burnet:** Red Knobs is the common country name for this plant as it describes the dense rounded inflorescence that appear at the end of tough little flower stalks.

**Dwarf Thistle:** As the name suggest the flowerheads appear directly above a tight rosette on spiny leaves.

Photo taken on the Freedown  
Corncockle.

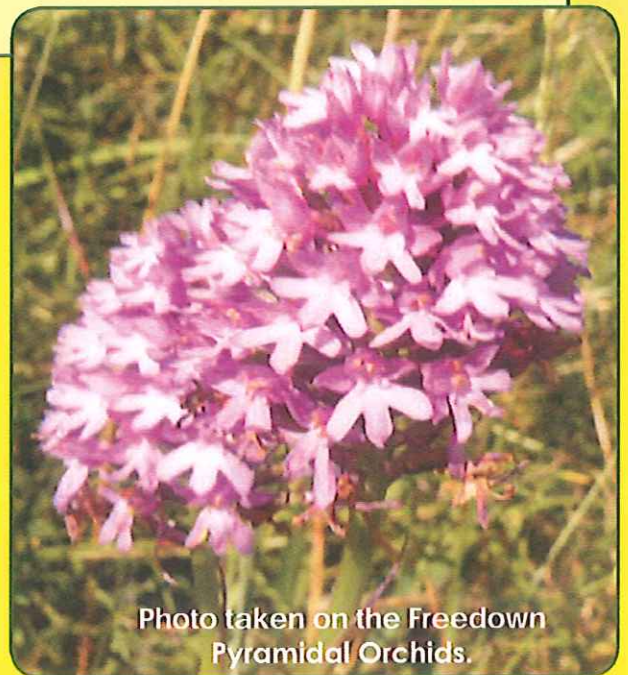
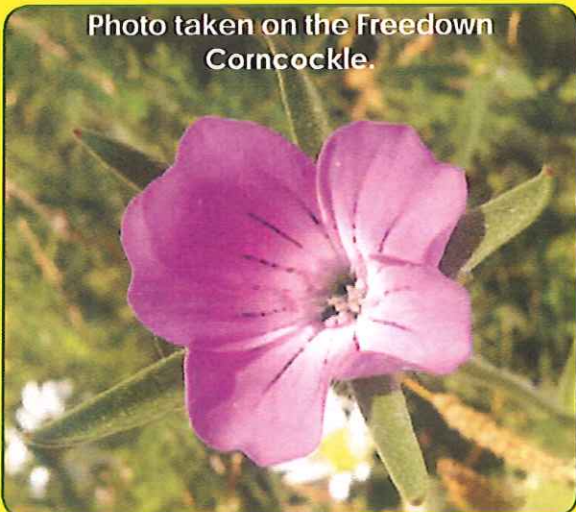


Photo taken on the Freedown  
Pyramidal Orchids.