

## The Woldingham Countryside



All around the village lie the rolling chalk slopes of the North Downs.

Of course you pass the downs and woodland every time you drive into Woldingham through the woods along Gangers Hill and Titsey or the open downland along the Halliloo Valley. A far better way to get a feel of the place is to go for a walk. Enjoy the high downs and hidden valleys. There are so many places to visit and you don't have to be away long. In five minutes you can reach Great Church Wood past St Agatha's Church or stroll along Madeira Walk. Or you can spend the whole day and make a circuit around the village. Eric Scadeng devised such a walk to celebrate the Millennium which is described in the "Woldingham 2000" book. A network of footpaths and bridleways lead from the village. They are well sign-posted and you can choose your route depending upon your mood. You could head east along the scarp of the downs on the North Downs Way from Marden Park Woods to Chalkpit Lane and return along Southview Road. Or you could walk around the Halliloo Valley and back along Plantation Lane or climb from the valley to the Garden Village and enjoy the fine views. From Warren Barn Farm, another track leads you up the steep slopes of Nore Hill past Hovings Hole, where you can look towards open downland or west across the village. Sit awhile maybe: time to think, to dream.



However familiar the scenes may seem, they change with the seasons, weather and time of day. In spring you follow the brightening of the woods with primroses, violets and bluebells: seek out the orchids - twayblades - in Marden Park Woods or common spotted orchids and others in more open places. The long distance path - the Vanguard Way - south from Slines Oak Road climbs to Greenhill Shaw and leads to open downland: summer is prime time to watch butterflies here, especially on the slopes of the downs where marjoram, wild basil and thyme flower. If that doesn't appeal, follow the bridleway along the Marden Valley where there is still some agricultural activity. You could return past the Templehill Plantation to Church Road or take the longer route via Stubbs Copse and the many informal paths within Marden Park Woods. There is always something of interest, an unusual bird call, maybe a newly excavated badger sett or the many remarkable trees around the parish - large gnarled beeches in the Rookery and Stubbs Copse, the oaks near Chaldons Farm and the ancient yew and ash in St Agatha's churchyard. Many of these veteran trees are older than any of the houses in the village. Indeed some of the area has been wooded since at least medieval times. There are many traces of man's past activities - worked flints in the fields, ancient hedgerows, disused quarries, earth banks and rows of old beech pollards in the woods.



The thin chalk soil supports specialist plants and is one of the rarest habitats in the country. The scarp of the downs, Marden Park Wood and Great Church Wood are nationally recognised for their flora and fauna - and are designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Some areas are noted for their landscape and are included in the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) - and we have the highest part of the North Downs here. Most of the rest of the downland around the village is known as an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV). So attractive is the area that a colour leaflet "The Woldingham Countryside Walk" has been produced by the Downlands Project. A copy is included in the Information Pack.



Of course landscape is not static, short cropped chalk downland changes to scrub, trees shed limbs, footpaths become overgrown. It is the care given by private landowners, the Woodland Trust, the National Trust, the Downland Countryside Management Project and their volunteers that each area remains attractive. You too could become a volunteer.

Woldingham is special! Enjoy these glorious open places close by home.