

PRESS RELEASE: WHITE HART LINK STALBRIDGE – GILLINGHAM INAUGURAL WALKS. SEPTEMBER 2ND AND 3RD

Following the launch of the White Hart Link project (a walking route linking the five towns of North Dorset –and villages between) in April this year, the first 'link' to be route-marked and cleared was that between Stalbridge and Gillingham, and inaugural walks took place over the week-end of September 2nd/3rd.

18 walkers set out on the 2½ mile section between Stalbridge and Henstridge in glorious weather on the afternoon of Saturday 2nd September, with the Stalbridge flag being proudly borne throughout by the Rector, William Ridding. Thanks to 'cross-border' cooperation between the two parishes involved, the route was cleared of overgrowth and upgrowth by a team of volunteers. At the end of the walk, the group was given a warm reception at the Virginia Ash in Henstridge, with welcome supplies of cakes, coffee and tea from a bottomless pot!

Unfortunately the weather on Sunday 3rd was not kind – but this did not deter 15 hardy walkers as they set out from Henstridge to Gillingham, sustained by tea, coffee and biscuits kindly provided at the Village Hall by the Parish Council. With a very brief stop for a picnic lunch at Bugley, we successfully negotiated the railway crossing, followed quickly by dipping our boots in the stream. This is one of the points on the route that will be enhanced by the addition of a footbridge, which will be installed by the DCC Rangers. This walk was also included in the programme of the Gillingham Walking Festival - now in its fourth year - and after a total of 9½ wet miles the walkers were welcomed into Gillingham by the Mayor, Cllr Belinda Ridout, who received the White Hart Link pennant from the walk leader, Jan Wardell. This will be carried forward to the next stretch of the White Hart Link to be opened. The White Hart Link project has been fortunate in obtaining a grant from the Dorset Community Innovation Fund, for initial work on the project and route.

For more information about the White Hart Link, please e-mail Jan (info@whitehartlink.uk)