

Thursday Group's 10th Birthday Celebrations



Our tenth birthday celebrations. Photos: John Luck

"Do you realise it's our 10th birthday, this year, Frank?" I said, during our Lullington Heath coffee break. "Surely not," he said. "Someone suggested that a couple of weeks ago. Then someone else said, no, it can't be".

"Anyway, it is," I said. "I was glancing through a few photos on my laptop the other evening and I came across some pictures taken on our fifth birthday." "Good lord," he said. "We'll have to have another celebration." "My very thoughts," I said. "So I'll bake another fruit-cake and we'll also need to get some bubbly." "My wife does a wonderful baked fruit cake and Shirley does a brilliant chocolate cake," he said, totally overlooking my offer. Well, I thought it hadn't tasted that bad but in the face of competition from proper cooks, I thought it better to keep quiet.

So I left it to him and sure enough, at our Friston Forest work party the following week two cakes, two bottles of bubbly and a bottle of alcohol-free Merlot duly appeared and here we are celebrating with Forestry Commission Ranger, Jese.

So, many thanks to the two Shirleys for the delicious cakes and Frank, who laid on the bubbly. A second bottle is now on ice ready for the volunteers who didn't make it this week.



We celebrated the first five years of the Thursday group in 2007 at Seven Sisters Country Park.

Looking back to 2007, most of us are still going strong without only Sandie, who has moved to the West Country and Ken and Anne, who have been permitted early retirement.

It's been a lot of fun. Here's to the next ten years!

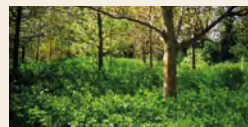
John Luck
Volunteer Ranger – Seven Sisters

South Downs
Volunteer Ranger Service

South Downs
National Park

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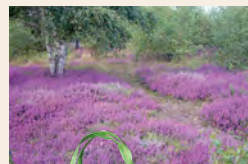
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Comment

I had a lot of feedback on a new logo for the VRS, with a wide range of views. Two of the four proposals were significantly more popular than the other two, but there was no clear winner. In fact almost as many of you felt that none of them as they stood were quite right, with several of you sending in 'tweaked' versions. A few of you felt we should just adopt the current National Park logo.

The NPA has taken this feedback on board and would like to work with other organisations who contribute to the Area to develop a 'brand' to be used by all when involved in activities which benefit the Park. This will take time, since it will require extensive consultation, but it makes sense to become involved in that process to help create a logo for the National Park. I'll be in touch about that. As you can see in this issue, we've kept the same 'interim' design as last time and probably will until we have an agreed alternative.

Thanks to all of you who came to one of the VRS Workshops during March (and to your Chairman Stephen Allberry who was at all three!). In all more than 70 of you attended an event. Thanks also to the 121 of you who filled in a questionnaire, either on-line or on paper. Reports detailing what came out of both the workshops and the questionnaire have now been written. I am sorting out how best to make these available to you all, as they are both quite big, but a short summary should accompany this newsletter. The review of Volunteering is now drawing to a close, with draft Action Plans under review for how we develop and support the VRS in the future and for how the Authority helps develop volunteering in other ways. During the process I have spoken to a number of colleagues about potential new areas of work for Volunteer Rangers and Trevor mentions one of those - the 'hidden' archaeology of the National Park - in his article opposite. Conservation, access and promotion have long been the main 'planks' of the work of the VRS; it looks like cultural heritage and also education/outreach will have a significantly bigger part to play soon.

I am very sad to include a piece by Phil Belden about Paul Millmore, the founder of the VRS, whose death I told you of in March. Phil's piece gives some insight into the energy and determination Paul focussed on the Downs over more than thirty years and just some of his achievements. I wish that were the only loss I had to report, but it's not, with a few words about three more good friends to the Downs. And distressingly, we have also heard in the last few days of the deaths of long term Volunteer Rangers Diana Sadler from Chichester and Ted Hurdle from Newhaven. We'll have more about them in the next issue.

Thanks to those of you who have sent in articles and photos about some of the work you have been doing; one of the main purposes of this newsletter is to see what **you** are doing, so do keep those coming. There is also a short piece about forming a group of Volunteer Rangers to help produce Downland Thymes – do have a think about that.

All the best to you all

Ian Hartle
Volunteer Co-ordinator



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Volunteer Co-ordinator

News from the Chief Executive

The four months or so since I became Chief Executive of the National Park Authority have passed in a blur of activity. A great deal of progress has been made, with highlights being the approval of the Nature Improvement Area bid, the launch of the South East's first electric bike network at Alice Holt, the creation of the "Our South Downs" project for 738 local schools, and the celebration of the first year of the Sustainable Communities Fund which has to date provided £400,000 to support 57 separate community projects. Throughout all this activity a common theme has been how the combined expertise of our staff and volunteers is a powerful recipe for conserving and enhancing the varied landscapes of the South Downs.

In my first months in post I have been privileged to see at first hand many examples of the transformative effect of the VRS. To pick just a few, I have seen the careful thinning of silver birch and scrub at Iping Common, the clearance on the slopes leading down to the new Rathfinny vineyard, the restoration of the age old view from Beacon Hill across to Treyford Hill through the removal of scrub around the Devil's Jump bell barrows, and the slaughter of rhododendrons attempting to re-colonise cleared heathland near Midhurst. I have learnt much about the dedication of volunteers across the National Park, as well as about the satisfying crackling noise made by burning rhododendrons and the importance of cake to any major enterprise!

I have seen how, by the end of March, most scrub clearance and other destructive work stops until the autumn to minimise disruption to the breeding season, but I know that the VRS is still doing some of this to protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments. We are in the process of commissioning a high-tech aerial survey of the archaeology that lies hidden beneath the woodland of West Sussex that will reveal many new and interesting sites. I am sure that these will become a focus of volunteer activity in future years and we will keep you informed on the progress of the survey.

We are currently drafting our first "State of the Park Report" which is being prepared with a great deal of help from the 720 members of our online forum and many other partner organisations. This document, which will be produced in the autumn, will be important reading for all volunteers, so when it is ready I will ensure that you know how to access a copy.

I am keen that the National Park should empower the VRS to operate in a flexible and proactive



Clearance on Rathfinny Estate.

manner. With this in mind, I will work with you to ensure that you have the right facilities at all your bases. They are being built into the early planning for our new South Downs Centre in Midhurst, for example, (on which there will be progress reports in future issues of Downland Thymes). On a more immediate timescale, I know that VRS drivers from all areas have been spending a half day learning how to tow and manoeuvre trailers. This ought to give groups more flexibility in delivering their work.

I am always interested to see work in progress and, although there is never enough time to fit everything in, it would be helpful to me if you could let me know of any sites I should see or issues I should be aware of. You can do this at any time by emailing me on trevor.beattie@southdowns.gov.uk or by writing to me at Hatton House, Bepton Road, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9LU.

Trevor Beattie
Chief Executive
South Downs National Park Authority



Trevor Beattie
Chief Executive

Worthing Millennium Woodland Group

In the late 1990s a group came together out of a shared love of English woodland and a desire to enhance it locally. At the same time the local council had begun to encourage tree planting to celebrate the Millennium by allocating land for the purpose on the Hill Barn golf course to the north of the town in the then Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The site was a disused chalk pit with mature tree growth around the fringes. There were several acres of grassland in the centre, maintained regularly by the golf course ground staff, but otherwise unused.

The first planting day was at the end of 1999 and we had prepared for the occasion by acquiring an allotment plot for raising trees. Our objective was, and remains, the spread of native tree species which we grow from seed gathered locally as far as possible. Since the beginning we have been active also on other sites in the area, and to date have planted several thousand trees.

The first plantings at Hill Barn are now 13 years old and already taking on the appearance of a new wood, which is appreciated by members of the public who walk there. The land is privately owned by the golf course who have granted access via a track through the new wood.

The backbone of our plantings have been oak, ash, beech, yew and hornbeam, with a substantial supporting role from field maple, holly, hazel, silver birch and hawthorn, plus willow, wayfaring tree, dogwood, whitebeam, wild cherry, wild crab, wild privet, blackthorn, elder and spindle and others to add broad variation and interest.

We still maintain our allotment tree nursery, now much extended from the original, and group members are kept busy caring for the new seedlings until they are lifted and transplanted during the winter months. In the past two years we have been ably assisted by VRS groups who have carried out tree planting and nettle cutting for us. Nettles are widely established at Hill Barn and serious competitors for rain water much needed by our young trees in their first summer. More nettle management tasks are planned to give new trees a helping hand by cutting back the surrounding nettles until the trees are large enough to fend for themselves.

Since we began our activities the South Downs National Park has been established which includes both Hill Barn and another site at Angmering where we have been planting since 2005. This has given us the confidence that what we are doing now may also be enjoyed by future generations.

Tony Holmes

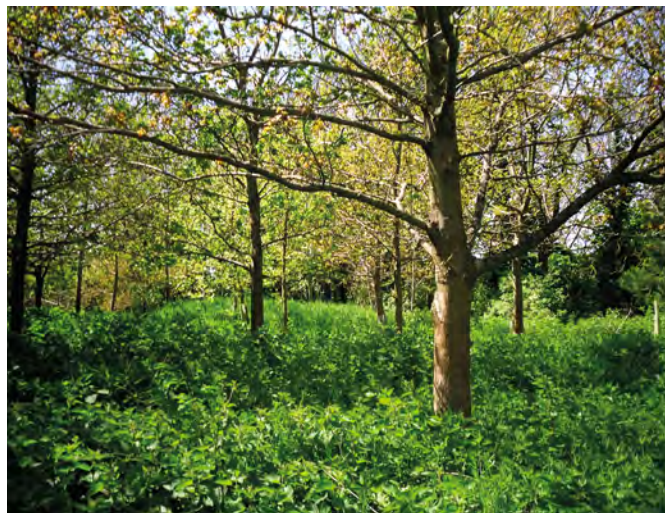
Church Copse volunteer and member of Worthing Millennium Woodland Group



A new woodland starts here!



Tending new plantings



This is how some of the earliest plantings look now

Photos: Tony Holmes

Jake's 90th Birthday



Photo: Anne Bush

One thing the Volunteer Ranger Service always does very well is celebrate a special occasion so when Jake Wright turned 90 in May what better excuse to have a picnic.

Jake joined the Central East (formerly Western Area) Wednesday group in 1998 when he retired and has been coming out regularly most weeks since then. Volunteer Rangers from the group turned out in force to help him celebrate his birthday with a picnic at Halnaker Windmill near Chichester, one of his favourite places on the South Downs.

Halnaker Mill was first mentioned in 1540 as belonging to the manor of "Halfnaked". It was built for the Duke of Richmond as the feudal mill of the Goodwood Estate. The surviving mill is thought to date from the 1740s and was working until struck by lightning in 1905, damaging the sails and windshaft.

The restored mill is now a well-known Sussex landmark, surrounded by wildflower-rich chalk grassland, and visible from a wide surrounding area with views of the coast. On a clear day you can see the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth's Spinnaker Tower.

Anne Bush

Volunteer Support Officer

Where do you take your Downland Thymes?



Sue Disney from the Seven Sisters Thursday group (see also front page) sent in this photo from her visit to St. Helena. She is pictured with a local Ranger who was her guide to find the rare 'wirebird', the island's only surviving endemic bird.

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Paul Millmore 1949 – 2012

Paul Millmore was the founder of the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service – for that we must all be truly thankful. Sadly, he passed away on the 18th March, peacefully and sleepily at his Lewes home, after having been recently diagnosed with cancer. Our thoughts are with his family at this time, especially Bridget, his essential rock and anchor, without whom, he couldn't have chartered his epic course.

We have lost one of the most colourful and fervent supporters of the South Downs and when people sit down to tell their tales of the South Downs, it is his name which should be heralded in future folklore.

If you were privileged to know Paul, you'd know Paul – a Yorkshireman by birth and upbringing, naturalised to Sussex and passionate about the South Downs – he called a spade an effing spade and didn't suffer fools, gladly or otherwise. He told it like it was; no soft, Southern diplomacy or evasion, but blunt, gritty, honest Yorkshire frankness. You either loved it or hated it, but you couldn't ignore it!

The best thing East Sussex County Council ever did was to take one of its Planners, Paul Millmore, and re-deploy him with a free rein, to embark on a new Heritage Coast project, back in the 1970s. He seized the moment and never looked back. He started with a Morris Minor van and a few quid, quickly applied his sharp, lateral-thinking brain to the area, identified the key issues and people and got stuck in. Paul was a do-er, leading by example and he soon realised he couldn't do it all himself. His enthusiastic zeal was pretty infectious and he recruited rambblers to work on paths, enlisted locals to care for their patch and looked to the National Parks for some ideas of how to do more.

Out of this arose the beginnings of what is now, surely the best Volunteer Ranger Service in the country, which he named the South Downs VRS, for he had aspirations that one day it would be just that. He ran the first training course in 1981, armed with a training manual he cobbled together from his and Park experiences; printed (then embroidered) Long Man VRS badges followed, initially a "uniform" of arm bands, that would be velcro'd on for each task by the volunteers out that day. The essential Land Rover was soon acquired, to effectively get gear (and Vols) to the downland sites and rights of way.

The little Heritage Coast Project was proving to be a great success, so an assistant was sought – and that's where I came in – 1983. Instead of consolidating work in the Heritage Coast, two energetic and idealistic live-



Paul with Phil and East Sussex Land-Rover in 1987.

wires decided to take on the whole East Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Eastbourne, west to the Brighton Downs). The VRS expanded and we utilised a wonderful Government unemployed training scheme, which gave us some serious weekday resources, committed people to do yet more practical work as well as research, interpretation and admin (including developing the VRS and its training).

While all this was going on, Paul never rested, always looking to solve more problems, take on more challenges, all for the good of the South Downs.

Paul was scrutinising the Planning lists every week, then hassling the district councils and sometimes his own county council to "pull their fingers out" and object to this, approve that but make sure there's planning gain (and he always made creative suggestions as to how a planning application could be improved to enhance the Downs – if not, reject it!).

Agricultural policy was having seriously bad effects on the countryside, with grants to rip out hedges, drain ponds and generally increase production at the environment's expense. Paul discovered that the EEC also had concerns and he set about convincing people that the South Downs needed help; he instigated a lobby, running in parallel with civil servants pondering on this "problem", wondering which areas of the country were suffering and considering any mechanism that could help reduce this degradation. Paul's lobby worked, with more letters going in to Government than all other areas of the country put together.

Result: South Downs declared one of the first of five Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs) in the country, forerunner to the Higher Level Scheme of today (where some £4-5million a year goes to helping conserve our Downs).

Another Paul crusade was taking to the sea, emerging, dressed as King Neptune, to launch the National Trust's Enterprise Neptune campaign, to buy up vulnerable areas of precious coast, such as Birling Gap. Not content with that, he embarked on establishing a Voluntary Marine Conservation Area to complement the Heritage Coast.

His greatest coup, yes, even bigger than the SDVRS, was being the spark that lit the fuse of the modern South Downs National Park campaign. He started this with the VRS too, he asked them to use some of their funds (collected from donations) to produce "South Downs – the next National Park" badges, a promotion to run after the successful ESA lobby (also part-funded by the VRS). In 1990, he was one of just six people who came together to form a 'South Downs campaign' group, which grew to an effective collective of 160 national, regional and local organisations, culminating in the ultimate designation being bestowed on our beloved South Downs.

He proved a little too powerful for ESCC and there was a parting of the ways in the 1990s, but he bounced back as a member of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board, then became chairman of the Planning Committee when the SDCB merged with the East Hampshire Downs AONB unit, to become the South Downs Joint Committee. He should really have then gone on to become a member of the National Park Authority, but when I spoke about this with him a little while ago, he said that his illness would be a deterrent to the NPA and he'd re-consider if and when he got better; but sadly he didn't.

He wrote the definitive South Downs Way guide and was just completing his latest recce, at the Hampshire end, updating it for its latest revision. Three days before he died he was discussing with me final checks to be done on the proofs coming back from the publishers.

That's an exhausting list, which makes you tired just reading it but it only provides a small flavour of Paul and some of his tireless South Downs exploits. Paul had boundless enthusiasm, dogged determination and an amazing firecracker of a brain. He was a natural problem-solver and always had a dozen or more



projects on the go at any one time – it was hard but immensely rewarding, working with him.

Crucial to record in Downland Thymes is his lasting legacy, that Paul set up what is now probably the finest Volunteer Ranger Service in the country. Thanks to him we have literally hundreds of skilled and dedicated people, putting in thousands of hours a year to conserve and enhance the South Downs. He put his money where his mouth is and established a travel bursary for the volunteers, to seek out knowledge to bring back to the South Downs. He asked that any donations from his funeral be made to the VRS.

Paul's legacy lives on and we should all adopt an enduring 'Millmore mission'. For me it's his challenge to the "can't do" authority – I have the baton and will always push for the "can do" attitude. For you it might be his anti-litter vigil – every time you drive through the South Downs and you see roadside litter – tell the local council about it and keep on and on; or walk down your street, every week, as Paul did, picking up the litter on his way. Whatever you decide, stick to it like Paul always did and together we'll crack it and make the South Downs a beautiful place.

He'll go down in legend as the man who created the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service and instigated the modern SD National Park campaign: job well done Paul – rest in peace.

Phil Belden (May 2012)
Head of Operations – SDNPA

Paul's coffin (to his own design) was carried through the streets of Lewes from his home to the former All Saints Church in Lewes; his twin brother Martin (with hat) was one of the pallbearers.

Photo: Dave Walters



Paul was presented with a special VRS Long Service Award at the VRS AGM in 2010.

Photo: Anne Bush

The Code of the Volunteers

Next time you're out on a Down and you catch a glimpse of a rabbit, have a little thought about Leonardo Pisano Bigollo (c. 1170 – c. 1250), better known as Fibonacci, who often thought about the little furry creatures. He was a mathematician and was interested in calculating the idealised population growth of rabbits. As you do.



As the numbers get higher the ratio between successive results e.g., 34 divided by 21, tends towards as...1.618. In maths talk its called 'Phi' after the Greek symbol Φ , but so what, you may continue think.



The ancient Greeks knew about this number and noticed there are a number of ways to look at it - as a line, an angle or a spiral - but they also used it to help build their temples. In fact the dimensions of the various bits of Parthenon in Athens are all based upon the Fibonacci sequence. But they also noticed that, besides being an aesthetic architectural device, the ratio crops up again and again in nature. Not unsurprisingly and because of its importance the Greeks gave it a rather grand name, 'the Golden Ratio'.

As it turns out beauty in nature tends to like the golden ratio and the Fibonacci sequence. So much so, that there are some who call it the 'Divine number' as it shows evidence of intelligent design. For example, the ratio of the bones in your hand and arm, the whorls of flowers, the pentagram, the structure of your DNA, the rings of Saturn, the spiral of a shell, even the average total ratio of the gaps between the orbits of the planets around the Sun, all show a tendency to equal towards the golden ratio. Coincidence? Design? Or just maths?

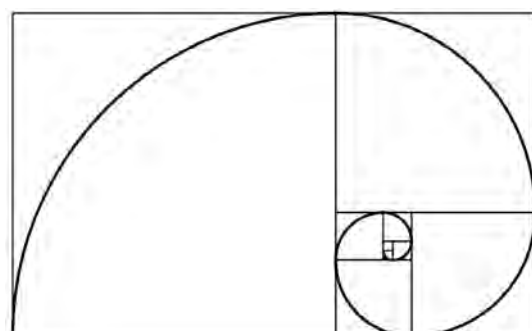
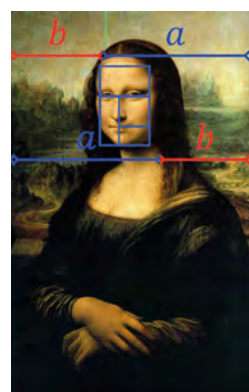
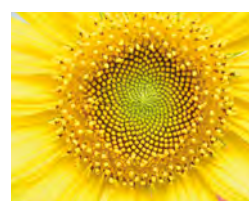


Even what we consider beauty is defined by this number. It seems the most beautiful and attractive of us have physiological ratios (eye length to nose length etc) that are closer to 1.618. And who has the most golden attractive faces? The likes of Tom Cruise, Angelina Jolie and DaVinci's Mona Lisa. It seem we are instinctively attracted to the beauty of the golden ratio.

But back to volunteering. Apart from the idealised bunnies and the occasional flower, the ratio and sequence also crops up in tree growth. The angular growth of leaves around Oak and Hazel branches follows the Fibonacci angles as this is a more efficient way than random to collect light, photosynthesise and compete. This efficiency is also shaping the way we use renewables. One latest idea is to arrange solar panels that mimic the Fibonacci leaves on Oak. Unsurprisingly, efficiency is increased by 50% for 50% more time. Its so obvious you have to think, "why didn't I think of that?". What will annoy you more, is that a 13 year old figured it out.

So what's this got to do with volunteering? Well the next time your standing on a Down, looking at the rabbits, a smile on your face as you use the billhook in your hand on some hazel coppice, with the sun beating down, under the shade of an Oak tree – just think what links all these together and makes the task possible and enjoyable. Not the prospect of cuppa and pie, but phi, 1.618. Amazing.

Dan Oakley
Ranger – SDNPA Western Area



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 $a+b$ is to a as a is to b

Volunteer Editorial Group

Does *Downland Thymes* have everything in it that you think it should? Are there things you'd like to see more of, either from other volunteers, from the NPA, from our partners or elsewhere? If so, would you like to help make that happen, by joining an Editorial Group to produce the magazine?

There are a number of jobs that need to be done: it would be good to have at least one person from each Area to gather articles and photographs; someone who can edit copy for grammar, spelling, sense etc. and someone to work with the designer to prepare the issue for printing. The group as a whole could take on much of the editorial control, working with me and our Communications team to develop the magazine.

Exactly how the group would get together is something we would need to work out. I would hope much, if not most, could be done by e-mail and phone calls, including conference calls from home, although the group might decide to meet together from time to time.

If you think you might be interested in getting involved, contact me at Stanmer.

Ian Hartle
Volunteer Co-ordinator



Funding for Training for Volunteer Rangers

If you are considering enrolling on a training course or evening class which is related to the work of the National Park Authority or would help broaden your knowledge about the South Downs National Park and its needs, we can help pay for it. With a contribution of up to 50% of the cost (normally limited to £100), the scheme is available to all active Volunteer Rangers.

Examples of relevant courses might include wildlife identification, habitat management, archaeology, aspects of local history, countryside skills, although this list is by no means exhaustive. If you want to know more, or have a course in mind, give me a call or drop me an e-mail. Training is an important part of what the National Park Authority is able to give in return for the time and effort that you all put in to help look after the Downs.

We've been going through a review of what introductory training we should provide and how that is best delivered, as well as what other training we will organise and support. By the time you read this, a proposal for a new introductory training day should be under review by the management team at the NPA. Once that's done we can start putting together the course itself, for those of you who are still waiting for that introduction.

Ian Hartle
Volunteer Co-ordinator

Hangers Way task

In early May this year the Hampshire volunteers were requested to resurface a short section of the Hangers Way near Petersfield. The Hangers Way is a popular long distance footpath which runs north-south to Farnham, essentially linking access between the South Downs and North Downs

The project concerned a 100m section where the wooded Ashford Hangers sits on a clay cap. Under the trees the footpath had become very sticky and churned up so that walkers were trying to avoid the path and creating diversions. The obvious solution was to excavate the mud and lay a decent all-weather surface which would keep walkers on the right of way.

The landowners, Hampshire County Council, liaised with Dan Oakley our SDNPA Ranger to obtain the VRS to help the County's site ranger to undertake a sensitive excavation and resurfacing of the footpath since it lay within a National Nature Reserve.



Photos Russell Cleaver

Come the day, come the solution – a team of valiant volunteers, experienced in countryside crafts. No problem was too muddy for our motley crew! Even though we've had the wettest spring for decades we worked around the worst of weathers and completed the project over a couple of work days.

On Day One we had to scrub bash the verges to open up the path to allow more light and air. So VR John Walton, scrub cutter extraordinaire sallied forth, he soon turned the thorn and bramble into chippings. By mid-morning came the machines; the site ranger was qualified on mini-diggers so he excavated the route – ably supported by VR Graham Wynne, our experienced dumper driver. Together they dug out the path and graded the sides.

Day two saw the arrival of 20 tonne of scalplings to resurface the path. Whilst the digger and dumper kept us supplied, we band of brothers were busily engaged

in spreading the material. We then took turns on the aptly named wacker plate, thumping the path down to a sealed surface.

At the day's end we were pleased with our resultant path. A job well done we all agreed.

But we hadn't foreseen we would be back a few days later. The call came for us to return and fit 'dragon's teeth', a row of posts across the end of the path to prevent vehicular access. A car had been out over the weekend and seeing the lovely new path the driver had thought to try it out. Since our last visit they won't be doing that again!

Russell Cleaver

Volunteer Ranger – Western Area



Gallery



Opposite page (top):

Stanmer Thursday volunteers Bob Granger, Peter Rolfe, Marilyn Marchant and Chris Chandler braved the torrential rain (in May!) to install two signs at Mill Hill Local Nature Reserve, overlooking the Adur Valley. Despite one of the holes filling up with water as they dug it, they managed to get them in successfully, one at each car park.

Left: Marilyn Bailey, Barry Hobbs, Bob Lewis, Richard Bosworth and Geoff Mitchell check Andy Gattiker is turning the nut the right way on a gate they've installed under Windover Hill in the Cuckmere Valley.

Photo: Ian Wildridge

Below: Tony Bish, Ray Mann, Dick Gould and Brian Russell from the Seven Sisters group lean (gently!) on the new field gate they've just installed.

Photo: Ian Hartle



Photo: Phillippa Morrison-Price



Above: Peter Tucker and Helena Lewis were part of a group hedgeplanting in Lurgashall recently.

Photo: Angela Shepherd

Left: Taking the vital statistics of a dew pond on the South Downs Way between Ditchling Beacon and Jack and Jill windmills. In the water Anna Fisher and yours truly; on the far bank Barney Cockerell. Holding the tape on the near bank is either Jo Sinkins or Vanessa Head. They were both there, but I can't for the life of me decide whose back that is!

Photo: Paul Harmer

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Help needed for the Serpent Trail

The Serpent Trail is a 64 mile long path leading you through the purple heather, green woods and golden valleys of the Sussex greensand hills. The name of the trail reflects the serpentine shape of the route. Starting with the 'tongue' in Haslemere High Street, Surrey, the route leads to the 'head' at Black Down, West Sussex and from there the 'body' west, east and west again along the greensand ridges. The trail snakes by Liphook, Milland, Fernhurst, Petworth, Fittleworth, Duncton, Heyshott, Midhurst, Stedham and Nyewood to finally reach the tip of the serpent's tail at Petersfield in Hampshire. Public rights of way, private permissive routes and a few quiet roads link much of the access land in this area.

On this walk you can see the beautiful and internationally rare lowland heath habitat, 80% of which has been lost since the early 1800's, often through neglect and the planting of woodlands. The Wealden Greensand area stretches through Kent, Surrey, North East Hampshire into Sussex. It is based upon the sandy rocks and soils from which its name derives and has characteristic habitats of heathland, woodland, acid grassland and bogs.

In 2002 the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) provided a grant to restore this rare habitat and conserve existing areas within West Sussex. The Serpent Trail and the corridor of habitat created along part of it is also important in linking up isolated heathland sites to

encourage the re-colonisation of once common species, such as the green tiger beetle and Dartford warbler.

After the end of the HLF project the South Downs Joint Committee continued to support Heathland Management (and the Serpent Trail) across the area through their Heathland Officer – firstly Rob Free and then myself. Since the arrival of the National Park a Wooded Heaths Officer has been employed to write a large funding bid to support connecting up the scattered heathland sites.

I am looking for Volunteers to help with the maintenance of the trail – until last year the trail was monitored alongside SDJC's rights of way duties, and was walked regularly by a very keen volunteer (thank you David!). The trail has been broken down into 16 sections of varying length from 2.4 to 7 miles in length. All that would be required of you is to walk your section annually, replace any waymarking disks as necessary and send me a report. Its that easy!!!

If you would be interested in adopting a section please give me a ring on 01730 817 945 or 07917 602 380 (though I am notoriously difficult to get hold of on the phone) or email me at dan.cornell@southdowns.gov.uk

Dan Cornell
Heathland Officer – SDNPA



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Obituaries

Dave Keller 1930-2012

Dave and I attended the same VRS training course in spring 1996 – he had joined the previous September, a few months before me. The course drew people from Eastbourne to Chichester, so I didn't know many of the attendees, but I'd worked with Dave before – at least I thought I had! In the end we worked out that we had first met at a Spanish evening class in Brighton a couple of years earlier, not out on task at all! He went out on task at weekends from Falmer until 2004, when he moved to Seaford and joined the Seven Sisters Wednesday group roughly once a fortnight until about a year ago when he had to stop.

Dave was someone who was easy to warm to – gentle, good humoured and quick to see the funny side of things. He was always an asset to a task group, not simply because of his hard work, but also because it was that bit nicer a day when he was there.

Dave came to family life quite late, but from everything I've heard embraced it to the full when it arrived. He would often talk about time spent with his family and I get the impression he took full advantage of the time that retirement allowed to spend it with Carmel and their three children.

Dr. Peter Brandon 1927-2011

We learned of the death of Peter Brandon just before Christmas, but I held back from writing something in the last issue of *Downland Thymes*.

With a career of academic study (Head of Geography Department at the University

of North London) and a number of books on the history and geography of the Downs to his name, Peter was a source of great knowledge and wisdom about the National Park.



He was also a great friend to the VRS, giving inspirational talks at VRS training courses for many years. His unflagging enthusiasm and love for the Downs and what they could offer infected everyone who heard him and although I listened to many of his sessions at VRS training courses, I always knew I was going to learn something new. It was he who introduced me to the lynchet and to the very simple idea that the Downs are naturally smooth, rolling hills and because of this, show the hand of man very easily and very clearly. Whether it be a former dewpond, ancient bostal, flint mine, chalk quarry, burial mound, field boundary, building foundations or Iron Age hill-fort, over most of the chalk downland – particularly when there is no woodland to hide things – any disruption to those smooth curves immediately draws attention.

That simple observation let me see so much more. While the Downs were already places I loved to walk and cycle, to escape the rat-race and see wildlife, they became too an illustrated history of man's interaction with 'his'

countryside over thousands of years. There is probably no other landscape in the British Isles where what has gone before is so apparent and I had no idea!

Thank you Peter for adding so much to visits to the chalk for me and for hundreds of other current and former Volunteer Rangers.

Dave Sinkins 1956-2011

Dave Sinkins was already a long established and very experienced Volunteer Ranger when I joined the VRS in early 1996. At the end of that year I became Volunteer Co-ordinator. Early on in the job I went out on a few tasks with Dave and appreciated his quiet confidence and competence, when I was not necessarily feeling either!



Dave Sinkins (right) receives his 10 year long service award.

Dave moved out of the area in 2004 and so, after 13 years, left the VRS. However since then his sister Jo has taken up the VRS baton and it was through her that we heard initially that Dave was ill, but then sadly, in December of last year, that he had died.

It was a great pleasure to know and to work with all three of these men. They were good people and I know they are all missed terribly.

Ian Hartle
Volunteer Co-ordinator

The Green Thing

Thanks to VR Frances Court who came across the following:

Waiting at the checkout, the cashier told the older woman that she should bring her own grocery bag because plastic bags weren't good for the environment. The woman apologised to him and explained, "We didn't have the green thing back in my day."

The cashier responded, "That's our problem today. The former generation did not care enough to save our environment."

He was right; that generation didn't have the "green thing" in its day.

Back then, they returned their milk bottles, lemonade bottles and beer bottles to the shop. The shop sent them back to the plant to be washed, sterilised and refilled so it could use the same bottles over and over. So they really were recycled.

But they didn't have the "green thing" back in that customer's day.

In her day, they walked up stairs, because they didn't have an escalator in every shop and office building. They walked to the shops and didn't climb into a 300-horsepower machine every time they had to go down the road.

But she was right. They didn't have the "green thing" in her day.

Back then, they washed the baby's nappies because they didn't have the disposable kind. They dried clothes on a line, not in an energy gobbling machine burning up 240 volts – wind and solar power really did dry the clothes. Children got hand-me-down clothes from their brothers or sisters, not always brand-new.

But that old lady is right; they didn't have the "green thing" back in her day.

Back then, they had one TV, or radio, in the house – not a TV in every room. And the TV had a small screen the size of a handkerchief, not a screen the size of a horse.

In the kitchen, they blended and stirred by hand because they didn't have electric machines to do everything for you.

When they packaged a fragile item to send in the post, they used a wadded up old newspaper to cushion it, not polystyrene or plastic bubble wrap.

Back then, they didn't fire up an engine and burn petrol just to cut the lawn. They used a push mower that ran on human power. They exercised by working so they didn't need to go to a health club to run on treadmills that operate on electricity.

But she's right, they didn't have the "green thing" back then.

They drank from a fountain when they were thirsty instead of using a cup or a plastic bottle every time they had a drink of water. They refilled their writing pens with ink instead of buying a new pen and they replaced the razor blades in a razor instead of throwing away the whole razor just because the blade got blunt.

But they didn't have the "green thing" back then.

Back then, people took the train or a bus and children rode their bikes to school or walked instead of turning their mums into a 24-hour taxi service. They had one electrical socket in a room, not an entire bank of sockets to power a dozen appliances. And they didn't need a computerised gadget to receive a signal beamed from satellites 2,000 miles out in space in order to find the nearest take-away.

But isn't it sad the current generation laments how wasteful the old folks were just because they didn't have the "green thing" back then?



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The information contained in this newsletter was, as far as known, correct at the date of issue. The South Downs National Park Authority cannot, however, accept responsibility for any error or omission.