



DOWNLAND THYMES



NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 66 | WINTER 2014



Fulking Escarpment
©SDNPA

HEROES OF THE DOWNS

A SOUTH DOWNS POEM DEDICATED TO WRITER BARCLAY WILLS

The South Downs is a much appreciated landscape in the UK, and there are many champions who have written about this beautiful place. Barclay Wills, a Londoner who moved to Sussex, wrote three books in the late 1920s, *Bypaths in Downland*, *Downland Treasure*, and *Shepherds of Sussex*. They are written with empathy, passion and vision.

Bob Copper, another champion of the South Downs, wrote the following poem in 1988 dedicated to Barclay Wills.

CRIS SAVILL
VOLUNTEER SUPPORT OFFICER

AN APPRECIATION OF BARCLAY WILLS

– Bob Copper 1988

Good friend and champion of a dying race,
The downland shepherds know his genial face
Throughout the length of Sussex. He became
Custodian, in everything but name,
Of all they held dear. The treasure store
Of sheep bells, crooks and tales of Sussex lore.
Forgotten customs, ancient song and rhyme
He garnered 'gainst the ravages of time.
From early shepherd life he raised the mask –
Posterity is richer for his task.

'Tis odd indeed the fact that it should take
A 'furriner' to nudge us wide awake
To all the charms our native acres hold.
By lantern-light he leads us to the fold
At lambing-time, and with him we have seen
The sun behind the mill at Rottingdean.
But though his laugh rings yet on Bury Hill,
It might be said that he's a townsman still.
Then, as one thrust on Sussex, may I voice,
This man became Sussexian from choice.

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AUTHORITY NEWS

Tell us your story. Email your Downland Thymes articles to the editorial team dt@southdowns.gov.uk



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

IT'S INCREDIBLE TO THINK THAT ANOTHER BUSY YEAR HAS ALMOST PASSED BY WITH CHRISTMAS JUST AROUND THE CORNER AND ALL THAT THIS ENTAILS.

Last September our VRS Committee meeting proved to be a very busy one with a number of important items being decided. New committee members Sue Jones, Cliff Hepburn, Chantal Laurent and Tony Mobbs were welcomed. The first item that the Committee decided was to change our bankers to HSBC for our current account and use Aldmore Bank for a more competitive deposit account – these changes are now underway. Secondly, we simplified the VRS Travel Fellowship Grant documentation (established by our founder Paul Millmore), the amount that can be awarded is increased to £500 – but now only on a bi-annual basis. Thirdly, we extended the existing “Area Funds” allocation to the 30 June 2015, so all areas should look to spend their allocated balances. Fourthly, the Committee requested a complete review of uniform entitlements for all volunteers. I therefore met with Amanda Elmes and Ian Hartle to discuss this further – all Volunteer Rangers will now have received an email from Ian on this topic.

On Friday 3 October I was presented, along with eight other Volunteer Rangers, to HRH Duke of York at the opening of the South Downs Centre, it was a memorable occasion and one which recognised the important role played by the VRS.

Finally, I am meeting with all Area Managers to better understand their areas, to meet local rangers and appreciate their interaction with the VRS – I have now had valuable meetings with three Managers. As a result, I am currently working with the Wealden Heaths team in applying for grant aid for work done by both Wealden Heaths and Western Downs Volunteers on the Rother River boardwalk, as well as looking at using some of the VRS's SDNPA Balance Sheet Reserve to help fund a major environmental project.

With the season's greetings to all of you and your families.

NEVILL BROOKE
VRS CHAIRMAN



UPDATE FROM THE VRS TEAM

WELCOME TO SARAH BRETT WHO JOINED SDNPA IN SEPTEMBER AS OUR VOLUNTEER SUPPORT OFFICER, A ROLE WHICH SHE SHARES WITH CRIS SAVILL.

Sarah works Monday to Wednesday in the office and Cris now works Wednesday to Friday. Sarah will get out to meet more of you over the next few months.

Vicky Wakefield-Jarrett stayed long enough to familiarise Cris and Sarah with the work she was doing, but we were all really sorry to see her leave at the end of her contract in October. Vicky is planning a move to Scotland so we wish her all the best with that.

Over the last few months we've spent quite a lot of time holding training sessions for Volunteer Rangers, with six Introductory Days held in July, October and November. These introduced South Downs Centre and 'Secret of the High Woods' project Volunteers to the South Downs as well as to outdoor practical Volunteer Rangers.

We've also held three training events for the South Downs Tranquillity survey and Chris Fairbrother, SDNPA's Landscape Lead, is now collating the feedback from the first of those surveys. Tranquillity is one of the special qualities of the National Park and greatly valued by visitors and residents. The data

collected will be used to help protect and enhance areas of high tranquillity and those most at risk from local development, so it's important work. We've got over 300 surveys to carry out by the spring, so do think about joining in, particularly if you live near the more western parts of the National Park. You can contact Chris Fairbrother (chris.fairbrother@southdowns.gov.uk) or me to find out more.

Thanks to all of you who supported the pilot Saturday opening of the South Downs Centre during August and September. Judith Meagher was employed on Saturdays to organise the openings and I hear she and Volunteer Rangers were also able to make good use of quiet times, gathering and preparing information for visitors on local walks, heathland wildlife, churches and even local breweries – something for everyone!

As always thanks for all the work that you do for the National Park.

IAN HARTLE
VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT
OFFICER



SDW WATER TAPS
THE PAUL MILLMORE PROJECT

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT THAT INSTALLING A WATER TAP WOULD TAKE TWO DAYS TO COMPLETE?

Yet that's what we've found whilst installing new drinking water points on the South Downs Way (SDW) – each location brought its own set of problems to overcome.

This task begins back in 2012 when, following the death of the founder of the VRS, Paul Millmore, the VRS decided to create a fitting memorial to him and so the taps and trough project evolved.

Andy Gattiker, SDW Officer, worked with us on the project to prioritise the locations for the new water points. Inevitably it took him time to get the relevant landowners to support the project but whilst we awaited confirmation we sought grant aid to help finance the project. Stephen Allberry, Wealden Heath Volunteer Ranger, discovered the Drinking Water Association – a charity founded in Victorian times that still funded drinking troughs. To cut a long story short, they agreed to grant us £2000 which doubled our funds.

In August this year we found ourselves preparing to install the first new water point along the SDW at the busy Queen Elizabeth Country Park. It turned out to be a more complicated task than we expected as we also had to fit drainage pipes, which meant we had to break through concrete, as well as trench and lay 12m of water pipe to the drinking tap and trough – all in the pouring rain! After one of the longest, dry summers in years we had to pick the day that storm, thunder and lightning arrived to liven up our proceedings. Not surprisingly the task ran over into the next day.

Our next water point then beckoned at Lomer Farm, a remote, problem free location west of the River Meon in Hampshire, or so we thought.

Here, just a few metres from our chosen site, lay a major underground pipeline – a high octane aviation fuel supply going from Fawley oil refinery to Heathrow. Oops, of all the places to choose to put a water point...

Images © Russel Cleaver

Fortunately Andy Gattiker was able to agree a suitable way forward with all interested parties, but even so we ended up having to dig a 35m trench across a farm track to avoid any mishaps. Luckily we were aided by a Hampshire County Council Senior Ranger who was suitably qualified and experienced to use a mini-digger. However, surprises were still in store for us as when the digger dug into the track it nearly pulled itself over. The little farm track turned out to be a foot thick in concrete and flints. So yet again it took us two days to complete the task.

Now, just from working at these two sites, we have already coped with a wide variety of problems that stand us in good stead for installing further taps and troughs along the SDW. Next in line has to be Littleton Farm in West Sussex – Volunteers in the Central Downs area, it's your turn next, a tap will be appearing near you soon so contact Andy Gattiker for more details.

RUSSELL CLEAVER,
WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



Above: QECP volunteers at work

Top left going clockwise:
The Lomer team; Lomer tap in use, even before we finished;
QECP tap nears completion.

THE TOUR OF BRITAIN



Cyclists reach the King of Mountains finish © Ian Wildridge

STAGE 7: THE PENULTIMATE DAY

ON A BRIGHT AND SUNNY 13 SEPTEMBER, THE 850-MILE TOUR OF BRITAIN RACE CAME TO SUSSEX.

This was day seven of the eight-day race and the longest stage covering 140 miles from Camberley to Brighton. In order to see a piece of the action, you could either watch the day's stage in comfort on the Big Screen on the Western Lawns, join the crowds on the three-mile climb up to Beachy Head, or watch the finish of the climb at Beachy Head itself. I chose the finish of the climb.

This was the first of the day's three climbs, the others being Ditchling Beacon and Bear Road Brighton. Although not the steepest climb it was definitely the longest. The Skoda 'King of the Mountains' (KoM) finish line was opposite the Beachy Head pub. This Czech company were sponsors of the KoM climbs throughout the tour and included in their roadside stands were a coffee bar, accessories (freebies), and their range of Skoda bikes!

The race crew were handing out useful A4 sized leaflets which explained the awards of the various leaders' jerseys and also listed the

20 teams with the names of their six team riders. Evident from their names, most teams were sponsored by continental companies apart from teams such as Sky, the Irish Post Office and Team GB – apparently the home country holding the Tour can enter their national team.

Eventually, after endless police motorcyclists had gone by, the main sponsor's car (Friends Life) arrived and via the tannoy the crowd were given a brief summary of the progress of the race. There was a breakaway group of five riders still nine minutes ahead of the chasing peloton, who would be crossing the line in 15 minutes. How do they work that out?

More police motorcyclists all blue lights and sirens passed by, then right on schedule the breakaway group came flying by and were immediately on the descent towards Belle Tout. The group included Belgian rider Julien Vermote, who was the eventual stage winner in front of the massive crowd on

Madeira Drive. Just over seven minutes later and gradually closing the gap, the chasing peloton came through with Sir Bradley Wiggins one of the leading riders. They usually ride tight into the curvature of the road so I made sure my size tens were well on the grass verge as the riders shot past. I did not want to be on ITV4 as the guy that 'brought Wiggo down'.

The stream of official cars and the colourful team cars (complete with spare bikes) followed. I was surprised to see four or five stragglers in amongst these vehicles. I don't know whether they had dropped off the pace or previously had crashes/punctures, but they were literally slip-streaming against the bumpers of the vehicles in order to catch the peloton.

Apparently the average speed of pro-riders is 27 mph – my average speed was a little bit faster, as I drove home to see the closing stages of the race on telly.

IAN WILDRIDGE
EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

RIVER ROTHER BOARDWALK



THE WESTERN ROTHER IS ONE OF THE DELIGHTS OF THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK, BUT AS IT RUNS THROUGH PRIVATE LAND IT IS NOT ALWAYS ACCESSIBLE.

To improve access to this hidden gem, the South Downs National Park Authority, Cowdray Estate and the National Trust joined forces to begin the River Rother Walk project. This focused on developing a permissive footpath between North Mill in Midhurst and the Woolbeding Bridge.

Since the path launched in 2011, Volunteer Rangers have been involved in hedge planting and the interminable battle with Himalayan balsam in order to improve access along the path.

Recently, staff and Volunteers from both the National Park and the National Trust embarked on the latest stage of maintenance work on this path – the building of a 60 metre stretch of boardwalk where the bank is particularly soggy. As you can see from the photos this task has now been successfully completed.

As the River Rother path starts very close to the South Downs Centre, why not take a stroll next time you come to Midhurst and see the result of our hard work in all its glory.

STEPHEN ALLBERRY,
WEALDEN HEATHS VOLUNTEER RANGER

Above: Construction of the River Rother boardwalk
Inset: The finished River Rother boardwalk

Main: Part of the team on the boardwalk
Images © SDNPA/Angela Ward



A field of green-winged orchids in bloom © Andrew Porter

RANDOM SCATTERING

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS GET TOGETHER TO COLLECT AND DISPERSE GREEN WINGED ORCHID SEEDS.

TASK OBJECTIVE
To establish the species in a nearby area.

PART ONE
The Thursday Volunteer Ranger Group arrive at Piddinghoe Reservoir to join Dan Fagan from Lewes District Council and collect green winged orchid seeds from the very few remaining brown and withered stems. I have the usual problem of getting over the locked entrance gate but did not catch anyone laughing!

PART TWO
Next comes the trudge down to the valley floor below Bollens Bush where we spend time following the brush cutter, using loppers and shears, and raking the results down the steep hill side.

PART THREE
Thirsty work but at last we can complete the task as Dan scatters the seeds and we rake them into the cleared land.

PART FOUR
Watch this space. Results to be assessed in 2015!

SHIRLEY BRICE, EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

THE POO FAIRIES OF LEWES



The Poo Fairies of Lewes © Roy Haines

THE TASK SHEET STATED 'BATTLE OF LEWES 750TH ANNIVERSARY'. I WAS INTRIGUED, AND FIRST OF ALL DID A BIT OF RESEARCH AS THIS WASN'T LIKELY TO BE ONE OF OUR USUAL TASKS.

Short-handing history, the English barons felt there was still some unfinished business left over from the Magna Carta. So, led by Simon de Montfort (he of the famous concert hall in Leicester) they took on the army of Henry III and his son Edward Longshanks (aka the Hammer of the Scots) to re-assert their rights and that of the nascent Parliament. Unfortunately for Henry his son got pre-occupied and pursued his quarry off the battlefield leaving his father exposed to the major part of de Montfort's forces. The decisive battle was at Landport Bottom, which now lies between Lewes Gaol and the old Lewes racecourse.

So what would the task be, I wondered, given our greater level of community engagement work over the past couple of years? Building the ramparts, marking out the battle plan, setting up interpretation displays?

Nope. Upon meeting our contact from Lewes District Council we were told that our

first task was to clear an area of land which was about the size of a football pitch that was to be used for a children's bug hunt on the weekend. Before we could enquire further,

BEFORE WE COULD ENQUIRE FURTHER, PLASTIC BAGS AND GLOVES WERE PRODUCED – YES, WE WERE TO CLEAR THE AREA OF DOG POO. OUR TASK WAS TO BE "POO FAIRIES".

plastic bags and gloves were produced – yes, we were to clear the area of dog poo. Our task was to be "Poo Fairies".

Trying hard not to turn our noses up too much we proceeded to clear the area of about 15kg (33lbs) of dog excrement – some of it appearing to have been freshly produced even as we were

working. There is not much to say about the practicalities of the task aside from that like any good Volunteer we did the task we were given with good humour.

With that part of the day's tasks finished, lunch was taken with a distinct smell of liberally applied hand disinfectant in the air

ROY HAINES
EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER





NEW STARTER CLAIRE GEE

AT AROUND THE SAME TIME THAT THIS DOWNLAND THYMES HITS YOUR DOORSTEP, CLAIRE WILL BE BECOMING A MOTHER SO WE WON'T SEE HER FOR A WHILE. WE WISH YOU ALL THE VERY BEST IN YOUR NEW ROLE!

AREA
I volunteer on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday with the Stanmer Park VRS group.

FIRST DAY
My first task was to help organise the workshop, located at Stanmer, which contains all the tools and equipment the Rangers use. We chose to do this task as the weather was too appalling to go out onto the downs! I have since taken part in lots of other tasks, including hedge laying, installing new signposts and making a fence around Plumpton First School's garden.

HOW I GOT INVOLVED WITH THE VRS
I read an article about Volunteer Rangers on a noticeboard at Devil's Dyke. I looked into joining as I liked the sound of working outside in the fresh air of the National Park.

UNUSUAL FACT ABOUT MYSELF
I currently work full time as long haul cabin crew, flying all over the world. I've been flying for just over 16 years and still really enjoy it. I've seen some weird and wonderful places –

from whale watching in California, to safaris in Africa. The days off that I get after trips allow me to fit in Ranger days and, although I love flying, it's lovely to be working outside for a change and to be doing something completely different!

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY IN THE NATIONAL PARK
I enjoy a bit of camping and would recommend a campsite in the pretty village of Alfriston. The campsite is nestled in a small valley just adjacent to the picturesque High Street that houses a couple of craft shops and some tasty tearooms. At the campsite itself you can either kick back and relax and enjoy the surroundings or, if you're feeling more energetic, have a game of tennis or go on a hack at the local stables. If walking is more your thing, a 5 mile walk up to the chalk figure of the Long man of Wilmington will enable you to have some great views of the Downs. When you get back to Alfriston you can reward yourself with some refreshments at The George, a 500 year old inn.

“IT’S LOVELY TO BE WORKING OUTSIDE FOR A CHANGE AND TO BE DOING SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT!”



BUILDING A COB WALL

LAST AUGUST THE SDNPA HISTORIC BUILDINGS OFFICER, MICHAEL SCAMMELL, OFFERED A FASCINATING TASK TO THE WESTERN DOWNS VRS – HELP RESTORE A TRADITIONAL COB WALL IN EAST HAMPSHIRE.

Once our merry band of Volunteer Rangers arrived at the farm site near Cheriton, it was easy to find the wall that needed our attention. Close to the farmhouse, great gaps were evident in an old chalk wall that ran alongside a footpath, with some parts slumping into the farmhouse garden.

Such chalk cob walls are actually scarce in Hampshire; this wall had been badly repaired years ago and then neglected so it was sorely in need of help.

Fortunately we had a heritage consultant, Kevin Stubbs, to advise us and explain that cob walls need a dry foundation and cap, and in Hampshire they are simply rammed chalk on a flint base, with a thatched or tiled roof on top.

To repair the gaps we first had to clear the slumped chalk to uncover its flint base.

There we revealed a perfectly straight stub wall of flint about 6” high. Next we had to construct shuttering either side of this base so as to contain the chalk we wanted to use to repair the wall.

Step forward volunteer Bill McCardle, he had a background in the building trade so could show us how to create a strong, stable shuttering. Utilising a large mound of chalk supplied, we then had to dig out and crush the chalk to a fine crumbly texture before adding just sufficient water to make it sticky – we wanted a chalk crumble, not a chalk pudding. Finally we barrowed it to the wall, shovelled it between the shutters and tamped it down. Where it very nearly did become a chalk pudding, oops... too much water! But, as they say, practice makes perfect and we eventually created a satisfactory, solid mass of chalk wall.

In the end it needed three days, averaging six Volunteers a day, to repair just one gap in the wall. This all goes to prove that in the old days labour must have been cheap and time plentiful, for whilst it made an immensely enjoyable task for us all to undertake, it cannot be economic to build cob walls anymore. For what all of us achieved over three days, one man could build a bigger brick wall in one day.

But hey, he wouldn't have had so much fun as us, and chalk walls have a certain rare heritage value.

To help with the work we were amply supplied with tea and cakes by the farmer's wife. Tasks don't get much better than that. Can we build another cob wall soon?

RUSSELL CLEAVER
WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



Main image: The Cob wall before we started. Above from left: Unveiling the flint base; Erecting the shuttering; Tamping down the Cob wall. © Russell Cleaver

HERE ARE SOME RATHER 'WACKY' PHOTOS OF AN ANNUAL TASK WE CARRY OUT FOR SOUTH EAST WATER (SEW).

READY, STEADY, COUNT!



AND THEY'RE OFF!



ALL CHANGE PLEASE, ALL CHANGE



ON YOUR MARKS!



GET SET!



ONE OF THE GROUP BREAKS AWAY TO TAKE THE LEAD.

This year, on 24 June, we took our starting positions on the flat top of the underground reservoir at Folkington. When the flag went down we... crawled away! Counting hairy mallows isn't a speedy task, but one that gives a sense of achievement as you tot up the figures you've counted in a number of quadrants to a total figure in the thousands! Estimated numbers of these plants are monitored each year by SEW and, according to

Richard Dyer from SEW, this is one of the four 'northern' sites – all in Sussex and Hampshire – where this plant grows. These photos show each stage of the hairy mallow "race", from the start to the 'all change for the next heat'. Enjoy!

IAN WILDRIDGE,
EASTERN DOWNS
VOLUNTEER RANGER

Images © Ian Wildridge



VOLUNTEERS MEET HRH DUKE OF KENT

HRH unveils the plaque to open the South Downs Centre
© SDNPA/Nick Robinson



Left: HRH meets Volunteer Rangers at the South Downs Centre.
Right: HRH discussing how the VRS work across the National Park.
© SDNPA/Nick Robinson

WHEN HRH DUKE OF KENT OPENED THE NEW SOUTH DOWNS CENTRE, VOLUNTEERS WERE AMONGST THE GROUPS WAITING TO WELCOME HIM.

HRH the Duke of Kent visited the South Downs National Park on Friday 3 October to officially open the new South Downs Centre in Midhurst. As well as planting a Sussex Mother apple tree and unveiling a plaque, His Royal Highness met people leading projects to: involve communities in their local history; support more schools to use the South Downs as a teaching resource; and reintroduce the locally extinct water vole to the River Meon. Partners from organisations working with the South Downs National Park

Authority talked about their involvement with the National Park and local school children from Midhurst and Easebourne described flower beds at the South Downs Centre which they have adopted as part of the John Muir Award in the South Downs. Chairman of the VRS Committee, Nevill Brooke, assembled his Volunteer Ranger representatives from across the National Park in the Paul Millmore library area of the South Downs Centre. Taking it in turn, each Volunteer was individually introduced to His Royal Highness and had a moment to talk

about the work and variety of tasks which the VRS are currently carrying out in the South Downs. To end the visit, HRH the Duke of Kent was presented with a posy by the school children and waved goodbye by staff, Members, Volunteers, partners and school children from the front of the building. The visit was a huge success and it was great to have so many Volunteers present to show just how valuable the VRS's work is to the South Downs National Park.

YOUR REVIEWS

This section is all about sharing reviews of your favourite things. Tell us about books you've read, pubs you've visited, tools or gadgets you've used or even websites that you'd recommend to other volunteers. Email your reviews, of up to 100 words, to dt@southdowns.gov.uk with a picture.



Volunteers, if you know of a pub that deserves this award, please let us know. We're talking about good old-fashioned public houses, rather than gastro pubs or themed inns. We want to know about places where you don't need to take your boots off before crossing the threshold! Send us a photo and 100 words explaining why the pub you nominate should be recognised.

THE TIGER INN, EAST DEAN, EAST SUSSEX, BN20 0DA

Sip a fruity wine in the fresh winter sun, or fill your rumbling tummy with a tasty feast. The Tiger Inn nestles beside the beautiful village green in East Dean. With a good selection of beers and wines and a menu consisting of classic pub grub, there's something for any hungry explorer. In walking distance from Birling Gap and Beachy Head, many people find the pub a welcoming halfway stop-off during an afternoon's walk. Having served fine ales, wines and food to surrounding residents, farmers, soldiers, walkers and smugglers since the 16th century, The Tiger Inn is definitely worth a visit.

BOOK AND GADGET REVIEW

SUGRU KIT, £12 FROM B&Q OR ROBERT DYAS

This is a tin of 'magic rubber stuff', now with magnets included so you can use it to fasten stuff to yet more stuff!

If you've never heard of this weird material it can be used to fix almost anything, e.g. broken handles, cables etc. I've used it to cushion door handles from banging the wall. Now with added magnets you can, for example, fit a magnet to a torch so it can be magnetised onto a bike or anywhere handy. See their website for more ways to use this crazy stuff www.sugru.com

Why not read one of these books over the Christmas holiday or maybe they'll make a great present for that bookworm friend.

MEADOWLAND BY JOHN LEWIS-STEMPEL, DOUBLEDAY, £14.99

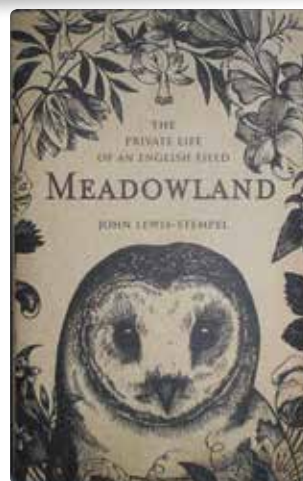
The author is a writer and farmer living on the Welsh borders. His book is about the passing seasons in a single ancient meadow on his farm, described with wit, poetry and wisdom. This is apparent from the very start of the book: "The ice moon is already rising over Merlin's Hill as I go down to the field at late evening..."

"Meadowland" has received glowing reviews from many people and I often found his expressions lingering in the mind. It's like a memorable love song to the land.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BEARDS BY THOMAS S GOWING, BRITISH LIBRARY, £7.99

This is a modern reprint of a book first published in 1854 and is hilarious. "The absence of Beard is usually a sign of physical and moral weakness" states the front cover.

The British Library have clearly brought this book out now as an eccentric Victorian book ideal for the Christmas market.



TOP TIPS FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON

VOLUNTEER RANGER RUSSELL CLEAVER GIVES YOU SOME TOP TIPS FOR THE FESTIVE SEASON.

MAKE YOUR OWN REINDEER

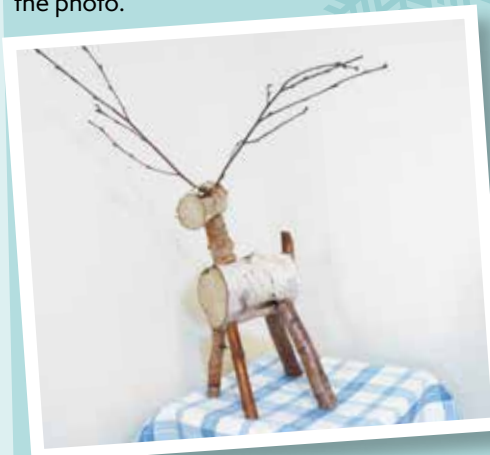
For Volunteers carrying out scrub cutting this winter season, a reindeer is a fun and simple decoration to make for Christmas – to start all you need is a branch, three inches in diameter.

For your reindeer's body use a bit of your branch about 5" long.

Drill holes to fit in smaller pieces of the branch for the legs, neck, head and antlers as shown in the photo.

Silver birch has an attractive bark, but you can do this with any tree species.

You can scale this up or down to make more reindeer of different sizes depending on the size of logs you cut. (I even made a huge one from ash for the front garden and fitted a cycle rear lamp for its red nose!)



FESTIVE DRINKS

TRY ANY ONE OF THESE DRINKS AFTER A HARD DAY'S WORK IN THE CRISP WINTER AIR OF THE SOUTH DOWNS AND IT WILL GIVE YOU A WARM GLOW INSIDE.

Hot Gold Pour 20ml of amaretto into a tall warmed glass, add a cup full of heated orange juice and stir with a cinnamon stick.

Hot Buttered Rum Mix a thin slice of butter, with 1tsp brown or Demerara sugar, add a big slug of rum and top the glass with hot water. Stir with a cinnamon stick and add grated nutmeg to taste.

Applebueie Drambuie added to hot apple juice and water. 100ml of hot cloudy apple juice, 100ml of hot water and 30ml of Drambuie, all stirred with a cinnamon stick.

Chilli Chocolate Cut a red chilli in half and discard the seeds. In a pan heat enough milk for your serving along with half of the chilli. When hot, remove the chilli and add plain chocolate to turn it as chocolatey as you like it!

Hot Spiced Cider Mix half a pint of Cider, 1tsp honey, a cinnamon stick and 2 cloves. Heat the mixture, bring it to the boil and then strain. Add orange or apple slices for decoration.

A CHRISTMAS QUIZ

1. In which country is turkey a native species?
2. What name is given to a wine bottle twice the standard size?
3. Which semi-parasite gets hanged every Christmas?
4. In the 19th century, what suddenly popularised Christmas cards?
 - a) Invention of postage stamps
 - b) First use by Queen Victoria & Prince Albert
 - c) Invention of cheap lithographic printing
5. Which Tchaikovsky ballet is most associated with Christmas?
6. What one word means 'to plunder'; 'to dismiss' and is a container often shown carried by Father Christmas?
7. *It's a Wonderful Life* is probably Hollywood's best loved Christmas film – but in it, what was the name of James Stewart's guardian angel?
8. When was Band Aid's *Do They Know it's Christmas* a Christmas No. 1 single?
9. Where did Good King Wenceslas rule?
10. What actually is Myrrh, and what is it made from?

Answers can be found on the back page of this Downland Thymes.

A CHRISTMAS TASK

CONGRATULATIONS TO SHIRLEY BRICE FROM THE EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER TEAM WHO WON THE CHRISTMAS POEM CHALLENGE:

It was Christmas Day at the workhouse,
And the volunteers were there,
Carrying loppers and bow saws
Eager their fir tree to share.
One in his best holey sweat shirt,
Did his thing as most of them do.
Ensuring a swift change of colour,
Rosy glow from a chilly pale blue.

The tree trimmed and hung with best seed treats,
Was soon full of birds for their share.
Closely followed by more downland orphans
Paws and tails waving thanks for warm air.
Then Santa arrived in his Landy box sleigh
With presents and goodies galore.
Mince pies, crackers, cheese and some pudding
No VR or guest asked for more!

By Shirley Brice

Volunteers carrying out fieldwork in
QECP, Hampshire © SDNPA/Anne K Purkiss



SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS

VOLUNTEERS JOIN THE SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS TEAM TO HELP REVEAL THE HERITAGE OF OUR WOODLAND LANDSCAPE

Earlier this year the South Downs National Park Authority, in partnership with Chichester District Council and with funding from the National Lottery, began a three-year project to investigate the hidden archaeology of the woodlands, through combining cutting-edge laser technology and 3D modelling, with field survey and documentary analysis. The project will provide lots of new information about the people who have lived in and cared for this landscape for the last 6000 years. We are now looking for help from the community to shed new light on the landscape revealed by the survey.

There are lots of opportunities to get involved, from venturing out in the forest recording features, researching local history through public and private archives, and recording oral histories and local memories.

No previous experience is required – anyone can get involved and help us to better understand and communicate the heritage of this area.

THERE ARE LOTS OF OPPORTUNITIES TO GET INVOLVED, FROM VENTURING OUT IN THE FOREST RECORDING FEATURES [TO]... RECORDING ORAL HISTORIES AND LOCAL MEMORIES.

In September the team welcomed 80 visitors to their first open day at the South Downs Centre to showcase the opportunities to get involved. The team were thrilled with the response of over 30 people signing up to help on the day, and many more filling in the online sign-up in the following weeks.

Over the month since then the team have been busy establishing all the training requirements of the Volunteers who come from a variety of backgrounds. All the Volunteers for this project are joining the South Downs VRS family so the first step was a day's induction to the National Park and a breakout session in the afternoon where the High Woods team and Volunteers worked together on interpreting LiDar data (high resolution 3D data captured using special sensors from the air) alongside modern and historic maps.

Below: Volunteers analysing LiDar data after a morning's induction to the National Park © SDNPA



The next phase of the training is tailored to the Volunteers' interest, so for example those who want to help with field validation can undertake practical training in feature identification and recording. Similarly, those who want to delve through the historical records are invited to introductory sessions at the West Sussex or Hampshire Archives. The team will be rolling out this training throughout the next few months, starting with fieldwork.

If you're interested in getting involved you can find out more information and the Volunteer sign-up form on our website here www.southdowns.gov.uk/highwoods.

We look forward to working with you soon!

THE SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS
PROJECT TEAM

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT AT EVENTS



The events van on
Eastbourne seafront © SDNPA



Volunteers
making
badges at the
Sussex Festival
of Nature
© SDNPA

THIS SEASON WE HAVE HAD A PRESENCE AT OVER 50 SHOWS AND EVENTS ACROSS THE SOUTH DOWNS.

The events have ranged from a full stand of marquees, displays and activities to simply parking up our new events van on a seafront for the day and talking to passers-by.

The events have been manned by a mixture of SDNPA staff, Members and SDVRS volunteers.

Volunteer Ranger input has been particularly valuable at some of our big flagship events such as the Sussex Festival of Nature and our own Open Day at the South Downs Centre.

Talking to the public at events like these is some of the most valuable engagement we undertake and the new events van has opened up a range of new opportunities for us to access smaller sites quickly and easily to target our engagement at, for example, known dog walking hotspots.

We would love more Volunteer Rangers to get involved with the events we attend and are making plans for a more prominent role for volunteering at our events next year. For example, next year's Secrets of

the Heath event on Petersfield Heath will feature a 'have a go' practical task where the public can learn about what's involved from existing Volunteers, and hopefully sign up themselves.

I am also bringing the events van to the Western Area SDVRS group catch up meeting on Thursday 4 December to demonstrate just how easy it is to set up. If you'd like a similar demonstration at another area office let your Area Ranger know and we can arrange this.

No particular skills or knowledge are required, just a willingness to chat to the public about the work of the National Park and your role within this – you will always be working alongside SDNPA staff and/or Members. As well as benefitting the public with your knowledge it always surprises me how much you can learn yourself on days like these.

I will be circulating a list of the events we plan to attend in 2015 early in the New Year

via the weekly Update newsletter, so please consider volunteering to help at one, or several! Just let your area team know which ones you are interested in and you will receive all the necessary details a week or two before the event.

Thanks for all of your support at this year's events and I look forward to working with lots more of you in 2015!

LAURA WARREN
EVENTS AND ENGAGEMENT MANAGER

SDNPA ANNUAL REVIEW 2013-14

Reintroduced water voles, better woodland management, preparations for a National Park Local Plan and promoting sustainable travel are just some examples of successful partnership projects highlighted in our Annual Review for 2013-14. Read the full report on the website here:

[southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/
key-documents](http://southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/key-documents)

ACCESS & RIGHTS OF WAY ANNUAL REVIEW

With 3,322km of Rights of Way in the South Downs National Park, partnership working is key to ensure these access routes are maintained. The Access & Rights of Way Annual Review 2013-14 details the successes of our partnership with four local highway authorities – West Sussex, Hampshire and East Sussex County Councils, as well as Brighton & Hove City Council – to do this.

It also celebrates successes such as resurfacing work carried out on the South Downs Way National Trail – accessed by 310,967 people during 2013/14 – improved access to Heyshott Down with

five kissing gates replacing stiles, securing funds from the Department for Transport Cycle Ambition for a major upgrade to the Meon Valley Trail (a 12 mile disused railway line) and lots more.

View the report and appendices which went to the National Park Authority meeting in September here:

southdowns.gov.uk/about-us/about-the-authority/authority-meetings/2014-meetings/23-september

LOCAL ACCESS FORUM ANNUAL REPORT

Responsible dog walking, local rights of way, controversial fencing and strategic planning are just a few of the issues tackled by the South Downs Local Access Forum (SDLAF). The SDLAF is a group of 17 people who give advice to various government authorities and other bodies on how to provide access to land for open-air recreation and enjoyment. Read more about their achievements in the *South Downs Local Access Forum Annual Report: November 2012-April 2014* on the website here:

southdowns.gov.uk/get-involved/laf

CAPTION COMPETITION

CAN YOU CREATE A WITTY CAPTION FOR THIS PHOTOGRAPH? EMAIL YOUR IDEAS TO DT@SOUTHDOWNSGOV.UK



The winner of last edition's caption competition was...

"THE VOLUNTEER'S HEAD BOBBED OUT OF THE WATER – BUT I KEPT PRESSING IT DOWN!"

**GRAHAM WYNNE,
VOLUNTEER RANGER**

LOVE IT OR HATE IT...

...Tell us your thoughts about *Downland Thymes*. What new features would you like to see? Which articles did you like? Would you prefer to read it online?

Downland Thymes is put together by an editorial team, made up of SDNPA communications team members, the VRS team and Russell Cleaver from the VRS Committee.

We'd love to hear your views, so please send your feedback to dt@southdowns.gov.uk or to russanne.cleaver@gmail.com

If you'd like to download a copy of *Downland Thymes*, visit the National Park website: www.southdowns.gov.uk/get-involved/volunteering/volunteer-newsletter

1) USA. 2) Magnum. 3) Mistletoe. 4) A. 5) Nutcracker. 6) Sack. 7) Clarence. 8) 1984. 9) Bohemia. 10) Myrrh is an incense or perfume, made from tree gum or resin. (Interestingly, Frankincense is the same, made from different tree resins.)

ANSWERS TO THIS YEAR'S CHRISTMAS QUIZ

South Downs
Volunteer Ranger Service

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**

Downland Thymes: News for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Issue 66, December 2014. © SDNPA.

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.

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