



DOWNLAND THYMES

NEWS FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS VOLUNTEER
RANGER SERVICE ISSUE 68 | SUMMER 2015



RACING ARCHAEOLOGY

HIGH ON THE SOUTH DOWNS ABOVE CHICHESTER, THE PINNACLES OF GOODWOOD'S GRANDSTAND ROOF PIERCE THE BLUE SKY AS A GROUP OF VOLUNTEERS MAKE THEIR WAY ROUND THE EASTERN ARC OF THE RACECOURSE.

The striking modern structure looks like a tented enclosure for a mediaeval tournament, but other genuinely historical features are the quest for this group. They are members of an army of amateur archaeologists recruited by the South Downs National Park to investigate, at ground level, the potentially important evidence of the distant and more recent past revealed by aerial survey using the Lidar technique of scanning the land below, including areas covered by trees.

After pausing to admire Goodwood, the eight volunteers and two professional archaeologists, Kimberly Briscoe and Vivienne Blandford, began their day's work of locating, assessing, measuring, recording and defining a range of features which show up on the Lidar views of East Dean Park.

Sporting high-visibility jackets emblazoned with 'The Secrets of the High Woods' the volunteers headed off in different directions through the woodland, armed with tablet computers to record their findings, red and white survey poles to show the scale of features in a photograph, and tape measures.

Among the lumps and bumps we found an ancient bank marking a parish boundary, two World War II bomb craters, several lynchets – banks which build up over centuries due to ploughing and erosion on sloping fields – an enclosure or possibly a viewing platform used in a mediaeval deer park and an abandoned 19th century section of the racecourse. We were most interested in the aristocratic deer park which Vivienne explained was

more like a larder for storing venison on the hoof than a sporting venue to shoot the poor beasts. At the beginning of the day, as we skirted the racecourse, she pointed out a high bank she believed could be the remnant of the deer park's pale, a man-made barrier built to keep the deer inside and predators or poachers out.

All the records from the day will be added to the steadily-growing database of archaeological features from the area surveyed in the Lidar fly-overs, 305km² from the River Arun westwards to the A3. Week by week the 185 volunteers, all trained as members of the Volunteer Ranger Service, are adding to the fascinating picture of how our forebears lived. Whilst at the same time enjoying the great outdoors, good company and the opportunity to engage with professionals who are ever-willing to share their knowledge and enthusiasm.

ROGER GREEN
SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS
VOLUNTEER RANGER

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Left: The crater
Right: Measuring
the crater
© Roger Green



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

SPRING IS HERE!

Our woods have recently been filled with the electric blue of our native bluebells – hopefully the Muntjac deer will not be munching too many of them!

The arrival of spring brings with it a change in the tasks undertaken by the VRS, so no more bonfires due to the need to protect nesting birds and more focus, for example, on Downland, butterfly and other surveys. In the case of the Western Downs team it will mean a start of another year in the River Meon Water Vole Release Project with its comprehensive and on-going river surveys. Talking of rivers, I mentioned in the last Downland Thymes that the VRS Committee had an excellent response to its education survey. At our last committee meeting it was decided that this year the VRS would run courses on the two most popular topics – namely River Ecology and Cultural History/ Archaeology – for delivery at both the South Downs Centre (SDC) and Stanmer area (total of four courses). Committee member, Ron Wilder, has finalised the programmes so all volunteer rangers should now have received the details – my thanks to Ron for his commitment and hard work in making all this possible.

During the first four months of this year three VRS Induction courses have been run at the SDC at which I presented a VRS overview. These courses were very well attended with nearly all participants being new volunteers who have joined the Secrets of the High Woods (SoHW) project – this now means that about 180 new volunteers have been added to the VRS. We have offered the SoHW group two representative places on the VRS committee and look forward to working with them. In the meantime I extend a very warm welcome to all new volunteers.

Enjoy the beauty of spring in our wonderful National Park.

NEVILL BROOKE
VRS CHAIRMAN

UPDATE FROM THE VRS TEAM

THE NEW WEBSITE FOR THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY WAS LAUNCHED IN MARCH AND CONTINUES TO BE UPDATED, INCLUDING CHANGES TO THE NEW VOLUNTEERING PAGES.

A big thank you to South Downs Way Warden, Tony Mobbs, who put in a lot of effort working with the Committee and SDNPA staff, proposing content for the new website, as well as for the new intranet site. He also played a big part in defining how the pages fit together, as well as what information is on them. If you haven't had a look yet visit southdowns.gov.uk/volunteering

The new intranet will be available from mid-June. If you're not sure how to access the intranet get in touch with Cris or Sarah at vrs@southdowns.gov.uk or 01730 819327. The web and intranet facilities provide a great way to find out about what is going on around the National Park.

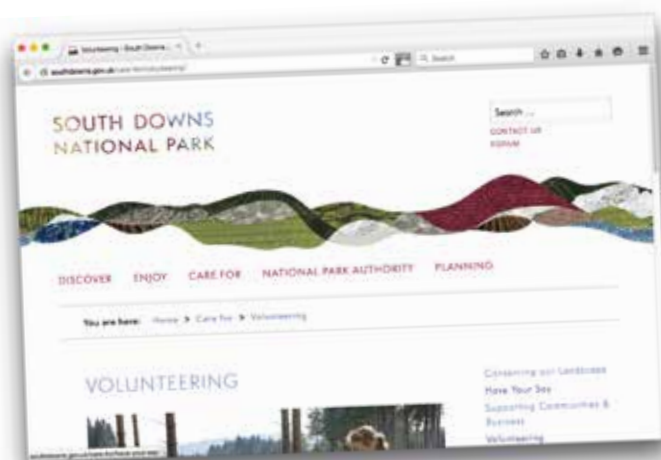
Also by the time you receive this we will just have held our inter-area social event – a Quiz Night in Lewes. This provided a chance for volunteer rangers, particularly those from the groups based out of Stanmer and Seven Sisters, to get together for some friendly competition. We are happy to organise a similar event for Western Downs, Central Downs and Wealden Heaths volunteers and I recently approached you all to get ideas for

what you might like to do. Watch this space!

In the last issue I reported that over 130 people had shown an interest in supporting the Secrets of the High Woods archaeology project. The stream of interest continued unabated until the project had to formally close the doors to extra help. In total over 180 people had been in touch to see if they could help. Of course, not everyone will be able to sustain that involvement but the team has a fantastic amount of support to help them achieve the most for the project. No-one can have any doubt about the level of interest in the heritage and history of the South Downs National Park!

As you will see below, the VRS AGM is being held in Lewes later in the year. For those of you who have not been to one before, this event is more than a 'business' meeting, with a talk and walk offering everybody the chance to hear from experts about some fascinating aspect of the local area.

IAN HARTLE
VOLUNTEER DEVELOPMENT OFFICER



A snippet of the volunteering page.

VRS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please make a note in your diaries that the VRS AGM is to be held on Saturday 12 September 2015 at the Linklater Pavilion in Lewes – I do hope that as many of you as possible may be able to attend. The broad programme for the day will be as follows:

10.00: Arrival – tea, coffee and biscuits
10.30: AGM
11.30: Long Service Awards
11.40: Guest speaker
12.20: Lunch break (bring your own)
13.30: Guided walk
15.00: End of proceedings

Please note that this date has slipped a week from that which was originally pencilled

in. When the programme details have been finalised a communication will be sent out to all volunteers, so I hope this will give everyone sufficient time to book the day!

I look forward to seeing you then.

NEVILL BROOKE, VRS
CHAIRMAN



TAKE A STUNNING SPRING MORNING, A WOODLAND GLADE WITH THE FIRST HINTS OF GREEN IN THE CANOPY, ONE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK RANGER, NINE ENERGETIC VRS VOLUNTEERS, AN AMPLE SUPPLY OF POST-HOLE DIGGING TOOLS, FOURTEEN SUBSTANTIAL CHESTNUT POSTS (THE 'DRAGON'S TEETH') AND WITHIN A COUPLE OF HOURS ALICE HOLT ARBORETUM HAD THE MAKINGS OF A SMART NEW ENTRANCE.

At the request of the Alice Holt Arboretum Restoration Project, members of the Volunteer Ranger Service (Western branch), led by National Park Authority Apprentice Ranger Chris Gurney, visited the northernmost reaches of the South Downs National Park in early April. They had been requested to help with some heavy work beyond the capability and resources of the small group of volunteers from surrounding parishes who are working closely with the Forestry Commission to refresh an old research arboretum in Alice Holt Forest.

The aims of the Alice Holt Arboretum Restoration Project are: to restore the arboretum to its status as a tree collection of national and international importance; to enable public access by all for the quiet enjoyment of the tree collection and the natural environment; to enhance the value of the site for biodiversity; to provide an educational resource, and to provide

volunteering opportunities for practical conservation and access work.

The work of the volunteers, supported by various generous grants (including from the National Park Authority), has mainly involved repairs to paths, removal of self-seeded understorey and invasive holly, cataloguing and labelling important tree specimens and planting the next generation of trees. A Tree Trail has been established in which 30 of the many interesting trees in the arboretum have been labelled and numbered, with leaflets describing these and a trail map available at the entrance.

This wasn't the first visit by the VRS, whose services have been willingly given on several previous occasions. This most recent visit of the VRS team was, however, doubly significant because the local arboretum volunteers are currently in the process of joining the VRS themselves, with their initial

introductory training day having taken place in late April at the South Downs Centre in Midhurst. For the past few years they have operated informally under the auspices of the Alice Holt Community Forum which comprises representatives from the Forestry Commission, the National Park Authority, local land-owners, surrounding parish councils and community groups. The group hopes that the formal relationship with the SDNP VRS will secure its longer-term sustainability, as well as provide welcome opportunities for training and for working elsewhere in the National Park.

Alice Holt Arboretum is located at SU 801432 and can be accessed from the car park (SU 802434) off Gravel Hill Road via the A325, Bordon to Farnham road. Parts of the website aliceholtforum.org.uk are currently being reconstructed, but further information can be obtained from Colin Hall at chall3422@aol.com or Robert Simpson at rf.simpson@talk21.com

DICK BEALES
ALICE HOLT VOLUNTEER RANGER

From left to right:
Planting the teeth.
The finished entrance
in all its glory
© Dick Beales

MESSING ABOUT IN THE RIVER



Main image: Exploring the river
Inset: Identifying river species
© John Rowe

WHILST VISITING QUEEN ELIZABETH COUNTRY PARK I SAW A VOLUNTEER TEAM 'SCRUB BASHING' AND WAS INSPIRED TO PURSUE THE IDEA OF BECOMING A VOLUNTEER.

After a few emails the opportunity arose to join the Sunday team. With visions of tracking down poachers and managing the big game in the park I eagerly awaited the first task. Needless to say that when details came through about a butterfly survey with SDNPA Ranger Elaina, I quickly volunteered my better half to accompany me.

Much to our amazement we had a fantastic day learning about butterflies, their habitats and had our first experience as volunteer rangers. It was so addictive that a couple of weeks later we had a great holiday chasing gatekeepers, swallowtails and red admirals in south-west France.

Since then we have both been taught how to do coppicing with SDNPA Assistant Ranger Laura in a lovely bluebell wood just outside Winchester, as well as doing a bit of 'scrub bashing' on the chalk downland. Taking the

coppicing a stage further I was lucky enough to be introduced to yet another fascinating activity by attending a traditional hedge laying course.

Soon after, our volunteering activities took a new path and SDNPA Ranger Elaina was kind enough to arrange for us to be trained by a team of enthusiastic experts to be river invertebrate monitors. This added a whole new dimension to our new country lives. Not only did it open our eyes to the many varieties of creatures that live in our rivers but also made us aware of how important they are to give an indication of how healthy the river network is.

Our river training was also supported by appropriate water safety training, again delivered by an enthusiastic specialist instructor and involving a mini expedition through some challenging parts of the River

Meon and launching safety lines at each other across a field like kids on a school sports day.

We were subsequently allocated our own bit of the River Meon which is a truly beautiful place and now have a monthly snapshot of not only how the river, with its inhabitants, changes and evolves, but we also have a royal box view of how the seasons influence an ancient woodland surrounded by horse paddocks and rolling fields. All of which, as 'townies', never ceases to amaze us.

Since joining the Sunday team we have met some great people and seen some fantastic natural wonders and that is only the first six months!

JOHN ROWE
WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER



STEPPING OUT AT LANGRISH

On two occasions over February and March, the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service helped Hampshire's Rights of Way team completely transform a couple of footpaths that were unusable, dangerous and difficult to navigate.

The paths in question were near Langrish just west of Petersfield. Paths that in the right condition should form part of circular walks within the villages of Langrish and Stroud. When colleague Simon and I first inspected the footpath, we came across many problems – first and foremost, a steep muddy bank that had an old rope tied between trees to assist the climb! Aside from this, there was no signposting – the odd old way-marker remained to demonstrate it was a long time since the waymarking was addressed. Further on, a fallen tree and a solid wall of vegetation blocked the footpath. The brave walkers who had made it this far in the past had either given up or diverted off into the woods and taken the footpath onto a new line.

So the main aim of the task was to make the path safe for users to walk. Creation of a flight of steps up the bank was the priority. We knew this wouldn't be completed in a day, so I kept aside two task days to finish it off.

On our first day we were joined by the Friday group of the Western VRS. We impressively installed 16 steps, it was a great result and some hard graft was put in by all. Cue the compulsory end of day photograph and the improvement to the footpath was already evident to see.

The second visit with the Monday group saw an increase in volunteer numbers. With so many extra pair of hands we split the group into two. One team finished the steps off whilst the other chain-sawed fallen trees, cleared the vegetation and signposted the route.

Both the Friday and Monday groups put in a fantastic effort. The improvements were dramatic. From a path that was difficult to use at so many levels to what it is now, the difference is remarkable. Thanks to everyone involved and see you on the next task...

ANDY AITKEN
COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS RANGER
CENTRAL & EAST REGION
HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE

Top: Installing the steps
Bottom: Adding the finishing touches

© Andy Aitken



BRUSH-CUTTING ON THE SCARP FACE

IT'S NOT EASY CUTTING SCRUB ON THE STEEP SLOPES OF THE SHOULDER OF MUTTON IN THE ASHFORD HANGERS NEAR PETERSFIELD.

Edward Thomas, famous World War I poet, is commemorated by a standing stone set halfway up the Shoulder of Mutton, since he once lived in the lodge to a mansion at the foot of the hill – this is just visible in the above photo underneath the beech branches.

This photo was taken near the top so it doesn't do justice to the degree of the incline.

The chalk grassland needs scrub cutting and raking off annually in order for the rare white and narrow-leaved helleborines to thrive. However, it's a difficult task to fulfil as after a day of hard work clearing the undergrowth

it feels like you end up with one leg shorter than the other. But it's worth the effort as the chalk grassland flora looks a picture when the orchids flower in May.

Sadly a week after this photo was taken, the brush-cutters, all our power tools and other equipment from both SDNPA and Hampshire County Council were stolen from the depot at Queen Elizabeth Country Park. So it's back to

hand tools again...
RUSSELL CLEAVER
WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

"OUR PHOTO WAS TAKEN NEAR THE TOP SO IT DOESN'T DO JUSTICE TO THE DEGREE OF THE INCLINE."

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A DAY MAKES



PRE-CLEARANCE



POST-CLEARANCE



The words of a famous song title which clearly sums up our day at the Coastguard cottages, Cuckmere Haven, in early February with a small task team of three volunteers and our trusted SDNPA Ranger, Fay Pattinson. The sun had greeted us as we loaded up the tools and left the Seven Sisters Country Park – it looked like a promising day weather wise for the task that had previously been cancelled due to howling winds and storms earlier in the year.

On arrival Fay took us over to the fence which, from a distance, looked like a bush of scrub tailing down the slope to the riverside. However, as we approached it we could clearly see the concrete roof of the World War II pillbox cleverly camouflaged within it.

The weather had taken its toll on the pillbox with a large amount of silt and grass now covering the entry steps down into the hidden room that sadly was full of decaying bags of rubbish and fly tipping of household waste. The task looked daunting to be completed in a day but very worthwhile.

So we set to it. The sun warmed up, bathing the glorious beauty spot we were working

in and melting the early frost. The view was spectacular, looking down to the river, across to the Seven Sisters and out to the calm sea where the sun danced off the surface as if it was glass. The sunshine brought out lots of walkers who showed a keen interest in what we were doing. It was heartening to hear

"IT WAS HEARTENING TO HEAR THE STORIES OF SO MANY LOCAL PEOPLE WHO HAD COMPLETELY FORGOTTEN THE PILLBOX WAS THERE."

the stories of so many local people who had completely forgotten the pillbox was there. One man told us how he had voted at the council offices over 30 years ago to keep this pillbox as so many had been demolished along the South Coast. However, he admitted that over time he had also forgotten it was there so he was very

pleased to see it being restored. It was great that we managed to fully complete the task within the day, restoring a piece of local heritage at this popular site with the results being so visible for us all to enjoy. I have to say it beats working on a screen for immediate rewards!

FRANCOISE COSGROVE
EASTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

Images: ©Francoise Cosgrove

LODGE COPSE

THIS MORNING I DROVE FROM THE COASTAL PLAIN, INTO THE NATIONAL PARK AND OVER THE SOUTH DOWNS TO LODGE COPSE WHICH NESTLES AT THE FOOT OF THE DOWNS A FEW MILES SOUTH OF PETWORTH.

Pied wagtails were dotted along the spring-fed ditch bordering Crouch Lane and there were grey herons in the field by Chingford Pond. The copse was alive with birdsong and butterflies, and the yellow archangel looked splendid along the path. In the section which we'd coppiced last winter the sea of white wood anemones had been replaced with bluebells. I really enjoy being here!

We've had another good year at Lodge Copse – the twenty-sixth year that volunteers have coppiced here. Now on the third coppice cycle, the ancient woodland coppice with standard trees is improving. Most of the standards were felled in the late 1930/40s then neglected until the late 1980s when BTCV West Sussex County Volunteers, Lodge Copse Group (LCG) took on a lease and used the copse for training members of newly formed woodland groups in coppicing, green woodworking and leadership skills. When the County Volunteers were disbanded the LCG continued the lease of Lodge Copse with the support of the SDVRS.

Our SDNPA Ranger Graham West has oversight of the site's Management Plan, advises us on our work programme and fells larger trees beyond the licence capability of our two chainsaw operators. Our two senior members, Roger West and David Randall, have continuous membership of the group since 1993.

Lodge Copse is a valuable SDVRS asset that is not currently used for amenity, education or demonstration purposes.

RON MACKENZIE
WEALDEN HEATHS VOLUNTEER RANGER

OUR OBJECTIVES ARE

- ☐ To return the copse to its traditional coppice with standard trees woodland structure and enhance its woodland habitat value.
- ☐ To enhance the copse's value for its flora and fauna whenever possible.
- ☐ To provide amenity value.
- ☐ To be commercially minded where possible.
- ☐ To use the copse for educational purposes.
- ☐ To use the copse in its capacity as a South Downs National Park Authority demonstration wood.

DURING THE PAST YEAR WE HAVE

- ☒ Coppiced one compartment on an eight year cycle, the first cycle took more than eight years.
- ☒ Felled some standard trees to reduce their shading to promote better hazel and ground flora growth.
- ☒ Pollarded willows to benefit purple emperor butterflies.
- ☒ Provided stakes and binders for hedge laying projects in the National Park.
- ☒ Split logs for post and rail fencing.
- ☒ Processed wood for the charcoal kiln and made charcoal.
- ☒ Harvested logs to keep the home fires burning.
- ☒ Widened rides and glades to create or improve the woodland edge effect.
- ☒ Maintained copse boundaries, tracks, rides and ditches.

Top: A section of Lodge Copse
© Ron MacKenzie

1001 THINGS TO DO WITH A COPY OF DOWNLAND THYMES...

The recent spell of hot summer sun has provided me with a chance to discover just how versatile the *Downland Thymes* is. I thought it was only fair that I should share this discovery with my fellow rangers. Since my discovery is essentially of the D-I-Y genre I felt the best way of telling you all was a stage by stage illustration.

First let me set the scene; imagine a hot and sunny morning somewhere in the National Park, a team of energetic volunteers is just setting down to work and suddenly our bump hat wearing hero is almost blinded by a flash of bright sun.

Nearby Mike Carter is happily wearing his SDNP wide-brimmed hat, no dazzle on Mike.



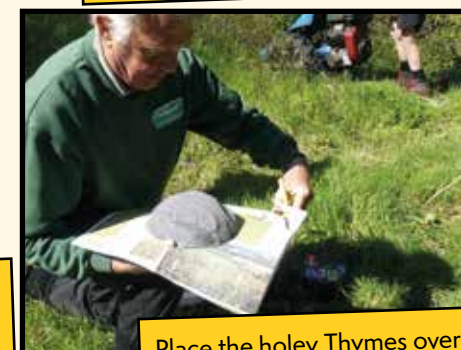
Lay out your copy of *Downland Thymes*, lay your trusty bump hat in the centre, be careful to make sure the hat sits across the centre fold.



Just then, *Downland Thymes* in hand, inspiration strikes our hero. And now the fun begins...



Next, close your *Downland Thymes* and with that pair of scissors you always carry with you, cut a hole the same size as your bump hat.



Place the holey Thymes over your bump hat and trim the excess paper from the corners.



Don the shade giving hat and bathe in the joy of no glare.



But what is this? Has Ron come up with a solution that provides shade and saves the *Downland Thymes*?

Yes, clever Ron has just put his bump hat on top of his floppy hat. With one simple move he has shade, protection, an unspoilt copy of the *Downland Thymes* and he doesn't have to carry a pair of scissors with him.

AH WELL, PERHAPS NEXT TIME I'LL HAVE AN IDEA THAT REALLY WORKS...

DICK COLE
VOLUNTEER RANGER

OBITUARIES

MY MEMORIES OF PETER TUCKER BY HELENA LEWIS

For over 20 years I have shared lifts with Peter to our monthly Sunday Volunteer Ranger tasks on the South Downs. He was always welcoming with a smile and so looking forward to working out on his beloved South Downs in whatever weather. He loved the company of all the Rangers and volunteers and especially the ride in the Land Rover where he had pride of place in the front seat. He used to say to me, "You and I must have worked all over these wonderful South Downs over the years doing all sorts of tasks – scrub bashing, making steps and stiles, putting in gates, clearing the South Downs Way..."

We started with the Sussex Downs Conservation Board then the South Downs Joint Committee and ultimately the South Downs National Park, but the work and

people continued to be fun and interesting. He didn't think much of the new black uniform but he and I loved the old overalls and continued to wear them even though they were no longer official uniform.

It is fitting that Peter's last task was Christmas tree cutting with a barbecue and a huge fire along with his buddies. We will all miss him so much but life was becoming hard for him out on tasks and he hated to feel he was not able to do as much as he used to. He almost came out with me recently but decided not to, so I rang him that evening to report on the day's work and people present. He loved to hear all the details and his enthusiasm will stay with all of us who were privileged to call him a friend.

...and now for a little ditty...

For 20 years good times we shared,
In rain and cold we've not cared.
You lit the fire while scrub we bash,
Hawthorn, hazel, birch and ash.
Then round the fire we all sat,
Sharing stories while we chat.
Beautiful views we all admire,
Of our South Downs we never tire.
Then you in Land Rover front seat,
We sit behind all dead beat.
You plan to have a bath so hot,
With glass of whisky (just a tot!)
To soothe your aching limbs at last,
And dream of precious times gone past.



EDWIN COLEBROOK 1940–2015

We were very sorry indeed to learn of the sudden death of VRS member Eddie Colebrook in March 2015. Eddie joined the Western Downs Tuesday group at Queen Elizabeth Country Park in early 2014 and quickly established himself as a happy, popular and hard working member of the team who derived great satisfaction from contributing as a volunteer ranger. It always amused him that, although intent on joining the VRS, he had almost inadvertently signed up for another group by going into the wrong office at the National Park headquarters.

There was nothing Eddie couldn't turn his hand to and his expert woodworking skills made a real difference to VRS tasks, in particular on shuttering work on a cobb wall at Cheriton and construction of the Meonstoke Boardwalk. When first undertaking tasks at the butterfly conservation areas of Magdalen Hill and Morn Down on the outskirts of Winchester, Eddie recalled his early days at work there, helping when his Uncle had farmed on the site. Eddie's charm, his willingness to help and in particular his happy disposition and broad grin that

brightened many a day will be greatly missed by his Tuesday teammates. We extend our deepest sympathies to his wife Jane and to family and friends. Jane had mentioned how very much Eddie loved being part of the VRS.

ALASTAIR STEWART
WESTERN DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

Left: Helena Lewis pictured with Peter, celebrating his 90th birthday with her cake on task at Rewell Wood.
Right: Eddie is second from the left.

NEW STARTERS



NAME:
Robert Levy

AREA:
Western Area, Wealden Heath group on the second Sunday in the month.

SDVRS

FIRST DAY

A fine day in March working with Alison Pitts and Cris Savill in a lovely location by Stedham Mill. The task involved planting a mixed hedge with some standard oaks along the river bank, eventually to help to reinforce the bank against erosion. In a previous year, a large area of the land had been flooded shortly after being planted as a meadow. The slot-planting of the saplings was a new experience for me, a delicate but satisfying task. It felt good to be actively involved again and gaining an insight into some of the work that goes on in areas of the South Downs I had previously not visited.

HOW I GOT INVOLVED

About seven years ago I was looking to get into conservation volunteering after my interest was peaked by completing an NVQ course in what was impressively titled 'Land Based Operations' and going on numerous working holidays. As I live in Shoreham I applied to the SDVRS based in the then Central (now Eastern) area at Stanmer on the weekend rota. My three years spent there were highly rewarding and I learnt many skills and met some inspiring people. After a self-imposed hiatus I am now back in the fold but volunteering at the other end of the National Park. This is partly for the sake of variety but also because

I am going back to education in September at Chichester College and may be gravitating in that direction soon.

UNUSUAL FACT

While on holiday in Toronto, Canada many years ago, I managed to lose the car I had rented (until the next day). One parking lot in a grid system looks much like another. That's my excuse anyway!

RECOMMENDED ACTIVITY

One of my favourite hobbies which I don't do enough of is birdwatching. I think it adds an extra dimension to a walk and the South Downs is blessed with a variety of habitats in which to spot birds all through the year.



NAME:
David Martin

AREA:
I volunteer with the Western Downs area based at Queen Elizabeth Country Park (QECF).

SDVRS

FIRST DAY

My first day was over a year ago so I am struggling to remember exactly what it was but I think we were in Petersfield cutting the grass and bramble back in the flood meadow next to the river. The other option is that we were scrub clearing up on the Downs.

HOW I GOT INVOLVED

I got involved with the VRS after I completed my course in Countryside

Management at Plumpton College. A friend of mine put me in contact with the team at QECF and I started volunteering two days a week. The rangers and other staff were incredibly helpful and I gained a lot of experience throughout my time there, which I'm sure has contributed to me getting a job at the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust (WWT) based at Slimbridge.

UNUSUAL FACT

I do quite a lot of game shooting during the season and a little bit of fishing during the summer.

PLACE TO VISIT

Hockham Down just off the South Downs Way is beautiful and there

are normally red kites or buzzards hovering over that area. You're also quite likely to see barn owls here too.

WWT SLIMBRIDGE

I have recently got a job as Horticultural Warden at the Slimbridge WWT centre, this is a fantastic site with a huge amount of wildfowl and other wildlife present. It is widely considered to be the starting point of modern conservation as this is where Peter Scott first started monitoring Berwick swans and started the charity which now draws in hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and helps to fund conservation projects all over the world.

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 HORSE GUARDS INN, TILLINGTON, WEST SUSSEX GU28 9AF

Okay, this is a gastro pub but it is one you immediately feel at ease in. The interior is as a good pub should be, welcoming, wooden floors, busy and cluttered with interest. The menu is changed daily and they offer a variety of real ales. They provide accommodation too and with Petworth Park alongside you can enjoy a pleasant walk after your visit. Why the name? It seems the horse guards used to be stationed at Petworth Park a century or two ago and used this Inn as their local. I wish it was mine...

BOOK REVIEWS

H IS FOR HAWK, BY HELEN MACDONALD (JULY 2014)
NOW IN PAPERBACK,
VINTAGE, £8.99

This book has received rave reviews and has won several awards since it was first published, becoming a best seller within two weeks.

The book is essentially about the author's battle with depression after the death of her father, but is more than a diary of grief, it also depicts the training of a goshawk. Furthermore it is intriguingly woven with a biography of author and keeper of hawks, T H White, (The Once and Future King/ Sword in the Stone). This is just as well since the author's despair alone would make for a heavy read – there were times I felt like telling her to 'get a grip'!

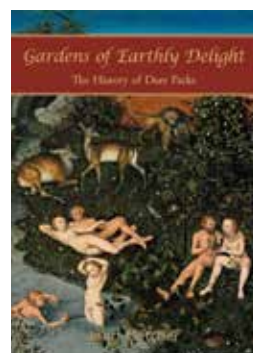


GARDENS OF EARTHLY DELIGHT: THE HISTORY OF DEER PARKS, BY JOHN FLETCHER
WINDGATHER PRESS 2011, £26.00
NOW REDUCED TO £8.95 AT
OXBOW BOOKS.

Within the 'Secrets of the High Woods' project there are several deer park pales being ground validated, including Charlton.

The author of this book evaluates long held theories of past historians and archaeologists, based on his long working life with deer, thereby enabling him to postulate other plausible explanations. The book is profusely illustrated with both monochrome and colour illustrations, backed by extensive research.

JOHN (WIZ) CRANE
SECRETS OF THE HIGH WOODS
VOLUNTEER RANGER



VOLUNTEER PIE

A recipe for a savoury VRS pie, as supplied by Graham Wynne and tested to destruction by Western Area volunteers in April 2015...

I have found that this recipe is remarkably forgiving if you want to mess about with it. I have successfully added mushrooms or replaced the bacon with sliced sausages. One memorable pie was made using bacon, sausages, mushrooms and a few beans. Quantities are obviously adjusted to fit the pie.

Serves: 8 hungry volunteers

Use a 23cm or 9inch pie dish.

INGREDIENTS

- Short crust pastry (either homemade or ready made from the supermarket, you need enough to line and cover the pie dish.)
- 8 to 10 smoked streaky bacon rashers
- 9 eggs
- 4 tbsp of whole milk
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

- 1 Cut the bacon rashers in half and fry or grill until crispy.
- 2 Remove the bacon and leave to cool.
- 3 Put a baking tray into the oven and preheat to 190c/375f/ gas mark 5.
- 4 Make the pastry (or unwrap readymade) and line the pie dish. Set aside the rest.
- 5 Scatter the bacon loosely over the pastry case bottom and gently break six of the eggs evenly around the bacon.
- 6 Beat the 3 remaining eggs and mix with the milk, salt and pepper.
- 7 Pour the mixture into the pie and let it settle to fill any gaps. Leave a little of the mixture to brush on the pie lid to glaze.
- 8 Roll out the remainder of the pastry to make a lid, brush the pie edges with some of the beaten egg and place lid on pie.
- 9 Firmly press the edges together to seal the pie, use a fork or similar to help do this and then brush the remaining egg mixture on top to form a glaze.
- 10 Bake on the baking tray for 45–55 minutes until golden brown and cooked through. Test by piercing with a knife, it should be set, if it is still runny put it back in for 15 minutes.
- 11 If required the same day, leave to stand for 30 minutes before serving.

Please note that this pie can be taken on task the next day and still be brilliant! See photograph, I used some left-over pastry to decorate the lid with VRS on the top.

Experiment as much as you like – this robust pie can take it!

GRAHAM WYNNE,
WESTERN AREA VOLUNTEER RANGER



MARATHON COMPLETED

I just wanted to say a big thank you to everyone for sponsoring me at this amazing event. I have raised over £1,320 so far for the Motor Neuron Disease Association, exceeding my target of £1000. I had an incredible day with a finishing time of four hours and seven minutes, which I was well pleased with!

I have to say that all the well wishes, good luck messages and the crowds on the day made such a difference. It was almost overwhelming at times but I felt so proud to be running for such a much needed charity. There were plenty of other runners for the main charities but only about 150 I think for Motor Neuron and I only ran past or saw about seven of them!

It was an experience I will never forget, the kindness and generosity of people made the London Marathon, for me, very special. The noise from the crowds was so loud at times and hearing my name called out

the whole length of the route made me feel like I could have been Paula Radcliffe herself! I think the highlight for me was crossing over Tower Bridge, the half way point, I still felt good and it was a mass of people. Seeing Big Ben for the first time was a very welcome sight but I have to say the rest of the route is a bit of a blur now! All I remember are the crowds of spectators.

After all the bad news and killings around the world, a day like the London Marathon puts your faith back in the human race. I think London should be proud of itself. It was so well organised and full of good spirit bringing people together!

So, a big thank you and yes, I would do it again.

The ballot opened on 4 May for anyone interested...

DIANA JORDAN
VOLUNTEER RANGER

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...



"MISSING SHEEP EXPLAINED – FARMER SPOTS NEW CARNIVORE IN THE SOUTH DOWNS"

MR S HARK





THE SOUTH DOWNS GEOTOUR

ENGLAND'S FIRST GEOTOUR, A HIGH-TECH TREASURE HUNT THROUGH INTERESTING PLACES, LAUNCHED IN THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK ON 31 MARCH 2015.

Designed to reveal its hidden gems, people can have an adventure by following the tour over hills, across commons and through woodland, collecting passport stamps and points along the way.

Geocaching is a game that combines being outdoors, exercise and technology. The South Downs GeoTour highlights great locations which link up to the thousands of other geocaches waiting to be discovered in the National Park. Using the Geocaching smartphone app, an Ordnance Survey map or GPS, people can seek out secret caches disguised in fake bird boxes, hollow logs, false stones and other cunning containers.

Our Education Officer Hannah Norton explains:

"Geocaching is a great buzz and anyone can join in the game. It's a different way to explore your own neighbourhood or discover an entirely new place. We've designed our GeoTour to take in some great places in the South Downs that you might never otherwise have found.

You also earn points for eating locally, staying in sustainable accommodation and travelling by bus, train and bike. When you have enough points you can claim your special silver and gold souvenir geocoins created for us by Pulse 72."

The tour is made up of 30 sites in the National Park across Hampshire, East and West Sussex. As well as the usual log book and small trinkets to trade, each cache includes ideas for things to do and see whilst you're in the area.

The South Downs GeoTour joins 50 others around the globe hosted by National Parks, visitor bureaux or local communities. More than six million people in 180 countries are already playing so why not join them and give it a go. Visit our geocaching web pages to find out more and download your passport – southdowns.gov.uk/geocaching

NEW WEBSITE FOR THE NATIONAL PARK

AT THE START OF MARCH WE LAUNCHED THE NEW WEBSITE FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS NATIONAL PARK.

Showcasing the new National Park identity, the website is full to the brim with eye-catching photography, latest news of the National Park Authority's and our partner projects, an overview of the different habitats found in the South Downs, information to help visitors travel sustainably and details of the wealth of family activities waiting to be discovered. Accompanied by a logical menu the website has been designed to make it easy for users to understand and enjoy the National Park and the work of the National Park Authority and our partners.

As detailed in Ian's VRS Update article on page 2, the website includes a newly designed area about volunteering, so if you haven't yet visited the site take a moment to browse the pages and you'll no doubt discover something about the National Park that you didn't already know – southdowns.gov.uk



EVENTS – AN UNUSUAL QUESTION...

Whilst helping at the South Downs National Park event stand at the Shepherd and Shepherds Hut Day at the Weald and Downland Museum, a lady came up and with a serious expression asked this question...

"WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT A NAKED MAN WHO HAS BEEN SEEN TWICE WALKING ON A LITTLE USED FOOTPATH IN THE AREA WHERE I'M A FOOTPATH WARDEN?"

Corrie (another volunteer) and I looked at each other and smiled saying we were not sure but the SDNPA Ranger would be back in a few minutes and we would ask him. She said that she would return but we didn't see her again. It just shows you never know what questions people are going to ask you so be prepared!

The badge making machine on the stand was a big hit with the children, as were the feely boxes, whilst the adults were keen to look at the large map and asked some questions about the boundaries of the National Park.

All in all an excellent day!

HELENA LEWIS, CENTRAL DOWNS VOLUNTEER RANGER

SIGN UP NOW!

Events attended by the SDNPA range 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.

We would love more Volunteer Rangers to get

involved with the events we attend so if you'd like to help please speak to your Area Team. 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.



SOUTH DOWNS FOOD AND DRINK PORTAL

Food and drink businesses in the South Downs National Park are getting a free publicity boost through a new online directory and networking service to help promote their produce to local people and visitors.

Any food business within a ten-mile radius of the National Park – from country pubs and farm shops to farmers markets and wine tasting – can register their business at southdownsfood.org. The site, which by the time you are reading this will just be launching to the public, will give visitors, residents and businesses quick access to accurate information about food and drink available in the South Downs.

From artisan cheese, 'super-food' watercress, wild venison, micro-breweries and some of the best sparkling wines in the world, the South Downs should be recognized for high-quality, sustainable food almost as much as its spectacular beauty and tranquil spaces. By showcasing the wonderful produce available, this site will help support local businesses to work together to share and overcome their day-to-day challenges.

Southdownsfood.org is being created by Natural Partnerships Community Interest Company with the support of the South Downs National Park Authority and the Southern Co-operative.

Top left: Trundle the event sheep explores the grounds of the Weald and Downland Museum. Middle: Trundle checks out the Shepherd huts on show. © Sam Buckland/SDNPA



SOUTH DOWNS SOCIETY

THE SOUTH DOWNS SOCIETY IS THE NATIONAL PARK SOCIETY FOR THE SOUTH DOWNS, THE ONLY CHARITY DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE WHOLE OF THE NATIONAL PARK AND ITS HERITAGE.

Sunday strollers
© South Downs Society

Independent and member led we were founded in 1923 as a response to a threat of a housing development which would have stretched across the cliff tops of the famous Seven Sisters. We are as passionate today, as were our founders, that the South Downs should be available for the enjoyment of all as well as future generations.

The prime concern of the South Downs Society is the protection of the unique landscape and the cultural heritage of the South Downs National Park.

- We fight campaigns against inappropriate development and fund conservation projects.
- We take an active role in safeguarding and improving the rights of way network and extending areas of open access land across the National Park.
- We encourage the public to learn more about the National Park.

We are an entirely independent charity, not funded by the Government, and so the interest of our members is our priority in retaining the beauty of the Downs and we have been working with the SDNPA on a couple of issues recently:

• NATIONAL PARK RIGHTS OF WAY SURVEY

In response to a request from Tim Squire (SDNPA Rights of Way and Access Officer) the Society has brought together a team of 17 volunteers in order to assess the condition of rights of way throughout the National Park. The purpose is to determine whether or not these are 'Easy to Use' and the activity is based on a 5% survey using Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs). Our volunteers surveyed designated rights of way across the network in May and November 2014 and will input the data on-line into CAMS from an easy to fill out form. The randomly generated selection of paths is spread right across the National Park and often requires some travelling between locations.

Although there have been some initial teething problems the system should be operating smoothly soon and those members involved are looking forward to exploring another selection of pathways during this May and November.

• CROW ACCESS LAND MAPS AND WALKS

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) gives a public right of

access to open access land, including areas of 'open country' and registered common land. Volunteers from the Society have carried out detailed surveys of ten of the more 'useful' access areas and prepared annotated versions of extracts of the 1:25,000 maps to show access points, and some of the most practicable and easily usable 'through' routes. In addition, for each map there is a recommended self-guided walk. The project has been grant-aided by the National Park Authority's Sustainable Communities Fund and the Ramblers. Natural England have also supported the project. Included on the leaflets are notes of special features which enhance the amenity of the chosen areas as well as details of how to get there by public transport.

The South Downs Society is based in Pulborough and every year we organise over 200 walks, strolls and bike rides in Sussex and Hampshire as well as events, talks and focused workshops, and a growing local discount scheme. Join us today and membership for yourself, or as a gift, will help to ensure the work of the Society continues and the Downs are protected for generations to come.

Please visit us at southdownssociety.org.uk or call us on 01798 875073.

South Downs
Volunteer Ranger Service

SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK

Downland Thymes: News for the South Downs Volunteer Ranger Service. Issue 68, May 2015. © 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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